



NEWSLETTER for NURTURING SUPPORT GROUPS

July-August 1980
Volume 1, no. 6

Welcome to the sixth issue of **WE**, a newsletter for and about groups of people who get together for the purpose of giving each other personal support. This issue includes:

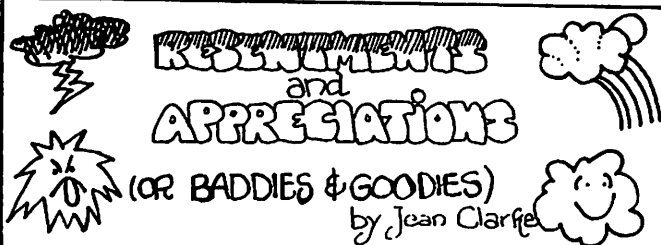
- a suggested format for group meetings
- suggested activities for group meetings
- thoughts about leading support group meetings from Sheila Hartmann
- an activity for strengthening your group and the individuals in it
- a request for **HELP**
- news about a support group
- calling **RESENTMENTS** and **APPRECIATIONS** by another name

Judee Hansord's information on how you can order this newsletter. If you have ideas about how to make this newsletter more useful for yourself or if you want your ideas included in the newsletter, write to Judee Hansord or me. I enjoy hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jean Illsley Clarke

Jean Illsley Clarke, Editor



It is important to provide a way for people to share positive and negative feelings at the close of each support group meeting, but the names for those feelings should be meaningful to the group.

If the word **RESENTMENT** sounds too strong, or if the idea of **APPRECIATIONS** seems too formal, encourage your group to choose words that are meaningful to them.

One group uses "Gripes and Joys." Another uses "Cold Prickleys and Warm Fuzzies," and another uses "Yucks and Goodies."

help!

We have a request from a reader who wants to know, "Does the Suggested Format for Group Meetings really work? Could we hear from someone who has used it?"

Will you write and tell us about your experiences with using the Suggested Format? What helps you; what changes do you make? If we publish your letter in **WE**, you will receive not only our heartfelt appreciation, but also a prepaid one year subscription to **WE**.

Thank you,
Jean Clarke

help! % WE
16535 9th ave. n.
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55447

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FIVE DOTS

The Five Dot activity builds strength in your group and in each individual. It is based on the idea that people who develop a wide variety of talents are more competent individuals than those who become expert in only one or two areas, and on the idea that a group is stronger if it does not channel each person into limited roles.

Five skills that are needed in any group are NURTURING, ORGANIZING, COMPROMISING, PROBLEM SOLVING and CREATING. Write each of those words on a different colored circle and place the circles in a line on the floor.

1. Say: "Let us identify some of the strengths in our group. Since every group needs people who are supportive nurturers, people who take good care of other people and who take care of our group, will you tell me the name of one person here who does a good job of nurturing?" When someone says, "Alice is good at that," ask Alice to come and stand on the NURTURING dot. (If more than one person is identified, choose one and hold the second name for a later re-run of the activity.)

2. Say: "Every group needs people who are good at organization, at providing structure. Who in this group has strong organizational skills?" When the group identifies Jennifer, ask Jennifer to stand on the ORGANIZING dot.

3. Say: "When we have a problem we need a good problem solver. Who in this group is good at solving problems?" When the group identifies Pat, ask Pat to stand on the PROBLEM SOLVING dot.

4. Say: "The ability to compromise, to pour oil on troubled waters, is important to a group. Who here do you look to for help when we need to be able to compromise?" When someone calls out Aaron's name, ask Aaron to stand on the COMPROMISING dot.

5. Say: "Without creativity and spontaneity a group would be lifeless and not very much fun. Who offers creativity in this group?" When Mark is identified, ask him to stand on the CREATING dot.

6. Say: "Here we see people who help us have a strong group, people who have developed skills that we appreciate. However, if we allow ourselves to slip into the habit of always calling on the same people to do the same jobs, we limit ourselves. If we depend only on one problem solver, what will we do if we have a problem and that person is out of town? Also, we are cheating ourselves as individuals if we put each other into "expertise slots" and don't expect each other to grow." Here is one way that we can encourage each other.

7. Go to each person in turn and ask him or her to claim the competent behavior that the group has identified. Ex.: "Pat, some people here have seen you do good Problem Solving. Will you accept that we appreciate your ability to help us solve problems?" Then ask that person to move to the dot that indicates an area in which he or she does not feel especially strong. For example: "Now, Pat, is there an area indicated by one of the other dots in which you are not as strong? Will you move and stand on that dot?"

8. When all five people have claimed their strength and then moved to a dot that identifies an area in which they are less strong, go to each person in turn and ask the group to

identify a specific incident in which they have been successful in that area. For example, to Aaron who moved from COMPROMISING to ORGANIZING, "Aaron, we know that you are good at helping us compromise and we appreciate that. Now you tell us that you may not have strong organizational skills. Will someone in the group tell Aaron about a time when he organized well or provided good structure or suggested a workable procedure when you needed it?" Encourage the group to give one or two examples and then say, "Aaron, will you accept that you do have organizational skills and that we need and appreciate those skills also?" Continue for each person.

When you have completed this activity, the group may want you to repeat it to include every member. Also, this activity can be repeated every few months to give people the opportunity to claim their growing skills and to observe which strengths the rest of the group is currently recognizing in them. This exercise provides a way to remind us that we can build a strong group and strong individuals by helping people develop a wide variety of talents.



