

NEWSLETTER for NURTURING SUPPORT GROUPS

may-june, 1980

volume 1, no. 5

Welcome to the fifth issue of **WE**, a newsletter for and about groups of people who get together for the purpose of giving each other personal support. This issue includes:

- a suggested format for group meetings
- suggested activities for group meetings
- "Learning by Seeing, Hearing and Doing," by Sheila Hartmann
- thoughts on dependence, independence and interdependence by Sally Dierks in "I Am Supportive, Isn't That Enough?"
- how to use Resentment and Appreciation time to minimize gossip and complaining outside of the group
- my thoughts on closure in "Goodbyes and Hellos" and
- Judee Hansord's information on how you can order this newsletter.

If you have ideas about how to make this newsletter more useful for yourself or if you want your ideas included in the newsletter, write to Judee Hansord or me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jean Illsley Clarke

Jean Illsley Clarke, Editor

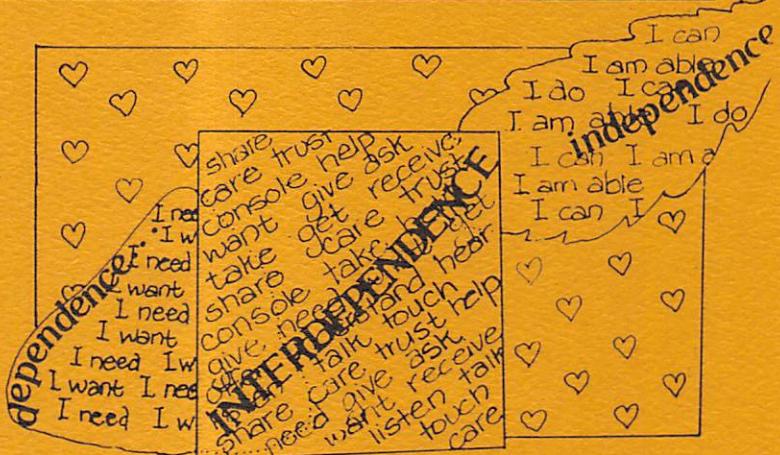
"I am Supportive, Isn't That Enough?"

by Sally Dierks

Many people are comfortable either giving or getting support. Not so many do both with ease, yet we need both. We all have a dependent, independent, and interdependent part and each of these parts needs nurturing and support. Support for self and belief in self helps the independent part of each of us. Support and belief from others helps the dependent part of us. Depending on others by getting, giving and asking for support strengthens the interdependent part of us. I want all three.

Last month at the support meeting, the question "What part needs support?" was asked. People offered different answers. "I don't need help yet. I'll let you know when I do." "I am here to give support, not get it." "I don't know what I want or how you can help me." "I'm the one who got this group started. How can I ask for help?" "All I ever do is get help. I don't know how to give it the right way." Sound familiar? Are there any of your own responses you want to add to the list? Was the question answered?

"I am a solid person," John said in response. "I enjoy being independent and taking care of myself. When I feel bad I figure out why, tell myself I can 'do it' two or three times a day and then I feel better. That is all the support I need." This is support for the independent part of John, yet John has two other parts, an interdependent and dependent part, and these also need support.



Jane was also at the support meeting and has a different idea about support. She depends on others to tell her she is capable and loveable. "Tell me how I did well and how you think I could do better," Jane asks, or she says, "I don't know what I need; will you hold my hand?" Jane is comfortable asking for help and is getting support for her dependent part. She is also neglecting part of her—her independent and interdependent part.

Both Jane and John are taking care of part of themselves in a competent way and both are neglecting parts of themselves. Jane and John decided to learn from each other and add to their support skills. Jane has decided to learn from John how to comfort and help herself. John will learn from Jane how to ask for comfort and help.

(continued on pg 3)

Seeing, Hearing and Doing

by Sheila Hartmann

"Boring, boring, boring. I wish we could have gotten up and moved around—been involved more. The time went so slowly—all Glenda did was talk!"

"Oh, did you think so? I was impressed with how clearly she presented her material, so well thought out."

"Hm, for me it would have been easier to understand Glenda if she had put her information on charts so I could have seen what she was talking about."

Three people, three interpretations of today's support group meeting—three favorite ways of taking information. Some people get ideas most easily through their eyes, some through their ears and some by using their bodies (being actively involved, writing, roleplaying, demonstrating, etc.)

Learning theory suggests that if Glenda gives a lecture for the meeting, participants may retain as much as 10% of what she says. They learn by listening. When Glenda talks less and also uses charts or posters, visual clues, to help get ideas across, she may get as much as 30% retention by the participants who learn by hearing and seeing. When Glenda combines posters with talking and also creates ways for people to experience the ideas, they may retain as much as 48% of what they hear, see and do.

