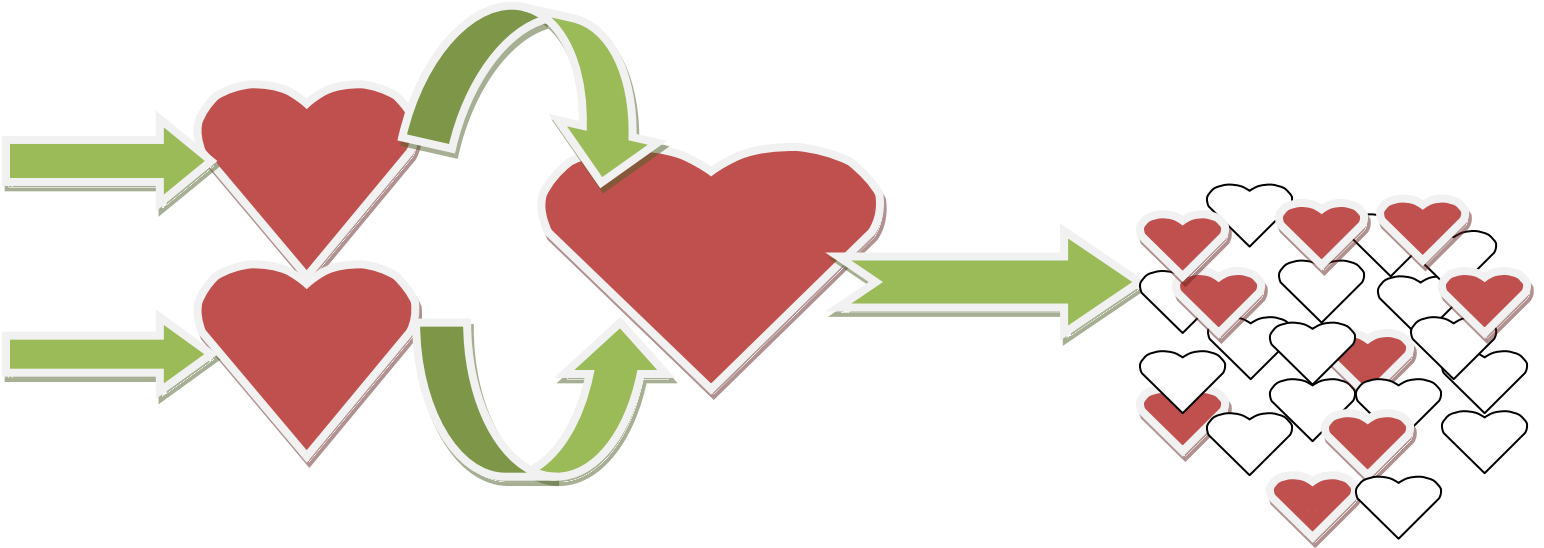


Co-leading in Core Energetics:



An Act Of Love

*Meis Thewissen
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1. Preface

The subject of leading and co-leading is relatively new in Core Energetics. Our quest to find articles, books, lectures and notes was for nothing. Leadership models in Core Energetics are mostly psychologically and individually based. Even the Pathwork Lectures about Leadership and Authority takes the individual as the main frame. In the day-to-day practice therapists often are operating with the basic assumption that a "one to one" transference is the guarantee for a professional relationship between therapist and client. But what if you start working with a co-leader?

Core Energetics training programs are using the format of teachers and assistants, which are hierarchal based. Many therapists have experienced co-leading groups, in workshops or in long term process groups. They seem to have originated sort of spontaneously.

By offering the Exceptional Marriage Mentoring model Brian & Marcia Gleason opened the doorway to a shared leadership in a therapeutic setting. In their model at least one of the leaders has to be a core-therapist. Their relationship is the primary 'tool' for the therapy.

Brian & Marcia Gleason started working, thinking and writing from a more methodological basis in co-leading by using principles as mirroring, bridging and mentoring in couple to couple sessions. We got very inspired by their work, especially when we gathered more awareness on how the dynamics of our parents' relationship affected the working with couples.

This study is a reflection and outcome of more than two years working together. We co-lead couples, workshops, modules in the Transformational Training and a process group and we experienced that the both of us mirrored the dynamics of the relationship of our parents. This is one of the insights this study brought us. We strongly felt our limits and control patterns, like trust and surrender. We strongly felt our gifts like an open heart, taking care and feeling responsible. We also co-led with other colleagues and in we both strongly feel the longing for being together, for not carrying alone the burden of the leadership we have been practicing, for not being alone anymore...

The topic co-leading also asks for much more research than we can offer here. Co-leading and sexual energy, co-leading and attachment history, patterns in how groups or couples mirror co-leading relationships, aspects of male-male leading and female-female leading in comparison to male-female leading and what kind of dynamics can make co-leading not work?

We hope we will find the time and inspiration to dive in...

We dedicate this study to all our colleagues who have the love and the courage to choose co-leaders, work with them, fight with them and dedicate all there is to benefit the process of others.

Nijmegen/Nederasselt, The Netherlands, June 5th, 2013

2. Introduction

A Mexican breakfast

Guernavaca April 23th 2013

Breakfasttable

Cees, Meis,

The script starts from Meis' perspective

Cees and I are having a breakfast with eggs, beans, fresh fruit, yoghurt and cereals. We are one day ahead of the third module Radical Alive Leadership in Atalayoca with Ann Bradney. Anna Timmermans granted us to take the year Leadership training in Mexico as a Postgraduate program and she required us to do a final project in order to become a junior teacher at her Core-Energetic Institute in the Netherlands. Cees was thinking of co-leading. I felt attracted to attachment as a theme, and it became a mutual project about co-leading. Anna suggested integrating the attachment into the co-leading.

But let's return to our breakfast.

Why, I asked Cees, do you want to co-lead? What exactly is your motivation? It seemed to me the most reasonable question to start the project with. Why do we want to co-lead? We worked together a couple of times and we also work with other people in different situations, with different tools and techniques and in different disciplines. Cees started to answer that question by telling me some of his history that started with the death of his Mum and his lonely road from there. He wrote some of his breakfast tales down in this presentation. Read for yourself.

His motivation brought me to tears. Such a story of loneliness. He broke my heart.

Where in a way my heart was already broken, because of my own history of being alone.

We sat there until we were both silent because of the impact of what we just had shared. It was wonderful to be able to open up about this and get vulnerable. Having been in many leadership situations in life, we finally came to the most simple and most touching motivation: *we really like to co-lead because we don't want to be alone anymore.*

It's lonely at the top

Meis

My story starts of course too in the family I was born into. Mum, Dad, two brothers. My Dad gave me a year before he died the biggest compliment ever – at least this was what I thought at the time – he said: 'Of my children (me and my two brothers) you are the only one with balls'.

I felt proud. Afterwards I feel awkward.

With balls he meant Leadership in the way leaders were looked upon in the timeframe he was brought up in. Leaders were strong, outspoken, straight back, of stern character, smart and assertive.

I tried for a long time to live up to that.

