

## newsletter for nurturing support groups

March-April, 1983  
Volume 4, Number 4

**GROWING YOUNG?** How frequently do you look in the mirror or think about your behavior and ask yourself, "Am I growing young?" Ashley Montague, in his book **Growing Young**, suggests not that we should be arrested at the level of a child, but that we should continue to grow and develop our child traits as long as we live. In this issue we will practice some of those young qualities. The Opening and Closing exercises deal with **CURIOSITY** and **FLEXIBILITY**. These are suggested activities to help us enhance our

HONESTY  
NEED TO LOVE  
IMAGINATION  
HUMOR

Welcome to this 22nd issue of **WE**, a newsletter for and about groups of people who get together for the purpose of giving each other personal support. Let us all enjoy the process of "growing young."

*Jean Illsley Clarke*

Jean Illsley Clarke

### SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

## humor!

Remind people that **humor** is one of the qualities of people who are "growing young." Bring a joke book and let each person read one joke.

Lie on the floor on your backs in a circle with each person's head resting on the stomach of the person next to him while you read jokes or tell jokes. Each person's laughter bobs the head of another person, and triggers more laughter.

## Facilitator Training Workshops

July 11-15, 1983, Minneapolis, Minnesota  
August 22-26, 1983, Seattle, Washington

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.

## GROWING YOUNG

Ashley Montague's book, **Growing Young**, has seven fascinating chapters ranging from the description of neoteny and the evolution of human behavior to the importance for us as human beings to learn to provide the environment for ourselves and for others in which each of us is able to "grow young."

Neoteny is the retention of fetal or juvenile traits by our slow development. "Growing young" is the process of deliberately retaining traits typical of the young. Montague urges us to embrace the concept of neoteny as important to the attainment of our highest human qualities and to attend to the process of growing young rather than growing old. He believes that "...it is to the slow progress of our life's course that we owe our human traits," and urges us to deliberately slow that process even more.

He identifies traits of childhood behavior that are valuable and much admired in great men and women as:

- imaginativeness
- playfulness
- open-mindedness
- willingness to experiment
- optimism
- flexibility
- creativity



- humor
- energy
- receptiveness to new ideas
- honesty
- eagerness to learn
- the need to love and be loved



Montague urges all of us to deliberately maintain those traits rather than to:

- become dignified and circumspect
- believe old dogs can't learn new tricks
- be set in our ways
- be still, quiet and slow.

He believes that "...we, all of us carry within ourselves the core, the essence, of an eternally youthful spirit whose inner light is designed to warm and illuminate all the days of our lives."

Ashley Montague was born in 1905 and is the author or editor of over 60 books including **Touching** and **The Elephant Man**. I met him recently and he is a delightful, challenging example of **growing young**.

**Growing Young**, McGraw Hill, New York, 1981; \$12.95.

—Jean Illsley Clarke



## Suggested Activity

### Imagine You Have Some Tissue Paper



Imaginativeness is one of the qualities of people who are **growing young**. Ashley Montague says, "What is imagination? It is the power of forming mental images of what is not actually present, or the power of creating mental images of what has never been experienced."

In this activity we will exercise our imagination with tissue paper.

1. Ask people to make a list of places. Anyplaces. Write the list on newsprint or a chalkboard. Examples:  
Grocery store, living room, concert hall, bedroom, car bus, ball park, elevator, kitchen, hot air balloon, post office, garden.
2. Ask people to imagine they are walking into the place listed first with a sheet of blue tissue paper. Ask them to think of a new way to use that tissue paper in that place. Take a sheet of yellow tissue paper into the next place and think of a brand new use for that tissue paper. Continue through the places, taking a different colored sheet into each new place.
3. Ask people to make a list of occupations. Write the list on newsprint or a chalkboard. Examples:  
Hairdresser, engineer, bus driver, veterinarian, artist, clown, bicyclist, computer programmer, shop keeper, farmer, secretary, governor.
4. Ask one person to pretend he is handing a sheet of green tissue paper to a person in the first occupation listed. Ask



the group to tell him ways the person in that occupation might use the tissue paper. Continue through the occupations, offering a different colored sheet to each.

#### Questions:

1. This exercise is designed to help adults recapture some of their imaginativeness. Do you think it would help young children accept and appreciate their imaginations?
2. With what age children could you use this activity?
3. Could you use it with adults and children?

