



newsletter for nurturing support groups

January-February, 1984
Volume 5, Number 3

Dear Reader,

By now you should have received your copy of *Who, ME Lead a Group?* as a special gift for the Volume 5, Number 2 issue of **WE**.

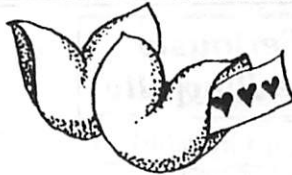
This issue of **WE** is a collection of guest articles and activities, mostly about **affirmations** and **play**. I appreciate the fine contributions of these readers and urge the rest of you to consider sharing things you are excited about with **WE**.

Sincerely,

Jean Illsley Clarke, Editor

FINDING MY OWN AFFIRMATION

by Deane Gradous



How do people discover the affirmations, the messages that they need to help them grow, that are just right for them? For quite a long time, I have wondered about the process of fitting affirmations to people. My husband uses one that seems to work for him on any occasion: "I like myself unconditionally." But his affirmation does nothing for me. Pamela Levin has helped people find and use affirmations for growing children and recycling adults.* These affirmations are just right for many growing people. I use them, too.

But what if I want to affirm myself in an area that doesn't seem to be covered by a familiar affirmation? Creating my own is my answer, and it becomes my problem. How do I create an affirmation to fit my special need?

Recently I felt a real push to upgrade my writing skills. Now here was a place for a specific affirmation — one that would fit me. I began with the obvious: "I am a good writer." This affirmation felt just right for a few days. "Yes, I could be a good writer." Then I began to think about what I meant by "good." Just what is a good writer?

About this time I went to a facilitator's meeting. There we celebrated our growing and discussed affirmations. During the meeting I asked the others to affirm me as a "fast, easy, efficient writer." This affirmation was closer to what I needed, closer to defining what I meant by a good writer. Soon, however, I began to ask myself where was the part in my affirmation that would affirm me as an effective writer? I could write quickly and easily and efficiently all day long, but if no one wanted to read what I had written, if it had no meaning for the reader, my writing was not good.

I wanted a new affirmation, one which would affirm that I have something important to say and that I communicate effec-

Suggested Activity

How To Ask Your Group For Support

by Carole Gesme



Go around the group and ask each member to quickly state what kind of support he or she wants at this time. Then give the group ten minutes to move around and give each other the support they have to offer and to ask each other for individual support. Example: Martha asked for support in looking for a new job. Marie offered to call her once a week with encouragement. Jim recommended a career change institute, and Dave gave Martha the name of a company that might be able to use her skills.

Fred asked three individuals to give him advice and encouragement about a new project he is starting.

Carole Gesme lives in Minnetonka, MN, and is a Self-Esteem Facilitator to such diverse groups as upper management corporate parents, unwed parents and parents who formerly battered their children.

tively through the written word. I found my affirmation: "I, Deane, write with clarity and precision and humanity."

This affirmation fits me well. Now I don't care if I write quickly, easily, or efficiently. I do care that my reader understands and finds meaning in my message. Because of my job, my responsibilities as a writer have increased. More than ever, I am obliged to spell and punctuate accurately and to use words with precision. I delight in my ability to affirm myself in this task. Speed and efficiency in writing will come later, when I am ready.

* These affirmations were first listed as "New Messages" in the book for therapists, *Becoming the Way We Are: A Transactional Guide to Personal Development*, Transactional Publications, 1974.

Jean Illsley Clarke, in her book for parents, *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair*, Winston Press, 1979, presents the affirmations in expanded form.

Deane Gradous lives in Wayzata, Minnesota. She is a Self-Esteem Facilitator for parents and in business settings. She is an editor and writer of training materials.

Workshops:

Facilitator Training Workshops

July 16-20, 1984, Seattle, Washington

Led by Jean Illsley Clarke

July 30-August 3, 1984, Cincinnati, Ohio

Led by Gail Nordeman

August 13-17, 1984, Plymouth, Minnesota

Led by Jean Illsley Clarke

A week-long workshop for people who want to . . .

- Facilitate the *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair* parenting model, or
- Improve group leadership skills for working with growth, educations or support groups.

Write to WE for details.

Experiencing Enough Workshop

July 4-8, 1984

Greater Chicago Area

A week of structured experiences focused on pre-verbal issues and therapeutic bonding.

Led by Pam Levin with guest staff Gail and Harold Nordeman, Elaine Childs-Gowell and Jean Illsley Clarke. For details write to Pam Levin, Box 1429, Ukiah, CA 95482.

Suggested Activity

Build Your Own Affirmations

by Jean Clarke

1. Read *Finding My Own Affirmation* by Deane Gradous (in this issue).
2. Write four or more affirmations for yourself on a card or paper. Have them reflect how you want yourself to be. Make some of them unconditional — affirmations that you do not have to earn by doing well.

Examples:

I have a right to be.

I'm glad I'm me.

I'm glad I'm alive.

I like myself unconditionally.

Make some of them conditional. Focus them on your capabilities.

I finish things on time.

I jog with easy, flowing motion.

I type fast and accurately.

I am patient and see humor in people's behavior.

