Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to assess the level of success of the project by following the four research questions. I have positioned the four questions to lead the reader through the chapter. I will attempt to answer each question in an analytical and honest manner so as to measure our mandate and objectives against the outcome. If it is possible to integrate two different race groups in a South African business, or if there is the likelihood of being able to heal even some of the negative psychological effects of Apartheid, or if we have been able to change one person’s attitude, enable one person to grow personally, or to find perhaps two ways to sustain organisational change, then this research has been valuable and worthwhile.

The Research Project
In 2001 a South African food processing company of 67 members asked my small consultancy, Innergize, to assess the communication problems between the two sections of the staff, namely 39 black factory staff and 28 white office staff. The mandate then given was that the company (which I have called Tastory) be integrated so as better to reflect the new democracy. We, at Innergize, found that there were serious problems of communication within each group and hostility between the white and black staff.

In an attempt to first attempt to heal the individual from her/his Apartheid past, we developed two preliminary workshops, one for the black staff and one for the white staff before we held two mixed-race workshops. The preliminary workshops focused on personal growth and development plus the resolution of conflict within the group. For the black staff the emphasis was on surfacing their experience of being oppressed and expressing that creatively and verbally. For the white staff the emphasis was on increasing their knowledge and understanding of the impact Apartheid had made on black people, becoming aware of their attitudes towards their own and other race groups, and expressing their fears as regards the future of the country.
The second, mixed-race workshops focused on developing personal relationships between the staff, acknowledging the positive aspects of the company, resolving past conflict and planning for the future.

As a result of the intervention over the year some staff left, some were dismissed. A forum to deal with past grievances was established and procedures set in place to sustain the transformation. The intervention was initially requested to cover a two-year period. It ended at the start of the second year.

Question 1
Is it possible to integrate two work groups differing in race and class given the historical background in South Africa? Why would it be important to attempt to achieve this and how can this be facilitated?

The research findings show that it is possible to integrate two work groups that differ in race and class. The extent to which integration is maintained will depend on the individuals concerned, the climate of communication in the company and strategies that are in place to encourage continued integration. By “integration” I mean that each member of the company sees him/herself as part of the company with equal rights and responsibilities. It also means that any person can communicate on an equal footing with another person and everyone deserves respect and acknowledgement if they are to operate as a team, towards common goals.

It was important to attempt to achieve this in the new South Africa as any continuation of the past was not in keeping with the new constitution and would have been untenable. As people spend most of their lives at work, the negative effects of an environment that separates people according to race and class could only have contributed to illness and conflict. From the perspective of profit, the company had no alternative but to move towards an integrated approach. In fact, during the last two months of 2001 and after most of the intervention had occurred, the factory staff worked overtime without
Many days work had been lost because of the diversity process and they were prepared to make up the work.

What our company, Innergize, did was to create the possibility of communication. We brought the two groups together in a controlled and structured environment and enabled people to relate to one another (Ndlovu 1998:13). The key to our immediate success was that we first separated the two groups and prepared each group to meet the other one. Although this took time and reminded people of the Apartheid era, we chose to do this partly as a result of the pre-intervention interviews. They indicated that the issues within the two groups required resolution first. Some of these were mistrust, long-held grudges, betrayal, nepotism and competition. Another factor in the choice of this route was that my previous experience in working within companies and with groups had taught me that people respond positively to one another in mixed-race groups once they had been given time, tools and a guide to help them begin their own process of healing from their past experience—whether this took the form of Apartheid, a civil war, childhood trauma, or life under a dictator. As one of the factory workers, Samson, said: “I was happy in the workshop when I was given an opportunity to tell my white boss about things that always concerned me. He forced me to carry 240 bags from 7.30am to 4.00pm. I was happy when he was able to apologize to me. I realised that white people do not have to decide what we should do, but that we too make good decisions.”

