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Jönsson, Bodil; Whitelock, Ingrid

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Pacemaking Jönköping



“We know and can do much more than we thought we could!” – perhaps this is what is most clearly revealed by the participants in Pacemaking Jönköping. The process, final report and the project’s continuation comprise living proof that people in Sweden in 2004 do not all need to be either walking question marks or victims of today’s stress-related ill health, as what one is sometimes lead to believe based on the prevalent mood of resignation at the societal level and in the workplace.



The Jönköping County Labour Board is carrying out an EU project entitled "Supplying Competence" with 11 sub-projects. It focuses on supplying the county in the long term with a sufficient labour force for the future. One of the 11 sub-projects is called "A Healthier Working Life", and the Pacemaking Jönköping portion was included in this in the spring of 2004.

Pacemaking Jönköping was an individual and organizational development programme under the direction of Professor Bodil Jönsson, Lund University, Sweden. It aimed to increase people's consciousness of how they can create, maintain and recapture a constructive rhythm and pace, individually and in organizations, through awareness of goals, clear structure and functioning feedback mechanisms.

The decisive resources that Pacemaking Jönköping had were the experience and competence of the participants and the leader, a commonly shared inquisitiveness, inspiring material to work with and a number of well-structured internet tools. Of the 36 participants, the majority were in management positions. Ten of them had personal experience of job-related burnout: they had either triumphed over it or were in the process of doing so.

The efforts concentrated on the *lived* stress rather than on the (medical) diagnosis, and dealt with reasons and effects as well as possible treatments. The broad base for the Pacemaking research programme is described in Swedish at <http://www.certec.lth.se/pacemaking>.

The 36 participants and the leader met in person on three occasions at the beginning, middle and end of the project. Otherwise, the majority of the work was internet based with material that was made available step by step, assignments that were presented, as well as feedback on these from the leader, always with total openness. All the participants could read one another's contributions. The division of work was as follows:

The leader supplied inspiring material, concepts and structure during the first half (over 200 pages in text and images).

The participants contributed their situated experiences, reflections and new ideas.

The leader provided feedback and commented on the structure, individually and in the main subject areas.

The participants in this way could see their own contributions as a part of the whole and further pursue the contributions of others along lines that were of interest to them.

Long-term, sustainable learning requires variation rather than repetition. But variation is the cousin of chaos – you can only discover variation in a *structure*, and it was this structure that the leader made available.

The activity plan had four clearly defined sections.

1. Stress and myself.

We started with carefully selected materials and worked with assignments until we reached the point where the participants were able to concretely

specify Pacemaking from their point of view, starting with themselves and their own stress.

2. Stress and my place of work

In the next section, the participants were to concretize Pacemaking based on their *own place of work*.

3. Pacemaking across borders

This section was group based. With 3 to 5 other participants, each group was assigned to “cross-fertilize” one another’s analyses and ideas about their places of work and to discuss solutions to one another’s problems. In order to be manageable, the assignment was theme based:

- Stress related diseases as a healthy sign, 2 groups
- Sense of control, 2 groups
- New leaders, 2 groups
- Positive memes (basic building blocks of our minds and culture/contagious information patterns)
- Fear of being left behind
- The hunt for time stealers

4. This is how it turned out and how we plan to proceed

At the conclusion of the programme, each participant summarized the following:

- This is what I now know about myself from a stress perspective that I did not know before.
- This is what I now know about my place of work from a stress perspective that I did not know before.
- I/we should be able to manage the following on our own:
- I am not able to see how I/we can manage the following on our own:.... This is where we need help

The final report (in Swedish) is published at

<http://www.certec.lth.se/pacemaking/rapportjonkoping.pdf>.

Most of the material in it consists of structured excerpts from the participant’s contributions.