3. Read your affirmations aloud to a couple of friends or to your support group, and ask them to repeat your affirmations for you.
4. Say your affirmations to yourself, 5 times when you first wake up in the morning, and 5 times before you go to sleep at night.
5. Continue repeating these affirmations daily until you change them spontaneously or until you feel the need for a change and think it through!

Today the children appeared to be swarming over the mound of dirt, some digging holes, some scraping lines in the dirt with their trowels. One child delighted in jabbing at the dirt with a spade, over and over. Another group of children was playing nearby in the water filled ditch; dropping things in, fishing things out, leaping across. What is this special magic that takes place amongst children, which we have labeled play? It is the most envious quality that children possess. It is goal-less, joyous, frolicsome and contains within it the freedom to start and stop at will. Play exists for its own sake.

Although children usually do it better, play also belongs to the world of adults. I recall wonderful memories of playing with other adults; a time when we sang for hours and hours into the night, built sand castles at the beach. In a volleyball game with adults and children, we were absorbed totally in the pleasure of the moment. No one was concerned about winning. These play experiences have all contained elements of ecstasy, they were peak experiences.

Perhaps children are the best teachers of play. When a child runs he experiences the flow of air on himself, the movement of his body, the feeling of his feet pushing against the earth, the trees passing by. Adult runners may think about reaching their goal, improv-

Play Seriously and Live Playfully

by Marilyn Grevstad



ing their time, getting healthy. They run with purpose. When children play they take all their random sensory input and collect and organize it. Play is a way for children to make sense of their world and gain control over it.

When adults play it is quite the opposite. They break through their controlled orderly existence to spontaneity, heightened here and now awareness, and often achieve a state of joy. Play for adults springs from the subconscious mind. Play builds bridges between the conscious and subconscious mind which are necessary for mental health.

Many great scientists report that their theories came to them as metaphors.

These ideas appeared to spring playfully from someplace other than their conscious minds. It was only later after concentrated thought that they made sense out of them.

Nancy Foy, author of the *Yin and Yang of Organizations*, says "The group that plays together, stays together." Groups that have experienced play activities together can testify to the morale, productivity, and group-welding benefits of those activities. Support groups will do well to schedule play time as well as time for nurturing and learning. Play seriously and live playfully, is the advice of Seth in *Seth Speaks* by Jane Roberts. We would be wise to take his advice.

So remember the words of Tom Robbins in *Still Life with Woodpecker*, "It's never too late to have a happy childhood." Let's all go out and play!

Books referred to:

Yin and Yang of Organizations, by Nancy Foy, William Morrow and Co.

Seth Speaks, Jane Roberts, Bantam Books

Still Life with Woodpecker, Tom Robbins, Bantam Books

Marilyn Grevstad lives in Seattle, WA. She is a Parent Educator at Shoreline Community College and started a Nursery School that focused on high self-esteem several years ago — long before many people realized the importance of high self esteem.

Opening Activity for Remembering Play

by Marilyn Greustad

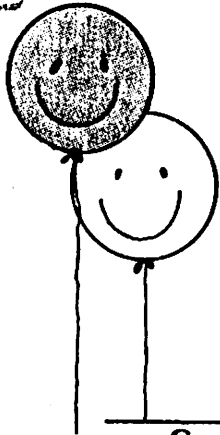
Choose a partner. Make a name tag for your partner. Find out a time when he had fun playing. Introduce your partner to the group and tell about his play experience.

Playful Closing Activity

by Marilyn Greustad

At the end of the meeting, briefly review the activities of the meeting.

- Ask several people to share what they plan to do to affirm themselves and to play.
- Ask for resentments and appreciations.
- Pass out balloons. Spend five minutes playing with the balloons. (Don't pop them.) Give your balloon away to someone. As you give away the balloon, tell your friend a reason you like her.



Suggested Activities for the Child Within Us

by Marilyn Greustad

1. Tiptoe Through the Tulips

Tiptoe around pretend tulips as you sing:
"Tiptoe through the tulips, through the tulips,
That is where I'll be, come tiptoe
Through the tulips with me."



Sing other verses with appropriate movements such as;
Come skipping through the tulips
Come leaping over tulips
Come slither through the tulips
Come stomping on the tulips

Source Unknown

2. Contract to Play

Write a contract with your support group to play this week with other adults or children. Plan how you will do that. Keep your contract. Give yourself a gold star when you do it. (Be sure there are gold stars to pass out.)



3. Be the Age You Want to Be

Post age-signs in different parts of the room. Near each sign collect toys appropriate to that age, i.e. BIRTH TO 6 MONTHS, teething rings, nursing bottles, rattles, mobiles, etc. 6 MONTHS TO 18 MONTHS, cardboard books, soft blocks, nesting toys, pull toys, etc. 18 MONTHS TO 3 YEARS, playdough, blocks, balls, push toys, etc. 3 YEARS TO 6 YEARS, dolls, trucks, dress-ups, felt pens, paper, etc. 6 YEARS TO 12 YEARS, jump ropes, yo-yos, water colors, paper, legos, etc. 12 YEARS TO 19 YEARS, frisbee, cards, board and word games, nerf ball.

