



newsletter for nurturing support groups

July-August, 1981
Volume 2, Number 6

Welcome to the twelfth 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
- news about support groups
- directions for Brainstorm Sessions and Suggestions Circles
- Three Ways of Hearing Affirmations from *Self Esteem: A Family Affair Leader Guide*, by Jean I. Clarke
- Jean Clarke talks about How Adults Take in Information
- Deane Gradous offers A Strength Building Exercise that involves Listening, Seeing and Doing
- How to Celebrate closure with a Rainbow Puzzle

If you have topics that you want covered in this newsletter, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Jean M. Clarke

Brain Storm Sessions and Suggestions Circles

by Jean Clarke

When a person in your group wants specific suggestions about a problem, use a Suggestion Circle. Ask each member to give his or her best quality suggestion and ask the person with the problem to listen to each suggestion without indicating acceptance or rejection of any one. Ask him or her to take the ideas home and decide upon which one to use. (See specific instructions on how to run a Suggestion Circle in Volume 1, Issue 1.)

When the person asking for help wants a wide variety of creative, horizon-expanding options, use the Brainstorm Technique.

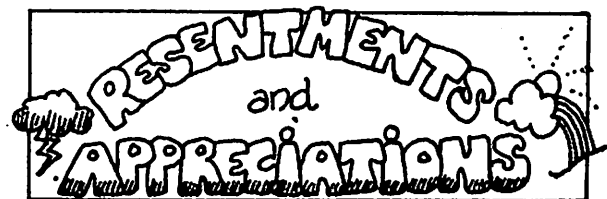
1. Ask the person to state the problem in as clear and concise a way as possible.
2. Ask each person to write down five or six possible solutions.
3. Write the first suggestion from one person's list on a chalkboard or newsprint. Ask everyone in the group to brainstorm off that idea — to give every idea that he/she thinks of without evaluating its possibility or practicality.
4. Repeat for everyone's first idea and as many more as the person requesting ideas wants or as the group wishes to take time for.

Give the lists to the listener for evaluation. If he/she wants help with the evaluation and the group agrees to help, ask each person to choose the three most valuable ideas. Take a hand vote. Invite the listener to ask questions of the group about why they chose the ideas they did.



CELEBRATING CLOSURE WITH A RAINBOW PUZZLE

It was Betty's last meeting with the Support Group. She had asked the group to plan a special closure event for her. Russ made a large rainbow out of tag board. He cut it into jig saw puzzle pieces. The members of the group wrote messages about why Betty is important on the puzzle pieces. Betty asked the group to help her fit the puzzle together so she could see her rainbow.



If you ask for Resentments and Appreciations at the end of each meeting and people are silent, remind them that they are not to respond to Resentments or Appreciations but are to hear them and do something about them if they want to. Expressing your Resentments and Appreciations lets the group know that the rules apply to the leader as well as to other people.

A Strength Building Exercise using Listening, Seeing and Doing

by Deane Gradous

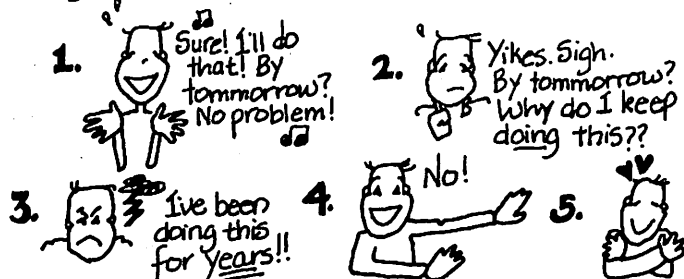
Based on the Belief that we grow from our own strengths

Purpose: To become aware of our own strengths

To acknowledge the strengths we find in others

Time: Allow one hour for this exercise.

Materials: One sheet of drawing paper 11x17 or larger for each person, a variety of colored markers or crayons, 10 or more two inch square pieces of colored paper for every participant, and glue sticks.



1. Opening statement: "Most of us are unaware of many of our strengths. We may have strengths that we do not value. We may say, 'Of course I can do that, so what?' When others let us know they value our abilities, we can begin to appreciate ourselves in new ways. We can help build the self esteem of other people by identifying their strengths."
2. Adopt a ground rule, "It is OK to brag during this exercise," or give the group whatever permission they need to set aside "Don't brag" rules for the next hour. You may want to remind the group that it is important for people to see themselves clearly and that involves recognizing their strengths.
3. If the group has more than five people, divide into small groups of three or four. Hand out drawing papers and markers or crayons. Say: "Think about a recent activity, change, or accomplishment that you are proud of. Perhaps you have not told anybody about this activity. On the other hand, you may have received many accolades for your accomplishment. On your drawing paper write, 'I am proud that I . . .' Complete the sentence with a picture."

