



## newsletter for nurturing support groups

Volume 5, Number 5  
June-July, 1984

**D**ear Reader,

The importance of **Ground Rules** for Support Groups has been discussed frequently in **WE**. This issue focuses on Ground Rules for the most important Support Group of all, the family.

See:

- **House Rules**
- **Check your Household Rules**
- **Broken Rules**

For information about how some people are changing violent family rules, see **NEW RULES** and try out:

**Things To Do Instead of Hitting.**

In addition, there are some ideas on Group Leadership. You will also find a reprint of **The Fuss Box**; several people have requested it. Remember that the purpose of The Fuss Box is to resolve problems, not to prolong anger.

*Jean Illsley Clarke*  
Jean Illsley Clarke, Editor

### ♥♥♥♥ Affirmations for Leading ♥♥♥♥

If you, as the leader of a group, want a ready source of support and affirmation for your leadership skills, try this method.

After you lead your next meeting, hand out 3x5 cards. Ask each person to write one specific thing that you did as a leader that was helpful to that individual or to the group.

Keep the cards and reread them before you plan a meeting and before you lead a meeting.

If you prefer listening to reading, pass a tape recorder around and ask each person to describe one of the ways you are a good leader. Listen to the tape on the way to your meeting.

This 17"x26" rules poster was designed by Mic Johnson.

### HOUSE RULES

1. Speak for *yourself*, not for anybody else.
2. Listen to others, then they'll listen to you.
3. Avoid put downs. Who needs 'em?
4. Take charge of yourself. You are responsible for you.
5. Show respect. Every person is important.
- 6.
- 7.

You fill in items 6 and 7. Order poster from: Mic Johnson, 18025 Hummingbird Rd., Wayzata, Minnesota 55391, \$3.00.

### Suggested Activity

## Check Your Household Rules

With your family all together or one at a time,

1. List the important rules at your house.
2. Check the concreteness of the rules by asking each person what the rules mean. If someone does not understand a rule, reword it and ask again. For example: "Show consideration for others" may be too abstract for a three year old. It can be restated, "Play quietly while others are sleeping." "Wipe your feet before you come into the house" may be too concrete for a teenager and can be restated, "Everyone helps keep the house clean."
3. Check the effectiveness of the rules by asking each person, "If you could choose one new rule for this family, what would it be?"

### Suggested Activity

## BROKEN RULES

The purpose of this activity is to consider the relevancy of rules. There are no "right" answers. There may be a "best" answer for your house.

1. Read **The Rules of Our Family** one at a time and decide what consequences would be appropriate if a school age child has broken the rule once.

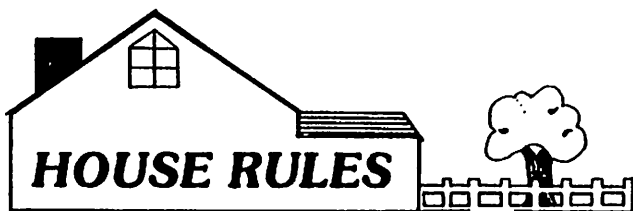
Example:

- Remind the person of the rule
- Scold
- Take away some privilege
- Logical consequence

Decide what consequence would be fitting if the child had broken the rules five times.

2. Go back over each of the rules and decide if the consequence would be the same if one of the parents broke the rule.
3. If the consequences would not be the same for the parents as for the children, divide the rules into a Childrens list, a Parents list, and a Family list.
4. Choose four household rules that apply to both school age and adolescent children in the same home. Example:  
Call if you won't be home when you say you will be home  
No put-downs  
Pick up your own stuff  
Complete your household chores by Saturday noon  
Or use **House Rules**, by Mic Johnson (in this issue).

For each rule, decide what the consequences of breaking the rule might be and indicate whether the consequences would be the same or different for an eight year old and a 17 year old. If consequences are different, what explanation or reason is offered to the children?



Every family has house rules. If you think they don't listen to what kids say.

"We can't do that at our house."

"Oh, they'll yell if we do that, but they don't stop us."