So I became the strongest member in the family, because somebody had to take up that role nobody wanted. Just think of all the implications. The biggest effect was that I was the most lonesome member of that family. I was the fifth (or third) wheel to the wagon:

my Mum had my Dad, my brothers had each other, I was the only girl and very outstanding. As far as you can imagine and I mean that literally.

I can see a straight line starting there into the history of my life. Leadership meant: it's lonely at the top, and tumbling down was no option and this is also in short how I went about my working life and my career. I was manager, chief-editor, director, leading lady. I stayed on top for a long time, until I was so cold, I had to defrost. That's when core-energetics came into my life.

Being on top – when I look back – was my way of finding a safe spot. If I by way of speaking could stay ahead of everyone and everything, either by agility, intelligence or intimidation, no one could touch me.

But that of course was what I longed for most and the thing I feared most: being touched and being together instead of standing apart from everybody.

So in my experience Leadership and developing it, has the quality and the gift of bringing together.

This is what Leadership is really about: the ability to tumble and fall in either save arms or on hard concrete. But taking that risk to fall, to don't know, to be ready for negative transference, to let my heart be broken over and over again, make one mistake after the other without losing enthusiasm (quoting Winston Churchill) and live through it all...that is Leadership.

I graduated as a core-energetic therapist in 2009. A totally new direction my life took when I started a practice, started groups, started assisting and started to live life by feeling instead of thinking, by checking in with me first instead of checking in with others to see what I needed to do or what was needed to be done by me.

In a way taking the path to awareness, become a therapist, work with my body and my feelings has made me more me, so in co-leading I can also show up with all I am and have.

So I feel very happy with the co-leaders I am able to work with. I feel them to be special friends. So writing this down I also say to you Cees: I love you very much and I feel you to be a close friend. Thank you for being in my life and in my work. It's a treasure.

One particular exercise in de Radical Aliveness I want to share. We did a mirroring role-playing in how parents react to a child and what kind of example they set by doing so for Leadership. And what kind of effect that had on that child in terms of what as a result ended in suppression or developments as a reaction to their behavior. It was painfully amazing to find out how much distrust that generated in me towards leadership in general and theirs in special. But most of all towards my own leadership. It made me some much aware of all kind of images I have around leading and leaders.

The next step in that exercise will be of course what images I have about co-leadership, as of course my parents set the very first example to that. In terms of therapeutic healing, the example of co-leading parents set, has as much impact on further relationships as attachment histories have.

The connection between fetal and infant origins of adult problems is nowadays-common knowledge.

Attachment and relationships between parents and child is building ground for future relationships in adult life and as you might start to understand, co-leading asks for a high quality relationship.

Central in this aspect seems to be presence. How present was mother in early life for the baby? How present was father? How did they handle their presence towards the child and towards each other? What was the quality and what kind of example did they set?

Presence is also keyword in vision on modern leadership. [Presence, Peter Senge et al.]

The line that could possibly be drawn between them might be awfully straight. My line from my attachment history would be: never, ever trust a leader, they are never there

when you need them. Which originates from a repeated trauma of my Mum being hospitalized when I was very young.

So my conclusion was: I will do it on my own and never show what that does to me.

In the Mexico training I volunteered once to lead a group. I asked everybody who held something against me to get up and be part of my group. Ten people rose and I got scared. I went to my biggest fear that roots in my attachment history: I will be annihilated. So my reaction was the reaction I had to survive: I will never show what it does to me. I made a turn around: I started showing what it did to me, how it affected me, how it touched and scared me and that brought everyone in the group to some insight for themselves. It was the biggest risk I ever took in this work except crying out loud for my Mum.

My transference towards co-leaders is two-legged. On the one hand, it brings safety that they are together so I don't have to deal with them alone, on the other hand I would like to split them up to have them both exclusively for my own needs. So this will definitely show up in groups I will be co-leading, I am sure.

I'm a lonesome cowboy

Lucky Luke

Cees

Since three years I've experienced the benefits of co-leading. Doing workshops, trainings, couples work and process groups together with different partners I feel that I'm entering a new experiential area I've never felt before. Before that I' never thought or could even imagine what co-leading is. **I did it all alone.**

I've led non-profit organizations, companies, projects, basketball teams, my families, the Cordium Centre and my dogs over a period of more than 30 years. As a leader I felt I had to know everything. I was operating in a world of knowing, wherein reason and will were dominating. High performance was the standard.

I've worked hard, made my money, had my issues with employees, was in the newspapers and never had anybody besides me.....

Do I regret? No!

Was it fulfilling? No!

Was it exhausting? Yes!

Was it challenging? Yes!

Was it frustrating? Mostly!

Was it rewarding? Mostly!

Going back in my history I remember the death of my mother when I was 6. Caused by my father's decision to keep me out of the dying process of my mother, even keep me away from her funeral; I felt anger, rage and a deep pain of separateness and isolation. My mam's death uprooted the family; for sure she was the binding factor. My father disappeared from that moment in his work, friendships and hobbies. I struggled with finding my place in the family, which felt, as there was no place anymore. One of my strongest beliefs was that I was too much and a big problem for my father and siblings.

To protect myself for the pain my first decision as 6 years old leader was "From now on I will do it all alone. I don't need anybody. I have to take care for myself and nobody else will do that for me." It's clear that my view on leadership has been strongly modeled by this decision over years and years. Leaders have to be strong, responsible, outstanding and above all they need to have will-power and perseverance. I realize that in a certain sense I've always tried to get my family back in putting efforts on team making, trying to feel the strong bonds between people operating in my management- and sport teams.

Although it felt that I missed the qualities to bind my longing to be part of a circle resulted in joyful experiences like the ecstasy of winning championships with my sport teams and successfully ended difficult projects with my management teams. But still, until the end of my fifties I felt the lonesome leader in me. Far away from my family, far away from home...

Ann Bradney's Radical Alive Leadership program (Mexico, 2012-2013) was a high motivator to reflect on my leadership. The program was intense, radical and extreme and it put me in all corners of the room. In a ruthless way my fears and doubts about my leadership were revealed.

What if I don't know?

What if the group doesn't accept me?

What if the group criticizes and judges me?

What if I can't show up?

What if chaos enters the room?

What if others know more or better (even worse)?

Joining Ann's program was part of my process since 2010 when I finished my Core program in New York. I chose to quit my regular job and became a core practitioner. From the beginning it felt like a huge shift: from a world of knowing I stepped into a world of not knowing. Full of feelings, emotions and senses and without any blueprint. My process was about to show myself in my vulnerable parts as a leader and to stay connected with my clients and groups.

It was quite a coincidence that I started working with other core-therapists. Mostly I was asked; it started with cooperation in workshops, then with process groups and finally with couple sessions. I felt honored to be invited and enjoyed the cooperation. It really was a gift to feel the relief and togetherness as a result of the cooperation. Little by little I got aware that my old style of leadership was transforming in shared leadership and I loved it. No more loneliness, no more carrying, no more sorrow.

I'm convinced that shared leadership can be powerful in Core group work. Not only my Leadership transformation process contributed to that; my experiences in groups until now were also positive. At least it helped me to become a different leader...

In this study Meis and I want to share those experiences. We'd also like to try to analyze the different factors that make the shared leadership work.

