

Rhythmic by Nature

Terri Segal 21 Kenwood Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M6C-2R8 416-662-6488 www.rhythmicbynature.com

There's So Much More to Drumming!

Teamwork, Building Trust, Respecting Differences, Communication, Leadership, Embracing Change

Teamwork

There are many teams that occur in everyday life, that happen so smoothly they often go unnoticed. We have only to look to nature, and our bodies, to see the results of teamwork; everything is **interconnected**. Music is another unconventional team analogy that can help us to realize the importance of all working relationships.

The fact that all parts of the whole are interconnected makes team dynamics extremely complex. For example, the disruption and devastation to our trees greatly affects all other environmental systems, just as mental and emotional stress affects our physical functioning, and the whole orchestra is influenced when the string section misses one note

Despite the inevitable obstacles that a team faces, the efforts of a healthy team can be extraordinary, certainly beyond the results achievable by one person. **TEAM – Together Everyone Achieves More.**

In a drumming ensemble, there are different parts that make up the whole, just as in an organization there are different departments, teams and roles that are working together towards a common goal.

Building Trust

When entering a room to play drums together for the first time, whether for a company teambuilding event, a 50th birthday party, or a community drum circle, each person is walking into unknown territory. Some may react with resistance, while others may react with excitement and curiosity. Before touching the drums, the facilitator engages the group in “ice-breaking” rhythm-based activities that induce laughter, silliness, **connection**, and immediately sets up a safe environment for creative expression where there is no such thing as a mistake, and where everyone has an equally important role to play. Participants build trust with the facilitator, with each other, and with themselves, as the drumming session moves from ice-breaker activities, to movement warm-ups, and then to drumming. Those who entered the session with resistance now have smiles on their faces and are engaged whole-heartedly in the music-making process.

A Sense of Belonging

Being part of a drum circle creates a sense of belonging as everyone has a valuable part to play. Each instrument plays an integral role to the whole group song, just as each person plays an **integral role** in the team.

Respecting Differences

In a drum circle, in addition to drums, there are also other instruments such as; shakers, claves, and, tambourines. These percussion instruments add spice to the drum circle; they make the music **dynamic**, varied and diverse. No matter whether your instrument is loud, soft, large, or small, your rhythmic expression adds to the group song.



we are all rhythmic by nature

Rhythmic by Nature

Terri Segal 21 Kenwood Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M6C-2R8 416-662-6488 www.rhythmicbynature.com

A mindset of We versus I

Playing music together is a **co-created** process. Although we enter the drum circle as individuals, once we add in our rhythm, we are essentially working together as a team. What we play and how we play will influence the group song.

Communication

Listening is the most valuable communication tool. If you have a team in which only the loud thrive, your team is not accessing everyone's creativity and people will feel excluded. Similarly, if there are several players in a drum circle dominating the circle with their "voices", then the whole group song will be affected.

In verbal conversation, one person speaks at a time, when drumming; all players `speak` at the same time.

Whether we're drumming in a group, having a team meeting at work, or a conversation with a friend, we can listen with more than just our ears. We can and do listen better when we combine all our senses.

Embracing Change

Team members work together towards a common vision to achieve a common goal. A team's vision can be represented by the PULSE of the music. In a drum circle, players are working together to create harmonious music, and this vision or, in musical terms, the downbeat, is what holds the music together. As in the storming stage of team development, sometimes, the group rhythm can undergo a storming phase; the music can speed up, fall out of sync and become disconnected. It is often these chaotic, dissonant, and fragmented moments that bring the group song to a deeper, more **synchronized** level.

Just as a team adjusts and finds methods of compromise, so does the drumming ensemble work together to come back to the common PULSE, to the common vision. The pulse is going back to basics, and is the simplest thing one can play on the drum. This redirection can occur in combination by the facilitator stepping in, by a group member taking leadership, and by players listening to and supporting each other. It may take several attempts and strategies to come back into sync, but it inevitably happens and something entirely **new** is formed.

Leadership

Every person in the team has a different approach to leading, just as every person in the team has a different approach to following. Most successful teams, communities and/or leaders recognize the importance of both leading (influencing) as well as following (supporting). Both people have to listen to each other, and their needs. The way in which one takes leadership and one follows greatly **influences** the whole team.

When drumming, if the leader makes unreasonable demands on the players such as increasing the tempo or assigning parts beyond their capacity, this will be reflected in the music; chaotic, dissonant, fragmented. On the other hand, if the **leader** does not challenge the players enough or take any risks, the players will lack motivation, focus, interest and this again will be reflected in the music; chaotic, dissonant, fragmented.



we are all rhythmic by nature

Rhythmic by Nature

Terri Segal 21 Kenwood Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M6C-2R8 416-662-6488 www.rhythmicbynature.com

The Learning Process

We're all learning everyday, and each person has a different way of learning. Some people may pick up a rhythm really quickly just by listening and watching the facilitator, while others will need the rhythm broken down and the instructor to teach at a slower pace. As a leader, it is important to be sensitive to the **differences** in learning styles and offer different methods of teaching, such as call and response, visual tools, one-on-one attention, encouragement and support. And as a participant, it is important to not be hard on oneself when learning something new.

Mistakes are inevitable and often part of a team's learning curve. Leaving room for mistakes can bring innovation and new **solutions**. In a drum circle, when improvising, each person is contributing their own unique musical expression, so there is no such thing as a mistake. What one may consider as a wrong note or rhythm may in fact add a whole new dimension to the group song.

We are all rhythmic by nature

Terri Segal, Expressive Arts Therapist, Facilitator & Educator
Owner/Director, Rhythmic by Nature

© 2008 Rhythmic by Nature



we are all rhythmic by nature