

In Review: Hakomi Embodied and Aware Relationships Training

Hakomi trainer, **HALKO WEISS** and Hakomi Teacher, **KAREN BAIKIE**,
recently completed the H.E.A.R.T. one year relationship training in Sydney.

Graduates **BRENDA ROWLANDSON**, **JANE WARNOCK**, **BERNADETTE GEA GEA**, **CHRISTINA BROCK**,
LIZ MACKENZIE and **BENN LIM**, share their heart-felt experience of the training journey
and its profound and ongoing impact on their lives and relationships.



From Left to Right: Brenda Rowlandson, Karen Baikie, Jane Warnock, Halko Weiss, Bernadette Gea Gea,
Christina Brock, Liz Mackenzie and Benn Lim.

— BRENDA ROWLANDSON

A FEW YEARS AGO I ATTENDED A SOMATIC psychotherapy conference where Karen Baikie presented the H.E.A.R.T. model of the Reciprocal Interaction Loop (RIL). I was instantly attracted to its basic premise that empathy and kindness are the “way in” to staying connected and managing relationship conflict. I tentatively started to incorporate this RIL into my psychotherapy practice and discovered that clients found it illuminating and that it evoked many “aha” responses. I was delighted when I got word that there was a H.E.A.R.T. training being offered in February 2014.

I ENTERED INTO REGISTERING WITH ENTHUSIASM and anticipation, and while driving to the venue on the first day I realised that I was feeling apprehensive. My workshop had begun! Group situations, dynamic and changeable as they are, can provoke anxiety, but over the course of the first week, under the careful holding and encouragement of Karen and Halko, our facilitators, I started to feel safer to take the risk and get to know my internal world more deeply. I relished the relief of the invitation to become more authentic with both self and others.

EACH OF THE THREE WEEK-LONG MODULES IS designed to include both relational and self-guided exercises, mindfulness meditation, didactic learning and large group process. H.E.A.R.T. is mindfulness-centred and because of this it can enable profound insights and learning.

THE MODULES ARE SPACED SIX MONTHS APART, WHICH at first felt ‘interrupted’ for me, but I began to understand and appreciate the value of the space in between to begin to incorporate and integrate the experiences of each week’s training and to reflect on what would be valuable to take to each week-long module as a stepping-off point to new learning and deeper self-understanding.

I WAS KEENLY AWARE OF THE SUFFERING IN MY BODY during the first two modules, from both headaches and back pain. I even tried to withdraw from second module when I encountered a very young part of me who was quite scared, but I was warmly received and empowered by Karen to make my own choice, whilst also being encouraged to stay and to acknowledge my value as a member of the group.

I ARRIVED AT THE THIRD AND FINAL WEEK FEELING more cohesive, without physical pain and with a strong desire to make this a week where I would try to practice

authentic communication. I vowed to “listen deeply and speak my truth”. At no time did I feel any pressure to be anything other than who and how I was. And I feel I achieved my goal.

THIS IS A SPACIOUS TRAINING. A PLACE WHERE FEELINGS and thoughts of all stripes are welcome; where we are encouraged to be kind to ourselves, and others. When conflicts arose in the group, they were gently managed with great compassion by the facilitators. There was no “wrong” or “right”, only the reality of what was happening in each moment. This fostered a sense of safety and acceptance, which in turn enabled us to stretch our inner selves. Both the mental and emotional learning was, for me, profound.

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I MADE NEW FRIENDS. I FELL IN A LOVE A LITTLE BIT with human-kind and left the warm bubble that is the H.E.A.R.T. training feeling more robust, more centred, and very grateful to have found this community of like minds and hearts.

I’M LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING NEWS OF FURTHER workshops because this work is what makes the most sense to me. Embodied people with minds of their own and emotions to share, in openness and a spirit of heartfelt generosity.

JANE WARNOCK

WHEN I THINK BACK TO OUR H.E.A.R.T. TRAINING I see both an oval of engaged faces and also a constantly evolving dance as people mixed and mingled to pair and group for the experiential component of the course – the exercises! We all became deeply immersed in the learning. My memory is drawn to one particular exercise so this is what I will write about today.

THIS PARTICULAR EXERCISE COULD BE DESCRIBED AS A way of working with “that something” you say to me which makes me want to distance myself from you; which triggers me; which keeps me stuck and disconnected. Halko’s approach is beautiful in its simplicity. It is also transformative. The words he uses to meet the touchy communication are, “Ouch that really hurt! Can you say it again please?” “Can you say it again please?” opens up a space for me to study how I organise around the hurt. If I can stick with it, I’ll be able to discover more about what is driving my “Ouch!”

FOR THIS EXPERIENCE, WE WORK IN DYADS, PAIRING with a neutral person rather than the person we are triggered by. Each of us has half an hour to hear the words, and study what happens inside when the hurtful remark is repeated to us by our partner. We select something which has wounded us from our own lives. For me, an appropriate comment arises immediately. I hear the words in my head and then I coach my partner in how to deliver them to me. The words are, “I chose you because you’re dull.”

