

Great Groups

Creating and Leading Effective Groups

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Leading the Working (Norming–Performing) Group

The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime.

—Babe Ruth

GREAT GROUPS IN ACTION: A GROUP VIGNETTE

Some groups seem to work better than others. This book, naturally, aims to help you work with groups in a way that ensures that they will go well. You will find, however, that even though your preparations and work for one group are pretty much the same as that for another, one group may simply seem to coalesce and work together better than the other.

There are good groups, groups where people get along well, where they share details of their lives, and where they get feedback from others about how they are perceived. And then there are great groups, where there is a significant level of trust and intimacy and where people take significant—but contained—risks with one another.

I recall one of these great groups and one particular day at one of our meetings. We had been meeting weekly, and things had been going pretty well. People in the group seemed to enjoy one another's company while accepting their differences.

They were talkative and not reluctant to share personal material, and some were reporting that coming to the group was having a positive impact on their lives at home and at work.

This was a group that had come together around issues related to grief and bereavement. I had put the word out to my contacts in schools and to the human service and medical communities that this was to be a group for people who had lost friends or family through some kind of death. I had received 20 inquiry calls, 12 had shown up for initial interviews to hear more about the group, and we now had a group of eight people who were coming regularly. This was a closed group, meaning that this same group of eight people met every week.

Each of our meetings had been filled with stories about the people who had died. Some of the deaths had been of natural causes, some had been by suicide, and one had been from a drug overdose. While there were eight people in the group, each with distinct stories and personalities, four stand out in memory.

Jessica talked bitterly about her husband and his slow death resulting from his chronic alcoholism. She had divorced him years before his death, yet she cared for him in his final months, the time when he was at his sickest. She regaled the group with stories about what an awful person her ex was. I began to experience her as something of a whiner, a chronic complainer, and found myself wondering what it might have been like for the ex-husband to live with her during his last days on the planet. Additionally, she was a one upper, always coming up with a problem that was worse than what another person in the group would describe.

Gabriel was a man's man—a truck driver by profession, stoic, and not very therapy-wise. He loved to listen to stories about others' situations, their losses, and then give them some piece of advice to make things better. He was a fixer. I had seen my role as trying to teach him to modify his need to make everything better and to help him learn some basic listening and responding skills. Different group members had generally reinforced this by telling him that what they really wanted from him was simply to be heard and understood. His wife had died of cancer, and though the death had occurred 10 years previously, her presence was still very much a part of his life.

Caitlyn was the group mother. Her response to loss was to care for others. She had lost a child to a heroin overdose and was heroically struggling to cope with his death by involving herself in a variety of drug abuse prevention programs (not an atypical response to tragedy—an attempt to somehow transform the loss). Her pain was palpable, and her stories about her attempts to thwart his drug use were hard to hear. Despite her own pain, she was always emotionally “there” for other group members when difficulties were discussed. She even brought home-baked bread and cookies to group meetings.

And then there was Gene. Gene's father had died 1 year ago, and on the day we were meeting, it was the anniversary of his dad's death. Gene had just been to the cemetery to visit his dad's grave. Gene's father had been very religious, a devout Roman Catholic, and Gene had come to share this devotion. But the dad had also been something of a bully, had ruled the home with an iron fist, and had sometimes been cruel with Gene, his brothers, and their mother. Gene's mother, he said, had seemed almost relieved when he died.

I experienced Gene as tightly controlled and out of touch with his inner world. He usually looked miserable, despite his claims of how well he'd been doing. When he talked about his dad, he used platitudes like "He's in a better place" and "It was God's will" to explain his response to his father's death. He described his home life with his family as idyllic—problem free. Being a naturally suspicious person (a decent clinician never takes what is said at face value), I never accept such sweeping characterizations as being wholly accurate. While in no way did I want to challenge his spiritual beliefs, I did want the group to help him dig below the surface of that perfect persona a bit. I thought that if he could loosen his grip on himself, he might not continue to appear quite so unhappy. In short, I wanted "Clean Gene" to rough it up.

On this particular Wednesday, we did our usual check-ins, where we briefly went around the group, each person talking briefly about the highlights of his or her week and how things were going. When we got to Gene, he said, "So you know that this is the day my dad died last year." "Yes," we said, "we remember."

He paused, and then, he said, "And I told you what he was like." "Yes," we said in unison, "we remember."

"Well, I've been thinking . . .," and here he took a very long pause. The room got very quiet, and this lasted for quite some time. "Uh oh," I thought, "here we go. Clean Gene's about to take the lid off, and things are about to get really interesting."

The group, bless its collective heart, remained silent through these pauses, as Gene gathered himself to talk. No one jumped in with questions. It takes a while for a group to be able to suffer periods of silence, and thankfully, this was one the group didn't break. It kept the focus squarely on Gene.

"I've been thinking I'm turning out just like him." There was another long pause. The group maintained its silence, but many in the group were nodding in encouragement for him to go on. I was loving their silence and their nonverbal encouragement.

Finally, he spoke, and this time, it came out in a torrent. "I look in the mirror and I see his face. I look in my kids' eyes and I see myself when I was their age. I see their fear, their mistrust, their anger."

He continued,

I took care of the old man when he was sick. I managed his business affairs when he couldn't do it. I even washed him when he was too sick to do it himself. I was

the dutiful son . . . and I hated every minute of it. I hated how he still controlled me; I hated how sick he got; I hated having to touch him. It got so bad sometimes I even almost threw up.

The group sat in a stunned silence as Gene recounted all this and more. I sensed that they felt as much as I did that this was a huge turnaround, a confession of immense proportions. For Gene to talk about these thoughts and feelings about his father, I imagined, was a betrayal of all that he supposed himself to be. He was shattering his image of himself as the dutifully loving son, of being something other than a fully loving, accepting person.

I really wanted to say something to Gene, to reassure him that these complicated feelings are normal and acceptable, particularly given what he'd been through in his history with his father—yet even greater than my desire to respond was my desire for someone else in the group to respond. Never do for the group, I thought, what the group can do for itself. So I hung on to my impulse to speak and held out, waiting for someone else to step up to the plate. I knew that this was a magic moment in our group, and that this was a wonderful opportunity for someone to respond with empathy and understanding. I continued to wait it out while Gene started to tear up and then to openly cry.

