

Trainer Tips:

By Joanne Willis Newton (Tribal STAR trainer since 2013)

Last week marked the four-year anniversary of the date I first worked as a trainer with the Tribal STAR team. What a journey of development this past four years has been! Looking back, it is clear that my personal evolution toward greater mindfulness has mirrored my progression as a trainer.

For example, I have come to understand that the energy I bring into the room as a trainer, and how I manage that energy throughout the day, as well as the group energy in the room, is as important in guaranteeing the success of a training, if not more, than the knowledge I impart to the trainees. The following are some tips in this regard:

- Prepare in advance: Remember the teachings of our Tribal STAR Elder, Margaret Orrantia, that it is important to begin preparing for work as a trainer at least three days prior to the training. By following our best wellness practices, we can help ensure that on training day we are already primed with positive energy.
- Assess your energy level: On the morning of the training, before you arrive at the training site, mindfully check in with yourself. How are you feeling physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually? Make the mental adjustments needed to let go of, or at least set aside, thoughts and feelings that are draining your energy.
- Take an initial reading of the room: When you arrive at the training site, if you have time before the opening circle, observe the energy of the trainees. If you don't have that opportunity, opening circle is a valuable time to get a sense of each trainee's energy or mindset for the day. Use this information to develop a conscious approach on how to use your energy to start the training off on the right foot.
- Use your sources of positive energy: There are inevitably a few people in the room whose positive energy is palpable. Use them to elevate the energy in the room by calling upon them throughout the day to be part of the active discussion. Acknowledge their contribution at the end of the day.
- Combat negative energy: Occasionally, negative energy can hijack the flow in the room. Nip it in the bud before it gets out of hand. Just as positive energy is infectious, so is negative energy. If you're the source – for example, a trainee has made a comment that angers you – take a breath and remove yourself from the mix for a few minutes to regroup. This is where a co-trainer can be invaluable. If the negative energy is coming from a trainee, actively manage the situation rather than hope that it will correct itself. Sometimes just casually moving to stand beside a “trouble-maker” while you're presenting is all that is needed.
- Monitor your energy and that of the trainees throughout the day: It is natural that energy will ebb and flow throughout the day. Monitor these changes and use techniques to boost the energy when it drops, like taking a short unplanned break, asking a provocative question, engaging in a group stretch or breathing exercise, or stirring up some laughter.