"You mean your mother lets you do *that*?"

"My dad's tough on that one."

"Oh, we can do that at our house anytime except if my mom is getting ready for a party."

In some homes, these rules are not discussed. They are made and enforced as the parents see a need for them. In other homes, they are negotiated at family meetings or hammered out through hasseling in an informal way.

### YOUNG CHILDREN

Simple, clear, concrete rules are very supportive to young children. In some homes the rules are posted. Even if the children can't read, the poster is a reminder.

Pick up your stuff.

Everyone's feelings are important.

Ask for help when you need it.

Do not play in the street.

### SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Children in the six to twelve year old range face the developmental task of internalizing their own rules and determining the relevancy of rules. They do this by making rules, testing them, breaking them, and comparing them. They often need lots of rules to experiment with. Parents who are willing to negotiate house rules in family meetings with grade school age children may be surprised at the long list of specific rules they generate. Jan Schneider offered such a list to **WE**. I am grateful to her and her family for the opportunity to share this list. Jan reminded me that this is not a static list; she expects that six months from now the list will look somewhat different.

This list reminds me of several important qualities of functional household rules for school age children:

- The rules reflect family values
- No item is too small or unimportant to be included if someone needs it
- Personal needs can be reflected in family rules

Read the rules and think about how you could alter them to fit your family.

### THE RULES OF OUR FAMILY

1. Each family member is responsible for cleaning up after his/her self.
2. Discussions about unwanted behaviors are to be done in the privacy of the family.
3. If you are told of a behavior annoying another member — stop it.
4. People do not enter one another's rooms without knocking or use one another's property without asking. However, requests should be kindly considered.
5. Articles cut from newspapers are to be left with the paper until all have a chance to read that day.
6. No questions are asked about letters or telephone calls other than "Does this concern me?"

7. Only by consent, may the privacy of a family member be revealed by other members outside the family.
8. Everyone says "good morning" to all members of the family encountered before noon.
9. Each member is responsible for replacing rolls of toilet paper, or getting a new one out if near the end, and for asking permission before spending extended periods of time in another's bathroom.
10. When preparing food for oneself, ask if anyone handy would like some also.
11. GUESTS — Each member is responsible for coming to meet guests if in the house. Other members shall be consulted before guests are brought in the house, and the host shall be responsible for introducing new guests to anyone on the premises.
12. We use "excuse me" not as license for repeat behavior, but because we would rather not do what we have just done.
13. "Celebrating wins" in our family is not boasting, and feeling all the hurt of defeat is not being a "cry baby."

### MEALS

Unless otherwise arranged, everyone shows up at meals neat and clean, and ready for general conversation.

Each member uses good table manners including:

- Eating slowly
- Chewing with mouth closed
- Use utensils properly
- Wait for cook to start
- Ask for things to be passed
- Don't take calls unless urgent
- Take small bites
- Don't tip your chair
- Use your napkin
- At least taste everything
- If you dislike something, just leave it on plate without comment. (i.e. Urgh, Yukkee, etc.)
- Compliment the cook
- Offer to clear if you are not the cook
- Excuse yourself before leaving table
- Remember the basics even in front of the T.V.
- Say a private grace before taking food



### ADOLESCENTS

Teenagers who have successfully tested and internalized rules during their six to twelve year period need to move on to broader rules, and may be impatient with the rule emphasis of their younger siblings. Parents can remember to model negotiating skills. In the later teenage years, adolescents will often break long-established household rules as part of the process of separating from the family. Consequences that were effective earlier may not work. The parents can continue to emphasize and negotiate rules without taking this separation

# The Fuss Box

Suggested Activity  
By Jean Clarke

Several of you who have seen me use the FUSS BOX in Couples Workshops or Anger Workshops have asked me to write about it in WE. The background on the FUSS BOX is that I have observed that some people fuss a lot, some fuss less, some people show their anger in loud ways and some act quiet or tight or seem to want to hiss steam out of their ears. However they do it, other people know that they are angry and often wish they would do something to get over their anger and get on with the rest of life.

