



Provoking Flourishing Not-for-profits

Call forth your best, then play above that

Safe SPACE to Improve

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I have been remarkably successful in leading change in the nonprofits I have served. All three faith-based nonprofits I've served as executive director (two congregations and one college) have co-created lasting changes that enhanced their significance and sustainability in their communities.

In reflecting on the ups and downs, the ins and outs, of those journeys, I now think that the key factor that enabled us to develop the synergy to improve was the safety of the SPACE in which we imagined, designed, and executed the changes.

Here's the acronym I currently playing with for SPACE:

Spirit - the energy released and enhanced by the positive purposes the bring people together

Possibilities – positive ideas about what to explore more carefully in order to best serve the purposes

Appreciation – the gratitude that greases ownership, contribution, and resilience in collaborating in achieving the purposes

Collaboration – the collective effort that aligns the talents being contributed to the purposes

Elation – the mix of joy and pride that emerges when all the other elements in this acronym are flowing in sync

When you co-create this kind of SPACE with the people with whom you are working, it will be safe to do the following essentials in generating beneficial and lasting change:

Dream bravely about what would best serve your core purpose.

Contribute with creativity to making the dreams chosen happen.

Fail with courage to find better ways to move forward.

Try again without regret to experiment with improved strategies.

Celebrate small gains, step by step, through which improvement grows into a habit.

Lots of change management experts detail the barriers and pitfalls in leading change. They are real, but it is crucial not to let them define reality for you. With a clear purpose broadly owned, an honest gratitude for the gifts present to achieve that purpose, and a flexible approach to the ways that positive change can be implemented, you can create safe SPACE for improving the benefits your nonprofit delivers.

I invite you to use this provocation to convene a conversation about creating this kind of safe SPACE in your organization. What are the most effective things you are doing to create the SPACE described here and what could you do better?



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