Attraction and Trust

What is that...attraction? And how do we dare to trust, different from falling in love in 'real' life and taking this as a start for an intimate relationship. One of the liberating aspects of being in Core Energetics is the freedom to have all your feelings. Anna Timmermans stated a very short definition of what the goal of therapy is: 'The purpose of therapy is to learn to feel.' As short as this statement is, the impact is big. It implicates to have your feelings without judgments, without blocks and without shame. Just have your feelings and enjoy them. This is the place you can live from and also feel your boundaries, your limitations and your love for yourself.

We would like to see attraction as the next step after you welcome yourself to have your feelings and enjoy them. Because from that place you can enjoy others. Attraction is something energetic, something that gives a thrill and gives a happy energy. Of course the attraction can go many ways: from a gentle, sweet energy to strong sexual feelings.

Attraction is an energy that takes you somewhere. Meis remembers a Take a Risk night. Stuart Black led the session and Cees was working. Cees stood up because he really was fed up with what was going on at that particular point in the evening. He started hitting the cube and showing his anger.

When Cees was done Stuart asked everybody to stand up who felt attracted to Cees. Half the room stood up (about 30 people) mainly women but also a few men. Meis was one of the people who stood up and had a strange experience. First of all she felt shame for her attraction. She realized she threw a few quick glances to Anna Timmermans, Cees his wife, checking what was going on. So she concluded in her system attraction and action upon the attraction had a strong bond. Why would she otherwise look over to Anna to check whether it was all right?

It says something about Meis' attraction to her Dad and the way her mother reacted to it. Her Mum was kind of jealous on the strong bond between daughter and father. Meis was the apple of his eye and her Mum even always told her so.

On the other hand she gave Meis a responsibility to deal with him so a bit of her burden being married to him was lifted of her shoulders. Meis always felt special because of that kind of responsibility until it made her throw up when she realized this was very inappropriate.

The way they modeled co-leadership has brought Meis many learning points in co-leading especially with men. As her Dad choose to be away a lot [flight], she concluded he was the weaker leader. Nowadays a lot of leadership theories state that authentic leadership also is being present on any level you can be present. So Meis saw her Mum as being the 'best' leader. She was there, took decisions, set rules, controlled the family and was outspoken. Dad was silent, left the job of household and raising children to her and followed more then he was leading. Mainly he backed off.

This pattern of her parents Meis can easily relate to co-leading.

'I really need (my male) co- leader to be there. Competitive feelings when I feel them are more a test if he can stand up to me (which my Dad couldn't to my Mum). If yes, I can trust and surrender. I can also really feel the difference in co-leading with women and men. In a way I seem to trust women more easy.'

As it comes to Cees, being her first male co-leader, the start was relaxing for her. She felt in control at the beginning, because she asked him, he didn't have a practice or was professionally seen way ahead of her. That could trigger a lot of buttons in Meis from where she easily can start to work really hard to prove she has a right to be there too although she doesn't know that much, or feels unequal in another way. The pitfall was of course that she would stay in control too much.

They started with a process group and Cees' presence was strong but also vulnerable. He was there and he was where he was and stuck to that. That really made her trusts him, so she could be vulnerable too. In a way it fitted how they got together and how their personalities found a way to work from attraction. Cees has a lot of humor and that makes working with him easy.

Meis can also remember a moment of transference in a couple session they led. Cees at one point 'left'. Meis couldn't reach him anymore; he made her clear he didn't want her too close and was non-responsive to her attempt of making contact again. That really terrified her. She got lost and angry, and took it personally. It worked out for her from that moment on that being in contact is the main focus for her in couple sessions, There is no way doing couple sessions when there is no contact.

We've worked and are working with each other and we also worked with different partners. Cees experienced difficulties to reach out, because he struggled with old images of being not good enough. Nevertheless he felt honored and seen and jumped

into the collaboration. Meis felt honored to work with Cees from the warm feelings and the love she has for him. The opportunity to work with a man in equality is a real gift.

Meis: 'Coming from a career in business where hierarchy and status were leading and also gender issues in power struggle were present, being with Cees in equality he has so much awareness about, was a terrific and healing experience. I can remember on one of the first occasions we worked together he sat down and supported my back and said:

"You don't have to do it all on your own..."

No man ever said that to me in such a supporting way EVER in my life.

So thanks again Cees.'

The process of choice was from attraction and trust.

Meis: 'I liked him right away and because of his openness he was very attractive to me. I still see him as a very attractive guy with whom it is fun to work with. I like his energy, I like his creativity and his sweetness and I like how he takes responsibility for his own doings. He has a wonderful heart.'

The attraction between Meis and me is an interpersonal one, based on friendship. The completion was based on the match of personalities and situation. I liked her style and work attitude, we shared interests in the business we both were in and we had many brainstorming sessions how to bring Core in Business. We did see and interact with each other years before our cooperation started. She got more and more familiar to me. It's clear that I need my time to become closer that shows itself in all my cooperation's with different colleagues. It's a mixture of trust and self-confidence to give over to cooperation. It seems easier for me to work with female partners because they give me the feeling of trust more easily than male partners. Going back in my history I realize that it has to do with my need to feel connected to my mother that I dearly missed in my life. I'm aware that this can cause strong transferences between my co-leader and me. My tendency in sessions is to withdraw when I've the feeling of losing contact with my partner.

Meis and I have shown throughout the years the willingness to work on this issue by expressing our feelings (I remember some urgent phone calls after frustrating sessions). Her willingness to stay in contact is one of the main reasons to work with her.

Cees: 'I loved her energy that is powerful and crazy. She has the courage and the guts. Behind her screen she shows how vulnerable she is. She challenges me in bringing the best of me to the group.'

3. Benefits and Challenges

There is a no more lonely job sometimes than being a therapist, and especially a group therapist because there is so much to process afterwards.

(Jeffrey A. Kottler. One life at a time, 2003)

Starting with this quote it is as simple as it is: co-leading seems the way out of the loneliness as we both feel this to be the deeper motivation for working together. There was already a connection before the co-leading started. So the risk to take before any co-leading situation starts, is considering the reality that you may lose a friendship. It was striking from the interviews that most of the choices and decisions to cooperate were as an act out of friendship or love. One of the colleagues, who have been in a co-leading cooperation for twenty years stated that actually their love that deepened over those years working together, was doing the group-process nowadays and nothing else. For the married couples that work together it has brought a lot of benefits for their own relationship. One of the married couples spouse said: 'it makes us move in our relationship too. But it takes strong boundaries. We never talk about sessions we do with couples in the bedroom'.

One of the interviewed even went as far to say that co-leading was the place where she learned most and gained most for her own personal process.

'In my whole career in the therapeutic field, co-leading was the biggest gift to my growth as a person and as a therapist.'

Co-leading and choosing for it also builds expectations and brings implicit needs and old patterns to the surface.

In order to be able to get an overview of the aspects that are important in the decision for co-leading we've listed the benefits and challenges. It may look simple as: 'hey I like you, you are a core-therapist lets start a group!'

Maybe sometimes it can work like that. But the decision has a much wider span of energy and consequences, so it might help to bring in some points of consideration.

