

Returning to Spirit



Becoming a Trainer

Fall 2017

Introduction

So you want to become a Returning to Spirit Trainer? This document is your guide to the process we have put in place for Trainers-in-Training. Our training program is always in development, based on the feedback of Trainers and Trainees. This document is a living document and nothing within these pages is cast in stone.

You likely have many questions, and if you read this document, we hope you will find the answer to most of those. Becoming an Returning to Spirit (RTS) Trainer is a never-ending process. Even trainers who have been certified for over a decade are still in development with their ability to deliver the work.

Some trainers have been certified within a year of entering training. Some have taken a decade to become certified. Our training process is a very individual process and it depends entirely on YOU and what you bring to the process.

Our training process is just that... it is a process, not a program. Although we have identified several different stages or aspects of the training process, how long these take depends on the individual. There is no guarantee of certification. There is only a guarantee that the training process will transform every area of your life. You will discover things about yourself that you never knew. You will strike out in new directions, on paths that you never could have imagined. You will confront your barriers, over and over again. No one will force you to move through those barriers and your future as a trainer depends on you moving through those barriers.

Our training process is exciting and terrifying. It is exceedingly difficult and yet very simple. It will demand that you face your personal issues, fears, challenges and barriers. Many have begun the process but few have completed the process. Are you ready?

Background

Returning to Spirit began as a project between an Indigenous man and a white Religious Sister who wanted to heal the wounds between Indian Residential School survivors and the Church. After designing the process, they gathered together a group of elders, survivors, priests, sisters and bishops. The first workshop did not go well. There was too much hurt on both sides for either side to listen to the other. The process was modified and both sides completed the initial 5-day workshop separately. After they had identified their own ways of disempowerment and discovered that there was another way... the two groups were brought together for the Reconciliation workshop. This format continues to this day. Both groups do their work separately in preparation for the Reconciliation workshop.

Requirements

Becoming a trainer has more to do with attitude than with skill. While some level of skill in conversation is definitely an asset, it is attitude that determines how quickly and how far a trainer progresses. One can

have all sorts of education or skill in facilitation, counselling and group dynamics but... if the attitude is not present, the skills don't mean anything.

As a trainer we are all in development, always and everywhere. Every experience in our lives is an opportunity for us to practice the work, to take our own development deeper. The moment we think we have it all, that we have the answers, that we have arrived and (hooray) we are now certified trainers – that is the moment that we start sliding backwards. We are either in development or we are not.

Being in development can be a very painful and soul-searching process. We are always uncovering aspects of ourselves that disempower us and keep us stuck. This can be extremely uncomfortable as we discover that we are not who we thought we were. It is a life-long journey.

Responsibility

We do not hold responsibility as burden, fault or praise. We see Responsibility as a way of being to be exercised in the face of every event that has shown up, is showing up and will show up in our lives. Responsibility basically means that, at the end of the day, I am left to handle what is in the space of my life. I cannot wait for external circumstances or other people to change. Transformation happens when I live in responsibility. Blaming others for how I feel keeps me stuck in disempowerment. We have an ability to respond to events and circumstances that no one can take away from us.

Integrity

When we honour our word, honour our choices and take responsibility for what is in the space of our life, we stand in a place of integrity. We know when we are out of integrity for we slip into excuses and blaming. We are late for an appointment – we blame the traffic for “making” us late, we blame the facilitators for “making” us to be on time. We are not standing in a place of integrity in acknowledging that we agreed to be on time. Standing in integrity means that we acknowledge and take responsibility for the times when we do not quite measure up. We do not make promises that we know we cannot keep.

Choice

The most powerful thing we can do in life is to choose. And to remember that there is always a choice. To not choose is to choose. We may not like the choices in front of us, but there is always a choice and usually more choices than we care to acknowledge. We may not like the situation we find ourselves in (e.g. stuck in traffic), but we can choose our response to that external situation and not let it derail us.