The purpose of the FUSS BOX is to help people

1. claim their anger
2. claim their right to express it
3. claim responsibility for it
4. have a way to express it without hurting themselves or other people, and without other people interfering with it or trying to "fix" it.
5. have a way to clear out the anger and get on with solutions to the problems



**How do you make a FUSS BOX?** Find a sturdy box big enough to stand in with a bit of space to move around. I get paper towel cartons from the grocery store.

Using a magic marker, write FUSS BOX in bold letters on all sides of the box so anyone entering the room while you are fussing will be reminded that you are to be left alone because you are in the FUSS BOX. How long does a box last? Depends. Some people fuss more with their feet than others.

**How do you use the FUSS BOX?** First you let everyone in your family group, or wherever you use the box, know what the box is for and how you plan to use it. Be sure that they know the purpose of the box (five items listed above) and the rules for using it. Post the rules where you and they can see them.

## FUSS BOX RULES

1. **Only use the box in a safe place** where people care about you, such as your family or your support group.
2. **Stand in the box** while you are fussing.
3. **Say anything you want to.** The box is a place to let out all the unreasonable, unwarranted, unfair and maybe not even true feelings and thoughts you may have. It is a place to express your frustrations.
4. **Other people are to stay out of it.**
  - a. They can sympathize if they want to.
  - b. They are not to argue with you or tell you to "be reasonable."
  - c. They may NOT try to fix you, console you, or change you.
  - d. They are not to take anything personally or to hold what you say against you. FUSS BOX time is "free" time for you to fuss.
  - e. They are to leave the room if they are at all tempted to get hooked or to take any responsibility for your feelings.
5. **Fuss as vigorously as you want until you feel your energy switch.** The amount of time for this varies with the person and the size of the frustration. Sometimes 30 seconds is enough, sometimes a big resentment will take 4 to 6 minutes.
6. **Step outside the box.** When you feel the switch, when you start to feel calm or perhaps chuckle at yourself, say, "I feel better now."
7. **Decide and do** at least one thing to make the situation better.

**CAUTION:** Do not get outside the box and continue to fuss. If you do that, get back into the box and finish your fuss there, otherwise you can encourage yourself to continue fussing instead of solving problems.

**CAUTION:** Use a real box, not a pretend box. Someone who says they are using a pretend box can use that as an excuse for irresponsibility. Consider Amy. She carelessly says something caustic to Marty. Marty is hurt and objects. Amy says, "Oh, you shouldn't take that seriously. I was pretending I was in the FUSS BOX. Couldn't you tell?" No way!! That is unfair! Amy is using the FUSS BOX idea as a way to shift responsibility for her own actions onto Marty and as a way to try to get Marty to take responsibility for what Amy said.

**CAUTION:** Do not use the FUSS BOX just to vent anger and/or frustration and then not do something about the situation. That would be using the box to encourage your frustration and to make life worse instead of better.

**How do people use the box?** Many ways. Knowing that it is there helps Mary deal with frustrating situations. She said, "If Jason is still sick on Friday I am going to get in the FUSS BOX."

Joan uses it to let her irritation out before she decides what to do about it. This lets her 14 year old twins know that she is responsible for taking care of her own irritations. It also shows them that they can be responsible for theirs.

Brad sometimes uses the FUSS BOX to complain about a part of his job that is unpleasant, then switches energy, gets out of the box and decides that since that part cannot be changed he will concentrate on the many parts he likes. This helps him deal with his stress. It also shows his children that jobs have both pleasant and unpleasant aspects, and one way to cope with that reality.



**At what age can people start to use the box?** Stella started at 56 and said she liked it a lot. Ron and Diane started at 32 and 35. One of the unspoken agreements in their marriage was that Ron would express anger and Diane would be calm and sweet. That had worked well for several years, but was becoming a burden because Diane had stored up so much anger and Ron was tired of having to get angry about things that Diane didn't like. When they started using the FUSS BOX, Diane was scared Ron wouldn't like her if he heard some of her feelings, so she did not use it when he was home until she got confident with it. When she used it in front of Ron, he was scared that Diane was mad because he was not a good husband. He had to leave the room until he figured out that Diane's anger belonged to her and that she would not take it out on him. Later he learned to use the box to lessen some of his anger.