Let the artist in you show us several facets of your change or achievement. Use symbols, stick figures, masks, colors, arrows, before and after scenes, or any other way that you want to express your accomplishment visually. Take five or ten minutes for this."

4. When most participants seem to be finished drawing vigorously or at the end of ten minutes, ask people to stop drawing.

Say: "Take turns being the focus person in your group. The focus person shows his or her picture and talks about it in some detail. The listeners job is to look and to listen and to intuit the strengths the focus person is demonstrating. Listeners may ask clarification questions only. Allow about three minutes."

5. Toss (yes, toss!) many small slips of colored paper to each small group and hand each group a glue stick.

Ask: "Will the focus person and the members of the group each write words describing the strengths or positive qualities the focus person brought to his or her accomplishment? Use a separate piece of paper for each strength."

Ask: "Will the focus person read the strengths he or she wrote and glue them on the front or the back of the large drawing paper?"

Say: "As the rest of you hand your strength papers to the focus person will you say one of the following:

- 'I believe that you are (read the strength).'
- 'I have heard that you are _____.'
- 'I see that you are _____.'
- 'Your _____ is a great asset to you and to others.'

Ask: "Focus person, will you take the papers with a 'Thank you' and refrain from denying any of the strengths? and glue the papers on your drawing paper?"

6. Repeat until each group member has had the opportunity to be the focus person.
7. Call the group back together and ask: "Does anyone want to share a response to this experience with the whole group? You might begin: 'I learned _____' or 'I relearned _____' or 'I became aware _____'."
8. Close by encouraging all of the group members to continue to grow and to build upon their strengths.

Jean Egeland invited me to attend a meeting of her Support Group which as been meeting for two years following the class Mothers, Fathers and Others Who Care About Children. The group has been discussing competition. They did several exercises about handling competition between children at different ages. (I will feature these exercises in future issues.) This group has decided to move back into a formal class experience in the fall and get some more concentrated information after which they will go back to their Support Group format. They are a superb group of people who obviously depend upon and enjoy each other's support.

Jean Clarke

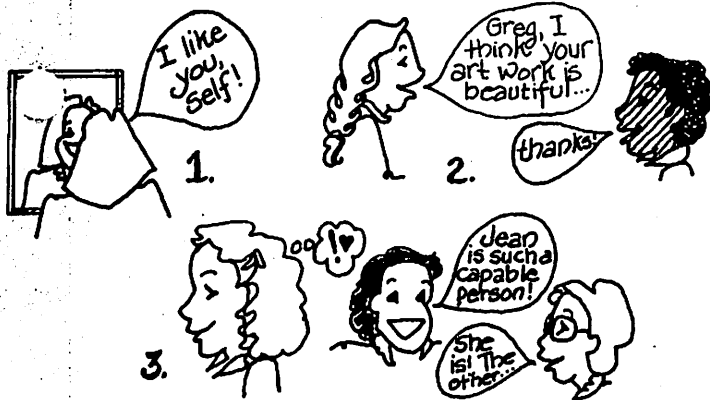


NEWS NEWS NEWS about support groups

Sometimes the best way to get support is to find the right support group for you. Jan Schneider writes:

"I especially like reading in **WE** about different kinds of support groups and ways of making them work. I just ended a support group here that I started two years ago. I realize now that I was too intent on trying to make it work when the other members didn't want me, or anyone else, to lead, or to do any type of activity that could be construed to be an exercise. Next time I will remember that there are lots of people around and find the ones who want a group experience closer to my own. I was caught in that myth of scarcity. Now I feel comforted, knowing there are many people around me that can support me, and me them, in many different ways."

Three Ways of Hearing Affirmations



This activity is a sample activity from **Self Esteem: A Family Affair Leader Guide**, by Jean Illsley Clarke. Try it with your group.

Say: **AFFIRMATIONS** and **NEGATIONS** are two powerful kinds of communications. **AFFIRMATIONS** are powerful positive messages we give each other and ourselves that define who we are and how we expect to be treated. We may or may not be aware that we are giving affirmations, but whenever we interpret positively, verbally or nonverbally, the behavior or personal attributes of ourselves or others, we are giving **AFFIRMATIONS**, invitations to high self-esteem.

Say: **AFFIRMATIONS** or **NEGATIONS** can be heard in three ways: from oneself; from someone else; or overheard.

k: Will you say out loud, all together, "I like myself?"

Say it.

Will you say to the person next to you, "I like you?"

Say it.

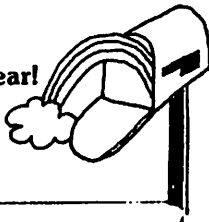
Will you say to another person that you like the person next to you?