And then it came. “It can be really tough to have this idea about who and how you’re supposed to be, and then all these feelings you have just don’t line up. It sucks!” I was stunned. This response, this reflection of thoughts and feelings, was almost exactly what I could have said, and it came from a most unlikely source—Jessica. No whining here, no one-upmanship, nothing other than an intelligent and heartfelt response to this all-too-human dilemma of Gene’s. She had avoided making suggestions or telling something about herself, and instead, she had accurately captured the essence of his dilemma—and the feelings surrounding it—and handed it back to him. I was sincerely moved, as I think most of us were, by this simple act of generosity. This brief interchange clearly demonstrated the healing capacity of groups—both for those who choose to take reasonable risks of self-disclosure as well as for those who respond.

Gene responded immediately to Jessica’s comments. He continued crying freely and started banging his fists against his thighs. His feelings were fully engaged, and now, it did seem like a good time for a “leaderly” intervention, so I stepped in. “There’s so much here, so much feeling, so many contradictions, and you’ve been beating yourself up for so long.”

Now, the tears really came, not only from Gene but from others in the group as well. Gabriel, the stoic trucker, was weeping silently. Caitlyn simply sat quietly, one of the few times she didn’t try to offer help. Others sat with their own personal thoughts about what Gene’s admissions meant for them. All our own thoughts and feelings were being triggered by Gene’s disclosures and emotionality. Gene—and

Jessica—had given the group permission to go deeper, and now, we had the opportunity to help Gene sort out the meaning of his tears, as well as begin to work with others about the meanings of theirs.

Gene had taken the risk of letting go of the known, the predictable, and allowed himself to show a side of himself rarely, if ever, shown to others. He had allowed himself to experience and show feelings in a way that gave others the permission to show theirs as well.

Furthermore, Jessica had modeled a way of responding that showed true understanding, a way of being present with Gene that was without judgment. She became, at least at this moment in time, the point person for a group that was demonstrating that it could hear and handle strong emotion and that people within the group could swim with one another through deep and difficult waters.

These few interchanges did, in fact, constitute a magical moment in this group. There was a current of feeling, an almost tangible electric connection between us, filling the room. I sensed that in this risk of disclosure and genuinely helpful responding lay the beginning of real work that we could do together. Gene would be able to explore the complexities of his relationship with his dad, with all of his family, including all of its contradictions. I hoped that the group would help him be more accepting of these contradictions, help him let go of some of his self-condemnation.

In the process of helping Gene continue to talk about and explore these thoughts and feelings—as well as in helping others who would inevitably step forward to take similar risks, now that Gene had broken the ice—we could all learn more about how to give responsively to another's pain and suffering.

This is the beauty of great groups: the giving, the risking, and the giving back again. The great group can be a place where one can let oneself out, and show parts not often seen, parts of a self that are too often filled with shame and regret. Moreover, it is a place where people can learn how to reach out to reassure and give sustenance to one another in a way that can be taken in and integrated. At its best, the group is a training ground for experimenting with new ways of being with people, for learning some new interpersonal skills, and for learning more about oneself.

These are some of the reasons why I love working with groups, and this is what I hope you come to love about them as well. The groups that I've enjoyed the most are like this one, groups where people like Gene choose to take the risk of becoming more vulnerable. These are groups in which people talk about things that are important and personal, and in a way that is heartfelt and with feeling, and where others witness and receive those disclosures with respect and concern. These are the truly great groups.

Groups create a space where people can not only learn more about themselves but also learn more about others and about themselves in relationship with others.

Groups, and perhaps everything that is important in life, are all about relationships. This book is about helping you lay the groundwork for groups that will work well and for creating the possibility that some will be truly great.

Reflection and Discussion Exercise

Following are some questions you could contemplate after thinking about this case vignette you've just read:

1. What are your overall reactions to this group interaction? What are your reactions and thoughts about the different members of this group?
2. How far along do you suppose this group to be? How many times has it met? Could Gene's disclosure have happened earlier in this group?
3. Is it the role of groups to encourage this kind of personal disclosure? Why or why not?
4. Would encouraging younger people to reveal themselves, like Gene has done here, be a good thing? Would you set any guidelines about age and self-disclosure in your groups?
5. What are your ideas about what might happen next (over the next few weeks) in this group?

Finally, if you are working on this exercise with other people, take a few minutes to discuss your thoughts with them.

This chapter will help you recognize and understand some of the dynamics of the group that has become fully productive and engaged. It will highlight some of the characteristics and features of the group at this stage of its developmental life and will provide you with some information about the skills you'll need to help work with this group. It will also provide you with ample opportunity to reflect on

LEADING THE WORKING GROUP

- Norms and Roles: Positive and Negative
- Strategies to Promote Positive Roles and Norms
- The Hallmarks of the Productive Working Group
- Skills for Leading the Working Group
- What to Do When It's Not Working

your ideas about these groups and practice some of your own leadership skills with a “norming and performing” group.

THE GROUP SETTLES INTO SOME REGULAR NORMS AND ROLES

As your group grows and gets its feet under it, there will be certain unspoken rules, or *norms*, that develop by which it will operate. People, for example, may sit in the same places, get quiet before the group starts, develop some routine jokes, or repeatedly have the same reactions to what you initiate. These and any other number of typical group behavior patterns may become regular occurrences in the group.

Relatedly, individuals may play specific *roles*, or parts, in this unfolding little drama. Their regular, somewhat predictable behaviors will typically support the norms that have developed in the group. You may be able to easily spot and name some of these—the monopolizer, the clown, the silent one, and so on. Some of these roles may be helpful, or *facilitative*, and some may be negative, or *obstructing*.

We talked earlier about how these norms and roles can theoretically affect how your group develops. We talked about how these norms, and particularly the kinds of roles that people adopt, can oftentimes be a replication of the ways in which they behave in most groups and of the ways in which they may have behaved in their families while growing up.

When you are in the midst of your developing group, all this becomes less theoretical and more of a real-life set of issues with which you'll have to deal. You'll most likely come to appreciate and value the facilitative roles that some play. They will mimic the kinds of skills you are trying to model—the reflective listening to others, the empathic understanding of the concerns shared by other group members, or the positive enthusiasm for the work of the group. They'll generally be hopeful and enthusiastic about the directions in which the group is moving. You will experience the ways in which they interact as supportive and in synch with what you are trying to do for the group.