**Can the FUSS BOX be used with children?** Brad had used the FUSS BOX in front of his two year old son several times. I heard him tell his two year old at the breakfast table, "I am tired of hearing you fuss. I want to eat my breakfast in peace. Either stop fussing and stay at the table with us or take the FUSS BOX to your room and use it until you can come back and be pleasant." Son looked at Daddy steadily for a long minute, stopped fussing, picked up his fork and ate his scrambled eggs. There is no guarantee that all two year olds will do this. Some will use the box and some will continue fussing to find out if you mean what you say.

So, here it is, the FUSS BOX. Explain the purpose and the rules and practice using it in Support Group. Follow the rules. Use it to get beyond frustration to problem solving. Use it to help make your life and the life of your family better. Let WE know what you discover about it.

## NEW RULES

## To Hit or Not To Hit

If you have ever attempted to help people change long-standing family rules, and if you admire pragmatism, let me introduce Mike Walsh.

Mike runs a day care center for children who have been abused. Their mothers are in a rehabilitation program called Genesis II for Women in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These women hit their children. Often. Hard.

Carole Gesme, self-esteem teacher, collected the following family rules from the group:

### WHY NOT TO HIT

They'll hit back  
They'd be scared  
It hurts them  
They'd feel not wanted  
They are too small  
Makes them jumpy, moody  
They'd feel abused  
Hit too hard and you hurt them bad!

### WHY IT'S OK TO HIT

We learned it from our parents  
It gets your point across  
It helps teach children to know what's right and wrong  
To help them so they won't do it again

Mike discovered that telling the women not to hit simply did not work. They do hit. As you can see, their rules in support of hitting indicate not only family modeling, but care for the welfare of the children. Mike decided that since he was unable to stop the hitting, he would attempt to modify it. He devised **NEW RULES**.

### MEMORIZE THESE RULES!

#### Spankings - Whuppins

1. **What** - Tell your child your rules. Don't expect him or her to obey rules that you haven't told him (or her). Save spankings only for the behavior that bothers you the most. Spank whenever your child ignores your attempts to protect them from danger (running into the street, climbing on the stove, etc.). Don't spank for everything the kid does wrong.
2. **When** - Don't ever spank when angry. Spank when your child first breaks your rule. Don't use it as a last resort when you are out of control.

When you are angry, you need to use time out or distraction, or get help from another person. You may need to leave the situation for a minute or two to calm yourself down, unless your child is in danger of hurting himself or others.

3. **How** - A spanking is not a beating. Let your child know why you're spanking him or her. Give no more than 2 hits. Use only your open hand, not an object. Spank only on the bottom. Keep your child's clothes on.
4. **Afterwords** - Talk to your child (if he or she is calm enough) and explain once again why he (or she) got the spanking. Tell him (or her) you love him (or her) and that he (or she) must follow your rules. If he (or she) will let you hug them, this is a good time to be close and support them.

Child protection is not concerned about spanking or whuppins unless there is an injury or a bruise.

The directions on handling anger were not enough, so Mike devised a second sheet.

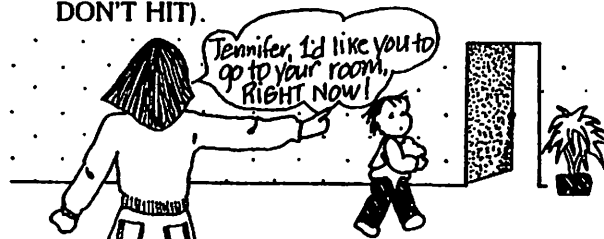
### CONTROLLING ANGER

Here are some ways that you can deal with your anger without spanking or whuppin your child:

1. Admit to yourself that you are angry. Say "I Feel Angry."
2. Count to 10 slowly. Don't do anything until you have full control over what you say and do.
3. Stop and think why you are getting angry. Are you angry because the child did something or angry because you aren't getting your personal needs met in your life?
4. If you are angry because you aren't getting your needs met, don't take it out on your kid!

