

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN GROUPS

In all human interactions there are two major ingredients—content and process. The first deals with the subject matter or the task upon which the group is working. In most interactions, the focus of attention of all persons is on the content. The second ingredient, process, is concerned with what is happening between and to group members while the group is working. Group process, or dynamics, deals with such items as morale, feeling tone, atmosphere, influence, participation, styles of influence, leadership struggles, conflict, competition, cooperation, etc. In most interactions, very little attention is paid to process, even when it is the major cause of ineffective group action. Sensitivity to group process will better enable one to diagnose group problems early and deal with them more effectively. Since these processes are present in all groups, awareness of them will enhance a person's worth to a group and enable him to be a more effective group participant. Below are some observation guidelines to help one "process analyze" group behavior.

### Participation

One indication of involvement is verbal participation. Look for differences in the amount of participation among members.

1. Who are the high participators?
2. Who are the low participators?
3. Do you see any shift in participation, e.g., highs become quiet; lows suddenly become talkative. Do you see any possible reason for this in the group's interaction?
4. How are the silent people treated? How is their silence interrupted? Consent? Disagreement? Disinterest? Fear? etc.
5. Who talks to whom? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?
6. Who keeps the ball rolling? Why? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?

## Influence

Influence and participation are not the same. Some people may speak very little, yet they capture the attention of the whole group. Others may talk a lot but are generally not listened to by other members.

7. Which members are high in influence? That is, when they talk others seem to listen.
8. Which members are low in influence? Others do not listen to or follow them. Is there any shifting in influence? Who shifts?
9. Do you see any rivalry in the group? Is there a struggle for leadership? What effect does it have on other group members?

## Styles of Influence

Influence can take many forms. It can be positive or negative; it can enlist the support or cooperation of others or alienate them. How a person attempts to influence another may be the crucial factor in determining how open or closed the other will be toward being influenced. Items 10 through 15 are suggestive of four styles that frequently emerge in groups.

10. Autocratic: Does anyone attempt to impose his will or values on other group members or try to push them to support his decisions? Who evaluates or passes judgment on other group members? Do any members block action when it is not moving in the direction they desire? Who pushes to "get the group organized"?
11. Peacemaker: Who eagerly supports other group members' decisions? Does anyone consistently try to avoid conflict or unpleasant feelings from being expressed by pouring oil on troubled waters? Is any member typically differential toward other group members—gives them power? Do any members appear to avoid giving negative feedback, i.e., who will level only when they have positive feedback to give?
12. Laissez-faire: Are any group members getting attention by their apparent lack of involvement in the group? Does any group member go along with group decisions without seeming to commit himself in one way or another? Who seems to be

withdrawn and uninvolved; who does not initiate activity, participates mechanically and only in response to another member's question?

13. Democratic: Does anyone try to include everyone in a group decision or discussion? Who expresses his feelings and opinions openly and directly without evaluating or judging others? Who appears to be open to feedback and criticisms from others? When feelings run high and tension mounts, which member attempts to deal with the conflict in a problem-solving way?

### Decision-Making Procedures

Many kinds of decisions are made in groups without considering the effects of these decisions on other members. Some people try to impose their own decisions on the group, where others want all members to participate or share in the decisions that are made.

14. Does anyone make a decision and carry it out without checking with other group members? (Self-authorized) For example, he decides on the topic to be discussed and immediately begins to talk about it. What effect does this have on other group members?
15. Does the group drift from topic to topic? Who topic jumps? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?
16. Who supports other members' suggestions or decisions? Does this support result in the two members deciding the topic or activity for the group? How does this affect other group members?
17. Is there any evidence of a majority pushing a decision through over other members' objections. Do they call for a vote (majority support)?
18. Is there any attempt to get all members participating in a decision (consensus)? What effect does this seem to have on the group?
19. Does anyone make any contributions which do not receive any kind of response or recognition (flop)? What effect does this have on the member?

### Task Functions

These functions illustrate behaviors that are concerned with getting the job done, or accomplishing the task that the group has before them.

20. Does anyone ask for or make suggestions as to the best way to proceed or to tackle a problem?
21. Does anyone attempt to summarize what has been covered or what has been going on in the group?
22. Is there any giving or asking for facts, ideas, opinions, feelings, feedback, or searching for alternatives?
23. Who keeps the group on target? Who prevents topic-jumping or going off on tangents?

### Maintenance Functions

These functions are important to the morale of the group. They maintain good and harmonious working relationships among the members and create a group atmosphere which enables each member to contribute maximally. They insure smooth and effective teamwork within the group.