We've collected those points from the interviews, our experiences and out of psychotherapeutic literature. We state them in a rational way; later in this essay we'll talk more about emotional and intuitive aspects.

Benefits

We distinguish three aspects: Group Level, Process Level and Professional Growth.

Group Level

It provides greater coverage of the group. While one leader is working with a client, the other leader can be scanning and monitoring other participants and processes on the side which are not in the main focus. The co-leader can provide support and contain the space during difficult group experiences and be of practical support. For example when there is a situation with really intense transference that takes a total focus in a one-on-one encounter between therapist and client. One therapist can totally focus on the encounter, knowing that the co-leader is holding the space for the rest of the group. The co-leader can also anticipate on materials needed or physical support in a male/female-therapist session.

It also allows the group to continue during absence of one of the leaders.

Meis led a group once with a male colleague and one of the participants broke two toes in an exercise. Her co-leader could help the participant get the medical support she needed while Meis could still go on with the group.

Process Level

If counter transference occurs with one leader the other leader may be better able to work with the member(s) and step in and take over.

The co-leaders can model the way for the group-members how cooperative partners work together, recreating the family situation, being perceived as parental figures and thus being open to transference. Modeling can build a new experience and set a different pattern where group-members can benefit from and for example loose images about their own leadership and the way it was set in behavioral patterns that don't work for them.

Co-leaders can act as role models for the group by demonstrating how to communicate clearly, cooperate, collaborate and disagree effectively. Co-leaders can act in complementary roles, each reinforcing the other. Of course strongly in a male/female setting where as most of the people grow up in a family where a Mum and Dad are the providers of care, love and safety. Their co-operation sets an example and builds images around co-leadership. But also in role-playing models like good guy – bad guy; acting verbal vs. non verbal; one is focusing on the group process, the other on the individuals)

Professional Growth

Working together creates for each therapist a possibility for finding a plus.

In the preparation it provides inspiration and new ideas or new exercises. In the aftermath it gives an opportunity to learn from each other by reflection and intervision and supervision. It can give positive impulses to your personal process as well as to your own professional attitude.

During the work you can learn and see how your co-leader works and from which impulses interventions are done. Maybe some disciplines and professional techniques fuse to new approaches. Cees and Meis both have been in coaching and consultancy. Through their career they attended workshops and seminars and they bring that experience also to the core- energetic therapy setting, which leads to creative and playful exercises. In the collaboration you can work out issues serving your own process in how to build a profound relationship.

One of the interviewed said: 'In working with my female co-leader being a female myself, I can see how I take from my background the images that I have to do it all by myself. That's why I get pissed off when to my opinion my co-leader doesn't do enough.'

Her co-leader stated something else: 'It is such a rewarding trip that in working with her [the former quote] I can finally express feelings and thoughts I would have never dared telling my Mum.'

Most of the co-leaders expressed the relieve they felt that they could sit back a little bit in comparison to the working alone.

From the interviews we also learned that co-leading provides a stage where the co-leading can bring you to your excellence or even brilliance because there is support and safety provided for by your co-leader.

In addition to these aspects, literature names the benefits for beginning leaders to validate their perceptions of group process. Novice group leaders can observe a more experienced leader in action, and they can gradually assume leadership functions. Moving from a more structured, dependent role to a less structured, independent role can provide support and decrease the anxiety level of the beginning leader.

Challenges

We also found the challenges of co-leading a group. They are not meant to generalize things that can go 'wrong', but we found again similarities throughout the interviews that might be pitfalls in the co-leading. The medal also has a backside. Shining on the one side and attractive for sharing and feeling the support of the co-leader it can also be a confrontation with sides we not much like about ourselves. Co-leading can be on a smooth track of love and understanding, and giving space to each other to be excellent in your excellence. It can also really get in your way or even in your face when other feelings and distrust are part of the co-leading process. It can even go as far that co-leading stops and you split up as a team.

Which of course is a painful decision to be made. Even more so because most of the choices and decisions to cooperate were made also as an act out of friendship or love in most of the cases in the interviews we held. You can also look at them as beautiful learning points to take to supervision. So of course the list is not a complete overview, but it gives some insight in what can occur as challenges in working together.

Of course the most obvious challenge of working together is that there is someone around who can look into your kitchen, can and will interfere with some of your strategies and will take up space too...

Or as one of the interviewed expressed: 'You earn less money because you have to split the earnings...' He made a nuance by adding: 'But I gained more than ever working with her.'

Group Level

Co-leading can have disadvantages when the group tries to play one leader off against the other. The leader who talks more, who has more experience, who has more positive transference feelings can be perceived as the senior leader and the other can be seen as the junior one. This situation can create tension, because the group will be uncertain about the leaders roles that can cause a lack of safety. Also between the two leaders it can bring them to get into ego-business instead of commitment and thus create an even bigger space for splitting up.

The leadership unity can easily be broken up by motivations from the ego that say: 'Now I want to be the groups favorite leader....'

This situation can have a parallel with a traumatic experience and can lead to a lot of mask stuff in the group process.

'Being a sole leader has also the pitfall that you want to become part of the group, and doing so you take a risk of sharing things with the group they really don't need to know.' This quote from one of the interviews is a little bit shocking, but important is, a pitfall is named.

Process Level

The group also quickly senses any disagreement or tension between leaders. This situation is analogous to another family phenomenon wherein the children of fighting parents may react by trying to mediate, by feeling guilty because they think they may be the cause of the disagreement, by withdrawing, by acting up or by resigning from their own needs in order to hold the parental figures together and in doing so, repeating old patterns without getting awareness of other possibilities.

On the other hand the group can on a process level also get into the strain of having to take sides. It is a distraction and shows up in a group as a split. The Leadership Training in Mexico taught us that anything that tends to go under the carpet between co-leaders, call it your worst fears, will show up in the group. It can be in a conflict, or in a split in the group or it shows itself in processes getting stuck and never seems to go into any direction. The group thus mirrors what is under the surface in a co-leading relationship.

Right in the moment a not working co-leadership can even cause a repetition of an attachment trauma. In the process of transference there is also attachment development as in the therapeutic process a male and female leader will be seen or perceived as two parental figures. In the growing connection that follows the group-process, attachment histories will also surface and be re-enacted. If the co-leading doesn't create enough safety, because of the tension between the leaders that is not solved or open, members can relive what they came for to heal. Which is very, very sad.

Professional Growth

If the co-leading relationship has difficulties that haven't been dealt with, or solved, nobody can grow; neither the group nor the co-leaders. This is the most significant signal of a non-working co-leading.

One of the colleagues stated that in working on the speed and rhythm of doing interventions it takes a lot of energy for him to stay attuned, but it also brought him to work on making space for him.

Challenges can be a strong lead to growth though, if both leaders have the willingness to lead and to follow, to share and process their own issues and other qualities it takes to co-lead.

Co-leading qualities

There is a special set of skills and qualities employed that really benefit the working as co-leaders.

First of all you possess and developed leadership. It takes even more leadership to co-lead, because leading on your own there is nobody around who can interfere with your strategy or style or get in your way with personal issues. So being two leaders in a single working situation, it is in general, crucial to work together as a team of two leaders, which means that you synchronize efforts, strategies and styles to present a consistent, unified leading front. The relationship you are able to build and the safety and support that you gain in cooperation, brings a great contribution to the safety and the space you offer to people to come forward with anything that needs to be expressed, solved or dealt with and it unifies the group.