I BECOME MINDFUL AND THEN SIGNAL TO MY PARTNER that I’m ready to start. She says the words. Initially they feel like a body blow. I feel myself pulling away slightly and hollowing my chest against them. My shoulders pull round me like protecting wing buds and I feel something happening in my heart. There is a bracing down the front of my body and I’m barely breathing. I sit with the sensations and allow the feelings to be there.

THEN I SIGNAL MY PARTNER TO SPEAK THE WORDS again. This time I can feel my hands clench and my stomach harden. I feel a rush of rage and my language is harsh and annihilating. I’m surprised by the intensity and notice the expletives spluttering around in my head. My partner allows me the space to let the rage have its voice. Eventually it passes.

I SIGNAL TO MY PARTNER A THIRD TIME. THIS TIME, when I hear the words, I see an image of a lake and can identify myself as a tiny spot somewhere on the periphery, in the shallows. My head tells me I’m alone and unsupported

but I can’t quite get the feeling. So I wait and then I notice that my cheeks are wet with tears. I feel very young. I’m here and no one has noticed me. I’m not in danger but I feel I’m not really important to anyone. Invisible. I feel bereft. For a time I’m totally identified with the grief. Then something in me changes. I’m able to pull back. From a place of witnessing, I can see the little girl’s pain. I’m flooded with compassion for her. She can feel me there beside her. She feels supported, she feels “got” and she feels valued. There is some settling in me and as I continue to self soothe, some thoughts emerge. I realise that something I’ve often dreaded has actually happened. I’ve been seen as a “dull person” and I’ve survived! And now I’m sitting here noticing what it’s like just to be with that.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT SURPRISES ME. I BECOME DEEPLY peaceful. In fact what happens is that I remember myself. I remember that, in truth, who I am has nothing to do with my personality. But on a personality level too, I find it’s a great relief to know that I can just be myself; that sometimes I’m dull and sometimes I’m not. I really “get” that all I need to do in life is show up and be myself. I feel solid and present. I’m calm, I’m aware of my gratitude for my life, for the course, for the exercise, for my partner, for the words I’ve been studying, for the possibility of healing, and for myself ... myself as I am, without any bells or whistles.

“ *... all I need to do in
life is show up and be myself.* ”

I MAKE A FINAL SIGNAL TO MY PARTNER AND I HEAR the words for the last time. “I chose you because you’re dull.” My equanimity remains. There is no reactivity. Instead, I find myself soft and curious about the speaker of the words. I find myself feeling enormous compassion for her and her need to choose someone she perceives as dull. I’m open. I’m wondering what makes it difficult for her to be around someone who sparkles. I wonder about her wounding. I wonder what life is like in her universe. I feel able to be present to myself and to her. I am open for connection.

THIS EXERCISE WAS REVELATORY FOR ME BECAUSE IT showed me how “that something” which separates, can actually be the bridge to connection. What a gift! What a tool! What a surprise! For me this was one of the most profound learnings from an exceptional training in mindful relationship. Thank you Halko and Karen, Greg and Jenny, and thank you fellow students. How lucky are we to be doing this work?!

BERNADETTE GEA GEA

H.E.A.R.T. FOR ME WAS A WAY OF LEARNING ABOUT intimacy. When I began my heart journey, I was trying to save a failing relationship that I'd gotten into after going solo for many years. I remember asking myself years back whether I was fit for a relationship because I didn't believe I knew how to love. I knew how to meet people and fall head over heels, but that was more about what I hoped they could do for me than knowing how to love. Admittedly my early messages about "love" led me to believe that love meant compromise and giving up on myself. Love meant pain. Love meant rejection. Love meant abandonment. Love came at a high cost. It seemed like, in order to have someone close to me, I had to completely subjugate myself.

“ *I'm in a beautiful relationship now. With myself.* ”

WHEN I CAME ACROSS THE H.E.A.R.T. TRAINING, I WAS amidst reevaluating what it meant to love. In my life until that point, I'd mostly been focussed on how to be someone that others would love. It had always felt for me like I had to work incredibly hard to the point of self-subjugation to win the approval of others, which might have been the closest thing to love I'd experienced.

THE H.E.A.R.T. TEACHING ENABLED ME TO UNDERSTAND how things came to be this way for me and to make sense of my behaviour patterns around intimacy. It helped me bring a heart full of compassion to myself and understand the impact of the experiences that shaped me.

KINDNESS BEGAN TO DEVELOP INSIDE OF ME. THE teachings are such that they show up our relational behaviour and the underlying drivers of that behaviour. The H.E.A.R.T. space was safe and supportive. Any judgment I noticed I had of myself began to drop away. I started knowing myself. I'd begun to experience safe intimacy. Kind intimacy. Dare I say, love.