If you are angry with your child because he did something:

- a. Tell your child that you are angry because of what he or she did (shout if you need to, but **DON'T HIT**).



- b. Give your child time out if over 18 months old (or send them to their room). Try to distract a child younger than 18 months.
5. To help control your anger:
    - a. Leave the room for 1-2 minutes unless the child is in danger of hurting himself or others.
    - b. Hit a pillow or mattress 100 times with your fist.
    - c. Rip up old magazines or newspapers for 3 minutes.
  6. If none of these steps helps you control your anger, call someone on the phone and tell them how angry you feel. Ask for help if you need to. Call a friend and/or a counselor and/or The Crisis Nursery and/or Child Protection.

Carole supported the rules on Anger control by creating an activity. Try it.

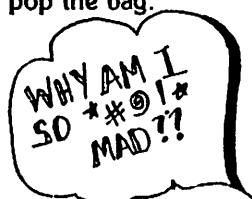
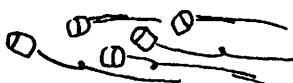
### Things To Do Instead of Hitting

1. Get an empty coffee can.
2. Read the suggested activity "**Things To Do Instead of Hitting**."
3. Write each one on a separate slip of paper, rewriting it to fit your household if needed.
4. Think of more things to do instead of hitting. Write each one on a separate slip of paper.
5. Fold the papers and put them in the coffee can.
6. When you feel angry, pull out a slip and do what it says instead of hitting.
7. Teach the children to bring the can to you when they feel like hitting so you can read a slip to them.

Many thanks for permission to share this material to Mike Walsh, Carole Gesme and the courageous women at Genesis II who are changing their family rules.

## Things to Do Instead of Hitting

- A. Take time to ask yourself what you want and/or need.
- B. Rip up old newspapers or magazines and throw them about. (Keep a supply handy for this purpose.)
- C. Stomp out of the house and walk briskly until your anger dissipates. (Do this only if someone else is in the house so your babies are not left alone.)
- D. Punch a bean bag chair.
- E. Say, "I'm going to scream for X number of minutes." Then do it. Make angry sounds but eliminate words that might hurt others.
- F. Open the linen closet door, whip the towels out and throw them across the room. (Don't throw them at anybody.)
- G. Or do same with dirty laundry and eliminate having to fold the clothes again.
- H. Go outside and throw a basketball against the house.
- I. Take a towel and beat on the bathtub with it.
- J. Shout, "I'm so angry, and I expect you to stop what you're doing now!"
- K. Count to ten loudly and in an angry voice. (Go to twenty if you need to.)
- L. Do an angry dance.
- M. Throw snowballs at a tree.
- N. Whip marshmallows into the sink and yell a karate type yell as you throw.
- O. Take a shower to calm down. Let the water wash the negative feelings away. (An alternative is a hot bath.)
- P. Pile up pillows or inflated inner tubes and smash them with a tennis racket using your whole body. Keep knees bent.
- Q. Pound on a mattress.
- R. Kick into pillows piled against a wall. Blow into a paper bag and then pop the bag.
- T. Play angry notes on a piano.
- U. Pull weeds with vigor saying "I'm so mad!" with each pull.
- V. Throw rocks into a lake or river. (Don't throw at anything.)
- W. Use the Fuss Box (see page 3)
- X. Give up the anger as inappropriate to the situation.
- Y. Decide to think. Resolve the issues about which you are angry.
- Z. Get physical, pleasurable strokes yourself to prevent your anger.



## 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, education or support groups. Write to **WE** for details.

## Ways a Five Minute Introduction Exercise Can Lead to

*Discovery*

When you plan an opening exercise, consider the following possibilities:

- get 2 or more people to connect
- focus group on task ahead
- provide structure for individual focus so the individual is important within the group, diversity and disagreement are accepted
- provide structure for group mind set
- provide entry into group
- legitimize personal feelings
- provide fun—openness—color—energy
- give time for reflection
- help people to listen
- invite open flow rather than rigidity

If you aren't satisfied with your openings, check to see if you are neglecting one or more of the items on the list.