At the end-of-year picnic the race and work-team groups tended to stay separate but their children played together. If people were still a little awkward about social contact it didn’t mean that attitudes had not been changed. There was a willingness to interact and a conscious effort to do so. “I got to realise I can be close to a white person like I am close to a black person” (Titus, factory staff). Class divisions might be more difficult to overcome than racial divides. Prior to the mixed workshop one of the office staff said: “What on earth can I learn from a factory worker? I have nothing to learn from him!” That person changed her ideas after contact with the workers.
In the personal interviews I discovered that white people who had grown up in poverty were most classist. They were apprehensive of being reminded of their background. Some were ashamed of having been poor. As Adorno and his colleagues in Reich and Adcock (1976:52) point out that the prejudiced person is basically insecure and class impacts on this attitude. Low self-esteem can contribute towards the scapegoat theory, they claim. “I think what divides us even more is the economic difference and this caused some nervousness even during the workshop but at the end of the day I was happy” (Luke, factory staff). The intervention helped many black participants realise that although white people may be financially and economically stronger, they had not all been able to avoid suffering and pain, and sometimes poverty. The workshops allowed a sorting out of pre-conceptions and a levelling of experience.

In terms of how integration can be facilitated, the quality of the facilitator and the make-up of the team played a vital role. All four facilitators were highly experienced, sensitive and responsive. Each one of us represented a group within the Company. Jerry Mofokeng enabled the Sotho-speaking staff and the black male staff to identify with him. Tebogo Makgabo enabled the Sepedi-speaking staff and the black female staff to identify with her. She could also speak Afrikaans. Nico du Bois was a white male Afrikaner and I was a white female English-speaker. Both Jerry and Tebogo could speak other South African languages as well as English, and I understand some Sotho, Sepedi and speak Afrikaans. As a team we mirrored the diversity of the staff.

We understood that the facilitator shares her/his personal experience where necessary. We did not stand outside the process. We shared the joy and the pain of the participants. We were capable of listening on many levels- from the superficial to the emotional and non-verbal level. We balanced one another in that two of us were stronger at challenging the participants and two were stronger at encouraging them. Our ability to empathise with the participants was evident. Our approach enabled the staff to trust us, to co-operate with us and to take risks through the process. We created what could be termed ‘a safety net’ for them to move beyond their comfort zones. This facilitated a change in attitude and personal growth.
We spent a large amount of time preparing for the process and we were committed to following up on individuals and with management. We practiced what we taught in that we had sessions of positive and negative feedback together after each workshop. The workshops were vigorous and our commitment to the staff needed to be as strong or stronger than their commitment to themselves and to the process.

I think each situation requires its own approach. I do not think that what we did can be applied without adaptation to all other cases. One has to estimate the depth and breadth of the impact of the past on the staff, the number of people concerned, who they are, the objective of the company in terms of what they wish to achieve in the field of diversity management. What cannot be omitted is sensitive, experienced, creative and committed facilitators who know their boundaries and their mandate and can meet the needs of the particular company. There needs to be attention to the details of the issues, a flexibility to change pace or structure where necessary, and a fine line drawn between being totally committed to yet not being a part of the organisation.

**Question 2**

Is it possible to heal the negative psychological effects of the *Apartheid* system? What is meant by healing in this context? Is it necessary to delve into the past in order for healing to occur and how long would this take?

The research shows that it is possible to heal some of the negative psychological effects of the *Apartheid* system. *Apartheid* dehumanised people; it taught black people that they were not good enough; that they were second-class citizens. It used violence in many forms to maintain control; its prohibitions forced people to live in selected areas; no black person could vote or apply for any job or sit on the same bench as a white person or eat in the same restaurant. It consistently degraded people. At the same time it made white people callous; it gave them a sense of superiority; it taught them that it was acceptable to pay black workers minimal wages; it claimed that black people thought and felt differently to white people and that their needs were different; it reinforced prejudices such as that black people are dirty; they steal; they are not intelligent; they cannot be educated.
In order to heal these effects it is necessary to recognize them in action. For example, a black factory worker will not challenge his manager on an issue of injustice if he is told he can lose his job. Prior to the intervention, the white office staff would organise a social function but not include food that the black staff would eat. We tackled the negative psychological effects on an individual and a group level, by creating a ‘healing’ environment.