We found common qualities in the cooperation of two leaders also in literature as well as in the interviews. The qualities that we will distinguish don't have to be personal qualities, but they sure should be in the consciousness of both leaders who are working together. You must have awareness on your behavior in cooperation and what your topics or issues are, or at least ready to work on them. The qualities we found are not conditions that should be set out before working together, they serve more as giving an idea of what kind of aspects will make a cooperation work.

Here they are:

The capacity to be equal in communication and openness

The ability to be comfortable asking questions to your partner in order to commend his or her attributes and be able to receive criticism

The willingness to disagree or agree outside (or sometimes inside) the group session when differences emerge
The ability to confront and to support
Willing to share knowledge, experiences and exercises and develop common goals
The readiness to perceive your impulses and interventions as worthy and professional as your own
Being generous in support and love
Being flexible in both roles: leading and following

Thinking about how to develop a good working co-therapist team the following criteria are important:

Complementary balance of therapist skills
Compatibility of therapists' theoretical viewpoints
Openness in communication
Equality of participation
Liking each other as people
Respect
The pleasure in the dance together

Two big shots

We've read books of a few famous psychotherapists to find out why they choose to work with co-leaders. Irvin D. Yalom is one of them: he has a lifelong experience in working with groups in a clinical setting. In one of his books Yalom highlights attention to the selection of the co-leader. *"When co-leaders don't feel at ease with each other, uncommunicative, try to outbody each other, showing huge disagreements about style and strategy (that can't be solved by supervision) their group never can't be an effective group."*

Stability and durability are according to Yalom the most important conditions in an effective cooperation in group therapy. His selection is mostly gender based, although other options appear. He even mentioned a combination between father and son, both therapists. Because he was professor at a University he preferred to work with talented students, first in a role as an assistant, then as a co-leader.

Quite different from Yalom are Arnold & Amy Mindell.

They have co-led groups in many parts of the world using conflict and diversity for large group transformations. The setting is not clinical, but working in the reality with diverse, multicultural and complex groups, highly politicized. (LA gangs; Russia; former Yugoslavia) Their work inspired Ann Bradney in developing her Radical Alive Leadership programs. Although Mindell's teachers told him to avoid large groups, because they are unruly and dangerous, he and his wife stepped into the working with larger and complex groups. *"The world is not composed of docile little groups. Enforcing law and order can't be our only strategy for resolving problems."*

His book wants to demonstrate that engaging in heated conflict instead of running away from it is one of the best ways to the creative utilization of conflict.

"If we don't permit hostilities a legitimate outlet, they are bound to take illegitimate routes. The fire that burns in the social, psychological and spiritual dimensions of humanity can ruin the world. Or this fire can transform trouble into community".

Co-leading those large complex groups is a real challenge. There's a good reason to fear them; their potential power is enormous. They can create in the leaders a sense of being dominated, judged or shamed. So, they asked themselves the question: "How to survive as leaders"?

First of all you can't lead those groups alone. You need support, assistance and (a) co-leader(s). Besides that Mindell suggested that inner work is needed to transform co-leaders into what he called "elders who can sit in the fire".

Process oriented inner work focuses on following the flow of one's own experiences by noticing the most obvious body movements and signals, as well as more subtle dreamlike experiences, and the most subtle, almost ineffable feelings and tendencies occurring within and around us. (From his book: Working on yourself alone)

He told one of his experiences feeling bad and unhappy about the outcome of a gathering where racial issues between black and white lesbians arose. He and his wife (who was co-leading) decided to do an inner work exercise. His wife helped him to go into his feelings and processing the gathering again finally brought him back in his personal history of being socially oppressed.

Co-leaders also need relationship skills and understanding of class and ranks. Instead of working in an academic fashion co-leaders in Radically Alive situations must work with the experience of anger and hate. By making rank and class explicit the dynamics are there!

Speaking about class and rank, we've interviewed two of our colleagues who work in the Middle East. One woman is Arab and Christian, the other one is Jewish and from Israel. The work for an organization called Together Beyond Words and they co-lead process groups. Beyond words is a special organization. Together Beyond Words (TBW) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the empowerment of women, the healing of emotional wounds and traumas and the undermining of prejudice as a path towards building a just and peaceful society.

To accomplish this goal they run workshops, trainings and courses for Arab Palestinian and Jewish women using an innovative multi-disciplinary educational model.

So in their co-leadership, they say that how they deal with a conflict is the most important thing for the groups.

'Our co-leadership is related to huge conflicts. That is why the mutual trust is most important. We also started to solve our conflicts in front of the group. We see co-leadership as a journey we take together to bring something to the world.'

Summary

Co-leading has benefits and challenges on different levels: group, process – group level and personal process - and on professional growth.

Co-leaders need relationship skills, must have a professional attitude and are easily able to change from following to leading position.

4. Co-leading is an act of love

Prelude

Douce flamme!
Reste dans mon âme
Comme un doux trésor
Longtemps encore.
Ah! - Comme un trésor
Longtemps encore.

Sweet flame!
Stay in my soul
Like a sweet treasure
For a long time still.
Ah! - Like a treasure
For a long time still.



The introduction to this chapter comes from Charles Gounods opera Romeo and Juliet. The most well-known love-story in music. Why? Because choosing a co-leader has all to do with attraction and love.

All the people we interviewed for this project stated that co-leadership arises from attraction, love or friendship. Of course Eros must be involved, because through the connection of co-leading something new, a new synthesis is born that has the energy of both leaders, the ideas, the skills and the love.

Meis has a noteworthy story about one of the dearest co-leaders she has been working with. She and her co-leader went through the core-energetics training three years avoiding each other. There was no attraction, a lot of dislike and no impulse at all to connect. Of course when you are embarking upon training like this, there is no way of staying in the avoidance. So there were a few encounters on which they got to know each other better. Then as a whim of fate Anna invited them in the Transformation Training where Meis was the assistant and she the teacher.

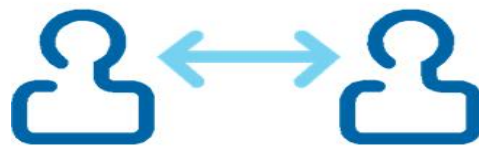
From that co-operation grew a strong and very loveable friendship.

So the loving and liking doesn't have to be there in the first place. But after working through what Meis and her co-leader worked through, the love that was behind it all is a very dear treasure in life and work.

So how do you know and from what kind of motivation you want to co-lead?

First you really have to feel something like an attraction for the one you choose to be your co-leader, whether he or she is of the same sex, much older or younger, of different race or background: bottom-line is a (strong) attraction. Like there is in any love story. One of the interviewed colleagues told us that throughout his long term cooperation in leading groups with female co-leaders, he somehow struggled with the fact that he over the years became more intimate with his co-leaders about how he felt and the things going on in his life, than with his own wife.