## Opening Activity That Offers Everyone a Positive Personal Message

### CURIOSITY



Choose a partner. Make a name tag for your partner and interview him to find out one area of **curiosity** that he has that adds richness to his life. It might be a "how things work" curiosity or a "why people do things" curiosity or a "what would happen if" curiosity. Introduce your partner to the group and tell the group about his curiosity.

## Closing Activity That Offers Everyone a Positive Personal Message

### FLEXIBILITY

Quickly review the events of the meeting. Ask for Resentments about the meeting. Accept resentments. You do not necessarily have to do anything about them. Ask for Appreciations. Remind people that flexibility is one of the qualities of people who are "growing young." Ask if two or three people will describe times when they have appreciated the flexibility of someone else in the group. Then ask each person to remember one time he is glad he was flexible and to tell one person about that as he leaves the meeting.

### Resentments



and



### Appreciations

The regular use of Resentments and Appreciations at the close of each meeting honors all sides of our experiences. In addition, since the group is expected to listen to the resentments and appreciations but not necessarily to do anything about them, this activity provides a climate for group members to be *receptive to new ideas*, one of the qualities of people who are "growing young."

## Games Trainers Play

If you want to introduce some "growing young" activities into your support group or into adult training sessions, but you think you can't invent them, try **Games Trainers Play, Experimental Learning Exercises**.

This book by John W. Newstrom and Edward E. Scannell has over one hundred separate activities designed to help people become more open-minded, flexible, imaginative and creative. The topic groupings range from "Climate Setting & Icebreakers," and "Listening" to "Problem Solving and Creativity."

In the *Brainteaser* activity, participants are asked to decipher twenty visual and written communications like these three examples:

1. reading
2. ecnalg
3. GROUND



The answers to these brainteasers are on page 4.

McGraw Hill, New York, 1980, \$16.95

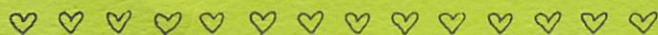


## ground rules

Every group uses ground rules. In some groups they are written or spoken, in others there is a silent awareness of what is acceptable or unacceptable in that particular group. Ask the people in your group to consider the ground rules you use in the light of the twelve attributes of people who are "growing young." Does your group need to alter a rule or add a new one to give people more protection? If so, encourage the group to adopt the new rule.

### Suggested Activity

## The Need To Love



The "need to love" is one of the twelve qualities of people who are "growing young," who are maintaining and enhancing their creativity and expanding their humanity.

**Say:** Every human being has a need to love. One way we can meet that need is to express our appreciation to someone who has done something we value. It does not have to be someone we know. Let us do it out of our human need to love rather than to "be good to" the other person. Remember, love doesn't need to be sexy, mushy or paternal, but it must be sincere. It is an honest, deep concern for the other person's achievement and welfare. A love letter doesn't have to use the word "love."

**Ask:** Will each of you think of a person you would like to express appreciation to? It might be to a friend, a family member, a co-worker, a teacher, a student, a government servant, an employee, a boss, an author or a media person.

**Hand out** one envelope and one small sheet of paper or note card, and a colored pen to each person.

**Say:** We can Brainstorm some starting lines for love letters. Here are some suggestions:

Did I remember to tell you \_\_\_\_\_  
I want you to know that \_\_\_\_\_  
Maybe you didn't know that \_\_\_\_\_  
I don't have the time/skill to do what you do and I want you to know that I appreciate \_\_\_\_\_  
Today I am doing something important, namely, telling you that I like \_\_\_\_\_

**Ask:** Will each of you give other suggestions? (Write them on a chalkboard or newsprint.)

**Say:** We will take five or ten minutes to write our love letters. Remember, love letters don't need to be long-- just sincere. If you don't like to write, you might draw a picture.

P.S. Other ways we can express our need to love are:

send a love telegram  
make a love phone call  
send a love gift  
say something loving directly

You and your support group can design ways to practice each of these ideas.

## Willingness to Experiment

A **Suggestion Circle** is a way of getting people's best suggestions about how to solve a problem. This circle was in response to the question *What is something small and safe I could do during the coming week to practice my willingness to experiment?*

1. Try smiling at the first ten people you see.
2. Get up one hour earlier to watch, listen and feel the morning.
3. Change a recipe.
4. Drive to work a different way.
5. Switch roles with someone for half an hour.
6. Find a way to give a friendly touch to someone you like but have never touched.
7. Listen to a child for ten minutes without making any judgements.
8. Read a magazine back to front if you usually read it front to back, or vice versa.
9. Learn nine words in a foreign language and say them to someone.



