

newsletter for nurturing support groups

May-June, 1982
Volume 3, Number 5

Welcome to the 17th 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, opening and closing activities and notes on the protection of Ground Rules. The theory piece can enhance your leadership skills for dealing with people who choose to "sit outside the circle."

In addition, there is **INFORMATION ABOUT POWER**

- the Power of Suggestions
- Power and Love
- Power — then and now
- Power Name Tags
- Pick a Number
- Five Levels of Power
- the Power of Laughter
- Choices for Children — a review of Elizabeth Crary's books

Jean Illsley Clarke

Jean Illsley Clarke, Editor

POWER

THEN and NOW

The purpose of this activity is to compare our early ideas about power with our ideas now, and to think about if we need more information about power.

Recall your early messages about power. Use Group Activity (A) or Personal Fantasy (B).

A. GROUP ACTIVITY

1. Ask: Will each person think about your early messages about power? Answer the following questions to yourself.

- a. Who had it?
- b. Was it considered to be good or bad?
- c. For what kinds of uses of power did you get positive rewards? negative responses?

Ask: Will you share your answers in groups of four and report to the whole group on similarities and differences?

B. PERSONAL FANTASY

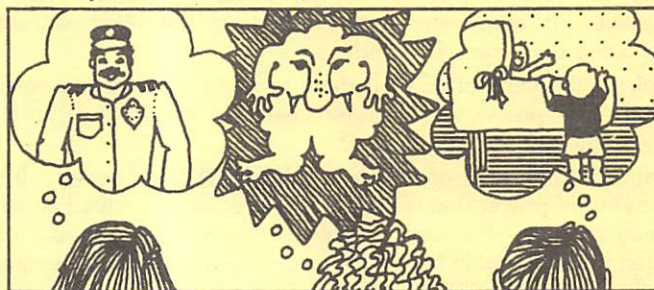
Say: Move your body into a comfortable position, feet flat on the floor, back straight, arms relaxed. Close your eyes and breathe deeply. I will guide you on a fantasy trip to help you remember about how power was used and regarded when you were little. I will signal you when to return to the here and now or you can return at any time during the trip.

Say: "You are very little and you know something about power — maybe that is not what it is called — it has to do with who gets to keep things the way they want them and who gets to change things when they want them changed. When you think about it you realize that you know who has the power, you know what is good, and what is bad

about it. . . you know when you use power or try to, what happens, whether you ARE powerful, and what gets positive or negative responses. You know what kinds of power are OK for you and what kinds are OK for other people. . ."

Wait about three minutes or until some people open their eyes.

Say: Will you come back here now? Leave any negative feelings you may have had during the fantasy and share what you learned about power and its use.



C. Write the responses to the list of questions or the Fantasy Trip on newsprint or a chalkboard. Examples:

- Grown ups were more powerful than kids.
- Men had power outside the house, women in the house.
- Power was admired.
- Politicians had too much power.
- Grandma was a powerful woman.

Ask: Will you move into groups of four and list ideas about power that are helpful to you today?

Ask: Will each group of four report to the whole group one idea about power that is the same as your early ones and one that you have changed?

Five levels of power

suggested activity

This Exercise is based on Chapter 5 of Rollo May's **Power and Innocence, A Search For The Sources of Violence**, New York; C.C. Norton, 1972. You may want to read that before you lead this exercise. I highly recommend it.

Hand each person a copy of the enclosed worksheet.

Say: Power, as described by Rollo May, is the ability to keep what you want to keep and to change what you want to change.

Ask: Will each of you tell one thing that you hope to be able to keep in your life?

Ask: Will each of you tell one thing that you wish you had the power to change in your life or in your community?

Say: These five levels of power are described by Rollo May in his book **Power and Innocence**. He rates them from destructive to constructive. You can think about whether you agree with his evaluation.

The first kind of power, the most destructive, is **EXPLOITATIVE** power. This is the power people use when they make you do what they want you to do, or use you, whether you want to or not.

Ask: Will you share several examples of **exploitative** power, beside slavery? (Examples can be very large like the Holocaust or being hit from behind by a drunk driver, or small like someone stealing your lunch money.)

Say: The second kind of power is **MANIPULATIVE**. This is destructive, but not as bad as exploitative, according to May. It is power over someone with — at some point — their willingness to be conned.