What is healing? Healing in this context means introspection, thinking about one’s feelings towards oneself and others; becoming aware of unexpressed anger, remorse, fear, guilt; remembering experiences which were painful; acknowledging attitudes that were learnt and that may be harmful to oneself and others. In line with Lauzon’s *psychology of the soul* (1998), this can mean re-experiencing as an adult the pain and distress of childhood, or recalling a critical incident which had not been resolved, and, in a constructive way, releasing emotions. The release of information and emotion can happen by talking to an individual or to a group with a trained facilitator present. It can also take the form of writing, drawing or painting, sculpting, writing music, or any other creative communicative modality. Our most effective results were where we used a creative modality reinforcing Dupierry in Hampe 1998 such as painting, and then asked the artist to describe in words his emotions and experience. Before any of this was possible we had to create a space where people felt they could trust us with their stories and trust one another. This confirms the work of Noddings 1992. Our approach was gentle and included choice. People chose the level at which they would interact. The aspect of judgement was removed (Lauzon 1998:321). As Monica, an office worker, said: “At work all of us were on such a high – it was like some huge burden had been lifted”.

Perhaps a return to the past is not the only way healing occurs but in this case it was important, because many of the negative experiences of the black staff were vivid and had taken place within the work situation. This made it difficult for them to affirm themselves. In a situation where a person is able to express what happened in the past to people who represent those who inflicted the pain, she/he stands to regain her/his
personal power, as reinforced by Lauzon, 1998. In this scenario it is imperative that representatives listen carefully and empathetically and do not try to minimise the experience of the speaker or take it away from him. If the perpetrator is present, an opportunity for reconciliation arises. The presence of a trained facilitator usually creates a feeling of safety for the participants.

It was important if not vital for the black staff to communicate the quality and depth of their experience to the white staff. They were able to do this through their drawings and their stories. They needed to be heard, and they were. This was evident in the way in which white staff listened to the black staff tell of their experiences and in their willingness to interact and respond. The Black staff wanted to be accepted because they had not been accepted before. However once they had accepted themselves for who they were, they no longer had such a need to be accepted by others, white or black. The white staff wanted to be ‘forgiven’ for injustice perpetrated by their group - if not by them as individuals. Some of the staff admitted their role in the Apartheid system and this was accepted by the black staff.

How long does a person take to heal? Sometimes people have what is called an “Aha!” experience. They receive an insight into their lives and this increases their understanding about themselves and others. Many people spoke of a “return to self” experience. When some of the participants released experiences that had been traumatic they felt relieved and happier. This may be lasting. For other people an initial awareness, let’s say of the depth of the negative influence of Apartheid, dawns and as time passes the person continues to be conscious of his thoughts, feelings, actions, motives, attitudes.

Healing is often generated in a group situation and once group support (and pressure) diminish people may forget what happened or change their lives. Not one of the staff was unaffected by the process. To the extent that people were willing to learn and to grow they did so. This was evident in their responses at the end of the process, in their written evaluations, and was captured in the video. “On a personal level the weekend
made me realise that I am responsible for my destiny and the things that have complicated my life are things that I need to work out for myself” (Barry, office staff).

Our recognition that people express themselves best in their home language was another major factor that contributed towards people gaining a better understanding of one another. People who had for long been forced to communicate in English at the workplace could now speak fluently and articulately in their own language. This reinforced a respect for the language of the speaker (Nettle and Romaine 2000:7). Many of the non-African language speakers expressed a desire to learn Sepedi. Our holistic approach included our choice of music which was carefully selected to include all language groups and cultures represented in the company.

There was pressure on each person to participate. The Managing Director had made it clear how important the process was. In fact if people chose not to attend a workshop it would be seen as an indication that they were not willing to be part of the new workforce. One person in particular who held a responsible position managed to avoid the first workshop and part of the second. On both occasions she had ‘reasons’. The point is that an important part of the process was a willingness to be vulnerable. The woman who stayed out of the process avoided placing herself in a position of vulnerability. The Managing Director did take risks. My opinion is that this commitment by management was essential. At no stage did the Managing Director sit on the fence or refuse to participate. This raised the level of respect for him by the staff. He had an open-door policy, retained his authority, and was seen as a human being, just like anyone else.