MY TURN ALREADY?



By Sheila Hartmann

Well, that's that. I've stalled as long as I can—my turn to lead our support group. I guess I understand the SUGGESTED FORMAT but I'm not really sure about how to lead it. That seems to be the missing ingredient. I want to put the quality of ME into running the meeting.

"Hmmm, I wonder how I do that." John picked up the phone and dialed his friend Molly. Molly leads lots of workshops and maybe she can help John develop some personal quality in running the support group meeting.

"Hello," Molly answered.

"Hi, this is John. I need some help. Do you have time to talk about my running the support group meeting? I'm the leader next week and I've got this SUGGESTED FORMAT to follow but I want help putting ME into the meeting. Will you help?"

"Sure, John. I've been thinking about the same thing the workshops I do. Let me think a little longer about it and then I'll call you back." Molly hung up the phone and thought, "What do I do that works? Well, in the workshop I did for foster parents I offered people skills in their roles as caretakers of children. (That's STRUCTURE.) I provided theory and information supporting the exercises and gave them ideas to think through. That encourages THINKING. We laughed. (We had FUN.) Three main points, NURTURING and STRUCTURING-THINKING-FUN. I'll call John and we can explore ways to fit these into his SUGGESTED FORMAT for the Support Group meeting. "Hi, John, here's what I've come up with, NURTURING and STRUCTURING-THINKING-FUN. Do these sound like ingredients of a good meeting for you?"

"Yes, I guess so, Molly. NURTURING and STRUCTURING sounds good but how do you do it?"

"Well, I offer Ground Rules that provide protection for people to do what they want without worrying about being put down. You can also remember to be empathetic and a good listener. When you show that you care about people and are concerned about their problems and their joys you provide warmth. Warmth is part of Nurturing and rules are part of Structuring. How does that sound, John?"

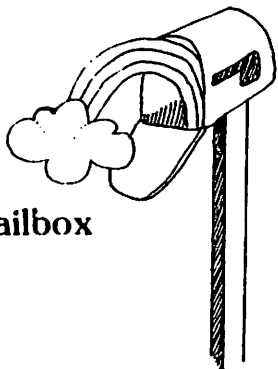
"OK. Now let me try the next ingredient—Thinking. I could pick an area to explore at this meeting. A topic for us to think about and process. I can provide the idea, theory and facts. With this information we will have food for thought and perhaps be willing to discuss new ways of thinking about the topic."

Molly said, "Sounds like you have the Thinking part ready to go, John. Now, what about FUN?"

John replied, "We like each other so spending time together is fun. Also, I could make the opening exercise fun by using goofy name tags and I think it would be more fun if we got up and moved around during our support group than just sitting in one place and listening. When I present the Thinking part, I can post my facts on colored posters with some cartoons. I'm tired of having the chairs arranged in rows week after week, reminds me of being in grade school. I'll arrange them differently—that will be fun for me. Laughter is fun and I appreciate our ability to laugh at ourselves in a positive way. I have never thought of that as an ingredient for a good meeting before, but it is. One more thing, I've heard of working easy, the ability to work in a way that is comfortable instead of drudgery. I'm going to try that. How does all that sound to you, Molly? Are those the kind of things you were thinking about?"

"Yes, John. Sounds like a dynamite meeting to me! You've combined the three ingredients of a good presentation, Nurturing and Structuring - Thinking - Fun. You even used Seeing, Hearing and Doing activities. You must have read the article about that in the last WE. Let me know how you do at your meeting. Bye."

John hung up, feeling relieved about the planning and excited about how he was going to run the next support group meeting.

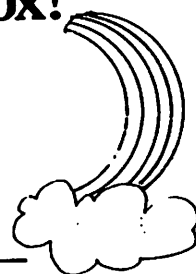


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♥ **OPENING ACTIVITY THAT OFFERS EVERYONE A POSITIVE PERSONAL MESSAGE**

Ask each person to interview a partner. Find out one thing that your partner is glad to have started and one thing that she/he has successfully completed during the past six months.

♥ **CLOSING ACTIVITY THAT OFFERS EVERYONE A POSITIVE PERSONAL MESSAGE**

Use masking tape to stick a sheet of paper to each person's back. Ask, "Will each one of you write a positive personal message for each person on his or her sheet?"

news about support groups

Family Service Agency in St. Paul, Minnesota offers a way to extend the Five Dot Activity described in this issue to become an ongoing way to give support to each other. They suggest putting the words **NURTURING, ORGANIZING, PROBLEM SOLVING, COMPROMISING** and **CREATING** permanently on the floor of the lounge. A person who wants to share a celebration with the other people in the lounge can stand on a dot and tell about a success, or can stand on a dot and say, "I didn't do so well in this area today. Will someone remind me of something I have done well in this area to help me remember that I do have the ability to be competent in this way?"

SUGGESTED FORMAT for GROUP MEETINGS

Place _____ Date _____
Time _____ Person in charge _____

Program:

- ♥ opening activity that offers everyone a positive personal message
- ♥ celebrating wins and sharing problems
- ♥ practice skills, new learnings, play.
- ♥ suggestion circle
- ♥ plan the next meeting
- ♥ resentments and appreciations
- ♥ closing activity that offers everyone a positive personal message

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- Suggested activities
- Thoughts on theory and purpose of support groups
- News from other support groups

newsletter for nurturing support groups