Review of Discover Your Inclusive Leadership Potential

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Edited by Linda Hill from feedback provided by the following participants in the Fall 2017 Pilot Course: CM Justice, Emily D., Harriet Greenwood, Katie Sayers, Lindsay Beal, Lynn Smith, Shayma Awedi, Susan Norris, Terri Beaton, and Thomas England.

Everyone’s feedback comments were entered into a spread sheet. The comments were first coded and then sorted into themes and subthemes. The comments were then edited together into paragraphs.

Overview

“I loved this online course and I’m so glad I was giving the opportunity to participate! I could paper a wall with all the useful information about what Inclusive Leadership is and how can we promote and practice inclusion on our daily lives.”

Discover Your Inclusive Leadership Potential is so well presented from start to finish with clear goals, and simple, systematic steps, and excellent content for each module. Each module built on the others beautifully! We congratulate course designer, Linda Hill. This is such an outstanding accomplishment in your life. You began wanting to write a book and had the vision and adaptive leadership to move into offering an online course that addresses the immediate needs of today and has the potential to reach more people and have a greater impact.

Although some of us who are beginners at online learning took awhile to figure out how to move back and forth through the modules we found the course easy to navigate. The online platform felt intuitive and the format was helpful.

“It always felt like such an accomplishment to press the "Activity Completed" button and be able to move on to the next activity.”

Although the course flowed nicely at a pace that felt manageable for participants who mostly have fairly busy lives, some participants found it challenging to keep up. Our three hour per week time-commitment was actually a four hour per week commitment.
“I was starting to have some difficulties keeping up with the modules as my time was limited to evenings. When connecting through the discussion groups, typing always seems to take more time to communicate ideas and respond to others.”

We think it is brilliant that there is now a self-guided, totally self-paced version of this course for different styles of learning or for anyone who finds it difficult to fit in time for interaction each week. However, without the Discussion Forum, mentoring and other interactions, this version will likely be more like reading a book.

Who This Online Course is For

The participants who piloted this course were a diverse group of 20 people who included professionals in education and health, volunteers, students, and concerned community members. Some of us participate in other social movements such as the women’s movement, men’s groups, the disability movement, and environmental movements.

Discover Your Inclusive Leadership Potential is designed as a continuing education course for individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds who already acknowledge the importance of inclusion and diversity education in today’s world. The Inclusive Leadership Co-operative strives to be accessible to everyone who wants to learn how to be inclusive in ways that will better the world we live in. The cost is based on the Inclusive Leadership spirit of generosity with participants paying whatever they can afford: $140, $70, or $35. Full sponsorships are given to participants who face financial barriers.

“I’m a Tunisian student. Thank you so much for sponsoring me. I’m so grateful. If you are able to continue making this course free for people from countries such as mine, it will be great.”

There were many suggestions from the pilot-group that this online course would be an ideal course for high school or university students (in programs such as international studies, counselling, education, health, child and youth care, psychology and social work) or home-schooling students. We wondered if high school students could receive credits toward their career and personal planning courses, social studies and social justice courses or other graduation requirements by taking this course.

“Participation by international students and those engaged with hosting and teaching international students might be helpful, stimulate a lot of thought, and get a much-needed dialogue going at school.”

High School students could take this course individually, or as a group with guidance from an instructor who has already experienced it. Another thought was that sponsor teachers for Student Councils, sponsors of student groups focused on specific diversity issues, and teachers of Social Justice courses could take this course and then integrate bits and pieces of it into their work with their students.
We wondered if university students could participate in this course as a student project for another course, or as a Directed Studies course. Other potential participants include teams of co-workers and volunteers, business owners, non-profit organizations and other individuals and organizations that interact with lots of different people or are looking for a socially connected purpose in life.

Review of the Course Content

The Orientation Module that was available as soon as we enrolled, made it possible to jump in and get started in our own time, even before the course started. The videos, pictures and words were very clear and relaxing to follow.

“I loved the introductions and getting to know the community of Inclusive Leaders participating in this shared journey right away.”

The activities focused on creating our study spaces and setting up our journals equipped us to start the course!