Another factor that contributed to the success was that we recognised that most of the staff believed in God. This meant that they saw themselves as having a spiritual dimension that impacted on their lives. Forgiveness takes place within this realm. The question of whether it is possible to talk about any healing taking place without the spiritual dimension being involved is beyond the scope of this report. When people pray they can move into an awareness of a harmonious energy where there is no pain or
illness, either mental or physical. This can impact positively on them, emotionally or physically.

It is natural among many groups in South Africa to fall into prayer at certain times. Many of the factory staff interpreted their meditations and visualisations in terms of their relationship with God. Many put their experience within the Christian context (See Appendix G ii). On the last day I gave them a quote from the Psalms to think about for half an hour and when we returned they shared their insights. It was easy to move into a hymn and a prayer.

**Question 3**

What changes, both intra personal and interpersonal, did management and workers undergo that contributed to the project? Was there any resistance to change? How did this manifest and with what consequences?

Innergize gave the staff an opportunity to review their lives, talk about some of their experiences, critically evaluate their attitudes to race and gender and obtain information about life in the *Apartheid* era. For white staff this was enabled by the video “Black Man Healing” and through listening to the factory staff speak about their experiences. In examining the paintings of the factory staff and reading their descriptions of life under *Apartheid* they were able to extend their understanding. In addition all staff were able to express their cultures in a creative way and this in an atmosphere of trust and respect. “I enjoyed demonstrating my culture to the white people. I learnt a lot about white culture. It was humbling to see blacks and whites holding hands and dancing together. The spirit of forgiveness was very present” (Factory worker).

The staff were able to resolve differences between themselves and other staff members and contribute towards re-designing a workplace climate that would be conducive to work. “It taught me about humanity, respect and patience” (Mpho, factory worker). The combined result was an increase in self-respect, a sense of hope for the future, more understanding between cultures and languages, an awareness of the common humanity of
all the staff, heightened awareness of the issues in the past that required addressing and a new team spirit.

“The question I kept asking myself is what are we going to do with these white people? The second question was why do we have to be with them? I only got to understand at the end of the workshop that Re Selo Sele Sengwe, We are One” (Matthew, factory staff).

Twice the U.K. manager came to South Africa to assess developments. On his first trip he declared he was amazed at the difference. We held a dinner on site and danced a dance we had learnt together. He joined in (See the video). He said our operation was the most integrated of all the company’s outlets in various countries. I suggested to him that the company should assist the staff who lived in shacks to buy houses and to ensure that their children could complete their schooling. This is in line with Fuhr (1999: 90). This generated a survey into each staff member’s housing situation. The white staff were included but it was clear that the need lay predominantly with the black staff.

“I had a number of problems but since the workshops I have managed to work through a few. I’m experiencing a lot of peace. I’m finding it difficult to explain how I feel. Most of the time I find myself alone. This workshop has really touched my life because I see my co-workers being close to me now. We are also able to discuss how we can approach our jobs and work as a team. I find that we are also able to reach our goals in production” (Elijah, factory staff).

Was there any resistance to change? “The company is definitely moving forward but sometimes it is moving too fast. The focus has moved from just white being privileged to multi-racial although sometimes it seems the black staff are getting more.” At the beginning of the process the factory staff were reluctant to engage in the process. Prior to the arrival of Innergize, surveys had been conducted of staff attitudes towards the company and towards one another with no results. As one worker said, “I was told we were going to embark on a journey, but then I wasn’t too sure if that was just going to be another false trail” (Mpho, factory staff). As Innergize began to win the trust of the
factory staff, they began to speak out. From holding a glimmer of hope they moved to a high level of enthusiasm which lasted until the beginning of 2002. At the abrupt departure of the Innergize team and the replacement of the previous management team by new white management with no black representation, there was a sense of disappointment. I was later informed that the factory staff decided to form a Union rather than rely on promises made by management. This suggested that previous promises had not been honoured.