Others may be playing less positive, obstructing roles. Some of these may pose minimal problems, like just being quiet, but one or more of these may be operating in roles that are really distracting, openly resentful, or reluctant to “get with the program.” These can present you with some real challenges.

PROMOTING POSITIVE NORMS AND ROLES: MOVING TOWARD COHESION

When confronted with negative attitudes and behaviors, I would encourage you to think strategically. Start thinking—and strategize with your supervisor and/or your

coleader—about the ways in which you can support the positive, facilitating things that happen in the group and minimize the obstructing behaviors. This can be a little tricky, because while you want to obviously throw your energy behind those who are acting in ways that promote the group goals, you also don't want to embarrass, or subtly shame, those who are more negative.

One of the best ways to funnel energy into positive directions is to *selectively attend* to those member statements that are operating in a facilitating manner. Simply respond more to the positive things that are said, while directing less energy toward obstructing commentary. You can even make affirming and supporting responses for the positive contributions the people make, perhaps not saying much—or anything—about the negative. This is a subtle *behavioral shaping* of your group, steering it in the positive, cohesion-building directions you want it to move.

When one or more persons are being particularly vocal in their obstruction, use your best *reflective listening* skills. Avoid becoming defensive, and roll with their resistance. Remember the martial arts analogy, and let their negativity flow around you. You can show that you understand what their complaints are without agreeing with them. Then, as we discussed earlier in strategizing how to deal with conflict in the group, you can check in with others to see how widespread the discontent is. If others share the concern, you can always nondefensively make some adjustments in what you're doing.

If one individual is alone in her or his complaints and negativity—and you've already found out that no one else shares that individual's perspectives—you could always have a *private conversation* with her or him, outside the group. Try to ascertain what it is that individual is really looking for (typically, some variation of affection or control) behind the obstructing behaviors. You can see if there are some things that you could let her or him do, or do for her or him, that would make the situation better. I wouldn't suggest having this conversation in the group,

TIPS FOR PROMOTING COHESION IN THE GROUP

Model the kinds of behaviors you want your members to emulate: empathy for others, enthusiasm, and a positive, hopeful attitude. Selectively attend to the positive, facilitating things the people say, giving less attention and responses to the negative.

In dealing with obstructive behavior or direct criticism, be nondefensive. Try to make reasonable accommodations that might empower the person who's being obstructive.

Use drawing out skills to encourage the quiet people to talk and cutting off skills to help the overtalkative people become more observant. Use inclusive activities, games, and exercises to promote total group engagement.

When someone is quietly subverting the group (e.g., showing up late, making negative aside comments, sulking), it might merit a private conversation to let him or her know that you've noticed and to find out what might make things better.

as there is too much of a chance that this singling out could be experienced as embarrassing.

If the person, for example, is complaining about other people in the group, you could tell her or him that you'd support her or his efforts to voice those complaints in the group. And then, you could help work those issues through. If the person is unhappy with some of the content under discussion, you could ask her or him to provide some alternative suggestions, maybe even lead a discussion in ways that would make her or him feel more included and valued. Negotiate seriously with the person, letting her or him know that you take her or his concerns to heart and that you want to help make this a positive experience for everyone, her or him included. If the person can leave this conversation feeling like she or he has been heard and that she or he has some power to influence how things go, she or he will most likely move from being an obstructer to a facilitator.

HALLMARKS OF THE GROUP THAT IS PERFORMING WELL

It's usually not hard to know whether a group is working well, or not. There will simply be an atmosphere of good will, perhaps some occasional humor, and a sense of bonding that has developed between members. People talk about looking forward to coming to group and about using the group as a silent advisor during their times away from the group. People in the group like one another, and there are possibilities that some of these relationships born in the group will continue after the group ends.

A single determinant of how well a group is doing has to do with its *cohesion*. This is a term borrowed from chemistry, derived from the Latin *cohaerere* (to stick together). The word accurately describes the bond that forms between people in the group when things are working well. While everyone in the group may not like everyone else equally, there is nevertheless considerable camaraderie and a sense of shared purpose (see Figure 9.1)

People in the group will be actively using the skills you have modeled. They will be listening to one another, responding with reflective comments, and will be giving one another feedback. When the group is working well, there simply seems to be a general sense of people caring about one another.

The "working" group will have rounded off some of the rough edges that characterized the "engaging" group. Because people now seem to be involved with one another in more accepting, generous ways, the information that gets shared by way of feedback is typically more positive. This opens the door for more member self-disclosure. When people feel safe, and sense that others genuinely care about them, there is more of an inclination to take risks, to be vulnerable.



Figure 9.1 The Cohesive Group Embraces Individual Differences

One of the shifts I’ve noticed in groups that have begun to work well has to do with a move away from advice giving toward more active listening and brainstorming about solutions to problems. While in early groups members may try to respond to one another primarily out of their own experiences, now there is a more respectful staying with the person who’s sharing. There is less of an inclination to jump into finding solutions to problems people in the group bring up and more of an interest in fully exploring different options for collaborative action with them.

Thus, early in the life of the group, a response to someone whose dog has died may have been “Oh, I’m so sorry about your loss. I know what it feels like to lose a dog, because mine died a year ago. Here’s how I dealt with it, and maybe this will work for you.” In the later working group, this response might be slightly different: “Oh, I’m so sorry about your dog. This has got to be really hard. Can you tell us about it?” This latter response will be experienced as significantly more supportive and understanding and is indicative of the increased level of sophistication in the group.

This sense of cohesion and shared purpose extend to an acceptance of differences between people. Some of these differences may be attitudinal or relationship-style related (e.g., some people will be more vocal and active), and some may be cultural or ethnic. In the cohesive working group, these differences are embraced, and the people will want to learn more about what’s different, while they will at the same time be accepting of those differences. The group that’s cohesive creates an environment where differences can be safely explored.

HALLMARKS OF THE WORKING GROUP

- Cohesion
- A Sense of Shared Purpose
- Positive Norms Prevail
- Members Facilitating, Supporting, and Empathizing With One Another
- Acceptance of Individual Differences
- Self-Disclosure
- Giving and Receiving Positive Feedback

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR THE WORKING GROUP

It should go without saying that you'll continue to use all the skills we've discussed thus far in your work with a group. You'll want to ask questions, use exercises, and do all the things to lead the working, cohesive group that have helped bring the group to where it is now.