Participation

We ask each of our participants to “jump into the soup”. That means engaging with the process fully and completely. It means playing the game instead of being a spectator or a coach or a counsellor or a bench-warmer. We are out there – making mistakes, putting ourselves on the line, exposing our vulnerability, and giving it our best shot. We don't wait and see if we like the way things are going or if it is safe for us to open up and share. We just dive right in and start contributing whatever we have to contribute.

Intentionality

“It Shall Be...”. No matter what barriers show up, if one has Intentionality, then It Shall Be. It is more than having a goal or a direction or a commitment or a willingness. Intentionality is a way of being that generates and creates the outcome desired.

Openness & Curiosity

As a trainer, one needs to be open and curious. You do not have the right answer. You do not generate insights in others. You are not a font of wisdom and experience. You cannot get people unstuck. The participants are the only ones who can do that.

Of all the qualities trainers can bring to a room, openness and curiosity are at the heart of our work. Can we stand in front of a group of people and be open and curious, without judgement, about how we, as human beings, have learned so many diverse ways to survive, cope and fix our lives. Curiosity is not only an attitude; it is a way of being. The opposite of openness and curiosity is judgement or all-knowing. Thinking that you know what the participants are going to say. Thinking that you have the answer.

Your role as a trainer is to be open and curious, to create a space in which you can engage the participants in such a way that they tell you what their answer is, what their wisdom is, what their experience is. If they can articulate that, they will have generated an insight for themselves.

At the same time, you need to bring openness and curiosity about yourself, without judgement or blaming. It is all just a matter of looking and seeing... “I didn’t know I did that”! If there is no openness or curiosity... there is no self-discovery.

Willingness

Being a trainer requires one to be willing to tell the truth about what is going on right now, for you. Trying to hide your upset or your breakdown is a barrier to self-discovery. Be willing to acknowledge what is there. It is normal human behaviour to want to hide our weaknesses and vulnerability – but that does not support us in discovering a different way. As trainers we need to be willing to not only offer feedback to others, but to accept it as a gift.

Skill

Leading the RTS workshops requires skill in many different areas: speaking, listening, conversation, facilitation, clarity, succinctness, curiosity, non-judgement, compassion, creativity, acceptance, calmness, courage. These are all skills that can be developed

Completion

Completions lies at the heart of our workshops. We all carry incompletions around with us, big and small, new and old. Incompletions take up space in our lives – whether they are unresolved issues in our relationships, in our workplace or physical incompletions. A project that we started but never finished that hounds us every morning. The letter that we didn’t send. The complaint we never spoke when the mechanic didn’t top up windshield washer fluid. The dirty dishes that our kids leave around the house. The work that we thought our co-worker would do... but didn’t. The conversations that we shy away from

having. The friendships that drain our energy but that we keep pouring energy into. The argument with our partner. The times we break our word. These all take up space in our lives.

Before we step into the workshop room, trainers are required to clear their space, to do the completions that we also request of the participants. We have learned that whatever is in our space as trainers is what we bring into the room. If we are incomplete when we step into the room, it will show up in the space – participants will resist the process, trainers will struggle to hold the space in the room. The state of the participants and their engagement or resistance to the process is a direct reflection of the state of the trainers. Participants can tell intuitively when trainers are not living the work, not being authentic.

Stages of Becoming a Trainer

The stages below are arranged in a certain order but this is not necessarily the order in which they occur. Individual trainer candidates may move more quickly in one area than in another. Workshop Practicums may take place before delivering the seminar series. The order below is the ideal order but we are willing to work with individuals on a case by case basis. Remember that the biggest training ground is Life... completions, conversations, taking responsibility, practicing curiosity, etc.

Take the Foundational Workshop (4 or 5 day)

Everyone who is interested in being a trainer needs to take the Foundational Workshop. At the end of the workshop, you can speak to one of the trainers about the process for beginning the training process. Or you can reach out to us weeks or months afterwards.

