



## NEWSLETTER for NURTURING SUPPORT GROUPS

September-October 1980  
Volume 2, Number 1

Welcome to the seventh 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
- ideas about how to start a group meeting when people are busy talking
- a letter from a support group member who is moving telling what she got from the group
- news about support groups
- how the words a support group leader uses can invite dependency, independence, cooperation or stubbornness by Deane Gradous.

Judee Hansord, Marnie Lilja and I are celebrating having completed the first year of the publication of **WE**. We appreciate your support and response. Some groups who do training of small group leaders have requested special rates for multiple copies; we are happy to announce that you may purchase multiple subscriptions at the rate of \$11.00 for from 5 to 19 copies, and \$9.00 for 20 or more copies. Good news in this time of inflation.

*Jean Illsley Clarke*

Sincerely,  
Jean Illsley Clarke

### WHEN IT IS TIME TO BEGIN ...

You are leading the meeting and it is time to begin, but two or more people are engaged in a spirited exchange. How can you get the meeting started? Here are some ideas offered during a Suggestion Circle. You can ask your group for more.



1. Decide whether it is important content or chit-chat. If it is chit-chat, start. If not, consider incorporating what people are talking about into an opening exercise or a name tag interview.
2. Use "starting" body language. Stand if others are sitting.
3. Ask if the focus person wants a Suggestion Circle. (See Vol. I, No. 1).
4. Acknowledge the fact that there is an exchange going on and ask the people involved to finish it after the meeting. Then start.
5. Stand directly beside the people who are talking and say, "Will you help me start our meeting now?" If they say "No," say, "I am going to start now. Please finish your discussion after the meeting." Start.
6. Ring a bell.
7. Hand each of the people a pad and pencil and say, "If you wish to continue your discussion right now, will you please write notes to each other? It is 7:30 and I am going to start the meeting."

Jean Clarke



## Does It Really Matter What Language Leaders Use?

by Deane Gradous

A group of trained leaders explored this question and answered it emphatically, "Yes!" Leaders' words can offer people choices or they can limit choices. By limiting choices, leaders limit opportunities for people to grow.

You can use the same process the training group used to discover effective language for your group.

Introduce the following exercise by stating clearly that the purpose of this 10 - 15 minute exercise is to explore different ways to ask people to participate and to find those ways which are more likely to be effective.

Write each of the following five sentences on a separate card and ask five volunteer members of your group to each take a card and be prepared to read the message.

1. The next item on our agenda is learning about the 4-Parent exercise. *Would you* turn to page 14 in your **Self-Esteem** book?
2. After we do **RESENTMENTS** and **APPRECIATIONS**, *do me a favor* and stay a few extra minutes to finish some business.
3. At our last meeting we talked about discounting. *Now we will* decide how to use that information to change our meetings.
4. I had fun with you learning about three ways we compliment others. *Will you* use this three balloon sheet to record ways you give compliments at home?
5. In order to experience redefining, *could you please* read this card to your partner?

Ask the remaining members of your group to role play people who are listening to the messages under the following conditions:

- One of you has recently had an argument with someone and you have brought your angry feelings with you, tonight.
- One of you has just decided to stop being a door mat. You have resolved not to do anything "just to be nice."
- One of you started your day at 6:00 a.m., worked 9 hours, fixed dinner for the children, and dragged yourself to the meeting at 7:30 p.m.
- One of you is here because your friend insisted that you come and you really wanted to stay at home tonight.

### CHART

Leader	Leader
Language that encourages dependency, being overly pleasing or rebelliousness	Language that encourages Self-determination and choice.
<i>Would you please . . .</i>	<i>Will you . . .</i>
<i>I want you to . . .</i>	<i>I invite you . . .</i>
<i>Do me a favor . . .</i>	<i>I encourage you . . .</i>
<i>Could you . . .</i>	<i>If you are willing . . .</i>
<i>Why don't you . . .</i>	<i>Will someone . . .</i>
<i>Now you will . . .</i>	<i>*Do not use "will you" unless you will accept a "no".</i>



Invite everyone to stay in their roles until all the messages have been read in turn slowly and clearly and to think about how they feel about the messages.

Now ask the readers to read the messages on their cards.

Ask participants to share how they felt either giving or responding to the messages.

Ask people to derole, to put aside any roles they were playing, whether reading cards or responding, and to see each other as they really are. Ask your group members to find more ways to encourage participation and allow choices.

You may wish to share with your group the responses from the people in our training group. Remind people that these are presented as ideas to think about, not as "right" answers, and that every group must find its own best ways of asking.

To No. 1. "When someone says 'would you do something for me?' I automatically say 'no, I wouldn't.'"