To work with the mature group, you'll also want to add some additional skills to your repertoire. You'll want to help your group dig deeper into personal issues that are brought up and help develop stronger ties between people in the group. The skills that follow should assist in these efforts.

Starting a Session

In addition to starting a new group at the beginning, there is also the need to know how to start each session of the group. You will most likely experiment with trying out some different ways to do this, and there are some typical ways in which experienced group leaders do this that you could try.

Sometimes, the group will have a structured plan or an exercise that you want to use to begin the group. This will then dictate how things get started. If there is no fixed plan, there are two alternative ways by which you could think about starting. One would be to summarize what had happened in the past week or two, and then, say something like "So, given all that we talked about past week, I'm not exactly sure who would like to pick it up from there . . . or maybe introduce something new."

Another common way of starting is to have everyone do a brief "check-in." Each member briefly says something about her or his week and then says whether or not she or he would like some group time to talk about a particular

issue. Then, after everyone has checked in, you can come back to give the member time.

Affirming

Affirming is a demonstration of your positive belief in someone in your group. It may be making a statement about his or her ability to do something in the future or it may be a statement of your belief that someone is already doing something well. This might start with something like “I really like it when. . . ,” or “I think it’s great that you. . . .” Your affirmation of something this person is doing shows your respect for that person’s thoughts or actions (Englar-Carlson, 2014).

An affirmation might even demonstrate your affection for this person. Thus, “It’s great that you were able to do that. I think you’re terrific” is an affirmation of the person and what’s been accomplished. Naturally, when you make this kind of affirmation, you need to be aware of how others in the group will take it. Your affirmation of one person should not exclude others; so you’ll want to make sure others are affirmed at some point as well. Your affirmations should help set a general group tone that is positive and hopeful (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010).

Validating

Validating is a lot like affirmation. With this skill, you are telling someone that you believe what’s being said and that you have some understanding of the meaning of what’s been told (Hall & Horvath, 2015; Howey & Ormrod, 2002). When someone talks about having been bullied as a child, for example, you can validate this by saying—perhaps with some kind of reflection—that you hear what’s being said and that you understand, at some level, how difficult it must have been. “Thanks for sharing this really awful bullying experience you had with us. This must have been awful.”

You will have people in your groups who have grown up in terribly nonvalidating environments, where they have been given lots of messages, in lots of different ways, about how their experience of what goes on around and inside them is not accurate.

Sometimes, people have been told, even as children, that their feelings—whatever they might be—are unjustified. While your validation of these people’s experiences and feelings cannot change those earlier messages, it can help minimize the feelings of craziness one must feel when one is told that one’s internal experience (e.g., feeling sad or angry) is inaccurate.

Cheerleading

There are times when you—and the group—can solidly back a member’s plan to do something with unabashed encouragement. You can serve as a cheerleader for the things that need to be done (Kral & Kowalski, 1989; Schorr, 1995).

Cheerleading Example 1: “You work hard and deserve more money! We know that you can convince your boss that you need a raise. Go for it!”

Cheerleading Example 2: “You’ve studied hard and you know the material. We know you can do well on this test—go get ‘em!”

You want to make sure that your cheerleading is for the person, not for how well he or she performs, because there will be times when your cheerleading efforts don’t pay off—the person doesn’t get the raise or the student doesn’t do so well on the test. You want the person to know that your support is for him or her and that it is not contingent on how well he or she does.

Brainstorming

Simply put, this is helping someone outline multiple strategies for dealing with a specific problem or situation (Sarnoff & Sarnoff, 2005). This may involve either you, or one or more group members, offering potential options for looking at someone’s problem situation in a variety of different ways. The person in question might also offer some possible options. This way of helping someone strategize about courses of action is preferable to giving advice about one way to go—it’s more respectful of an individual’s capacity to make intelligent choices for herself or himself.

The following is an example:

Ok, so you say that your boss is intolerant, miserable, and mean. It looks like there could be a number of ways to go with this: You could quit, and find another job; you could get assertive and tell him where to head in; you could just suck it up, and let him do whatever. And I’m sure you’ve thought about some other options, as well.

Using Deeper Reflections

We’ve already discussed reflection as a critically helpful skill in letting people know that they’ve been heard and understood. This skill will continue to serve you well as your group grows and matures, and you can enlarge on its use with your ability to capture the full—sometimes less obvious—meaning and feelings associated with what’s being talked about.

By way of an example, consider the woman who has been talking about the difficulties she’s been having with her teenage daughter. The woman is a single parent, juggling work and parenting responsibilities, and the daughter has recently been getting into trouble at school. A simple reflection might be “You’re having a hard time with your daughter.” A deeper, perhaps more meaningful reflection could be “You’ve got so much on your plate, and being a mom with a kid who’s having trouble on top of everything you do . . . this is just really tough.”

The deeper reflection captures both the meaning and the feeling of what someone has been talking about. You can use your own experience and feelings associated with those as a guide to how to respond to someone. The more closely you can personally identify with the content of what someone is talking about, the more able you’ll be to accurately and empathically respond with a deep reflection.

Summarizing

This is a skill typically used at the end of a group meeting, where you can tie together a lot of what’s been said and done in the group that day (Madson, Schumacher, Noble, & Bonnell, 2013; Morran, Stockton, & Whittingham, 2004). You might start by saying something like “This has been quite a group meeting, and we’ve talked about a bunch of things.” and then, you might go on to enumerate what those things are. You might end the summarization with a statement about how you can continue with a discussion of these things the next time you meet.

The best summarizations incorporate some *linking*, meaning that the items that are summarized are talked about in a way that connects the different things—and people in the group who talked about them—together. A good summarization can also serve a cutting off function. If, for example, someone brings up a weighty subject when only a few minutes are left, you can include to your summarization some kind of statement like “Wow, and now, in addition to all the other good stuff we’ve talked about, we’ve got this—and it’ll be great to get into this next week.”

Self-Disclosure

There are times when sharing something about yourself can help move a group in productive ways. In a previous chapter, for example, we talked about using some low-grade self-disclosures early on in the group as a way of modeling how people can talk about themselves.

Remember the “people as onions” analogy? You can model peeling back some of your own layers using some carefully thought-out self-disclosures. Now that your group has moved a bit farther along, you might use self-disclosures of your own experiences as a way of relating to the things people are talking about. You

might also share your personal thoughts and feelings about what is being talked about in the group. Thus, there are two ways of self-disclosing: (1) sharing your personal experiences and (2) sharing your ideas and feelings. Using self-disclosure in either of these ways is also a means of modeling what you'd like others in the group to do.