MY FAILING RELATIONSHIP ENDED. AND THAT IS A GOOD thing for me. I'm in a beautiful relationship now. With myself. I have more space and more time. And I'm becoming more and more able to tend to my own needs. Somehow throughout the H.E.A.R.T. training, I learned how to love and be intimate with me. And this gratitude I feel is sublime.

CHRISTINA BROCK

HAKOMI EMBODIED AND AWARE RELATIONSHIPS Training — I wonder what that all means? It meant coming together for three weeks over a period of 12 months with some of my Hakomi training buddies, some new people and trainers, Karen Baikie and Halko Weiss, who were assisted by Gregory Lazarus and Jenny Morawska.

THE FOCUS WAS ON RELATING NOT JUST IN OUR CLOSE intimate relationships, but in all relationships. Of course the starting point for me has been getting to know myself, a journey of discovery which commenced formally in 2011 when I signed up for the Hakomi three-year training, but this project will continue for the rest of my life. The impact for me and those around me is profound. Peter, my partner, seemingly out of the blue, recently thanked me for being in his life; and I feel more connected to the people that I interact with professionally and personally.

THE H.E.A.R.T. LEARNING WAS RICH. TO UNDERSTAND the one world/two world dichotomy, that is enmeshment versus differentiation, is a light bulb moment in understanding relationships. In a healthy functional relationship we come together but remain differentiated. This is new information to many of us, who may have modelled our own way of relating on our parent's relating style, which may have not been the best model for us.

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ANOTHER ELEGANT TECHNIQUE MASTERMINDED BY Halko, is called the reciprocal interaction loop (RIL), which I found very enlightening. The RIL is about understanding what drives the behaviours, emotions and beliefs that we observe in ourselves and others. In Hakomi language the term "part" is used to describe some of those complex combinations of behaviours, belief and emotions. In relationships some of those "parts" that may have been "exiled" out of our consciousness become activated and get us into all sorts of tricky situations when we bump up against other people in our lives. Relating can be hard work and it requires constant adjustment in a conscious mindful way, but the outcomes for me are rich and satisfying.

THIS IS JUST A SNIPPET OF H.E.A.R.T — THERE'S SO much more. So if you get the opportunity, go for it.

LIZ MACKENZIE

WHAT IS THERE MORE OF IN MY LIVED EXPERIENCE, after the H.E.A.R.T. training? Safety, acceptance and connection!

SAFETY INCREASES AS MY REACTIONS BECOME MORE transparent to me. There is more space now for me to let things be as they are.

ACCEPTANCE GROWS IN THE SPACIOUSNESS.

CONNECTION IS MORE FELT WHEN I AM NOT WORRIED about making things happen.

AS I EXPERIENCED MY OWN REACTIONS, SOMETIMES with astonishment, sometimes ruefully, and learned to see others more clearly, I felt the safety grow. I am thankful to everyone in the training for being so wonderfully there and true to themselves — and therefore to me. The openness and gentleness in our interactions, fostered by the trainers, Halko and Karen, and the ways in which I saw them respond when difficulties arose in interactions, was nourishing for me and ‘grew me up’ a lot. Precious!

MY HEART RESONATES MORE. IT IS A GOOD PLACE TO live.

“ *The openness and gentleness in our interactions, fostered by the trainers, Halko and Karen, and the ways in which I saw them respond when difficulties arose in interactions, was nourishing for me and ‘grew me up’ a lot.* ”

BENN LIM

FOR MOST OF MY LIFE I LIVED MY LIFE BEHIND A MASK, never truly letting anyone in. I was interested in H.E.A.R.T. because I wanted to improve my relationships. The H.E.A.R.T. training gave me a space that was safe for me to see myself and the stories I tell myself when I am in relationship. This awareness opened me and gave me the ability to stay curious in relationship and to truly listening to what really is happening.

“ *... knowing that we are all unique and have our own world’s playing within us and the best way to be with them is to be true to myself and not hide behind my mask.* ”

THE TRAINING WAS TRULY ENRICHING AND empowering for me personally and has helped me to be more conscious about my relationships. My relationships with myself, my spouse and my son have grown deeper and I continue to work on my relationships with my parents, my siblings and my friends knowing that we are all unique and have our own world’s playing within us and the best way to be with them is to be true to myself and not hide behind my mask. I recently read a quote that I thought was quite appropriate for my experience with H.E.A.R.T.

“To the ego, a good relationship is one in which another person basically behaves the way we want them to and never presses our buttons, never violates our comfort zones. But if a relationship exists to support our growth, then in many ways it exists to do just those things; force us out of our limited tolerance and inability to love unconditionally.”

– Marianne Williamson

THANK YOU KAREN AND HALKO FOR BRINGING THIS to me.