Another one of our interviewed colleagues even went a step beyond that and felt a good co-leader as someone with whom she could also be in an intimate relationship. You don't have to go there necessarily, but a lot of the co-leading experiences we have noted, grew to a deep and intimate level. It would be interesting to do research on how transference works between co-leaders, because they both bring their history to the work.



Dating

You can lead groups/couple sessions on your own; no doubt about it. Our project is nevertheless a pledge for co-leadership seen from our history and motivations. There might be all kinds of reasons why you want or won't work together. One of the most experienced therapists we asked told us very honestly that he preferred to work alone except for working with his wife. His motivation was that any kind of co-leadership other than with his wife would bring him too much in his own control patterns.

Somebody else said that co-leading helped her to stay out of her pitfall of being proud and arrogant. Co-leading made her humble in a very rewarding way.

So it doesn't matter what your motivation is, when it comes from awareness, it is okay.

Practical level

We met some co-leading situations where the co-leaders didn't have a choice, but were set together for doing process group. So the motivation was very practical and it brought a rich experience in working together with a lot of different people. Also working together on a practical basis was named in the interviews, but that mostly turned out to be experienced-novice or leader-assistant situations.

Just finding someone of opposite gender can have a practical motivation for leading couple sessions or mixed-gender groups. No need to say that the underlying choice should come from a different level.

In the next chapter: 'The C-factor' it will become clearer why.

Process Level

Why not choose someone you in the first place disliked? If the feelings of avoidance come from a history, the co-leading might become very rewarding as was the case with Meis in the working together with a co-student that didn't like her to begin with.

Co-leading brings on personal process; there is no way around it.

So you can also choose mainly because you trust someone deeply. Deep enough to show up in your vulnerability. That is also why partners in life who work together get great benefits for their own relationship.

Spiritual level

For us being a core-energetic therapist, the most desired level of co-leading is the exact collaboration where core-energetics originates from, which is the co-leading of Eva and John Pierrakos. They brought Pathwork and Core-energetics together, they were man and wife and they worked together. This is the kind of co-leading at least we would really opt for.

The choosing process is maybe the most underestimated part of the working together.

Do you choose the other?

Did you get chosen?

Or did you choose for each other?

Centre of this is that you can have awareness of what kind of choice you make for what kind of person in what kind of working situation.

By knowing the benefits and the challenges, by knowing what you long for. Before choosing you can bring yourself some awareness that might make your choices clearer.

One quote from the questionnaire blew us away: *"Choosing my co-leader is an act of love. Only when I feel our willingness to open up our hearts to each other we are able to serve our groups and clients. I strive for intimacy and long lasting commitment."*

Questions to answer on your way choosing a co-leader

Why do you want to choose to work with this particular co-leader?

Do you want to work with different co-leaders? If so, why?

Can you imagine choosing your partner as a co-leader? If so, why?

Why did you leave the co leader you've worked with? (If that's the case)

How do you see yourself functioning in the group/workshop/training?

How do you see your partner functioning in the group/workshop/training?

What group leader strengths do you think you/your co-leader have?

What group leader weaknesses do you think you/your co-leader have?

What are your needs and expectations?

The perfect match



Co-leadership is about relationship. From the EMM work of Brian and Marcia Gleason we would like to quote the next lines.

'In a committed relationship, partners tend to evoke strong reactions in the other. We refer to them as 'triggers'. When a couple has been in relationship beyond 'Eros' stage [

the stage of attraction] certain traits in one's partner begin to provoke negative internal reactions. Both partners will then typically respond by employing their own particular control patterns. So, for example, one partner may have a strong response to the others messiness. She may turn this into a broad judgment that her partner is careless and selfish. This may remind her of a parent who failed to take care of her physically when she was a little girl. Instead of feeling how much this hurt her as a child, she falls into a control pattern of nagging her spouse to get him to change his messy ways.'

As co-leaders wanting a committed relationship you need to foster consciousness by addressing your own underlying issues. Like:

How many conflicts have you failed to resolve in your personal life?

Why are they unresolved?

Have you accepted responsibility?

Have you considered the influence of rank and power, and political issues as gender, education, race, age and economic class?

Have you thought about differences in power due to the sense of oppression?

How many problems have you solved in your immediate family?

You also can build on your awareness of your control patterns.

Are they active or passive patterns?

Which behavior of your co-leader triggers strong emotions? What is your impulse upon this behavior?

Can you distinguish the reasons for control from your history?

What kind of vulnerable feelings do you defend most in a co-leading relationship?

MEIS

'In working with co-leaders I always like to attune before a session. It grounds me, it makes me present and most of all it brings me into contact with my co-leader. I have different styles, which differ because the co-leader is a different person. With a co-leader I do couple sessions with we always start with a little talk about ourselves and we are in life. I really like this, it makes it more real, it makes me feel my friendship again with him. With Cees I always like to have some physical contact. Holding hands, conscious eye contact or just horsing around when it gets too serious. With a female co-leader we had the ritual of eating together before doing groups sessions. It was nice and homely and it connected us deeply.

Attunement before starting to work is important. I can't see how you could work without attuning first and maybe also do or get something you need before you can be present.'

CEES

'I like to be in the working room before the session together with my co-leader. Just to check in where we are right in the moment, meditating a while. The eye contact is important for me: seen and being seen.... Starting the group it always feel good to be on the right side of my co-leader; closing my eyes, holding hands and set my intention to support and to stay connected. It often grounds and calms me. It provides trust and safety for myself.'

Attunement seems to be in general not only important but also necessary. From the attunement you build the contact that will last you throughout the session. You can add an intention to your attunement for how you want to feel or how you want to be together. That intention can work for you in the collaboration as well as for the journey the group will take. The power of intentional attunement can really be guidance for the cooperation.



Contact

Of the contact throughout the session most of the interviewed colleagues said this to be the most important instrument in co-leading. Eye contact, physical contact, small dialogue, non-verbal contact like bringing in equipment or making movements. A married couple we interviewed that has been working together for a long time even worked out hand signals that only they could understand.

We noticed that it seems to be sort of taboo or not preferred to have long talks in front of the group about how to deal with a particular situation. Except for the two women working together in Israel where dealing with conflict is the main purpose of their groups and workshops.

When you feel yourself or your co-leader to be out of contact with you, you can be sure something is going on. You need to get back to the contact.

Sharing the stage

Competition is on the lookout to show up in every working relationship. There is nothing wrong with that. Competition can go two ways. You can experience it on a lower self-level where it can block your openness towards your co-leader or you can take it to the pleasure of bringing out the best in yourself and your co-leader. Sharing the stage also means that you can easily go from leading to following and vice versa.

Checklist to observe yourself and your co-leader throughout the process

How was your connection throughout the work? (Eyes; touching; staying behind, besides, frontal; checking in with one another)

Was there an equal distribution of leading and allowing?

How did you handle possible disagreements between the both of you in the group? (Verbal - non-verbal)

Did you try to compete with each other and, if so, how do you recognize and deal with this? If so, how does it manifest?

Did you notice group problems like:

- monopolizing
- scapegoating
- silence
- new members
- transferences
- absences
- manipulation

How did you and your co-leader deal with that?