Letter of Intent

Consider this a letter of application. You are interested in becoming a trainer with Returning to Spirit – great! We want to know how the work has transformed your life. What is it that you think you would bring as a trainer? What is calling you to become a trainer? What inspires you about the work of Returning to Spirit? Have you considered your own personal circumstances? Do you have commitments that would get in the way of devoting the time to your training process – family, career, community? This is an opportunity for you to speak your truth and for us to get to know you better.

Develop a Portfolio

There are many stages and steps in becoming a trainer. As the trainer candidate, it is your Responsibility to keep a log of the steps you have taken to complete the training process. Consider this your portfolio in which you track your progress. When and where did you take the workshop? Who was the training team? Keep a copy of your Letter of Intent. Keep notes of your conversations with the Trainer Keeper (see below). Keep a log of your volunteer activities. Did you help host or organize a workshop? What other training have you taken in other areas of your life? The portfolio is a place to demonstrate your commitment to the training and development process, not just with RTS but in all areas of your life. It is an Opportunity for you... and it is your Responsibility.

Trainer Team Input

Your Letter of Intention and expression of interest will be shared with the Training team that delivered your Foundational Workshop. They had an experience of you in the workshop and their assessment of you as a potential trainer will be sought.

Conversation with the Trainer Keeper

This can be an ongoing process and may occur at many points. After receiving your Letter of Intent, the Trainer Keeper may phone you to have a conversation. Similarly, after getting input from the Training Team, there will be other conversations. Our work is based in conversation, particularly in telling the truth, which is a rarity in many conversations. What you hear may send you into reaction or trigger you in other ways – remember this is all part of the training process. Are you honest in what is showing up for you? Can you shift out of your reaction quickly and acknowledge it? Be curious about your reaction... it is not good or bad... it just is what it is. “Huh... I didn’t know I did that... go figure!”

Volunteer

Depending on where you live, there may be some opportunities to volunteer with Returning to Spirit. Perhaps you could support the trainers in a workshop by volunteering as a Room Manager. If you live in Winnipeg, we have several opportunities to volunteer in our office. Perhaps you could receive coaching on how to have conversations in your area to generate RTS events. Some of the trainers who have developed the most rapidly did so because they moved quickly to organize workshops in their community - workshops where they could observe trainers in action and take on small pieces. These trainers took Responsibility for their training rather than waiting for RTS to organize a workshop in their community.

Attend Reconciliation Workshop

Attending the Reconciliation Workshop, when it is offered in your area, is a requirement for all trainer candidates.

Attend Seminar Series

The Seminar Series is 11 sessions that deepen the work of the Foundational Workshop and introduce leadership concepts to participants. Seminar participants are asked to choose a project that they would like to bring to fruition in their life or their community and take steps to move it forward to completion.

Trainer Team Input

Remember, attitude is everything. The trainers who delivered the Foundational & Reconciliation workshops, as well as the Seminar Series will be asked to evaluate a trainer candidate. Does the candidate participate wholeheartedly? Do they contribute to the room? How quickly do they shift out of breakdown? Do they offer thoughtful feedback to the certified trainers? It is your responsibility to engage in a conversation with the Trainer Keeper and seek the results of that evaluation. Keep a copy for your portfolio.

Mentorship

Experience has shown that trainer candidates benefit when they are assigned a mentor, one of the certified trainers. Again, it is your responsibility to engage with the mentor – to seek out their counsel, their coaching and their advice. Keep notes on your conversations and add them to your portfolio.

Lead the Seminar Series

The Seminar Series was designed to be a training ground for new trainers. Over the 11 sessions, trainer candidates are introduced to the process of delivering the work. They are teamed with certified trainers and engage in everything that is involved in delivering the workshops – preparation, coaching, delivery, debriefing, evaluation. This is an opportunity for trainer candidates to deepen their awareness of the work and of their own disempowering behaviours. We do not see what we do not see. This is an opportunity to begin to see things more deeply, with the support and help of the certified trainers.