There are some things to think about as you consider whether to make a self-disclosure. The first big consideration has to do with your ideas about the reasons for making a self-disclosure. The only legitimate reason for making a self-disclosure is as a means for helping the group move forward. Using self-disclosure as a way of impressing the group doesn't cut it. The basic question you should always ask yourself is "What purpose will telling the group this about myself—or sharing my ideas—serve?" If you can't come up with anything reasonable, don't share (Goodspeed, McCollum, & Bauman, 2004).

A second proviso about self-disclosure has to do with the kind of information you might share. Be very careful about sharing information that, if someone in the group chooses to, could possibly harm you. Anything you might share can possibly be used against you. Would you really, for example, advise a leader to share the details of her or his past drug use with her or his group of 16-year-old high schoolers?

Finally, do not choose to share anything about yourself that you haven't sufficiently worked through. You may be tempted to share stories of your own losses or other hardships with people who are talking about loss and difficulty; .but don't do it if you think that you won't be able to manage yourself in the telling. As a therapist friend of mine advises, shedding a few tears as you recount some of your personal difficulties is acceptable, even advisable, but sobbing is probably over the top. The group you are running is not the group where you want to do your own therapeutic work.

Hunches/Speculation

We talked about using hunches in the last chapter, and the basics of the use of this skill remain the same when leading the working group. The well-timed hunch, or speculation, can help expand someone's thinking about herself or himself (De Domenico, 1999). The level of hunch, however, like the level of reflections, becomes more sophisticated with the group that's been working together for some time. You and the group have more information about one another with which to form responses, so your hunches about what's going on in one another's world have the possibility of being more accurate.

Sometimes, your hunch can hold an idea of yours about what someone is saying that could be posed as "It's interesting that . . ." or "I wonder what. . ."

The following is an example of a hunch:

It's interesting that you've been talking about this series of jobs you've had, and how you've never been appreciated for the work you've done. I wonder if perhaps there are some things you've done to undermine the positive contributions you've made.

Immediacy

Whenever you can make the material the group is discussing relate directly to what is happening in the here and now of the group experience, it sets the stage for some great, immediate learning. Bringing the “outside” into the immediate presence of the group is almost always a good idea. You can assume that people typically operate pretty much the same in most group situations, so if there are difficulties someone encounters in his or her world outside the group, those are most likely mirrored in the group. You have direct evidence of someone's positive and negative attributes as they play out before you. Providing the people in the group with information about how these attributes are perceived by the group might help them negotiate their lives outside the group more effectively (Hill, 2014; Sturges, 2012).

For example, given the previous “hunch” about the person's work history, you might make that more immediate by adding, “And maybe what goes on for you at work is just like some of the undermining you do with yourself with us (*and perhaps you could also cite some examples of when this has happened*).”

Silence

Sometimes, the best thing you can say is nothing at all. Unlike at the beginning of a group, where silence on your part can create and help escalate a lot of unwanted anxiety, a group that has grown and matured can likely tolerate some silence on your part. When the group gets quiet, particularly after some of the people have been doing some talking, you might just let things play out without saying anything for a while (Duba, Neufeld, & DeVoss, 2004).

Some silences feel comfortable. It seems that people are simply sitting, ruminating on what's transpired (Wood, 2012). Other silences are different, tinged with tension or pregnant with things that need to be said. Experience will help you distinguish the differences between these and will serve as a guide to when and how to jump in with something to say (Mance, 2011).

Oftentimes, when you're getting uncomfortable with the amount of silence that you're all sitting in, you could simply make a process comment—a *hunch* or

speculation—about the silence itself. You could say something like “This quiet time is really interesting. Some silences are just quiet times; other silences are just filled with things waiting to be said. I wonder what kind of silence this is.”

Another kind of silence can typically unfold in the middle of a group activity. If, for example, you’ve invited individuals to volunteer to take turns doing something, a number of the people may quickly participate, and others may hang back. You may get to a point where there is silence, as the group waits to find out if there will be another volunteer for the activity. At this point, I might say something like

You know, this is always one of those tricky times for a group leader. You want to give just enough time so that someone who’s a little reluctant to jump in might actually go ahead and do it—but not so much time as to create a lot of undue pressure. Let’s give it another couple of minutes, and we’ll see what happens.

Then, either another person volunteers or you can decide to proceed.

Reframing

This skill involves helping someone in your group look at a particular aspect of their life situation in a new, more positive way. Your ability to provide a new way of thinking about a difficult life situation can go a long way toward helping someone view his or her own role in the situation more positively (Schneider & Krug, 2014; Singh, Meng, & Hansen, 2014). For the young woman who looks back on her difficult childhood, when she had to take care of her younger siblings because of her parents’ drug addiction, you could suggest that while she undoubtedly lost some prized aspects of childhood, she also gained some remarkable life skills. She now has the capacity to understand and care for the needs of others, and she can be reassured in the knowledge that she is a resilient survivor of really difficult situations.

For the new dad, struggling to maintain a job, continuing his education, and supporting his young family, you could encourage him to view his situation as more than just a series of burdens. He can be encouraged to see the heroic aspects of what he’s doing—to look at the nobility involved with the struggle to improve himself and provide for his family.

Naturally, you don’t want to use reframing in a way that invalidates people’s thoughts about their experiences, and you’ll want to help them explore and express the thoughts and feelings associated with those experiences. You can, however, also provide them with newer, unique, and alternative ways of looking at their lives. Reframing can help instill hope and inspiration where previously there was little of either (Scheel, Davis, & Henderson, 2013).

Linking

When a number of people have been talking about things in the group, whether these are personal issues, common concerns, or any other matters, it's always helpful if you can draw some common threads out of all this material and make a comment (reflection) about it. "Linking" these different strands of thought together helps people see commonalities between themselves, as well as provides a new way for each person to consider new learning from the ways in which others deal with their particular situations (Davis & Meara, 1982; Morran et al., 2004). This is a skill that helps the people see their own issues in perspective, to appreciate the fact that others may share these concerns. Linking is a skill that, when used effectively, can help connect people to one another in the group and even to people in the wider human community (Wilke, 2003).