Afterplay

Yalom, and also Brian & Marcia Gleason, recommend at least 15 minutes after session to evaluate the session and the collaboration. Anna Timmermans says from a long experience that evaluation shouldn't be a protocol, but more like what the situation asks for.

Important evaluative questions to ask are:

Was there transference and countertransference? How did your own personal issues relate to power and control affects your ability to co-lead a group?

Were the observations of clients right about leader and co-leader?

Questions to discuss

Did you feel supported by each other?

Did you feel appreciation to each other?

Did you feel or experience

- Disagreements
- Competition
- Take overs?

What skills do you feel the both of you need to continue to develop in order to be (more) effective?

Supervision



Supervision in general is meant to learn from your own experiences in practicing as a therapist. Supervision in co-leading is also a great way to learn from each other's experiences. It doubles up the gain. In a way the co-leading offers also personal learning on relationship that you can take to other relationships in your life. What are your main issues, learning points, pitfalls?

Supervision helps to open up issues in competition, patterns and transference, maybe blind spots that are hard or too vulnerable to deal with between the both of you. Because co-leading has a commitment and a love connection, it is almost impossible without supervision.

Meis had an experience where a co-leading cooperation ended during a supervision session. The reason it ended was because she and her co-leader sat too long on issues before taking it to supervision.

Cees does not have that much experience with supervision. To be honest: he feels resistance coming from the feeling that he has to justify. It's part of his old image and anger to prove that he has the right to exist, to be good enough. It's time to demolish this last fortification!

Summary

So in the overall we can say that a successful co-leading collaboration is based on love and trust which also makes it a vulnerable choice. It also implies two leaders with the qualities that are needed for a working cooperation. The co-leading relationship is more important than the relationship between the group and the co-leaders. That's why you need evaluation and supervision.

5. The C-factor of co-leadership

CareCoreClarityClearChaosChallengeChoiceCircleCooperateColleagueConfidenceCommitmentCoequalControlCollaborationConnectionCompetitionCollapseCohesionCombinationCommunicationCompassionCompetentComplexityCompromiseComradeContainment

In our research and interviews we met with many of those c's and it feels we have to deal with them in our co-leadership. "Coincidence" or not?

In order to focus on what is important to us we have selected the 4 Big C's. Brian & Marcia Gleason already offered us those C's as a checklist to evaluate mentor interactions during couple sessions. They became our all time favorites, because they were very helpful in our personal evaluations, whether it was for our couple sessions or other cooperation's. They also were very helpful in finding the key factors to co-leadership.

We distinguish two pairs of C's:

Connection and collaboration

They arise from the intention to be together and to work together. Connection is working on the heart and soul level with your co-leader; it's the intention itself. Collaboration is working in a more rooted state; it's manifesting the intention. Without connection no collaboration. Both have an enforcing and enhancing quality.

Control and competition

They arise from a behavior, mostly based on false images of being the (co-)leader. Statements like:

"I can't give up control"
"I want to control"
"I'm better than he/she"
"I must be better"

If not:

"I'm worthless"

"I'm not good enough"

"Chaos is happening and I will be destroyed"

Both are big triggers in the working together.

They often cause anger and sadness and finally end in separations in the working couple.

They can be destructive.

Connection

Having a connection feels like an endless source of pleasure and happiness; losing connection feels like a deep pain that mostly causes a tremendous fear, terror and insecurity. For us connection is related to the attachment we felt with our parents. It was hardly there when we were young. When there is no or hardly any connection during sessions I tend to withdraw, making myself feel worthless (Cees) or work hard and making myself bigger (Meis). As a common result we tend to go to our old patterns of doing it all-alone.

According to the colleagues we've interviewed connection is essential in the working together. It's the basics. Support, confrontation, getting attuned, respect and encouragement will ground connection. Disconnection often begins with distrust, not allowing yourself to feel worthless or weak.

One of the interviewed stated: "Co-leadership is a kind of intimate relation; there must be a willingness to open yourself for the other. When I look to the different partners I co-lead with I feel my love, my heart and the longing for an intimate relation."

Clients and groups are constantly aware of "the vibes" between the co-leaders. Our view is that transference is correlated to those vibes. Sometimes in a positive way: "I wish I had you as my parents", sometimes negative: "I hate the way you're acting with each other". Absence of vibes can cause countertransference between the co-leaders.

Key factors to co-leadership

Attune by holding hands, by setting intentions, by mentioning your feelings

Eye contact during session

Changing positions during sessions: close stance, stay beside each other; opposite stance.

Energetic or verbal checking in with one another

Noticing body language of the co-leader

Touch hands, arms, holding shoulders

Collaboration

"Collaboration is working with each other to do a task. It's a recursive process where two or more people work together to realize shared goals" .

Task and goals are the keywords and the definition of collaboration sounds like a very technical one. It is, when you skip the connection.

There can be a lot of juiciness and joy in the collaboration.

In our view it's about converting complementary skills, good role playing, sharing space and letting the other shine. We experienced that many times in the working together and with our different partners.

Our interviewed colleagues confirmed more or less our experiences. They emphasize that you have to know each other's strengths and weaknesses (and accept them).

Leadership, creativity, expertise, wisdom, humor, perseverance, fantasy are the qualities mentioned for a good collaboration.

Key factors to co-leadership

Role-playing.

Male-male; male-female; the good one – the bad one; acting-observing

Space

This concerns an equal distribution of time, place and energy

Appreciation

Give each other the appreciation.

Don't make it only for yourself.

Let the other shine!

Control

Control issues in co-leading can be characterized by the need of one of the leaders to micromanage and orchestrate the actions and behavior of the other. Control is most often a reaction to fear. In general people who struggle with the need to be in control often fear being at the mercy of others. Control issues can develop from traumatic events that created a feeling of helplessness and chaos. When we relate our to history the control issues in our present co-leading we found out that they mostly are a result of being neglected. When the issues came up it appeared as anger (Meis) and hostility (Cees), or in the use of restricting emotional strategies (Meis & Cees).

Discussing those issues we found out that our control issues may be enhanced by the possibility of losing our self-esteem, failing, losing the other and being blamed.

Interviewed colleagues confirm our experiences being afraid of loosing the other or being neglected or overruled. It results in giving up the own space and an unequal distribution in leading and following. The controller takes over, the controlled one follows and disappears. If that happens the combination of fear and anger arises.

Key factors to co-leadership

Distribution of leading and following

Equal or unequal (depends sometime of roleplaying)

Involvement

Be present and show up

Intervening

The art of taking risks only can evolve by the support of the co-leader

Discuss control issues

Helping each other to understand the emotional base.

Addressing the issues who are related to fear



Competition

The tendency to compete is always there. When it is in service for the clients or the group it's okay. When it is meant to overrule the other leader, it's killing. Competition as we see it is a learning process with the intention to bring the best in you during the session. We've had some interesting experiences in the period we've worked together. Like experiencing our:
Survival patterns: Cees (freeze) & Meis (fight)
Disagreements: Cees (hidden) & Meis (openly)
Interventions: Cees & Meis (directly and mostly out of contact)

Experiences of the interviewed people worked out the same. Competition seems to be there and it is difficult to let it benefit the cooperation. Only one of the interviewed stated: "It's fully okay to be in competition. It keeps you sharp and it benefits the group".