Foundational Workshop Practicums

As a trainer-in-training, you are encouraged to attend as many Foundational Workshops as possible. This is an opportunity to learn Room Management. It is an opportunity to take notes on how different certified trainers deliver the pieces. While we have a Workshop Manual, the finer details, nuances and points of the work are not contained within the manual. The Workshop Manual is simply a guide, a framework, and the trainer needs to add their own unique style to the pieces. Watching different certified trainers deliver the pieces is the best way to get a sense for the key components of each piece and how their delivery can vary in style.

This is an opportunity to begin to deliver some of the smaller pieces, to be in front of the room with participants who are new to the work (unlike the Seminar Series participants who have attended the workshop). At the end of each workshop, it is strongly recommended that you complete a self-evaluation of your workshop experience. It is also strongly recommended that you take responsibility and ask each of the certified Trainers who delivered with you to complete their own evaluation of you. These can be added to your portfolio and shared with the Trainer Keeper and your mentor.

Trainer Development Programs

RTS may offer a Trainer Development Program during your training period. This is an opportunity for all of the trainers and trainer-candidates to come together and to deepen their understanding of the work.

Evaluation of the Trainers & Certification

We have identified several stages in the development of a trainer. If you feel that you have moved on to the next level, it is your responsibility to make your case. Your portfolio will be of key importance in demonstrating your progress as a trainer.

Timeline

There is no external timeline for the process of becoming a trainer. It takes as long as it takes. It can take a year. It can take a decade. It is driven by the candidate, not by RTS.

Resources & Tools

Mentors, Coaching and Feedback

Mentorship is for the coaching, encouragement and support of new and developing trainers. It creates connections within the RTS community and supports the retention of trainers. A mentor will “have your back” inside or outside of the training room.

Mentors bring forth coaching and call forth responsibility from an encouraging way of being. Ideally, the mentor will be on all coaching calls with developing trainers. At the minimum, the mentor and their developing trainer will have set aside regular times to talk, debrief, coach over the phone or Skype (monthly or biweekly).

Mentors should be rotated every 4 months to avoid the mentor and trainee falling into agreement and becoming entrenched in the same Story. The coaching relationship is two-way – the developing trainer has the opportunity to provide feedback to the mentor. The mentor must be open to the feedback as well. The mentor and developing trainer are to help each other to be great and to play the big game. Conversations are rooted in the tools and language of RTS and both trainee and mentor need to be complete with each other at the end of each conversation.

Skill Development

Facilitation

Standing in front of the room and delivering a workshop does require some skill in facilitation. Holding the space of the room. Being able to give instructions clearly and succinctly. Managing group sharing. In RTS workshops, much of what takes place between trainers and participants is simply a conversation. It is not teaching or telling. It generally centres on presenting a distinction or a concept and then allowing participants to delve into their own experience of whatever is being presented. Debriefing their experience is a place for conversation and curiosity to show up.

Curiosity

When someone makes a statement about how they see things or how their life works or maybe a problem that they're dealing with, where do you go? Do you go into offering solutions? Do you share how something similar worked out for you? Do you contradict them? Do you give them the answer and share your overarching knowledge of the world and how Life works? That is our tendency. We tend to want to answer questions or solve problems or give an easy fix for the problems of others. That is not our role. That does not solve anything for the other person. That does not move anything forward. You really know nothing about what they are going through, even if you went through something similar. They are not you. You are not them.

The best antidote to a “have to answer/fix/judge everything” issue is simply curiosity. The question “Tell me more about that” works very well in drawing people to share more about what is going on for them. The truth is that the other person is the only one who can come up with the solution or answer for what plagues them. Even if they are clearly wrong about how something is working in their life... you pointing it out to them does nothing but generate defensiveness. Asking them “And how does that work for you?”

can support them in taking a closer look. They are the only ones who can become aware of what is working or not working in their lives.

Curiosity did not kill the cat... and becoming curious about others and how they are living their lives will greatly advance your skill as a trainer both inside and outside of the room.