The first workshop for white staff alleviated many fears. People thought they would be attacked and blamed for their part in Apartheid. They resolved many misunderstandings that had occurred under the past leadership of the company. The process opened up personal issues for some people that would require individual ongoing therapy if they chose to take responsibility for their progress. Concerns about wives, husbands or partners were expressed. “I don’t know how I’m going to tell my husband. I don’t know how he’s going to take it. I’m very open in my relationship. I’m going to tell him the truth, about the dancing and everything and see how his response is going to be. He will also have to take that step with me. I’m going to walk forward, I’m not going to step back again. I’ll try my best to get him to take the step forward”. Resistance came from partners of staff. This was suggested by the number of partners who chose not to come to the Partner workshop.

At the start of the workshop for factory staff, participants’ apprehension was almost palpable. Once the first evening passed they grasped the opportunity and there was no holding back. A high level of optimism prevailed. They were eager for their wives and partners to share their experience. “My family also benefited from the workshop. We also learnt that discrimination is not okay. I know now that not only white people are racist. We are also racist in a way and this is not good. I am not able to live happily and peacefully with other racial groups” (Michael, factory staff).

**Question 4**

What allows a process of change to be sustained within an organisation?
To sustain change in an organisation there needs to be full *commitment* of all the staff, including and especially senior management to the changes. Without management’s participation the staff will find it hard to believe that the process is serious. As Madi states, “The advancement of blacks was seen as a pain in the organisation’s neck” (Madi, 1993).

In the Tastory scenario two senior management personnel were dismissed. One person had behaved inappropriately with a client; the other was dismissed because the person lacked the level of expertise and education necessary for the position. Another senior management person was put under pressure to resign. This is common when a new Managing Director takes over the leadership of an organisation. It may have been impossible for him to maintain the changes that were required if he kept them on board. The effect of this was that the office staff felt insecure but also realised they had to maintain a high standard of professionalism or their positions, too, might be jeopardised. It may also have sent a message that the principles advocated during the workshops had to be adhered to. I am not suggesting that any new process of change within an organisation requires that senior staff be dismissed.

It is necessary that any *procedures* set up during the change process be maintained until their reason for existing no longer holds. Thus, the Ditaba Forum where each person who had a grievance against the company in connection with hiring or pension or other such issues, would need to be continued until all grievances were laid to rest. Trust is an essential component to maintain good will that any breach of that trust can seriously damage team work or staff loyalty.

*Promises* made need to be honoured. If a factory staff member was promised that he/she would be mentored into a more responsible position, that needs to happen. If for some reason, that proves to be impossible, the reasons must be communicated not only to the person concerned but to the whole staff. In this situation that communication would not have been difficult as the staff is relatively small. If the factory staff were promised job
descriptions, medical aid, or any other specific terms of employment, these promises must be met. The housing and education survey would have raised hopes. The event of the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001 affected Tastory. Company headquarters were based in New York. The head office began to reconsider its position in Africa and its attention shifted from the diversity process to profit making. About 1.4 million Rand had already been spent on the process. If the company no longer had the funds to assist the staff in terms of housing and education, that would need to be communicated to the staff.

If an organisation has gone through a process which had ‘humanised’ it, enabled staff to communicate and relate to one another, it is necessary that a mechanism be found to continue this. Management could hold a series of talks or workshops or activities phased over a number of years. If this does not happen the likelihood is that the organisation’s level of communication and commitment will decline. The positive and negative feedback sessions in the workshops needed to be integrated into the day to day running of the organisation. This is about structural change and underlines the relevance of the work of Jacques (1997). The openness and trust that the workshops had engendered needed to be nursed and a forum offered to sustain it.