For example, let's say that in the group Mary was talking about problems with her young child who doesn't want to go to school, Amy shared some concerns about an elderly parent who might need to go into a nursing home, and Luis talked about his brother's trouble with the law. As a way of linking all this together you might say,

The three of you have really different situations, but all these are related to family and feelings of responsibility that come up as you consider these difficult situations. This is really hard and hard to figure out what to do.

This linking statement helps Mary, Amy, and Luis see their problems in a more universal light and can serve to bring them into closer alliance. It also serves the function of possibly helping each member learn about how to deal with his or her own difficulty by seeing how the other two deal with theirs.

The best linking comments/reflections capture—just like any reflection—both the common themes/meaning of what's been discussed as well as the feelings attached to the situations.

Drawing Out

You will sometimes have people in your groups who don't say much. They may be shy, they may be intimidated by others in the group, or they may just be naturally quiet. You'll want to develop an ability to get these people involved, to draw them out (Kieffer, 2006; Nosko & Breton, 1997).

As a group leader, you have an ethical responsibility to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate, so if you think that any of the reasons for nonparticipation have to do with cultural, racial, or other "differences"

between this member and others, this quietness takes on some special reasons for concern.

I have found that the best way to draw people out in a group is to use exercises or some kind of structured activity that more or less mandates the entire group's participation. Sometimes, this takes the form of an invitation: "With this next topic we're discussing, it'd be great to hear from everyone. Let's go around the circle, with each of us sharing our take on this." This kind of activity, in other words, is inclusive of everyone in the group.

Less helpful, I've found, are attempts to draw the people out by inviting them, specifically, to participate. When you say to the quiet guy in your group, "It would be great to hear what you think about this, Joe," it can simply serve to make the person feel on the spot, potentially embarrassing him.

If your attempts at drawing someone out via inclusive activities don't work, you can always have a private conversation with him or her outside of the group to check whether there are any inhibiting factors that need to be addressed.

Cutting Off

A very different problem can occur when someone is talking too much or talks about things that are not relevant to the topic at hand. You'll need to be able to stop someone who is talking too much (Harvill, West, Jacobs, & Masson, 1985). Other people in the group will become bored or, even worse, hostile toward someone who overtalks. Taken to extremes, a monopolizer can threaten to drive a group under (Gillam, Coker, & Trippany, 2004).

You'll want to do this cutting off as gently as possible. "Joe, you've talked about this work situation really thoroughly. I think we've all got a pretty good picture of what's going on. . . . Maybe it's time to invite some of other people's perspectives."

You don't want to embarrass someone or cut him or her off in ways that will discourage him or her from sharing anything else in the future. Remember, as the leader, you have a position of power in the group, and you want to use that power

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR LEADING THE WORKING GROUP

- Affirming
- Starting a Session
- Silence
- Hunches/Speculation
- Deeper Reflections
- Cheerleading
- Summarizing
- Reframing
- Immediacy
- Drawing Out
- Validating
- Self-Disclosure
- Linking
- Brainstorming
- Cutting Off

judiciously. Some people in the group will be more sensitive about being cut off than others, so you'll have to judge the best way to intervene without causing emotional injury.

THE NEW DIRECTIONS GROUP IS WORKING

Gary and Vanessa's group of teens with difficult family situations—the *New Directions* group—moved beyond the period of engaging and then settled into doing some productive work. Some group norms and roles were established, and for the most part, most of those roles that people in the group had adopted were facilitative. Amy was still quieter than most in the group, and Ted was still doing some occasional complaining, but these were not major obstructions. The group had settled into a familiar routine: After a brief check-in with everyone at the beginning of the group (*starting a session*), one or two persons in the group then took some more time to talk about issues at school or home, and then, when time permitted, the group did an exercise together. Things generally went smoothly.

One of these group meetings was characteristic of this productive period. A quieter young woman in the group, Noelle, was visibly upset about something. After everyone had given a brief update about what's been gone on for them during the week, Vanessa came back to Noelle and said, "Noelle, I'm not sure exactly what's going on, but you seem pretty riled up about something" (*drawing out*).

At this point, Ted started to complain, once again, about having to miss some study time to come to group. Vanessa responded with,

Ted, we can revisit this issue again, for the umpteenth time (*her exasperation is a small self-disclosure*), if it's really important to you, but the first order of business—Noelle—is already on the table (*cutting off*). So, Noelle, what's up?

Noelle looked a little reluctant to talk, but she began to tell the group about the events of the previous evening at her house. Her dad, who was about to move out of the house, had come after work to drink with friends. He was a little drunk and acting kind of mean. She said that he was mostly angry with Noelle's mom, who had told him some weeks earlier that he needed to move out because of his drinking, but he was also needling each of the kids, her brother and her. He started to get on Noelle's older brother's case because of his long hair, and then, he made some nasty comments about Noelle's choice of friends. She said that he went on and on about this, talking about how someone can be judged by the company he or she keeps.

When she took a little pause from telling this story, Vanessa said, "This sounds pretty awful—it's really hard to deal with such unreasonable stuff, especially from

a parent (*reflection and validation*)!” Noelle answered, “Yeah. He’s great when he’s sober, but when he drinks, watch out.”

Then, someone else in the group said, “Last night, for you, sounded bad to me, too. And I wonder what your brother thinks about all this.” (*This group member is using a reflection and a hunch/speculation—it’s always nice to see that the skills leaders have modeled have taken root.*)

Noelle replied, “We don’t talk much. I don’t have any idea what he thinks about, although I could tell from his reaction that he didn’t like the way dad was talking to him.” At this, a number of people in the group chimed in. They talked about not talking about family issues with their siblings, and they also talked about how hard that would be to do.

Gary then said,

You know, I remember when I first talked with my sister about some family stuff . . . but years after we’d moved out of the house. We both talked about how we wished we’d been able to talk together more while we were still living under the same roof. I find myself wondering what would happen if you talked with your brother (*self-disclosure and hunch/speculation*).

The group got quiet, and after a bit, Noelle said,

Well, we do get along pretty well. I’ve always looked up to him, and I think he knows I respect him. Maybe that could work, but I think I’d be pretty nervous about it. I’m not sure that’s such a great idea, but I’ll think it over.