The All Inclusive Base Camp where we gathered the week the course began, provided us with a map, a compass, and quizzes set up for success. This was such a good foundation and introduction to the work that was coming.

Building Bridges was the first destination on our quest. The challenges, benefits and commitment required to do that first Building Bridges step of Networking (or the Art of Showing Up) was a key discovery. The diagram showing the circularity of practicing the Building Bridges steps over and over again was an excellent visual.

“The Building Bridges template is like gold. I learned that the steps I’m following in my daily life are right, and found the structure I was looking for in planning and facilitating my own groups and workshops.”

Connecting With Differences, the next destination, taught us the true meaning of humanity and why we’re born different in this planet. This module seemed to require more thought and input then the previous modules even though the key learning was to relax about differences. We practiced relaxing and expressing gratitude for our own differences, another person’s differences and differences in nature.

“As I changed differences into gifts to embrace and learn from, I realized that it is differences that make our world rich.”
Communicating with Compassion with Raj Gill was such an important highlight because intentional listening to each person’s stories with attention and compassion is so different from regular listening.

“Raj shared that ‘When the emotion is strong, the pause is long,’ and also, ‘I will not take care of you. I will care about you.’ What great mantras! Now to just remember these at the critical moments!!" 

Getting past scripted conversations to listen to each person’s essence with an open heart, takes energy and patience, empathy and most of all love. We learned how setting the intention to listen and indicating a genuine interest in another person’s well-being allows that individual to speak. We learned how to ask questions that encourage reflection and disclosure.

“I loved the online workshop on Compassionate Communication with Raj and hope that other founders of Inclusive Leadership can be invited to facilitate online workshops in the future.”

Anti-Discrimination First Aid Training was another highlight. This was such a useful and relevant module.
“Learning that the ABCs of Anti-Discrimination First Aid are much like regular First Aid inspired me to want to learn more.”

We reflected on these helpful tools by watching powerful videos that broke down an incident piece by piece in ways that were really thought provoking. Although some of the videos may be triggering for some people, they were important. How amazing it is to see that it just takes one person to step forward with a calm manner to completely change the tone of an exchange and provide an example for others to follow. Like the other three destinations, this material is rich. Anti-Discrimination First Aid could be a course all by itself.

“I would love to learn to facilitate Anti-Discrimination First Aid workshops.”

**Action Planning**, the final destination was an encouraging and fun festival of choices.

“I liked the freedom to be at different stages with different endeavours.”

We were able to read through the stages of change, and honour the stage that we are each at. It really allowed for a sense of self-reflection about not over-committing.

“I liked that, no matter where a person was at, there was some action they could take.”

“I appreciated the opportunity to do an honest assessment, set one little goal and actually do some planning.”

However, some of us became a bit overwhelmed and lost as it was unclear whether we needed to read all the Action Planning processes or only the process that matched our Stage of Change.

“Realizing and recognizing the stages of change as a continuum made things clearer for me.”

Several of us appreciated the choice of a Self Care Action Plan. The accountability and team work of sharing our Action Plans in a Video Conference or Discussion Forum was motivating.

**Review of the Experiential Participatory Education Processes**

**The interactive participating and connecting** with a diverse group of people every week brought the course to life and was also the biggest challenge because of the time involved. Getting to know participants felt easy and encouraging via the discussion forum and encouragement to meet via email and video conferences. Sharing with and connecting with participants of different ages and from different places created bonds that were helpful, stimulating and inclusive. Those who contributed regularly became dear and real friends and experienced community engagement. However, the Discussion Forum that came with the course platform was very limited. Discussions were unnecessarily difficult until we changed different software.
“I also felt a bit removed and isolated because it was unclear how many people were participating. Glad that we changed to a less awkward discussion forum.”

Although we had designated mentors to respond to comments, the informal process of meeting for mutual mentoring was less supported and was somewhat difficult. Networking is at the heart of inclusive community building and is such a challenge.

“Timing just never seemed to work. It felt a bit overwhelming to choose who to connect with and then try and set up a meeting.”

“I liked that that was optional as I wasn’t ready for a study group.”

