

"Let's do a workshop!"

The mantra of hip youth organizations and business trainers throughout the world.

What is a workshop? It's a brief intensive course for a small group that emphasizes interaction and exchange of information. It can involve problem-solving. There may be a leader, someone who 'facilitates' but that person shouldn't behave in the same way as a lecturer or school teacher. A workshop can have a strong experiential component and take place just about anywhere.

There is currently a large amount of mystique attached to the word 'workshop' and I sometimes think that those who do this stuff place unwarranted faith in its efficacy. I detect a style of workshop evangelism that I'm uncomfortable with. Workshops are cool and stuff involving lecturing or teaching is frumpy or passé. No, sorry - I don't agree.

I love the workshop medium but I also recognize that it is lightweight. No huge industrial breakthrough has ever arisen directly from middle management brainstorming over coffee (Monday morning as scheduled). Trust me on this. You can't teach children to read and write *experientially* or while luxuriating in glorious informality.

Yet the workshop is an essential component of EQ's work. Why? Because it allows education to take place and issues to be explored with a *lightness of touch*. We need intimacy and trust and we build relationships during the course of a workshop. We all try to use our *emotional* intelligence.

Interactive education can involve:

- Voicing opinions (without sounding like an overbearing or opinionated adult)
- Formulating arguments
- Negotiating and reaching compromise
- Being assertive and tenacious
- Cooperating as a team member

- Learning not to take yourself too seriously
- Recognising that humour is valuable in promoting understanding, innovation and group solidarity
- Recognising authority based on valid criteria (knowledge, experience and leadership skills) and not just age or job status
- Thinking out-of-the-box and departure from formulae (precisely the abilities that those with limited options - the underprivileged - require)

These things come in handy. They lead to better decisions and that helps *everyone*.

David

PS Workshops and committee meetings are different. Never trust a committee to solve anything.