Gary said, “I’m not advising you to do it, but I’m just wondering how it might roll out.” After this little interchange between Noelle and Gary, almost everyone in the group began encouraging her to have a conversation with her brother (*cheerleading*). They talked about how articulate and sincere she was (*affirming*) and about how great it would be to have an ally to talk with in the family. (*Again, how nice it is when the leader can resist the urge to respond and let members use skills they’ve learned earlier.*)

Then Gary talked a bit about each of the other people in the group who had also mentioned siblings with whom they didn’t talk and made a reflective comment about how common it seemed that people in families oftentimes avoid real conversations with one another (*linking*). The people in the group nodded assent, and a couple of them started talking about their own personal family situations and the conversations that needed to happen.

“Sure,” Vanessa added,

Talking with a brother or sister can be a great way to go . . . but sometimes that might not be reasonable. Maybe they’re not accessible, or for whatever reason

you don't think it'll work. Tell me about other options, other people you could recruit as allies (*inviting brainstorming*).

The group responded by quickly listing people they might be able to engage in personal conversations: coaches, school counselors, uncles and aunts, and friends, mostly.

By the time Noelle had discussed her own family situation in a little more depth, adding that she thought that she might consider taking a shot at having a talk about it all with her brother, it was almost time for the group to end. A couple of the other people in the group said that they wanted to talk about their brothers and sisters, too. One person started to launch into talking about his sister and her drug use.

To this, Gary said, “Wow, this is terrific. Great stuff (*affirming*), and I think we should probably wait until next week to get into it so we can give this the attention it deserves (*cutting off*).”

Finally, Gary wrapped things up with a general statement about what the group had done that day, and he also took time to congratulate the group for digging into some important material and for responding in such generous fashion to one another (*summarizing* and *affirming*). He ended by making a specific invitation to the young man who had begun to talk about his sister's issues to lead off with that at the next group. With this, the group ended for the day.

Reflection and Discussion Exercise: The *New Directions* Group

You've just finished reading this *New Directions* group session led by Vanessa and Gary. Following are some questions about this session. Take a few minutes to consider each. Reread the outline of the session, if necessary. Make some brief notes about your responses.

1. Early on in this session, Vanessa cuts Ted off to draw Noelle out. Did you think this was appropriate, and did Vanessa handle this skillfully?
2. Gary self-discloses about talking—and about the times of not talking—with his own sister about their family issues. Was this appropriate?
3. The group has encouraged Noelle to have a conversation with her brother. What do you think about this? Are there any risks?
4. Noelle's situation is, unfortunately, not that uncommon. The group has focused on urging her to talk with her brother and has also encouraged her to consider talking with someone outside the immediate family about this. What other strategies do you think might be helpful for her in dealing with her family situation? Are there any other things that should be happening?

5. What if Noelle's dad had not only been a little verbally mean with Noelle and her brother, but Noelle told you and the group that he had started screaming at them or maybe even hit one of them? What would you have done if you were leading this group?
6. If you had been leading this group, what might you have done differently?

After you've had a few minutes to do some personal reflecting about this session and about these questions, take a few more minutes to discuss this with your colleagues.

WHAT TO DO WHEN IT IS NOT WORKING

There will undoubtedly be the occasion—hopefully rare—when things just don't come together. The group doesn't jell, there's no cohesion, and people in the group generally seem disengaged from one another. Despite your best planning and your close attention to the group's development, it's simply not working. Some people may not trust others in the group. Some in the group may not feel connected to the goals and activities that you've planned. Or maybe, there are one or two big personalities in the group that run rampant over everyone. Any number of things can conspire to threaten the well-being of the group.

Unfortunately, there are no easy solutions for this, particularly in that each situation is unique. There are some things you can almost always do, however. The first—and this is always the suggestion for troubleshooting when things aren't going well—is to talk with your coleader and your supervisor about the situation. Strategize with them about the group and what you might do. You can discuss the personalities who are playing obstructing or facilitating roles and about how to get them to pull together. You can discuss the goals of the group, its activities, and structure, and together you can assess whether adjustments should be made.

Because your coleader has been in the room with you during group sessions, he or she has direct evidence of what's going on and may have some fresh ideas about how to continue that have not occurred to you. This is yet another good reason to colead. Another set of leadership eyes and ears are almost always helpful when problems arise.

This is also why it's so important to have a supervisor who you can trust. You want to be able to talk over your concerns, even your thoughts about your own inadequacies, with someone who you respect. You want a supervisor who will take your concerns and feelings seriously and who will see those concerns in a positive light. Whenever I have been in a position of doing supervision, I have

always thought of the vulnerabilities that have been shared as a sign of strength and have been much more concerned when someone was reluctant to talk about any difficulties.

The other significant action you can take—at least with groups of people who are able—is to take a break from whatever is customary and usual and talk over the situation with the group. Simply call a time-out and invite a discussion about the people’s perceptions of what is going well and what is going wrong. Just as you did earlier, with the group that was engaging, you can check in with everyone to see what might be changed to make things better, and then, you can think about which of those suggestions you could take seriously and make adjustments around. Oftentimes, the simple fact of being asked and having you responding positively will be enough to turn things in a more positive direction.

If you suspect that part of the reason that things aren’t going well has to do with some in the group being intimidated by others, you may assume that having a direct conversation with the group might not be productive. It might be too threatening for people to share their distrust of others out loud. If you think that this is the case, you can always conduct the “discussion” in writing. During the time-out that you call, you could have the people in the group write down their thoughts and give them to you, confidentially.

Working with a group that is having difficulties can be frustrating. If you can keep in mind that the difficulties are not all about you (e.g., personality conflicts, transference, etc.), consult with others and make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the group’s wishes, and the chances are that things will get better.

Hang in there through the rough patches, and carry some grit and determination.

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH A GROUP THAT IS NOT WORKING WELL

- Consult with your coleader.
- Consult with your supervisor.
- Call a time-out in the group. Conduct a discussion about what’s going on, and ask for constructive suggestions about adjustments that can be made. Take suggestions seriously, and make reasonable accommodations. Don’t compromise on those things you believe to be essential.
- Don’t allow personal attacks. Remember and utilize rules with the group for giving and receiving feedback during group discussions.
- Conduct written feedback (to you) sessions when you think that it might be too threatening or difficult for some in the group to talk in front of others.
- Think of these tough times as helpful lessons. Some of the things you learn from this experience will help inform your work with future groups.

GROUP FISHBOWL LAB PRACTICE EXERCISE: USING EXERCISES TO PROMOTE GROUP COHESION

This lab practice will need some preparation time. Read the description of the exercise first, and then, determine how much time you'll need to prepare.

