Psy-Connection Award 2014-15 Brief Project Report

Project Title: Networking Workshop for Undergraduate Students – An Emotion Management Approach
LAM Ho Wa, Hodar, MPhil (Industrial-Organizational Psychology)

Background
The fast changing demands in the society require university students to develop more than intellectual maturity and theoretical knowledge. After several years of tertiary education, students will soon be exposed to many social interactions, including academic conferences and business networking events.

One of the learning activities of the course PSYC 3540 Psychology of Adolescence and Adulthood is a group research project. Students prepare academic posters and attend a simulated poster session at the end of the course. This provides a valuable opportunity to experience intellectual exchange with other student researchers. The process involves networking and hence, motivates the captioned workshop to better prepare for the actual poster session.

Objective
While many networking workshops and trainings focused on skills training, this workshop takes an emotion-focused approach. The focus is not to reduce negative emotions, but instead, to manage them. Through understanding emotions involved before and during networking, participants learn to evaluate the validity of the associated thoughts. After that, they also learn skills to maintain positive emotions during networking.

Workshop Design & Implementation

The interactive workshop is designed to help participants reflect the functions of negative emotions, such as worry and fear, when thinking of networking. It consists of two parts: (1) understanding fear for networking and (2) emotion-based skills training.

Building on a few classical theories in psychology, such as cognitive behavioural and social cognitive therapies, the workshop then introduced some ways to manage these negative emotions. A self-reflection activity is included for participants to recall a recent networking experience and write down their fearful thoughts and feelings, which will be referenced in later parts. This part aims at promoting a more positive, accepting attitude towards negative emotions in face of anticipated stressful events.

After learning about the emotions, the workshop moves on to the practical aspects. It first
Networking Workshop

discusses the importance of acting confident, especially when emotional states will be mirrored unconsciously – a process called emotional contagion (Hatfield & Cacioppo, 1994). After that, active listening skills are introduced (Helgesen, Brown, & Brown, 1994), as they serve two functions. Firstly, as Powell (1969) has noted, everyone has a need to be listened, especially for prospects in a networking occasion when they attempt to build relationships and look for cooperation opportunities. Secondly, taking an active listener role relieves the anxiety and fear at the beginning of a conversation with strangers. A practice session follows. Participants have to step out of their comfort zones and talk to other participants about their academic interests. After the practice, participants will be debriefed and encouraged to write down their reflections. Details of the workshop activities are seen in the attached workshop manual (Encl. 2).

The workshop took place during the 45-minute tutorial of the above-stated course on 23 March, 2015. 46 students attended the workshop. Despite no formal post-workshop evaluation, participants generally received the workshop well. Students also got the chance to learn about their course-mates more, especially on others’ interested research topics. They were also receptive to the new emotion-focused perspective on networking.

Nevertheless, time was insufficient for networking practice, especially in the context of a large number of participants. It was particularly hard for the facilitator to motivate the participants in a tight schedule to overcome both their comfort zones and initial inertia. Since the workshop was conducted in a classroom setting, participants found it hard to imagine being in a networking situation.

Future Work
Time was the major limitation of the above reported workshop. However in future, the workshop can be replicated with a longer duration for interested students at universities and secondary schools and around 30 participants. Apart from having more time for practice, participants will also take time to reflect and write down their insights, especially during the debriefing. Also in order to make the networking practice more realistic, drinks and plastic wine cups will be arranged as one of the skills introduced in the workshop was to use the drinks as a tool. The following are the details for a future workshop:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction &amp; Overview</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry &amp; Fear</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1: Self-reflection</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence &amp; Active Listening</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(With facilitator’s demonstration – 10 mins)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2: Networking practice</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(With debriefing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary &amp; Sharing</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Time:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 hr 45 mins</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Proposed Budget**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item (Estimated for 30 Participants)</th>
<th>Cost (HKD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plastic wine cups</td>
<td>$40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing of workshop manuals</td>
<td>$20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditure:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$120</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of promotion, respective function units for student development, such as Office of Student Affairs at CUHK and Centre for Development and Resources for Students at the universities will be contacted via email. As for secondary schools, this workshop can be promoted by sending emails and delivering brief presentations to teachers attending part-time courses or short development programmes at the universities.

**Conclusion**

To sum up, this project designed a networking workshop for university students to cope with one of the future job demands. Along traditional focus on soft skills training, this workshop promoted emotion management to overcome negativity and hence, comfort zones. The workshop was conducted in an undergraduate psychology class and received some positive feedback. It can be replicated at universities and secondary schools by extending the duration and arranging materials to make it more realistic.

**References**


**Enclosure**

1. Facilitator’s presentation notes
2. Workshop manual
Networking Workshop: An Emotion Management Approach

Hodar Lam
23 Mar 2015

Why networking?