Let's say that I am considering giving a twenty minute lecture. Instead, if I create multiple ways of presenting the same information, ways that involve people's eyes and bodies as well as their ears, I will offer more opportunity for personal growth. Usually a well designed auditory, visual and kinesthetic approach takes less time than a lecture. I believe that when we combine all three learning modes we enhance people's abilities to make better decisions on the information they receive—to accept, reject, or rearrange the information to fit for them.

EXAMPLE: I could present a twenty-minute lecture on how to transplant seedlings. The areas I want to cover are: a.) soil preparation b.) planting c.) taking care of the young plants. Instead I will create ways to present the same information using auditory (through the ears), visual (through their eyes) and kinesthetic (through their bodies) methods.

I'll talk for the first seven minutes explaining why I'm here and what I am going to offer (auditory) while pointing to the poster I have hanging on the wall listing my agenda (visual). Next, (a). I display different soil mixtures and invite people to feel the soil, being aware of the differences in texture, etc. (kinesthetic), while showing and describing the different mixtures for different plants (visual and auditory).

Next, (b.), I will have people plant different seedlings in an appropriate soil mixture (kinesthetic) following the directions that are clearly printed on a poster behind each soil mixture (visual) as I talk about why matching plants with the right soil mixture is important (auditory). Or, I could invite people to list the different seedlings and the type of soil necessary for optimal growth (kinesthetic). For the third part of my agenda, (c.), taking care of young plants, I will pass a handout with clearly worded directions on the proper care of various seedlings which people can read (visual) while I read it aloud (auditory), after which we can discuss each point (auditory).



Goodbyes and Hellos

by Jean Clarke

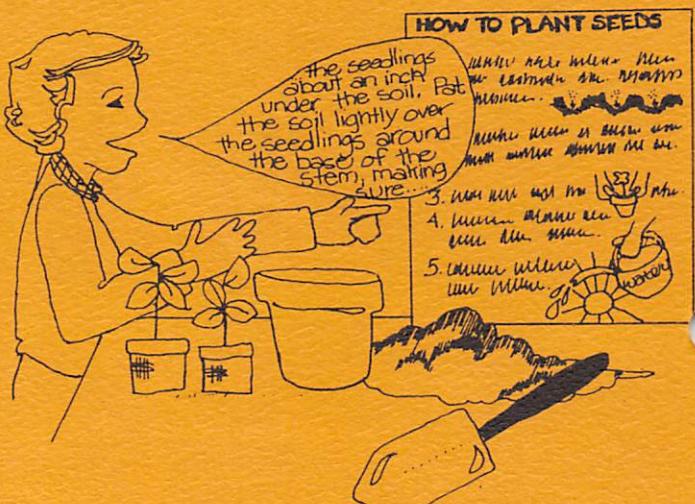
How much time do you allow for closing activities at each support group meeting? There is no correct amount of time in minutes, but there is a correct amount of time for each group. That is the amount of time that it takes to review the content of the meeting in some way, to get a feeling of closure on the activities, to get a clear understanding of expectations and obligations, and to have some time for personal contacts. Watching facial expressions and listening for voice tone and words can give clues about closure. If, when the meeting closes, people jump up, look worried, speak quickly, or call back over their shoulders, allow more time for closure at the next meeting and see if people appear to be more relaxed.

Many people who attend group meetings and enjoy and take support out of the activities also like a few minutes for the special reinforcement that comes from one-on-one exchanges during a leisurely closing time. Listen for the laughter, the lightness of voices, the "it was good to see you" messages.

Take time for goodbyes. When we say satisfactory goodbyes to our support group we are more refreshed and ready to say hello to the next part of our lives.

I believe that after hearing, seeing and doing the planting of seedlings, people will have learned more than if I had simply talked to them for 20 minutes, because they got to experience planting for themselves first hand and can decide for themselves how best to go about the transplanting of seedlings.

(continued on page 4)





Share a celebration! Ask people to stand in a circle. Each person: think of something in your life that you would like to celebrate with your Support Group. Act your celebration out and ask other people to guess what it is.

APPRECIATIONS and RESENTMENTS

by Jean Clarke

Asking for Resentments and Appreciations at the close of each meeting encourages people to be aware of both their negative and their positive feelings about the group activities. I believe that it is important to ask for the resentments first so the meeting closes on a positive note. Remember that the leader has the right to express both resentments and appreciations, and can refuse to listen to complaints between meetings with a simple, "Please bring that complaint to the group during Resentment time."