24. Who helps others get into the discussion (gate-openers)?
25. Who cuts off others or interrupts them (gate-closers)?
26. How well are members getting their ideas across? Are some members preoccupied and not listening? Are there any attempts by group members to help others clarify their ideas?
27. How are ideas rejected? How do members react when their ideas are not accepted. Do members attempt to support others when they reject their ideas?

### Group Atmosphere

Something about the way a group works creates an atmosphere which in turn is revealed in a general impression. In addition, people may differ in the kind of atmosphere they like in a group. Insight can be gained into the atmosphere characteristic of a group by finding words which describe the general impressions held by group members.

28. Who seems to prefer a friendly, congenial atmosphere? Is there any attempt to suppress conflict or unpleasant feelings?
29. Who seems to prefer an atmosphere of conflict and disagreement? Do any members provoke or annoy others?
30. Do people seem involved and interested? Is the atmosphere one of work, play, satisfaction, taking flight, sluggishness, etc.?

### Membership

A major concern for group members is the degree of acceptance or inclusion in the group. Different patterns of interaction may develop in the group which give clues to the degree and kind of membership.

31. Is there any subgrouping? Sometimes two or three members may consistently agree and support each other or consistently disagree and oppose one another.
32. Do some people seem to be "outside" the group? Do some members seem to be "in"? How are those "outside" treated?
33. Do some members move in and out of the group, e.g., lean forward or backward in their chairs or move their chairs in and out? Under what conditions do they come in or move out?

### Feelings

During any group discussion, feelings are frequently generated by the interactions between members. These feelings, however, are seldom talked about. Observers may have to make guesses based on tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and many other forms of nonverbal cues.

34. What signs of feelings do you observe in group members: anger, irritation, frustration, warmth, affection, excitement, boredom, defensiveness, competitiveness, etc.?
35. Do you see any attempts by group members to block the expression of feelings, particularly negative feelings? How is this done? Does anyone do this consistently?

### Norms

Standard or group ground rules may develop in a group that control the behavior of its members. Norms usually express the beliefs or desires of the majority of the group members as to what behaviors should or should not take place in the group. These norms may be clear to all members (explicit), known or sensed by only a few (implicit), or operating completely below the level of awareness of any group members. Some norms facilitate group progress and some hinder it.

36. Are certain areas avoided in the group (e.g., sex, religion, talk about present feeling in group, discussing the leader's behavior, etc.)? Who seems to reinforce this avoidance? How do they do it?
37. Are group members overly nice or polite to each other? Are only positive feelings expressed? Do members agree with each other too readily? What happens when members disagree?
38. Do you see norms operating about participation or the kinds of questions that are allowed (e.g., "If I talk, you must talk"; "If I tell my problems, you have to tell your problems")? Do members feel free to probe each other about their feelings? Do questions tend to be restricted to intellectual topics or events outside of the group?

## STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Saul Bernstein's Explorations in Group Work shows five stages of group development.

1. Stage 1 - TO BE OR NOT TO BE

This is the first stage which is technically called the "preaffiliation stage." In this stage we are confronted with the questions, "Are we going to be a group? Do I want to belong?"

2. Stage 2 - TO TRUST OR NOT TO TRUST

The second stage deals with the dynamics of power and control. This answers the question: "How are we going to be a group?" In this stage, the norms and rules of the group are established. Did everyone get a chance to talk? Did someone emerge as a leader in a discussion? Was the group safe? The leader's task in this stage is to help the group move through the completion of its tasks constructively. The dropout danger is high and there can be a lot of aggressive competition. This is natural. The leader is to permit some rebellion, but also must protect the safety of individuals and property. The leader is to set limits. This is very important because it makes the group safe. If destructive activity is permitted, group members will feel scared and unsafe. Most important, the leader is to provide activities for mastery to help them move through this stage constructively.

3. Stage 3 - CLOSE TO YOU

The third stage is technically called "Intimacy" and it says: We are a group. At this stage, the group is now more important than any individual member. There is genuine feeling of "We-ness" and the group is safe. There is something in it for the members. They have something to contribute to the group. Someone cares.

4. Stage 4 - I'VE GOTTA BE ME

The fourth stage is technically called "Differentiation-Cohesion." In this stage the group is important but so am I. There is free expression, mutual support, high communication, fewer power problems. And the group has an identity. This is the

stage in which the group can really buckle down and do its work, especially if it is safe, everyone has something to gain, everyone has something to contribute, and everyone is cared for.