Jean I. Clarke.

## support group News

From Parent Education Associates in Seattle comes this wisdom, shared by Betsy Crary:

Steps in learning to use alternatives:

1. Know that there are alternatives
2. Try out alternatives in a "nonreal" situation. (Practice in Support Group; practice the new behavior at home alone, role play with a supportive friend.)
3. Use the alternative in a real situation.



From an anonymous source

"Changes in behavior occur when practice is sufficiently rewarded to keep going until the goal is reached."

### Suggested Format for Group Meetings

Place \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Person in Charge \_\_\_\_\_

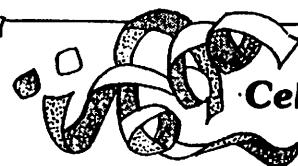
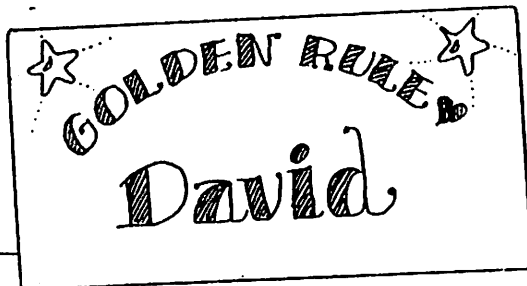
#### Program:

- 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

## Opening Activity for Considering Rules

### Hand out Golden Rule name tags.

Choose a partner. Make a name tag for him and ask him to tell you one or two rules that his family had while he was growing up that he is glad about. Introduce your partner and tell the group about his rule if he is willing for you to share that information.



## Closing Activity for Celebrating Family Rules

- At the end of the meeting, briefly review the activities of the meeting.
- Ask several people to share one rule they grew up with that they are glad they are still using or one rule they are glad they have changed.
- Ask for Resentments. Listen to resentments, do not defend or explain.
- Ask for Appreciations.
- Ask people to put their Gold Rule name tag in a place where it will remind them to be in charge of their own family rules.
- Say good-byes.

## Potent Organization

It is hard to be potent if you are not well organized. Here is a tip for organizing the little details that need to be taken care of on a daily basis or within a few days. Use the small size (1 1/2" x 2") Post-it® Note Pads.

938-9163

*plan to colead meeting for wed.*

*call Carole*

Write a signal message on the bottom of the slip. You can write a word or two to signal you which person to call, tasks to complete, assignment to do or topic to consider.

Stick the slips on your calendar or one above the other so the signal words show. As you complete each task, remove the slip. If a task cannot be completed, move the slip ahead to the calendar day when you will complete it. You can write additional instructions on the upper part of the slip if necessary.

*submit outline to Lafayette by Friday*

*plan angu workshop.*

*write COMPETITION*

*pay Visa*

*birthday cards*

*Call John*

This article was incorrectly presented in the last issue. Please accept this correction.

## Resentments

## Appreciations

While it is beneficial to ask for resentments and appreciations at the end of a meeting to help people get closure on the experience, sometimes it is wise to ask for resentments at the beginning of a meeting also.

One way to handle personal resentment is to hand out slips of paper and ask persons with resentments to write them on the paper. Ask them to let the resentment go as they write it. Do not collect the slips.

A way to handle resentments that are obvious to the whole group is the use of **The Fuss Box** (see page 3) yourself and then ask other people who want to use the box to take turns.

## Theory

## Know Your Goal

If you are leading a group and have difficulty holding people's attention, check to be sure you are clear about your own goal.

Dr. Lothar Sattler says:

"One listens and understands more by emotion than logic. One catches a thread. If the speaker has no goal, one can't connect with the thread, loses interest, and can't follow."

If you have difficulty identifying your own goals or limiting them to fit the time allowed, try using the **Planning Wheel** in Volume 5, Number 1 or in **Who, Me Lead a Group?** by Jean Illsley Clarke, Winston Press.

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

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