

10/09/02

Dear Kimberly and TK:

As TK slyly suspected it would, your query has rung my bell!

The concept of climate is far more basic to group success than we have realized. I prefer the term 'field' because it more accurately captures the wholeness, the entirety and inclusiveness of the concept. It is also gaining scientific acceptance in areas beyond quantum physics (see *The Field* by Lynne McTaggart, Harper Collins, New York, 2000) Recent brain research (see the articles in *Psychotherapy Networker* I sent you, K) has discovered that the brains of children subject to abuse or neglect form neural networks that trigger defensive behavior whenever the person senses threat to meaningfulness in other words, disrespect. Since we all suffer some punishment and neglect in our growing up years, virtually everyone is on hair trigger for signs of disrespect. Defensiveness, as you both know, is occupying my mind these days as I believe many of our destructive behaviors are triggered by perceived threat and our neural networks take over and govern us. To avoid the pain of anxiety, our foresight function, substitutes impatience, boredom, withdrawal, negativity, anger and the like, for anxiety. We tend not to perceive these defensive reactions for the destructive and limiting actions that they really are.

The field in a meeting (or anywhere) is like a magnetic field and we are like iron filings in that field and are strongly influenced by everything in it. One of the reasons I believe Excursions should be given a more prominent role in Synectics meetings is that they convey to the field, a strong message of openness to adventurous thinking.

The project I am working on would add a great many such things as Excursion, Tree like a Tractor, Itemized Response and others not yet invented, that would aim at relaxing every defensiveness we can delineate. This would have implications for every operation where good thinking and collaboration are important!

I know this is more than you asked for, but I can't help myself. My neural networks get triggered by any such attention!! The fact is, if I had my way, research and exploration in this direction would be a major Synectics effort.

But, to get to your query, for your purposes I might say:
Climate: The atmosphere surrounding a meeting. This is better understood if it is thought of as a 'field' as in magnetic field and each of us is strongly influenced by every aspect of the field of our meeting. Everything, from the venue and all it contains, to the guidelines adopted by participants in their interactions with one another. Everything either adds positive energy or negative energy to the field.

Warmest and best,
George