The hardest one to deal with seems to be the disagreement. One interviewed stated: "It takes a lot to be able to disagree and to let the group benefit. For role modeling it can be in service of the group if they see how a disagreement can be dealt with in a positive way."

Key factors to co-leadership

Fight/flight/freeze

Observe your personal survival strategy during sessions.

Discuss it with your partner after the session

Learn/Trial and error

Disagree openly can be good role modeling

The group often appreciates the way disagreements are handled



Brian Gleason handed us a very inspirational insight. He stated that the most dynamic moment in co-leading is the point where one of the leaders steps in to do an intervention. Right in this moment transference, all kinds of triggers and qualities are touched. So it seems the leading thread in evaluating you, the work or the co-leading at those moments.

Summary

Co-leading means you also will come into contact with your patterns of control and competition that are from the ego or lower self. Connection and collaboration are the intentional basis and from the higher self.

6. Statements



Co-leading asks for an intimate relationship that starts out of love and attraction



Co-leading is an opportunity for healing your wounds especially those coming from attachment histories



A successful collaboration in co-leading is based on trust, love and connection and sharing and processing after co-leading work is a necessary part of it



Any group will reflect the dynamics in the co-leading relationship, especially those aspects that are still not out in the open. The quality of the relationship between co-leaders is number one



The most dynamic point in co-leading is the point where one of the co-leaders steps in to do an intervention and it requires the ability to lead and to surrender in both leaders to be able to share the field

7. **Appendix I**

We send out this questionnaire to several of our colleagues to help us doing this study. The answers are integrated anonymous in the study. We are very grateful they helped us out. Also of many of the one who filled out the survey, we learned that talking, thinking and discussing the questions the got inspired, gathered more awareness on how they were co-leading or started talks with their co-leaders.

Also the interviews sometimes turned out sometimes as intervision talks and brought the ones who were interviewed the opportunity to say things the had never told their co-leaders before.

For us this was most rewarding. We loved them for it.

Questionnaire co-leading

Preliminary

1. Why did you choose to work with this co-leader?
2. Are you working with different co-leaders? If so, why?
3. Can you imagine choosing your partner as a co-leader? If so, why?
4. Why did you leave the co leader you've worked with? (If that's the case)
5. How do you see yourself functioning in the group?
6. How do you see your partner functioning in the group?
7. What group leader strengths do you think you/your co-leader have?
8. What group leader weaknesses do you think you/your co-leader have?

Throughout the group process

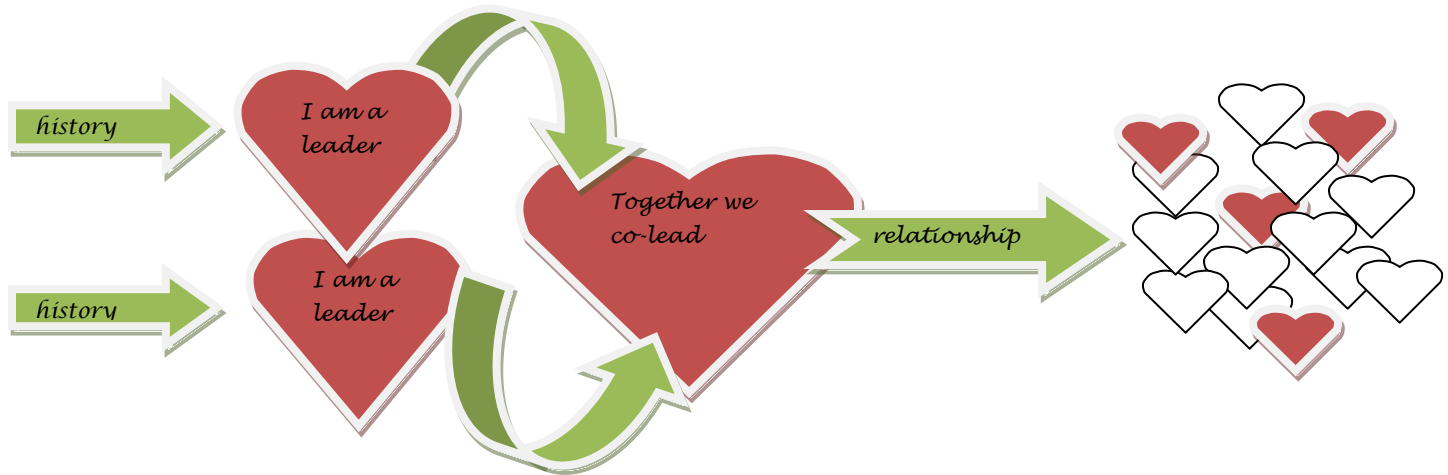
1. How is your connection throughout the work? (Eyes; touching; staying behind, besides, frontal; checking in with one another)
2. Is there an equal distribution of leading and allowing?
3. How do you handle possible disagreements between the both of you in the group? (Verbal - non-verbal)
4. Do you think you try to compete with each other and, if so, how do you recognize and deal with this? If so, how does it manifest?
5. How do you deal with group problems like monopolizing, scapegoating, silence, new members, transferences, absences and manipulation?

Reflections

1. Do you feel supported by your co-leader?
2. How do you feel when you're co-leader
 - Disagree?
 - Don't support?
 - Compete?
 - Takes over?
3. How may your own personal issues relate to power and control affects your ability to co-lead a group?
4. What skills do you feel you need to continue to develop in order to be (more) effective?

Appendix II

Model of co-leading



This model summarizes in a very simple way what co-leading motivates and what is most important.

First you make a choice to co-lead and that has implications on several levels. You bring YOU to the co-leading. Not a part of you: all of you which means you bring your history too.

The kind of relationship you can build and can maintain with your co-leader is the biggest 'tool' you bring to the work. As well for yourself as for your co-leader and the people you are leading together. The process that is involved within the process of co-leading is about connection and contact and about competition and control. In the model you see that you share the same space and the way you share it is in how you build relationship, also from your history.

The quality and characteristics of that relationship in any stage or process of collaboration, will reflect in the people (groups, couples) you are working with and they will mirror and react to anything that is under the surface within the co-leading relationship.

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And of course Liz and Barry Carl who helped us to overcome our bizar English language.

10. About the authors

MEIS THEWISSEN has her practice as a Core Energetics psychotherapist. She was trained at the NICE Institute. She works with individual clients, couples (EMM) and groups. Meis is also a career coach and trainer and leads the Van Ede Academie. She is a journalist and writer. In working with people she welcomes and supports life energy in her clients. Her mission is to make a difference in the transformation processes of her clients, which lead to further growth and development. Meis teaches in the Transformation Training and has the ambition to become a Teacher.

CEES VAN LOON is a core practitioner since 2010. He graduated at the New York Institute of Core Energetics. He came from a career in sports; as a player, trainer/coach, board member of non-profit sports organizations, director/manager and consultant.

(At least in his mind) he was supposed to know everything and find the solutions for winning, life lasting (and thus boring) problems and to lead organizations to their best performance. Becoming a core practitioner his challenge is to enter the world of not knowing, to be with clients/groups without any need to perform.