Say it.

- Ask: 1. For how many of you is an **AFFIRMATION** most powerful if you give it to yourself?
2. For how many of you is an **AFFIRMATION** most powerful if you hear it said by someone else?
3. For how many of you is an **AFFIRMATION** most powerful if you hear someone say it to someone else about you in your hearing?

Say: This week, think of which way you communicate **AFFIRMATIONS** most often and try out all three ways.

For fifteen dollars,
a rainbow in your mailbox six times a year!



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Send check to: WE, 16536 9th Avenue N.,
Plymouth, MN 55447

ground rules

If your Support Group has been meeting for some time without identifying ground rules, ask the group what the rules are. Every group develops rules and if they are not stated or written down people will use them anyway. One of the things a new person in a group has to do is to figure out the ground rules or the norms.

List the rules your group identifies. (Ex.: It is OK to start late but it is not OK if the meeting runs overtime. . . No one should interrupt, even if someone has talked for a long time. . . No gossip. . . Do ask about each other's families, but don't talk about money. . . etc.)

Invite the group to look at the list, think about each norm and whether or not it helps the group do what it wants to do. Then decide if there are new rules that would help the group more. The following rules are designed to offer protection to each group member.

1. Everyone participates (at least in their heads).
2. Everyone has the right to pass on an activity (to think but not talk or do something).
3. Everyone's opinion or belief is honored.
4. No gossip.
5. Leader stays in a position of respect for self and others.

If the group wants to add one of these rules, but isn't sure about it, try it for three meetings and then decide. (More about these ground rules in Volume 2, Number 4.)

CELEBRATION!!! NEW BOOK!

Winston Press announces

Self Esteem: A Family Affair Leader Guide by Jean Illsley Clarke.

This new book gives detailed instructions for using **Self Esteem: A Family Affair** in a series of eight meetings with parent groups.

This book is not a set of rules but an aid for parents to think about what is best for their families. It provides specific tools for parents to use with children of various ages, plus helpful resources for individuals and groups to learn parenting skills.

This carefully developed text has been used experimentally over a four-year period in small group work from coast to coast. In addition to the detailed lesson plans, it includes the chapter "Who Me, Lead a Group?," which has been hailed by a San Diego banker and civic leader as "the best thing about leading a group that I have ever read." Also included are "Letters to Marj," written by Jean Clarke to encourage a group leader who was using **Self Esteem: A Family Affair**.

Winston Press 430 Oak Grove Minneapolis, MN 55403

Self Esteem: A Family Affair Leader Guide @ \$14.95
Self Esteem: A Family Affair @ \$7.95

How Adults Take in Information

Condensed from *Self Esteem: A Family Affair Leader Guide*

Adults get most of their information in four ways: through their eyes, their ears, their bodies and their intuition. Some adults use all four.



Some people prefer to take information through their eyes, visually. They like to see pictures or diagrams. They say things like, "I'll look into it." "I'll see what I can do." "Look sharp."



Some people prefer to collect information through their ears, or audibly. They would rather listen to the news or the radio than look at the newspaper. They say things like, "Tell you what I'll do." "Lend me your ear." "Now listen!"



Other adults learn best with their bodies, or kinesthetically. They like to "walk through things." They are impatient with lectures and they move their toes and fingers while they think. They say things like, "I'll run through some possible solutions in my mind." "Let's find out if anyone came up with a new idea."

Taste and smell are important ways that people can collect information, but these ways are often discounted or ignored when planning group learning experiences, except in food and beverage preparation classes.



Many learners do not depend on one sense but like to use all of their senses to collect information. Maybe these are the people who are most intuitive.

opening activity that offers everyone a positive personal message

Find a partner and make a name tag for that person. Find out from your partner what he or she would like to accomplish during the next three months. Write or draw a picture of that on the name tag. Introduce your partner to the whole group and tell what he or she hopes to accomplish.

closing activity that offers everyone a positive personal message

Ask people to stand in a circle. Ask, "Will each of you tell one thing that you are proud that you finished and then tell one strength that you have that helps you finish things?"

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
- practice skills, new learnings, play
- suggestion circle
- plan the next meeting
- resentments and appreciation
- closing activity that offers everyone a positive personal message

So what is the leader's responsibility to provide for the different ways that adults take in information?

Leaders should remember that no matter what their personal learning style preferences are, they can do the following:

- use attractive, readable visuals
- use clear spoken messages
- provide learning exercises that involve moving the body
- check for adequate ventilation

These are all significant ways to facilitate learning experiences in groups.

Edited by Jean Illsley Clarke Published by Marnie Lilja Baehr
Layout Design by Marnie Lilja Baehr

\$15.00 per year (6 issues)

WE

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

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