5. Stage 5 - PARTING IS SUCH SWEET SORROW

This is when the group is ending. The feelings involved are comparable to going away to school, or taking a job in a new town, or moving. The four steps through which one may pass in the process of separation are: denial, anger, acceptance and grieving, and moving beyond.



BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION  
(Adapted from Parent Effectiveness Training, Thomas Gordon)

1. DIRECTING, COMMANDING

Telling the person to do something, giving him/her an order or a command:

"I don't care what other parents do, you have to do the yard work!"

"Stop complaining!"

2. WARNING, THREATENING, PERSUADING WITH GUILT

Telling the person what consequences will occur if he/she does something:

"If you do that, you'll be sorry!"

"One more statement like that and you'll leave the room!"

"You'd better not do that if you know what's good for you!"

3. MORALIZING, PREACHING, LECTURING

Telling the person what he/she should or ought to do:

"You shouldn't act like that."

"You must always respect your elders."

"Children must learn how to get along with each other."

4. ADVISING, PROVIDING ANSWERS OR SOLUTIONS

Telling the person how to solve a problem, giving him/her advice or suggestions; providing answers or solutions for him/her:

"Just wait a couple of years before deciding on college."

"Go make friends with some other girls."

5. RIDICULING, DISAPPROVING, NAME-CALLING

Making the person feel foolish, putting him/her into a category, shaming him/her:

"That's the dumbest thing I've ever seen you do."

"You're a spoiled brat."

6. JUDGING, CRITICIZING, DISAGREEING

Making a negative judgment or evaluation of the person:

"You're not thinking clearly."

"I couldn't disagree with you more."

"You don't really feel that way, do you."

7. DIAGNOSING, PSYCHOANALYZING, READING-IN

Telling the person what his/her motives are or analyzing why he/she is doing something; communicating that you have the person figured out or diagnosed:

"You're just jealous of Ginny."

"You're saying that to bug me."

"You really don't believe that at all."

8. CROSS-EXAMINING, PRYING, INTERROGATING

Trying to find reasons, motives, causes; searching for more information to help you solve the problem:

"Who put that idea into your head?"

9. AVOIDING, BYPASSING, SHIFTING THE CONVERSATION

Trying to get the person away from the problem; withdrawing from the problem yourself:

"Just forget about it."

"Let's not talk about it at the table."

"We've been through all this before."

10. TEASING, MAKING LIGHT OF, JOKING, SARCASM

Distracting the person, kidding him out of it, pushing the problem aside:

"Why don't you try burning the school building down?"

"Don't ask me, ask Reagan."

## GUIDELINES IN LEARNING THE SKILL OF "ACTIVE LISTENING"

(Adapted from Parent Effectiveness Training, Thomas Gordon)

1. Identify feeling in the sender's message and listen carefully to what is being said.
2. Tell the person, as exactly as you can, what you heard him/her say and the feelings involved.
3. Do not respond to his/her message by sending a message of your own, such as evaluating, giving opinions, using logic, analyzing, questioning, etc.
4. One way to start learning to actively listen is by beginning your sentence in one of the following ways:
  - "It sounds like . . ."
  - "What I hear you saying is . . ."
  - "What I think you said is . . ."
  - "You're (name the feeling) . . ."
5. As a safe GENERAL RULE: SIMPLY PARAPHRASE what the other person (the sender) has said and is feeling.

## POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD LISTENING

1. You must want to hear what the person has to say and be willing to take the time to listen.
2. You must be willing to accept the person's feelings, even if they differ from your feelings or from the feelings you think a parent or child "should" feel.
3. You must have trust in the person's capacity to handle his/her feelings, and confidence in that person's ability to find solutions to his/her problems.
4. Active listening will not solve your problem; it will create an atmosphere conducive to problem solving. It lets the other person know you are making an effort to listen and understand them.

## WHAT'S YOUR STYLE OF COMMUNICATION?

Adapted from Peoplemaking, Virginia Satir

BLAMER "What is the matter with you?" "Can't you do anything right?" "If it weren't for you, I wouldn't drink!" "Those kids of yours are always in trouble!" This person always points a finger and feels unsuccessful and lonely. The person is motivated by anger and evokes fear. He/she puts others down to keep on top. You don't count; only him/herself and the situation do. This person is a fault-finder, a dictator, a boss.

PLACATER "Yes dear, whatever you say." "Yes, you're always right." This is a yes-person who is always looking for approval, owes everyone gratitude, and is responsible for whatever goes wrong. This person puts him/herself down and disregards his/her own worth or abilities. The martyr fits in this category. Everything and everyone is more important.