Conversation

The word “conversation” is rooted in Latin and essentially means “turning with”. A conversation is a give and take – it is constructed from speaking and listening. It is really a dance between two individuals which, when performed with finesse can deepen understanding for both individuals – trainer and participant.

We often hold conversation as dangerous. We shy away from what we see as “difficult” conversations. Conversation is more than sharing information, it is an opportunity to be vulnerable - to take the speaking and listening to a deeper level.

Developing skill in conversation can happen anywhere – at home, work, community, on the bus. This is one of the key skills of a trainer.

Listening

In the Reconciliation Workshop, participants discover that communication happens in the listening. We already know this. If we are talking on the phone with someone, we know when they are distracted by their smart phone or by something else. The listening disappears. Studies have shown that we cannot multitask. We might think we do but our mind can only focus on one thing at a time. If you doubt this, try listening to someone in the room while also listening to someone on the phone. Not possible. We try to multitask but we are just shifting our attention from one thing to the other very quickly. And in those shifts we miss key information.

Delivering the RTS workshops requires that trainers listen to what participants are sharing and hear them. It means that we can't be thinking about our response. Or the fact that we have no response. Or that what they are sharing is silly. Or that our co-trainer is looking at us weirdly and what does that mean? Are we doing something wrong? Are we running out of time? Do we need to move on? Our focus needs to be on letting go of those distractions and simply listening to the participant - to really get what they are saying. Participants will intuitively know if we are really interested in what they have to say.

Listening is a skill that can be practiced anywhere.

Coaching

Offering coaching to someone requires us to practice the skill of curiosity and developing the skill of asking piercing questions. We need to learn how to ask questions that take the conversation deeper rather than just looking for information. It is a skill that can be developed.

There is an excellent book by Michael Bungay-Stanier – *The Coaching Habit – Say Less, Ask More and Change the Way You Lead Forever*. All trainers and trainees would do well to read the book, take the Seven Questions and weave them into their daily life.

Receiving Feedback Well

How do you react when someone offers you feedback? Do you get defensive? Critical? Do you go on the attack? There is a skill to receiving feedback well. It is a skill that can be developed. One of the key attributes of receiving feedback well is to come at it with curiosity and ask “What is a nugget of value/truth that I can take away from this”. There is always something in what the other person is saying... no matter how poorly or clumsily they said it. It is our job to look for that nugget of value. A very helpful book that dives into this is “Thanks for the Feedback - The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well” by Stone and Heen. Highly recommended.

Disruption

Disruption is sometimes seen as a “violent” word – turning over someone’s apple cart or something of the sort. In actual fact:

A **disruption** is a service—an interaction with the intention to cause an insight that alters the way you see reality, so as to create new possibilities.

People see things the way they see them. A disruption allows them to see things differently, to become aware that there is something different and that can open the door to transformation.

Reading

There are numerous books from a variety of different disciplines which provide deeper insight into some of the principles articulated throughout the RTS process. Trainers are always encouraged to expand their understanding of the work. This list is always in development and if you uncover an amazing book that deepens your understanding of the work... let us know!

Bungay-Stanier, Michael – Excellent book on how to let go of the answer and begin with the questions
2016—The Coaching Habit – Say Less, Ask More and Change the Way You Lead Forever

Carlson, Richard—Excellent author with a focus on altering one’s thoughts:
2006—You can be Happy No Matter What: Five Principles for Keeping Life in Perspective
1997—Stop Thinking & Start Living: Discover Lifelong Happiness

Dooley, Mike—several books related to altering your conversation in order to alter your life:
2012—Leveraging the Universe: 7 Steps to Engaging Life’s Magic
2011—Manifesting Change: It Couldn’t be Easier
2010—Infinite Possibilities: The Art of Living Your Dreams
2010—Choose them Wisely: Thoughts become Things!