Invite people to be whatever age they want to be, go to that part of the room and play. You will need one "adult" to set limits, give support and protection. After the play session, gather the group to talk about their play experience.

Thanks to Henry Maier of the University of Washington for the above idea.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

by Kathy Brinkerhoff

Who Are You?

The PURPOSE of this activity is:

1. To allow participants to become connected quickly with each other.
2. To allow participants to introduce each other to the group.

MATERIALS:

None

TIME REQUIRED: 40 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. The facilitator briefly discusses the goals of the activity.
2. The facilitator asks each participant to select another participant in the group that she would like to meet and split off from the group.
3. The participants are asked to find out about each other by taking turns asking questions.
4. The participants are then invited to come back together as a group.
5. Each participant introduces her new acquaintance to the group. After the new acquaintance has been introduced, she has the option of adding more information.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. The facilitator may suggest open-ended statements, for example:

My name is. . .
My titles are. . .
My marital status is. . .
My hometown is. . .
The reason I'm here is. . .
Right now I'm feeling. . .
When I'm in a new group, I. . .
I'm happiest when. . .
I feel the most affectionate when. . .



2. This process may be used periodically to explore various aspects of a relationship through mutual self-disclosure and risk taking.

CAUTIONS:

1. Before a facilitator tries suggestion #2, she/he must make sure the participants trust each other. It is possible that some participants might disclose some information about themselves that they were not quite ready to do. Thus, they have opened themselves up and they might feel frightened and/or relieved.
2. A ground rule of confidentiality must be observed.

Kathy Brinkerhoff lives in Lafayette, CA where she has extensive experience as a Parent Educator for parents of infants. Kathy is currently editing a book of Suggestion Circles for parents of infants.



Resentments and Appreciations

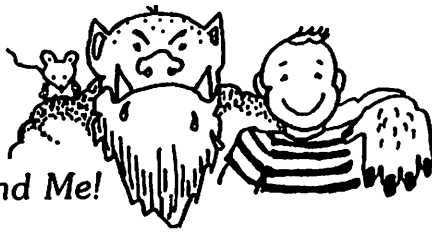


The use of resentments and appreciations at the end of each meeting provides a place for people to express their feelings about the group activity or climate. It is not a place for personal confrontations. It is the responsibility of the leader to make sure that a resentment is made in a general statement, not one that attacks an individual.

If Kim says, "I resent Pat's sexist remark," the leader intervenes with a request, "Kim, will you restate your resentment by telling us your feelings about sexist remarks and leave out any individual's name?"

Book Review

The Mouse, the Monster and Me!



The Mouse, the Monster and Me!, by Pat Palmer, is an assertiveness book for young people ages 8-12 years. Children are encouraged to differentiate between actions that are aggressive, passive or assertive by identifying or roleplaying behavior that is like a monster, like a mouse, or like **YOU**.

Dr. Palmer offers things to think about such as, "There are good ways (like **YOU**) and bad ways (picture of a monster and a mouse) of asking for what you want. A good way to ask is straight out. That is being honest and assertive. Some mouse ways are hinting, begging, whining, pouting, crying. Some monster ways are having a tantrum, sulking, hitting, shouting, getting mad."

Beside work book activities and things to think about, Dr. Palmer suggests activities. An example is:

Strengths Game

1. Sit in a circle with family members or friends.
2. Fold a piece of paper in half lengthwise. Put your name at the top of each side.
3. List your good qualities and the things you like about yourself on the left side.
4. Pass the paper to the person on your right. The person on your right lists the good qualities he or she sees in you on the right side.
5. Keep passing the papers until yours returns to you.
6. Compare the two sides.
 - Do people see me the same way I see myself?
 - How do I let others see more of my strengths?

The illustrations are marvelous and the leader guide is helpful. Run, do not walk, to get this excellent book.

The Mouse, the Monster and Me! Assertiveness for Young People, Pat Palmer, EdD., \$3.95, with teacher's guide, \$4.95 plus \$1.00 shipping, Impact Publisher's, P.O. Box 1094, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406.

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WE
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Plymouth, MN 55447

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

newsletter for nurturing support groups

suggested activity

"Good Grandparents"

- ♥ That he/she shares stories of history, childhood memories, ambitions....
- ♥ That Grandpa shares his zucchini bread recipe with me!

In a class I teach we made a list of "things I wish Good Grandparents would do." I asked people to make two columns — one for each set of grandparents. I collected the lists and combined and dittoed them. We then proceeded to update and make the lists more realistic. We also individualized the list for each set. It was a very successful session and most helpful in discussing how people deal with their own parents and their spouses.

Pearl Noreen lives in Seattle, Washington and is a Self-Esteem Facilitator and a creative Parent Educator at Shoreline Community College.

by Pearl Noreen

Suggested Format for Group Meetings

Place _____

Date _____

Time _____

Person in Charge _____

Program:

- Opening activity that offers everyone a positive personal message
- Ground rules
- Celebrating wins and sharing problems
- Asking for support
- Practice skills, new learnings, play
- Suggestion circle
- Plan the next meeting
- Resentments and Appreciations
- Closing activity that offers everyone a positive personal message