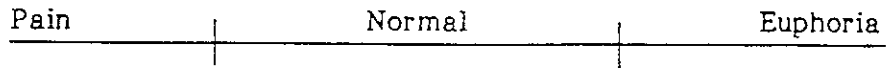
COMPUTER Such a person is very correct, very reasonable with no resemblance of any feeling showing. He/she is calm, cool, and collected. The voice is a dry monotone and dead, since there is no feeling from the mouth down. Inside he/she is feeling vulnerable, while thinking if big words are used you might envy him/her and keep him/her around. "If one were to observe carefully, one would notice that the vents are open, the windows shut, and because we are receiving no cross-ventilation, it is unbearably hot in here." The situation is important, not the person or you.

AVOIDER This is also the clown or distracter. This person is irrelevant, never responds straight and has an irrational feeling of dizziness. This person is feeling terribly lonely and thinks if he/she can make you laugh you may keep him/her around. This person avoids feeling. "Can I use the car?" — "Ask your dad." — "Can I use the car, Dad?" — "Ask your mom . . ." "Let's talk about our relationship" — "I heard a neat joke today . . ." The situation, you, and the person are not important to the avoider.

## THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

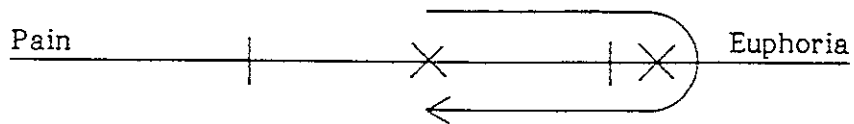
THE FEELING CHART



- I. **DISEASE:** Chemical dependency (alcoholism and/or drug addition) is a disease. A disease has its own symptoms and is describable.
  - A. Primary Disease: It is not a secondary symptom of something else.
  - B. Progressive Disease: It gets progressively worse. The victim becomes physically, spiritually, emotionally and psychologically ill.
  - C. Chronic Disease: There is no cure. Recovery from the disease must be based on abstinence from mood-altering chemicals.
  - D. Fatal Disease: The disease can only be arrested. If it is not arrested, the person will die from it.

Progression of the Disease

II. PHASE #1: LEARNING THE MOOD SWING (SPONTANEOUS LEARNING)



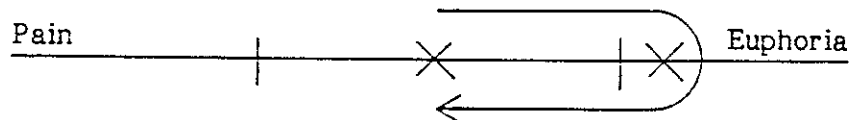
- A. First use of chemical adds a new dimension to the normal range of feelings (chemically induced euphoria).
- B. Learns that chemicals can provide a temporary mood swing every time they are used.
- C. Learns to trust the chemical and its effects.

- D. Learns to control the degree of the mood swing by regulating the quantity of the chemical intake.
- E. Getting high or intoxicated by the use of chemicals is added to the person's list of priorities for the first time.

SAMPLE LIST OF PRIORITIES


- 1. family
- 2. friends
- 3. school or job
- 4. sports
- 5. school activities or hobbies
- ⊕6. getting high or intoxicated

III PHASE #2: SEEKING THE MOOD SWING



- A. Negative dimension is introduced for first time, physical pain (hangover) and some emotional pain (guilt).
- B. Increased tolerance.
- C. Getting high or intoxicated has increased importance.
- D. Peer group identity may begin to form around chemical use.
- E. Continues ability to control the times, quantities, and outcome of chemical using experiences.
- F. List of priorities begins to change.

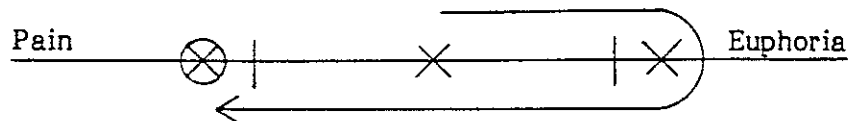
## LIST OF PRIORITIES

1. family
  2. friends (old & new)
  3. school or job
  4. sports
  5. school activities and/or hobbies
  6. getting high and/or intoxicated
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As the priority of getting high and/or intoxicated by the use of chemicals increases in importance, the old priorities are superseded and behaviors, attitudes and performance may sometimes change in a negative direction.

Social users remain in this phase. Victims of chemical dependency progress to Phase #3.