- Common in academic conferences & work settings
- To build relationships
- To explore collaboration opportunities

Game Rules for Networking

- It is about to see, talk and be seen
- Most people have to learn to like talking to perfect strangers
- Never be too serious as others can't exactly remember what you talk about

But what haunts us?
Worry & Fear (Olpin & Hesson, 2013)

- Worry
  - A manifestation of fear
  - Focus on events yet to come
  - Worry → anxiety → fear

- Fear
  - Escalated worry and apprehension
  - Distinct physical and emotional reactions
  - Focus on future
  - Based on avoiding potential pain

Why am I afraid to tell you who I am? (Powell, 1969)

- "Because, if I tell you who I am, you may not like who I am, and that's that I have."

- "Sorry, this is the way I am... is a handy motto and delusion to have around you if you don't want to grow up."

- "We all have a need to be listened."

Comfort & Discomfort Zones

- Comfort zone
  - Any place, situation, relationship or experience where we do not feel threatened
  - An innate preference

- Discomfort zone
  - Places where we do not naturally move towards
  - Where growth and progress are possible

- Belief of pain/discomfort → Fear
  - Mental manufacturing of pain
  - False need to prepare for some pain

Managing Fear

1. Fear can motivate positive action
2. Nothing in the world is inherently fearful
   - But the believed consequences...
3. Fear is learned
   - The Little Albert story...
4. With practice and experience we can learn to overcome fear
   - Self-efficacy & trust
Activity 1: Describe your fear for networking

- Now recall your last networking experience
  - e.g. orientation day/camp, first meeting with project group members, formal alumni gathering
- Describe the thing you fear doing.
- What are your thoughts & feelings about why it seems so fearful?

Starting the Game

Confidence
Approaching the prospect

Behind being (acting?) confident...

- Others take you at your own evaluation
  - You are what you think you are
- Others catch and mirror your emotional states

Act as if you are brave and confident
- Rejection? You are not everyone’s cup of tea

Approaching the prospect

What do good talkers have in common?

Demonstration: How to be an active listener?
#1: Attending

- What does attending behaviour look like?
  - S: Face the other Squarely
  - H: Head nods
  - O: Adopt an Open posture
  - V: Verbal following
  - E: SpEech
  - L: Lean toward the other
  - E: Eye contact
  - R: Relatively Relaxed

#2: Active Listening

1. Clarification
2. Paraphrase (content)
3. Reflection (emotion)
4. Summary (content + emotion)

#2.1: Clarification

- To encourage elaboration
- To check accuracy of understanding
- To clear vague, confusing messages

- Example:
  - "Do you mean that...?"
  - "Are you saying that...?"

#2.2: Paraphrasing

- Rephrase the content of the message
- Help simplify, focus and crystallise what prospect said

- Examples:
  - "It seems like/appears...", "As I see it..." (Visual)
  - "It sounds like..", "Something tells you..." (Auditory)
  - "You feel...", "I sense/have the feeling that..." (Kinesthetic)
#2.3: Reflection

- A verbal response to prospect’s emotion
- Probing & management of feelings
- Discrimination among mixed feelings

Examples:
- "You feel _____, because _____."
- Feedback both feeling and intensity

#2.4: Summary

- To identify a common theme/problem
- To review progress
- To interrupt excessive talking

Steps:
- Recall key content and affect messages
- Identify patterns or themes
- "I sense...", "You are feeling...

#3: Probing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Open-Ended Qs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Close-Ended Qs</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expected Answers</strong></td>
<td>More than &quot;yes&quot; and &quot;no&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>To encourage elaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To elicit specific examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Examples** | "Why is it important to you?"
| | "How did you feel when that happened?"
| | "What did you do when he/she said that?"
| | "Are you going to have the test done?"
| | "Do you drink often?"
| | "Do you like your job?"

Activity 2: Networking practice

- Imagine you are now in an academic poster session
- Aim: To share your views with people with similar interests
- Task:
  - To learn about others’ research project
  - To market your project
  - To seek opportunity for future collaboration

Some more tips:
- "Yes, and..." vs. "Yes, but..." → Find common ground
- Carry your beverage in your left hand
- Eat or talk. Don’t do both at the same time
- Always remember to close a conversation
Debriefing (cf. Activity 1)

- How was the experience from your imagination?
- Describe the insights you gained about the particular fear, and then fears in general.
- If you could do it again, what would you have done differently? Why?
- Did you feel "listened"?
- What else did you observe or feel?