For this fishbowl lab, you'll need six people to volunteer to be group members and two people to volunteer to be group leaders. The rest of the people will be silent observers, taking note of how the fishbowl exercise goes, particularly focusing on the leaders' interactions with the group. The observers should be prepared to give feedback to the leaders at the end of the experience.

The group leaders' job is to introduce and conduct a group exercise. There are two exercises provided in the For Further Thought section at the end of the chapter (Item 4). Each of these exercises serves a specific function, but they are each designed to get people working together more cohesively. The leaders should take some time to discuss which exercise they want to use. If neither of the exercises appeal, the leaders may opt to either create or find and utilize another "cohesion-building" exercise.

They should then assemble needed materials (if any) and run this exercise with the group for the amount of time allotted by the exercise's description. Observers should pay attention to how all this goes, and then, should give feedback, primarily to the leaders, about their perceptions of the process. Feedback should be specific, behavioral, and supportive. Observers should focus primarily on the things they think that the leaders did well.

Following their feedback, the leaders and group members should talk about their own participation and observation of the exercise—in particular, what was seen as particularly helpful in moving the group in productive directions and were there things that happened that might have been done differently. If there is time, you could all talk about how this group might proceed if it were to continue as an actual working group.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This is the period in the life of your group when you should be able to lie back a bit and become less active. The group has become more mature and knows, pretty much, what is expected and what it is supposed to do. Naturally, with some groups—children or people with serious and persistent mental illness, for example—you will remain highly active throughout the life of the group. But with most groups, your best strategy will be to let the group assume more responsibility for itself.

However, being less outwardly active doesn't mean to imply not being engaged. While you may be talking less, you'll nevertheless want to remain constantly alert to the dynamics between people, to shifting themes that are discussed, and to any possible problems that are emerging. If you have a coleader, have regular discussions about your respective observations about what's happening in the group.

Pay particular attention to the relative weight given to process and content as the group develops. Is the amount of time spent dealing with process and/or content appropriate to the goals of the group you're leading? Is the amount of time spent talking about the process, the "how" of it that goes with the group, sufficient?

Experiment with silence. When the group gets quiet, try to hang on for a bit, and wait to see if someone will pick up the ball. If no one chimes in and you don't want to chart a new direction in which the group should go, you can always make a process comment, like "We've been dealing with some interesting stuff here, and now it's interesting to see who'll pick things up next."

You'll experience some groups that seem to do better than others. Try to understand what you've done that helped the better ones come together, and capitalize on that for future group work. Remember that there are no bad groups—every group is a source of grist for the experience mill.

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. Interview someone who has led a number of groups. He or she might be a social worker, a psychologist, a clinical mental health or school counselor, or anyone with group experience. Ask about the different experiences he or she has had with levels of cohesion in groups—what does he or she think makes some groups become more cohesive than others? Are there suggestions he or she can give you about leading groups in ways that will promote cohesion? What does he or she remember about groups he or she has run that didn't become cohesive? What did he or she do then?
2. Examine the professional literature about the role cohesion plays in groups.
3. Create one or more structured exercises that are designed to promote group cohesion for a kind of group you might see yourself leading. The exercise(s) should follow the same format as those designed earlier.
4. Following are two student-created exercises, each of which might be used to promote group cohesion. Could you see yourself using either of these? Why, or why not?

ANGER SYMPTOMS BINGO

—Allison Hayes

Goal: To introduce and raise awareness of early physiological warning signs of anger

Target Population: Elementary and middle school-age children with anger management issues

Group Size: Small group size, ideally, no more than six members

Materials: Bingo sheets with symptoms written in grid boxes (each should be in a different order), chips, index cards, or paper with symptoms for “calling,” pencils, pens, or markers

Setting: Schools, family centers, or community agencies

Procedures: Begin exercise with a brief discussion, introducing the physiological symptoms associated with anger. A possible introductory statement could be

Today we are going to talk about how our bodies feel when we get angry. Learning to recognize when we are feeling angry can help us avoid an outburst or explosion. To help us think about ways we can tell when we are getting angry, we are going to play Bingo.

Pass out Bingo cards and chips. It may be useful to have a member be in charge of distributing materials. Check for understanding, and read any words needed. Play game by calling out symptoms and having group members mark corresponding symptoms on their card. The game ends when someone gets a row and calls “Bingo.” Process the activity by discussing symptoms and having members identify symptoms they have experienced. They may circle symptoms they identify in themselves on their Bingo card to take home and share with family or caregivers.

Variations:

1. For younger groups (nonreaders), provide Bingo cards with images to depict symptoms rather than words.
2. Older students can brainstorm symptoms to use in the game.
3. Physiological symptoms of anxiety can be used to serve a different population.

EMOTION EXCHANGE

—Michele Longobardi

Goal: The goal of this exercise is to practice mindfulness of emotions. It also serves to show members that they can relate to how one feels about another in the group, promoting acceptance of all different emotions.

Target Population: Ages 12 to 18 (adolescents). The exercise can also be used with a group of young adults who particularly struggle with awareness/acceptance of emotions.

Group Size: Eight members would be best.

Materials: Blank white paper and different colored pens are required.

Setting: Any private room, using chairs/desks, a table, or sitting on the floor will be ideal.

Procedures: Start with a bit of psycho-education on the eight primary emotions: (1) anger, (2) joy, (3) sorrow, (4) shame/guilt, (5) disgust, (6) fear, (7) interest, and (8) surprise. Explain how each of our brains is hardwired with these emotions and that it is okay to feel and accept all of them. Write the name of each emotion on the top of eight different sheets of paper, using different colors (red for anger, blue for sorrow, etc., if you want to make it more creative). Randomly distribute one sheet per person, and tell them that they are to write down different things, experiences, situations, or people (either general or specific) that make them feel that particular emotion. You will give them 2 to 3 minutes to think and jot down what comes to their mind, and then, have them pass their sheet to the right so that they get a new emotion. Have them do this for each emotion, taking 2 to 3 minutes each time. When everybody writes for every emotion, have them volunteer to read the responses of the one they have in their hand. Ask for their reactions at the end and if they were surprised by any similarities or differences among the group.

Variation: If there are less than eight members, you can still do this exercise, giving a random member two emotions to start, and they will get passed around in the same way.

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