### IV. PHASE #3: HARMFUL DEPENDENCY



- A. Begins to experience periodic loss of control over chemical use. Can no longer predict outcome once chemical use begins.
- B. These episodes result in behavior that violates the person's value system and in turn creates the emotion pain that victim experiences.
- C. Spontaneous rationalizations arise and hide these feelings from the victim. This loss of insight becomes a growing delusion.
- D. Negative feelings about self remain unidentified and therefore are unresolvable. This results in a growing chronic emotional distress.
- E. Experiences growing anticipation and preoccupation with the use of the chemical.



- F. Lifestyle begins to change and revolve around the chemical.
- G. Tolerance to the chemical increases, causing the victim to develop more ingenious ways to get, use, and keep the chemical.
- H. Projections of self-hatred onto others begin to occur.
- I. Peer group change is distinct and complete.
- J. Number one priority is chemically induced high.

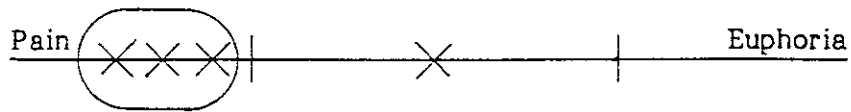
LIST OF PRIORITIES

- 1. getting high and/or intoxicated
- 2. family
- 3. old friends replaced by "new friends"
- 4. school or job
- 5. sports
- 6. school activities and/or hobbies

Symptoms now present:

- 1. Preoccupation
- 2. Increased tolerance
- 3. Depression (crash)
- 4. Use as medication
- 5. Personality change
- 6. Peer group change
- 7. Values superseded by drug
- 8. School performance suffers
- 9. Loss of control
- 10. Does not return to normal range

V. PHASE #4: USING TO FEEL NORMAL



- A. Using chemicals to survive rather than to feel euphoric.
- B. Blackouts occur more frequently.
- C. Arrested development.
- D. Physical addiction can occur.
- E. Paranoid-like thinking is present.
- F. Geographic escapes are made.
- G. Loss of desire to live and a complete hopelessness.
- H. In total conflict with values and moral codes.
- I. Suicide potential high.

LIST OF PRIORITIES

- ⊕ 1. getting high and/or intoxicated
- 2. old friends replaced by new friends
- 3. family
- 4. school or job
- \* 5. sports
- 6. school activities and/or hobbies

\*These have either become nonexistent or in complete conflict with life style. They are no longer priorities in the life of the adolescent.

## FEELING GRAPH

Adapted from the Johnson Institute's Feeling Chart

### Phase I: Learning the Mood Swing



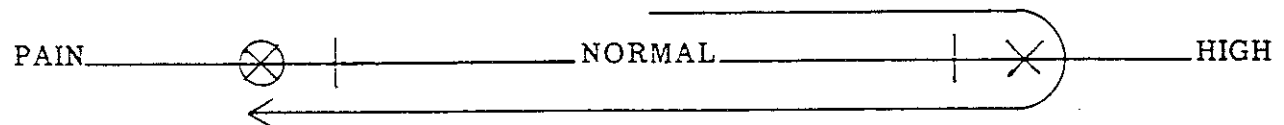
1. Chemicals make me feel good. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I feel good every time I use chemicals. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I know just how much to use to get high. \_\_\_\_\_

### Phase II: Seeking the Mood Swing



4. I use chemicals only at safe times and places. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I sometimes feel "hung over" or "burnt" after I come down. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I can't always predict how much I will use when I start using chemicals, so I only use at safe times and places. \_\_\_\_\_

### Phase III: Harmful Dependency



7. I can't always predict what my behavior will be when I use chemicals. \_\_\_\_\_
8. When I use chemicals, I sometimes do things I feel guilty about. \_\_\_\_\_
9. I feel anxious/jumpy much of the time. \_\_\_\_\_
10. I spend a lot of time thinking about and looking forward to getting high.  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. I've changed friends since I started using chemicals. \_\_\_\_\_
12. I've dropped some or many of the activities I was interested in since I started using. \_\_\_\_\_
13. I use chemicals more often than I used to. \_\_\_\_\_

Phase IV: Using to Feel Normal



14. I use more chemicals than I thought I would when I first began. \_\_\_\_\_
15. I can usually get chemicals if I want to. \_\_\_\_\_
16. I often feel that others don't like me. \_\_\_\_\_
17. I get into hassles with my family. \_\_\_\_\_
18. I have had one or more blackouts. \_\_\_\_\_
19. I sometimes get high/drunk faster on less chemicals than I used to. \_\_\_\_\_
20. I sometimes wish I could get away from everything. \_\_\_\_\_
21. I sometimes feel very lonely and alone. \_\_\_\_\_
22. I sometimes think of suicide. \_\_\_\_\_