To No. 2. "When I heard 'Do me a favor' I turned off. I'm not here to do people favors. I'm here for me, and besides that, the leader should finish on time."

To No. 3. "She said 'we will do it' without 'me'; she isn't 'we' unless she is pregnant or has a mouse in her pocket. I resent it when others assume I'll do something."

To No. 4. "The only message that elicited feelings of self-determination in me was 'will you'. When someone asks if I will do something, I have the choice and can say 'yes' or 'no' for me."

To No. 5. "I thought to myself 'Sure I could but I won't. I'll pass this one.'"

The training group make a list of suggestions and a chart.

### SUGGESTIONS

- Use "let us" only when facilitator is clearly with the group.
- "I invite you" is often experienced as just that—inviting people into new experiences or sharing.
- "If you are willing" is a variation of "will you" and invites people to think for themselves.
- "I encourage" is often experienced as "this person cares about me."
- "Will someone choose to" is being really open about offering choices.

They agreed that "will you" is usually experienced as choice permitting and is encouraging to participants. They also agreed that while it may seem repetitious to the facilitator to use "will you" repeatedly, other people rarely notice or object to it.



## REBIRTHDAY PARTY

This is a special CELEBRATION. It is fun and gives people a chance to have a birthday celebration just the way they want it. It is also an opportunity to give up some old, sad or angry feelings and replace them with happy memories.

**PREPARATION . . .** Each person who is going to participate in the party chooses a past birthday that he or she would like to relive in a better way. After each has decided on a gift, decide on the other things—what kind of food, what activities or games, what clothes to wear.

Now it is time for the whole group to share wishes and decide how to do the party. If Jim is going to recelebrate his 6th birthday party and what he wants is a pony, decide whether he would prefer a carved wooden horse that he can keep to remind him of this happy Rebirthday Party or whether he would prefer to have a live pony ride, or perhaps a ride on the ponies at the Merry-Go-Round. Throw out the, "Oh, we can't do that!" attitudes and brainstorm ways of experiencing the gift of a pony in the here and now. Maybe it is possible for Jim to buy himself a horse. Or maybe he will buy a pony for the day and give it to a young friend the next day. Or maybe he will decide that a painting of a pony is the most satisfying now.

If Kate is recelebrating her 16th birthday party and what she wanted was for her friends to dance with her, now is the time to find out how many people at the party will be willing to dance with her. If Bill wants to redo a birthday at which he gets to choose the activities, he should tell the group very explicitly what age he will pretend to be and exactly what activities he wants. "I want to pretend I am ten and play Crazy Eights."

The birthdays may cover many years. Maybe someone will redo forty and get the appreciation he wanted instead of the unfunny practical jokes that he forced himself to laugh at.

**PLAN THE PARTY . . .** the place, food, activities and anything else that is needed. Decide on who will do the decorating, prepare the games, bring the food. Of course, everyone does not need to eat the same things. One person may be eating cake and ice cream with pink lemonade, while another eats hot dogs with relish.

**AFTER THE PARTY . . .** Savor the experience. Thank your Support Group for helping you replace an unsatisfactory memory with a happy experience.

**HAPPY REBIRTHDAY!**

Jean Clarke

## NEWS ABOUT SUPPORT GROUPS

Marnie Lilja, co-publisher and layout designer for **WE** joined a permanent personal support group of two on September 6 when she married David Baehr.

### 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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• newsletter for nurturing support groups •



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

Ask each person to interview a partner. Find out where your partner would go for a vacation or an adventure if time, money or energy were not a consideration. Ask what would be the most fun or the most exciting thing about that experience. Introduce your partner to the group and tell briefly about the vacation or adventure.

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

Ask the group to stand in a circle. Hold onto the loose end of a ball of yarn and throw the ball to another person while you say, "I appreciate you because . . ." That person hangs onto the yarn and throws an appreciation to another person. Continue until each person in the group is holding onto the yarn. Move the activity along quickly. Ask the last person to return an appreciation and the yarn to the person who threw it and by continuing in that manner, rewind the ball of yarn.

### A LETTER TO A SUPPORT GROUP FROM A PERSON WHO IS MOVING

Dear Friends,

Before I move, I want to thank you for being part of my support group.

I feel like Dorothy's three friends in Oz. You have all been Dorothy to me. You have helped me find a heart—risking entering into friendships and caring about people and letting people care about me. You have helped me find a brain—one that can listen to my body and my feelings and together make decisions (and a brain that has lots of creativity too!) And you have helped me find courage—courage to make changes in my behavior. Courage to change because I know I had your support and understanding even if my new behavior had some rough edges . . . .

Fondly,  
Karen West

Edited by Jean Illsley Clarke

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**WE**  
16535 9th Avenue N.  
Plymouth, MN 55447

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