Your group can add to these ideas on Willingness to Experiment. You can also run Suggestion Circles on the other qualities of people who are "growing young."

The Suggestion Circle is a method of collecting ideas that share suggestions without putting anyone's ideas down, stimulates thinking, and encourages people to take responsibility for their own needs.

Here's how it works:

1. State the problem or topic clearly.
2. Go quickly around the circle; each person either tells her idea in one or two sentences or passes.
3. The person who asked for suggestions listens to each answer and does not say anything except thank you (not "that was a good answer" or "that was a poor one").
4. The person considers the answers and uses them in the way that fits for her.

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

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



yes, color my mailbox!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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





## Suggested Activity

### Affirm, Embellish and Expand



Honesty is a highly valued quality. It is one of the qualities that is important to people who are "growing young" or "staying young." Children express a natural honesty that adults sometimes squelch in the name of politeness.

In this exercise we will find a way to expand upon and enjoy a child's natural honesty.

1. Think about a time when a child surprised you with an honest observation.
2. Identify ways you did or could have encouraged that child to retain his ability to express honesty.
3. Try out a three step process.
  1. Affirm the honesty.
  2. Embellish it (embellish- to make beautiful or agreeable)
  3. Expand upon it (extend it).

Example: Dick, who lives in Minnesota, visited friends in Texas. Jamie, who is three and a half, remarked, "You talk funny." Before Jamie's embarrassed mother could interfere, Dick responded, "I do talk different from the way you do (Affirmation). I'm glad you noticed (Embellishment). All of the people who live where I do talk funny the way I do. Is there anything special about my talk that is funny to you? I like the way you say 'Y'all.' I'm practicing saying it the way you do. Can you talk like I do? (Expansion)"

4. Try the Affirming, Embellishing, Expanding technique and
  - a. notice if you think it encourages honesty in the children
  - b. notice if it helps you enjoy the natural honesty of children.
5. Questions to discuss and think about:
  - a.) How often do I affirm honesty in children and adults by simply saying "thank you"?
  - b.) Would this three step process help me affirm honesty in adults?
  - c.) Will this help me be honest more often?
  - d.) How often am I honest in my head and not out loud?
  - e.) In order to be honest out loud more often, what kind of internal or external protection would I need?
  - f.) What am I willing to do to get that protection?

## Book Review

### The New Games Book



If you want some games to play with children, with adults, or with groups of mixed ages, The New Games Book, Play Hard, Play Fair, Nobody Hurt, edited by Andrew Fliegelman may be for you. If you want games that encourage playfulness, creativity and humor and do not depend upon competitiveness to generate energy, this is the book to use.

There are games for two, games for a dozen and games for "the more the better." **Bug Tug, Vampire** and **Skin the Snake** fall in the latter category, featuring exercise and laughter. Some of the games are new. Others are old friends updated. Remember **Rock/Paper/Scissors**, where we showed a clenched fist, a flat hand, or two fingers, and the loser forfeited the prize or got a sting on the wrist?

Look at the **New Games Book** directions:

"You need two teams, a 'free zone' for each team, and a center line over which they meet. Each team huddles and collectively decides which symbol they will all throw... In two lines, the teams face each other and begin to chant 'Rock/Paper/Scissors' and throw their symbols. The team that throws the winning symbol chases the other team, trying to tag as many players as possible before they reach their free zone... The NEW GAMES way is to have all tagged players join the team that caught them. This way teams constantly changes numbers and faces, and the game keeps going with everyone in it."

There is lots of fun and lots of exercise in this collection. Doubleday/Dolphin, Garden City, New York, 1976, \$6.95.



### Answers to Brainteasers

1. Reading between the lines.
2. Backward glance.
3. Six feet under ground.

Edited by Jean Illsley Clarke  
Layout Design by Marnie Lilja Baehr

Published by Marnie Lilja Baehr

\$15.00 per year (6 issues)

WE

16535 9th Avenue N.  
Plymouth, MN 55447

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

newsletter for nurturing support groups