Kane, Ariel & Shya—husband and wife team who have written extensively in the area of personal transformation
2008—Working on Yourself doesn’t Work: The 3 Simple Ideas that will Instantaneously transform your Life

Ford, Debbie—several very good books, that focus on Story and the power of choice
2004—The Right Questions: Ten Essential Questions to Guide you to an Extraordinary Life
2002—The Secret of the Shadow: The Power of Owning Your Whole Story

- Goss, Tracy**—excellent, if slightly dense, book on how business leaders can make the impossible, possible
1995—The Last Word on Power: Executive Re-Invention for Leaders Who Must Make the Impossible Happen
- Heath, Chip & Dan**—organizational consultants who examine why change is so difficult
2011—Switch: How to Change Things when Change is Hard
- Patterson, Kerry, Grenny, Joseph et al**—excellent book on how to have difficult conversations
2002—Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High
- Porche, Germaine & Niederer, Jed**—two organizational communication authors with a focus on coaching
2010—Coach Anyone About Anything: How to Help People Succeed in Business & Life
- Ruiz, Don Miguel**—Tapping into ancient Toltec traditions, Ruiz brings an Aboriginal take to personal transformation:
2015—The Five Levels of Attachment: Toltec Wisdom for the Modern World (written by Don Miguel's son, with his blessing)
2011—The Fifth Agreement: A Practical Guide to Self-Mastery (Toltec Wisdom).
1997—The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom (A Toltec Wisdom Book)
- Stone, Douglas & Heen, Sheila**—consultants who provide some excellent advice on how to receive feedback from a place of empowerment
2014—Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well
- Stone, Douglas, Patton, Bruce et al**—how to have difficult conversations
2010—Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss what Matters Most
- Warrell, Margie**—excellent books on rethinking your life and moving forward with courage
2013—Stop Playing Safe: Rethinking Risk. Unlock the Power of Courage. Achieve Outstanding Success
2009—Find Your Courage: 12 Acts for Becoming Fearless at Work and in Life

Evaluation Tools

Portfolio

Developing a trainer portfolio is a rather new concept in RTS. The idea came out of our experience of trainees who look to other trainers or to the organization to track their development. Tracking your development and your capabilities and qualifications is your responsibility. When the time comes where you want to become certified, it is far more impactful to pull out your portfolio for review by other trainers. "This is me – this is what I have done – this is what my co-trainers have said about me and my development. This is how I have grown in the last x months/years."

Possible portfolio areas could include:

- Background
- Education and its relevance to RTS

- RTS workshops you attended as a participant
- How the RTS workshops made an impact on you and your life
- RTS Seminar Series that you co-lead with other trainers
- RTS workshops you attended as practicums, hosted and/or organized
- Pieces of the workshop that you have delivered
- Books you have read and how they related to the work of RTS
- Professional Development opportunities you have taken – and their relevance to RTS
- Self-evaluation from RTS workshops (see below)
- Peer review evaluations from other RTS trainers – for workshops or seminar series

Self-Evaluation

RTS has developed a self-evaluation form for trainees. It is available upon request.

Peer-Evaluation

RTS has developed a Peer Evaluation form for trainees to share with their co-trainers. It is your responsibility to request fellow trainers to complete the peer evaluation. It is also your responsibility to get the peer evaluations back from the trainers.

FAQ

This section is open for development. If you have a question that hasn't been answered... please let us know and we will seek to answer it and include it here!

Into the Future

Becoming an RTS trainer is not for the faint of heart. It will be one of the most difficult, soul-searching and transformation journeys you will undertake in your life. It will also be the most rewarding.

Some trainees or trainers hit a wall. They get stuck and cannot see the way forward despite coaching and mentoring. Some choose to leave to pursue other activities. That is their responsibility. We do not expect all trainees or trainers to stay with RTS for ever. There are many trainers who no longer deliver RTS workshops but who are transforming the organizations and communities within which they work and live. The work of RTS can spread by many means and delivering the workshop is only one of those.

Contact Us

Returning to Spirit
1039 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB R2W 3R2

Toll Free Phone 1-855-244-3963
Phone 1-204-889-4579
Fax 1-888-224-1286

www.returningtospirit.org
info@returningtospirit.org