Integrating new management into an organisation which has just gone through an intense process needs to be taken seriously. Misunderstandings will happen if the new personnel are not brought up to date with the history of the organisation. At Tastory the staff had been assisted to a level of communication that had improved upon their previous interaction. New management may not have been familiar with this type of interaction. If they had, they still needed to start at the beginning in relating to their staff and other management personnel. We had a classic example of this in the Tastory situation where the new Human Resource manager and the new Operations Manager did not have enough information about the nepotism that had just been erased from the organisation. They were on the brink of hiring new factory workers who were members of the factory supervisor’s family. This sent a ripple of doubt and distress through the factory staff as it looked as though the past would reassert itself.
A second aspect of the integration of new management is that trust will take time to build with the staff. In the above situation one of the factory workers had contacted me over the weekend about the issue of the possible new recruits. She was apprehensive of taking this up with the new Operations Manager as she had no relationship with him yet. I suggested she speak to the Managing Director who had an ‘open door’ policy. She told me she had been threatened by the factory supervisor whose family the new recruits were part of that if she reported their connection to him he would harm her. I called the Managing Director and he set up the meetings. On the Monday the factory worker did pluck up courage and she went to him. However the fact that she called me first gave the Managing Director ammunition which added to his reasons for releasing Innergize at the end of the first year of the process.

As a result of the Innergize process, a more democratic structure had been set up in the organisation. The process of change needs to continue in the hands of the staff and management together. It was planned that the factory and office staff would be represented on a committee which made decisions that affected the company. There would be a channel of communication between the staff and this body which would work both ways. This structure needs to be transparent. People need to be elected on to this panel or committee in a fair manner. Any attempt to return to an autocratic structure would dash the hopes of the staff and lower their morale. This structure needs to make sure that racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, negative attitudes to AIDS, or to certain religions in the workplace or any divisive issues can be aired, taken as opportunities towards increased understanding of one another. In 2002 the factory workers at Tastory chose to become part of a Union rather than negotiate with management directly. This has given them independent power rather than their having to rely on the beneficence of management.

If a principle of integration has been set, this would mean black men and black women in leadership positions and white men and white women working in the factory. This was an opportunity that the organisation needed to take. They chose not to. The new
management hired were white men and white women. To my knowledge no white factory staff have been employed in the intervening period. It is imperative that management are seen to have integrity.

Finally, the vision or mission statement of the organisation needs to be re-visited on an annual basis. Once complacency sets in new ideas hover only around the edges. Challenge is essential for the individual and the organisation. There needs to be continuous movement towards better quality, better communication, better service and a better product. Training and development continue. Sustainability is a mindset. It includes risk and the ability to continue to grow. My research shows that Brookfield was right about risk and its necessity in the workplace (Brookfield 1987). At the point where a person takes ownership of the company, she has internalised the vision or synthesised it to her personal framework.

Any diversity or change process in South Africa has to make sure that management is shared among all peoples of this country. This combination of energies will generate excellence. My hope is for companies in which people sustain other people by their ethics, their vision of a human approach to business, their positive values, and their openness to change and to one another.

**Conclusion**

The aim of the research was to find out if it was possible to integrate two race groups in an organisation, taking into consideration the legacy of Apartheid in South Africa. To be effective, we, the Innergize consultancy, had to attempt to heal some of the negative effects of that regime in both groups, bearing in mind there might be resistance to change. If change occurred we were to do what was possible to make sure the change was sustained in the organisation. We achieved our aims. It is possible to integrate different race groups. It is possible to create an environment that facilitates a degree of healing. Resistance to change is inevitable but it can be managed. Sustaining the positive effects of an intervention requires that the organisation commit itself in integrity to continue the process.
By looking back over the vista of the intervention we can isolate factors that contributed to meeting the initial requirements of the Company. These may be useful to other transformation consultants in a similar situation. At the same time this chapter will indicate areas that may have misdirected the focus of the consultant and could have been identified and corrected en route. This, too, could prove useful to others in the same field.
Postscript

The early release of Innergize was necessary for Tastory to move beyond the process. As I outlined in Chapter 4 and 5 some reasons for this had to do with external events such as the Twin Towers attack in New York in September, 2001 and a change of focus for the organisation. However, in the light of time and experience, I can see where I made mistakes. It is these mistakes I will now describe in the event that they may be useful to another consultant. The two themes I will discuss this under are those of power and boundaries.