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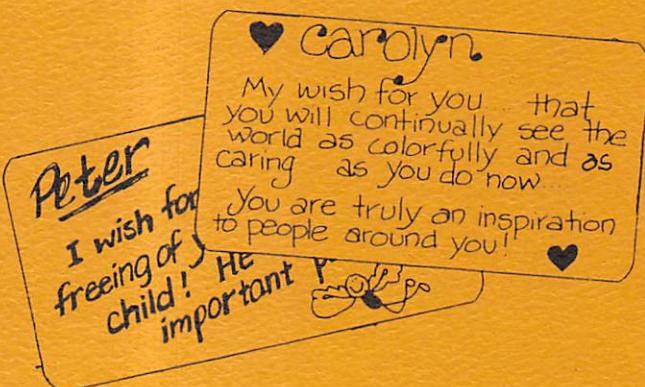
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OPENING ACTIVITY THAT OFFERS EVERYONE A POSITIVE PERSONAL MESSAGE

Ask each person to interview a partner. Find out one thing that person did well in a crisis; introduce the partner to the group and tell what that person did well.

CLOSING ACTIVITY THAT OFFERS EVERYONE A POSITIVE PERSONAL MESSAGE

Wallet Wishes: Write each person's name on a small card. Ask each person to take a card with someone else's name and write a wish for that person on it. Give the card and say the wish to the person. Invite people to carry their good wishes cards in their wallets and reread them frequently.



I Am Supportive/continued

"How can I get you to give me support when I am capable of giving it to myself?" John protests. "Stop protesting and ask. It is easy," Jane replies. "All you do is say what you want." There is nothing in John that believes it is easy to ask for help. How can a big, strong, successful man ask for help and still be considered a man? "Start," Jane urges, "Open your mouth and say the words." "Okay, okay. Help!" A good start, and Jane assures him that she will comfort him.

Now it is Jane's turn to practice new behavior. "How do I decide what I want for myself? This is ridiculous telling myself I am important! There must be another way? Tell me there's another way!" John suggests, "Say to yourself 'I am important and I do good work.' This is one way to start and you can always change the words when you want to." Jane writes the words on a card, reads them, and protests, "But I don't believe them!" John urges her to read them aloud to herself daily for two weeks and then tell him how she feels.

Both Jane and John are finding new ways to round out their personalities. Both protest the change of behavior, feeling comfortable in the old ways and unsure of the new, but go ahead anyway. Three cheers for Jane and John and all the other people who risk discomfort to find better ways to live.



Q.: How can I invite people who sit back and away from the group to join our circle?

Jean Illsley Clarke

Suggestions:

1. Invite them in
2. Everyone else move and physically move chairs to include them
3. Let persons know how you "feel" about their being out there
4. Take turns joining them on outside—spontaneous or planned
5. Pre-arrangement of chairs
6. Do a group task where person has to be involved
7. Personal contact
8. Listening—ask them how they feel
9. Be open with ideas—comfort
10. Get a commitment from outsider
11. Open questions—ask opinions
12. Touch, say "Come on in."
13. Sit in a circle
14. Send "I" messages
15. Welcome "Glad you came."

When you do a Suggestion Circle, the leader asks each person to give his best suggestion or to pass. The person who asked for the suggestions accepts them all with no verbal evaluations and then makes his own decisions about which ones to use.

Seeing, Hearing and Doing /continued

So where does this leave Glenda and her support group? Glenda can go through the format for the meeting and decide which parts she will do in an auditory, which in a visual and which in a kinesthetic manner. Some things she may decide to do in all three. In this she can provide a healthy variety of learning modes during each meeting and create an atmosphere in which people can challenge, share and have fun together.

When group members are aware of their favorite ways of learning they often go on to expand their learning by participating in all three modes in order to take full advantage of the material presented. Once leaders are aware of the different learning preferences, they can provide all three (visual, auditory and kinesthetic) for productive, supportive, balanced meetings that are honoring to all those involved in a support group.

SUGGESTED FORMAT for GROUP MEETINGS

Place _____ Date _____
Time _____ Person in charge _____

Program:

- ♥ opening activity that offers everyone a positive personal message
- ♥ celebrating wins and sharing problems
- ♥ practice skills, new learnings, play
- ♥ Suggestion circle
- ♥ plan the next meeting
- ♥ resentments and appreciations
- ♥ closing activity that offers everyone a positive personal message

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- Suggested activities
- Thoughts on theory and purpose of support groups

- News from other support groups

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