Ask: Will you give several examples of **manipulation**? Will you tell what feelings people usually have after they have realized they have been manipulated?

Say: The third kind of power is **COMPETITIVE**. This may be negative if it limits options and holds people down; it may be positive if it contributes zest and stimulates energy.

Ask: Will you give at least four examples of **competition** that are positive? (Ex: Olympic games) Will you give at least four examples of **competition** that are negative? (Ex: war, playing one-up in a marriage)

Say: The fourth kind of power is **NUTRIENT** power. This is positive. It empowers, makes stronger the taker without depleting the giver. It includes love.

Ask: Will several of you tell about some time in the past week when your power was increased because someone cared for you or taught you something?

Say: The fifth kind of power is **INTEGRATIVE** power. It is the kind of power that is used when everyone involved comes away stronger. It is win-win power. No one is lessened. It is often uncomfortable because it frequently involves challenging skills we thought we had already perfected or because it challenges values and beliefs. It is often unsettling because we use it to change ourselves. May considers it the highest form of power.

Ask: Will someone describe one time when you did something with someone and both of you learned, became stronger?

Say: To review the five levels of power I will read examples of power, and will you identify the level for each?

- A gun at your back, "Give me your wallet." (exploitative)
- Teaching a friend to bake bread. (nutrient)
- Parent repeatedly sets up a time when teenager is to be home with the car, does not identify a consequence for lateness, and then feel ripped off when the teenager

OPENING ACTIVITY THAT OFFERS EVERYONE A POSITIVE PERSONAL MESSAGE

River Falls
Pop.:1723

Choose a partner. Make a name tag for him and ask him to identify three geographical areas in which he feels powerful. Write or draw a picture of those areas on his name tag. Introduce your partner and tell the group the three geographic places he feels powerful if he is willing to share that information with the group.



CLOSING ACTIVITY THAT OFFERS EVERYONE A POSITIVE PERSONAL MESSAGE

Stand in a circle. Leader asks: Will you center your bodies by rocking gently from side to side until your body weight is evenly distributed on both feet? Next will you rock forward and backward gently until your body weight is evenly distributed between the heels and the balls of your feet? Will you slowly relax your body starting with the top of your head, face, neck, shoulders, arms, torso, thighs, knees, calves, ankles, and feet?

Ask: Will you feel the center of your energy at the very center of your body, a spot about one inch below your navel? Concentrate on it. Feel it as a light, bright ball of energy.

Own and feel your energy as you leave this meeting to go about your life with power and love.

breezes in late and says, "I couldn't help it." (Parent set self up to be manipulated.)

- Guests give many compliments to husband because he made homemade ice cream. Wife cooked the rest of the meal. After guests leave she does not ask husband for compliments, and she feels jealous. (Competitive, negative)
- Husband comes from a home where there were few guests, and keeping the home private was very important. Wife comes from a home where there were lots of guests in the home and sharing the home and family activities was important. At first the husband and wife were disappointed in each other's behavior around guests, then they had a few harsh words, then they decided to find one new way to meet his privacy needs and her hospitality needs every month for four months. At first each was uncomfortable. Later she learned to value (integrative) privacy and he began to enjoy the stimulation of guests.

Ask: Do you agree with Rollo May that **EXPLOITATIVE** power is negative and **INTEGRATIVE** power is positive? Do you believe that any particular power level or levels are generally expected of men? women? children? blacks? Native Americans? teachers? therapists? police? politicians? Any others you want to add?

Ask: Will you look at your hand-out sheet? Facilitator: Read aloud the quotes from Rollo May.

Ask: Will you divide the "receive" circle into pie-shaped sections, indicating the kinds of power you received last week?

Ask: Will you divide the second circle into the ways you did exert power last week?

Ask: Will you divide the third circle into the ways you wish you had exerted power?

Ask: Does anyone want to share any "I learned. . ." or "I wonder. . ." statements?

Ask: Does anyone want to share a way they plan to change how they use power during the next week?

POWER

From Power and Innocence by Rollo May (Chapter 5, "The Meaning of Power")

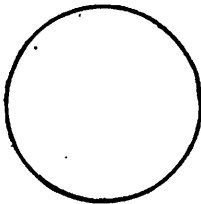
"'P.O.W.E.R.' is the ability to cause or prevent change."