Summary

- Manage, instead of reduce, emotions when it comes to networking
- Hold a scientific mind on internal dialogues
  - Collect evidence
  - Estimate the likelihood
- Life is full of uncertainties
  - The key is to accept and live with it

References

NETWORKING WORKSHOP
An Emotion Management Approach

Workshop Manual
NETWORKING WORKSHOP –
An Emotion Management Approach

✔ Understanding Networking ........................................p. 2

✔ Emotional Obstacles ..................................................pp. 3-4

✔ Skills in Networking ..................................................pp. 5-8

✔ Summary ........................................................................p. 9
(I) Understanding Networking

1.1 Why networking?

- Common in academic conferences & work settings
- To build relationships
- To explore collaboration opportunities

1.2 Game Rules for Networking

- It is about to see, talk and be seen
- Most people have to ___________ to like talking to perfect strangers
- Never be too serious as others can’t exactly remember what you talk about
(II) Emotional Obstacles

Questions for thought:
What haunts you to talk to a stranger in a networking event?

2.1 Worry & Fear

- Worry
  - A manifestation of fear
  - Focus on events yet to come
  - Worry → anxiety → fear
- Fear
  - Escalated worry and apprehension
  - Distinct physical and emotional reactions
  - Focus on future
  - Based on avoiding potential pain

2.2 Comfort & Discomfort Zones

- Comfort zone
  - Any place, situation, relationship or experience where we do not feel threatened
  - An innate preference
- Discomfort zone
  - Places where we do not naturally move towards
  - Where growth and progress are possible
• Belief of pain/discomfort → Fear
  - Mental manufacturing of pain
  - False need to prepare for some pain

2.3 Managing Fear

1. Fear can motivate positive action
2. Nothing in the world is inherently fearful
   • But the believed consequences…
3. Fear is learned
   • The Little Albert story…
4. With practice and experience we can learn to overcome fear
   • Self-efficacy & trust

Activity 1

• Now recall your last networking experience

• Describe the thing you fear doing.

• What are your thoughts & feelings about why it seems so fearful?
(III) Skills in Networking

3.1 Being/Acting Confident

- Others take you at your own evaluation
  - You are what you think you are
- Others catch and mirror your emotional states
- Act as if you are brave and confident
- You are not everyone’s cup of tea

3.2 Attending

- What does attending behaviour look like?
  - S: Face the other Squarely
  - H: Head nods
  - O: Adopt an Open posture
  - V: Verbal following
  - E: SpEech
  - L: Lean toward the other
  - E: Eye contact
  - R: Relatively Relaxed

3.3 Active Listening

1. Clarification
- To encourage elaboration
- To check accuracy of understanding
- To clear vague, confusing messages
- Example:
  - “Do you mean that...?”
  - “Are you saying that...?”
2. Paraphrase (content)
   • Rephrase the content of the message
   • Help simplify, focus and crystallize what prospects said
   • Examples:
     ➢ “It seems like/appears…”, “As I see it…” (Visual)
     ➢ “It sounds like…”, “Something tells you…” (Auditory)
     ➢ “You feel…”, “I sense/have the feeling that…” (Kinesthetic)

3. Reflection (emotion)
   • A verbal response to prospect’s emotion
   • Probing & management of feelings
   • Discrimination among mixed feelings
   • Examples:
     ➢ “You feel ______, because ______.”
     ➢ Feedback both feeling and intensity

4. Summary (content + emotion)
   • To identify a common theme/problem
   • To review progress
   • To interrupt excessive talking
   • Steps:
     ➢ Recall key content and affect messages
     ➢ Identify patterns or themes
     ➢ “I sense…”, “You are feeling…”
3.4 Probing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Open-Ended Qs</th>
<th>Close-Ended Qs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected Answers</td>
<td>More than &quot;yes&quot; and &quot;no&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Yes&quot;, &quot;No&quot;, or 1- to 2-word responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>• To encourage elaboration</td>
<td>• To narrow down the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To elicit specific examples</td>
<td>• To identify themes or issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• To interrupt an over-talkative prospect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>• &quot;Why is it important to you?&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;Are you going to have the test done?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• &quot;How did you feel when that happened?&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;Do you drink often?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• &quot;What did you do when he/she said that?&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;Do you like your job?&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 2: Networking Practice

- Imagine you are now in an academic poster session
- Aim: To share your views with people with similar interests
- Task:
  - To learn about others’ research project
  - To market your project
  - To seek opportunity for future collaboration
Notes:

Debriefing Questions (Refer to your notes in Activity 1):
- How was the experience from your imagination?
- Describe the insights you gained about the particular fear, and then fears in general.
- If you could do it again, what would you have done differently? Why?
- Did you feel “listened”?
- What else did you observe or feel?
(IV) Summary

4.1 Tips for Networking

1. Manage your fear
2. Explore validity of internal dialogues
3. Accept uncertainties

4.2 From Learning to Action

What have you learnt from the presentation?

#1

#2

What have you learnt from the others?

#1

#2

References