Those of us who did meet with some people, through email and video conferencing, learned more about others experiences and found it rewarding to make the connections. More structured opportunities for people to connect via video conferencing with the help of a mentor might add even more to the feeling of inclusiveness, especially during the Action Planning modules.

“This would be the “icing on the cake” for me!”

The Experiential Education Activities included handouts and worksheets that could be printed out, journaling and creative experiential learning activities. All these activities worked well for thoughtful, inspiring learning that was not just in the head.

“I liked learning through experience and reflection, knowing that others were participating too.”

“I appreciated the positive way the facilitators responded to our very different learning styles and sometimes hesitations to actually do certain activities.”

There always seemed to be something that one could do to put learning into action and feel empowered rather than defeated. Two questions that were very helpful in this way were: “How can I apply this to my own life?” “How can I apply what I am learning to my interactions with others?”

“However, as I was on my own to do this or not, to contribute or not, with no one checking up on me I sometimes gave up!”

When we were conscientious about writing in our journals (on a laptop, in a book, or even on random pieces of paper), we were able to capture thoughts that surprised us, be creative, integrate the learning on a deeper level, and remember important things.

Outcomes

This course is an introduction to a life-long journey of learning, sharing and honing our Inclusive Leadership skills. We look forward to joining the Inclusive Leadership Facebook Page, the on-line...
Inclusive Leadership Practice Groups, participating in the Hear to Heart Cafe and more opportunities for networking and discussing. We look forward to Inclusive Leadership Co-operative members growing a catalogue of Inclusive Leadership courses for our global village. Each module in this course and some of the activities could be expanded into individual courses.

“I look forward to including some reconnecting with nature / ecological integrity into a new course.”

“Let’s invite Kix Citton to facilitate an online workshop.”

Here are several testimonials about outcomes:

“I discovered how to help include all groups of people in my world by learning to think of all differences as gifts instead of problems. Instead of being angry with a family member or co-worker, I can think about all of the gifts they have to give become grateful and happy. It is much easier so relax about differences if the anger is taken out of the equation.” (Terri Beaton, Volunteer, BC, Canada)

“I discovered that networking and reaching out to others are at the heart of creating inclusion in our communities. I feel warmly embraced by a community of leaders dedicated to creating an inclusive world.” (Susan Norris, Bookkeeper, BC, Canada)

“I reached my goals of having the skills to build stronger connections and stronger communities. This course gave me maturity to resolve situations by ensuring everyone feels listened to and that everyone’s needs are met; including my own.” (Emily, New Mom, Alberta, Canada)

“This is a journey towards creating resilient, sustainable and thriving communities by participating, volunteering, mentoring, and facilitating service in community. I improved my ability to engage in real and challenging conversations by listening with compassion, holding back my immediate reactions and demonstrating open and safe vulnerability. I learned more about removing the societal masks we wear to protect ourselves, to get to the actual person inside. When we get past our own prejudices, bias and judgments, then, we are able to truly know each other and what wants to happen will emerge. “(CM Justice, Vancouver Island, Canada).

“I deepened my Inclusive Leadership skills in a structured and supportive way. Through practice and effort, I cultivated skills for relaxing, connecting with differences and responding with Anti-Discrimination First Aid to move towards more inclusion and unity. As my skills grew and developed, I discovered that the situations I encountered evolved too. For this reason, I can see myself taking this course again. I plan to apply what I have learned in my workplace and social settings; tactfully and skillfully responding and actively sharing my personal power to change lives on a personal and community level.” (Katie Sayers, Teacher and Facilitator, BC, Canada).
"Imagine the world where all people feel they have a role in leadership; leading, learning, and living in a whole new way! I am LOVING this course and am grateful for the helpful tools this course has given me. (Lynn Smith, Farmer, Program Leader, Musician, Cowichan Valley, BC, Canada).

"Thank all of you so much for this great trip, I'm so grateful for your support, your magical words, your seeds which grew into me with self confidence, hope and love! Feeling proud of my certificate!" (Shay ma Awedi, Surgical Nursing Student, Tunisia).