Kinds of Power

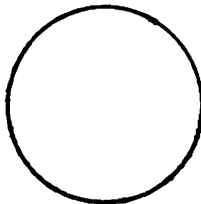
1. EXPLOITATIVE- power over (most destructive)
Subjecting persons to whatever use they may have to the one who holds the power.
ex.: slavery
2. MANIPULATIVE- power over (use as sparingly as possible)
Power over another person... may have originally been invited by that person's own desperation or anxiety.
ex.: con
3. COMPETITIVE- power against (may be negative or positive)
Negative form consists of one person going up... because his opponent goes down.
ex.: grades
Competitive power can give zest and vitality to human relations.
ex.: sports
4. NUTRIENT- power for (includes love, is positive)
Exerting oneself for the sake of others.
ex.: teaching
5. INTEGRATIVE- power with (includes love, is positive)
Using one's power to abet the power of another.
ex.: pluralism
ex.: equalitarian marriage

"These five different kinds of power are obviously all present in the same person at different times. The question- and it is a moral one- is the proportion of each kind of power in the total spectrum of the personality. No one can escape experiencing, in desire and in action, all five types of power, and only self-righteous rigidity leads one to claim that he is immune from any one of them. The goal for human development is to learn to use these different kinds of power in ways adequate to the given situation."

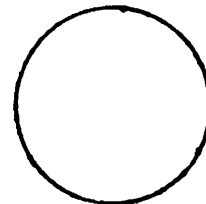
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Receive



Did
Exert



Wish
Exert

"Power cannot, strictly speaking, be given to another, for then the recipient still owes it to the giver. It must in some sense be assumed, taken, asserted. For unless it can be held against opposition, it is not power and will never be experienced as real on the part of the recipient."

-p. 145

Please Don't Sit Outside of the Circle

"Who, me? No, I don't care to come into the circle. I'm just listening. Don't pay any attention to me."

Have you ever been part of a group where some powerful person was sitting outside of the group, apparently not participating, yet people in the group felt anxious or worried about what that person was going to do with the information he was collecting?

The person who sits outside the group and refuses to be part of it may be engaged in a power play. This is a technique often used by persons who do not want to display their power directly to the group. The anxiety that the people in the circle feel is based on the fear that the power person is patronizing the group, in saying, "You go ahead and have your little meeting but when it comes to the real decisions, I will make them." Or the group activity is restricted because some people in the group fear that the outside person will report what is going on in the group to someone else who could affect them.

A way to diffuse some of the power of the person sitting (or lurking) outside of the group is to include that person in the working circle.



The POWER of the SUGGESTION CIRCLE

In any given situation the person with the most options has the most power. Therefore, any way that we can be aware of options increases our ability to be in charge of our lives.

The Suggestion Circle is a method of offering a variety of options to a person with a specific problem, and then allowing that person to evaluate the ideas and select the most useful ones. Directions:

1. State the problem clearly.
2. Select someone to write down the suggestions.
3. Go quickly around the circle; each person offers her best suggestion or passes.
4. The person with the problem listens to each suggestion and says, "Thank you" without giving approval or disapproval.
5. The person takes the list of suggestions home and evaluates them for herself.

There are additional tips on how to lead a Suggestion Circle in Vol. 1, Number 1 of **WE**, and in **Self Esteem: A Family Affair Leader Guide** by Jean Illsley Clarke, Winston Press.

suggested activity

POWER NAME TAG

Give each person a half sheet of construction paper and a felt pen. Post the following five directions:

1. Write your name. . . powerfully
2. Under your name write your general power number for today — 1 (none) to 10 (all you want)
3. List 3 situations in which you feel powerful
4. List the 3 subject matter areas in which you feel most powerful
5. Draw a picture showing how you feel about the powerful people in your immediate life.

ay: Put your power name tag on; move around and find someone else who feels powerful in the same situation that you do. Ask why she thinks that is a powerful one. Look for other similarities in your name tags.

Ask: Will you come back together and share any learnings or awarenesses you have about power?