I was in a position of strength as a consultant. The Managing Director had just joined the company. He knew little about how to integrate the company and depended upon me to make the right decisions. It was my first opportunity to work with an entire organisation. As a result of the initial interviews and the personal interviews after each workshop, almost everyone in the company had spoken to me about her/his private life. The office staff saw me as a kind of Messianic figure who could change their hardships. In fact they told me this. I was perceived as being very powerful.

The process almost ran away with itself. Once the first workshop for white staff started, the energy and enthusiasm it generated spread quickly. It was necessary to follow it up with the workshop for black staff as soon as possible. The combination of the two workshops built up an even greater expectation towards the mixed-race workshops which had to follow one another in close proximity or the second group would have been at a disadvantage. This meant that within the space of four months we had run four workshops, interviewed the staff twice, and put certain procedures in place to support the changes.

When the Continuity Groups were started after the mixed-race workshops I trained the facilitators and assisted them in running their meetings. This means I knew the agenda of each meeting and what the objectives were. I should have discussed this more with the Managing Director and worked with a committee.
The managing director had little personal power at first. His position was his power. Through the diversity process he gained personal power. The black staff had no power to begin with. As the process developed they became increasingly powerful until they were ‘checked’ in some ways. They have now joined a Union where they have the right to ensure proper treatment and they have access to power of a different kind.

Soon after the mixed workshops we ran the Partner’s workshops and by this time the Innergize team was exhausted. By the time December arrived and the final Christmas celebration was taking place I should have been making plans to move away from Tastory, making sure they would be able to continue what we had started. At this stage the Human Resource person had been fired and her replacement was hired. I had been very close to the HR person as she and I had run the process largely. I found it difficult to relate to her successor. I had become too emotionally involved – both with the staff and with the management.

For the December break I offered three people- who had gone through quite traumatic change- my autobiography with an attached workbook that I was writing for publication. The book enables the reader to write her/his own story. I should have asked the Managing Director for permission. One of the factory workers took a copy of the book, he worked with it, and it assisted both him and his neighbour to deal with issues in their lives. One person in management took it. She said if it had been available in the shops she would have bought it immediately. She knew it was a draft but wanted something to tide her over. She appreciated my thoughtfulness. A third person misinterpreted one sentence in the workbook where I gave an example of what could happen to a person in a certain situation. She read the sentence as being words she had spoken to me privately at one of the workshops. Instead of approaching me she told the Managing Director who told the UK manager who jumped to the conclusion that my book was about our process and that I had been drawing on the stories I had been told in confidence and writing a book about them. The Managing Director did not ask to see the book.
Adding fuel to the fire was the fact that two of the factory staff had called me over the Christmas break and early in 2002. One of the men had lost his son in a car accident and did not have the phone number of the new Human Resource person. I consoled him and gave him her number.

The second person phoned me over a weekend in connection with a departure from policy by the new Operations Manager as regards employing family members of a factory worker. I advised her to call the new Operations Manager but she had been threatened by the factory worker and did not yet trust the new Operations Manager, nor did she feel she had the right to tell him she was not supposed to hire family members. I suggested she tell the Managing Director in his office on Monday and I called him immediately. He set up a meeting with the HR person, the Operations Manager and myself and the men were not hired. This was viewed by the Managing Director as Innergize not referring staff to Line Management. Early in 2002 I received a hand-delivered letter aborting the second year of the Innergize process (See Appendix 8F).

I had become too used to “helping”. I had become a workaholic. Had I a family of my own or had I maintained my social support network during this period I might have stepped away sooner or planned the withdrawal process. I should have delegated more to the team. In a way I needed the connectedness. I cannot fully explain how much my connection with the factory workers meant to me. (See the poem ‘Release’ in Appendix 8B).

The abruptness of the removal of our team took the staff by surprise. I was asked to meet with the support groups and explain our withdrawal. I refused. The Continuity Group facilitators asked for a meeting with me. Over lunch away from the premises we said our goodbyes. I took the dismissal personally and it took me time to recover. Perhaps my decision to evaluate the process in this form was a result of that abrupt ending.