How People Deal With People Sitting Outside The Group

One group of people attending a leadership skills workshop did a Suggestion Circle to share ideas on how to diffuse the negative power of the people sitting outside the circle by getting them into the group. Here are the ideas they shared. You read them and decide for yourself which would be the most helpful in your group.

- Invite them in
- Everyone else move and physically move chairs to include them
- Ask them to lead the next activity at the meeting
- Let persons know how you "feel" about their being out there
- Direct specific comfortable questions to outsiders
- Lure with candy
- Give them a task to do: i.e., record, etc.
- Take turns joining them on outside — spontaneous or planned
- Pre-arrangement of chairs
- Do a group task where person has to be involved
- Touch-physical contact
- Ask them to leave
- Allow the position but them know that you are uncomfortable
- Listening — ask them how they feel
- Individual attention outside group
- Be open with ideas — comfort
- Get a commitment from the outsider
- Personal compliment — compliment them

SPRING and SUMMER FACILITATORS TRAINING WORKSHOPS

June 21-25, Minneapolis, Minnesota
July 26-30, Seattle, Washington
August 16-20, Lafayette, California

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 and education and support groups.
- Led by Jean Illsley Clarke

Write to **WE** for details.

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 appreciations
- closing activity that offers everyone a positive personal message



THE POWER OF *Laughter*

If you are thinking that power is all serious stuff, read or reread **ANATOMY OF AN ILLNESS** by Norman Cousins. In that exciting and encouraging book Cousins tells how he laughed his way to recovery from a crippling and supposedly irreversible disease. "I have learned," Cousins writes, "never to underestimate the capacity of the human mind and body to regenerate — even when the prospects seem most wretched. The life-force may be the least understood force on earth." With the help of some old Marx Brothers films, Cousins tapped the power within himself to regain his health. This book tells his story with many helpful suggestions for the rest of us. W.W. Norton and Company, 1979.

BOOK REVIEW

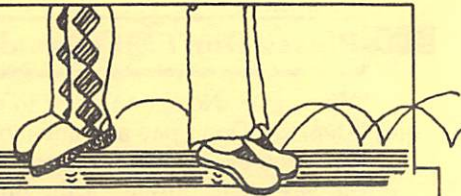


If you want to help the children in your life increase their power by becoming aware of more choices, I recommend Elizabeth Crary's three new problem solving books, **I WANT, I CAN'T WAIT** and **I WANT TO PLAY**. This unique set of books can be read straight through as we usually read books, or can be read as a "choice" book. Read this way, when a story comes to a decision point, the child can decide what the character will do. The reader then turns to the appropriate page and continues the story. The text includes questions that expand options and that encourage children to consider the feelings of others.

I WANT focuses on possession. **I CAN'T WAIT** deals with taking turns and increasing attention span. **I WANT TO PLAY** addresses companionship and loneliness. There is nothing "preachy" about these delightfully illustrated books. I have used them with children as young as three and note that they were enjoyed by a ten year old friend of mine who read them thoroughly and then told me with great dignity that he thinks "they would be good for little kids." Order from Parenting Press, Suite 207, 7750 31st Ave. N.E., Seattle, WA 98115, each for \$3.95 plus 25¢ shipping.

suggested activity

PICK A NUMBER



If your support group has been sitting for awhile and you want to raise the energy level of the group, or if there is an unconstructive competitive power game going on and you want to invite a switch to cooperation, try this exercise.

Say: Pick a number between six and sixteen. Move about the room and, without talking, find the person who chose the same number or the one closest to it. Stand back to back, link elbows and jump together the number of times of the number you chose.

(I can't remember where I learned this exercise. I'm sure somebody should get credit for creating it — JIC.)

POWER *and* LOVE

What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

ground rules

"All opinions are honored" is a ground rule that is frequently used to offer people the protection needed to share it with which other people in the group may disagree. When a leader hurriedly made a Ground Rules poster and wrote, "All opinions are correct," a group member objected. "I think my opinions are correct, but sometimes I get more information and find out they are not. If we say that all opinions are correct we are going to have an awful lot of arguments. **All opinions are honored** is different from **all opinions are correct.**"

Think about how your ground rules are stated to be sure they say what you intend them to. It is a good idea for a group to review their ground rules periodically to see if they want to keep them as they are or if there is a way to improve them.

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WE

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

newsletter for nurturing support groups