

Group Building for a Training Group with Variations in Outside Contact by Ann E. Hale, M.A., TEP

Trainer level Question

Some of your trainees have a lot of contact with each other outside of the training sessions and weekends. Other students live further away and/or have demanding commitments of work and family in addition to their training.

How do you address the impact of this on their choice-making? What suggestions do you have for ways the group may broaden their sociometric connections to one another?

The group has been prepared that we will be spending at least four sessions on our group's sociometry and group building. They understand that there will be opportunities for them to design sociometric experiences for the group in addition to those I organize, as one of their trainers. I have chosen to begin with exploring their connections in and outside of the group.

Getting the information we need

I have prepared a short pen and paper warmup that asks group members to indicate on a grid the degree to which the statement is true for him/her (towards +) and the degree to which is is untrue (towards -). Here are the statements I have prepared.

(1) When it comes to choices for psychodrama training roles, such as director, double and major auxiliary ego roles, I am more likely to be chosen by people who know me well.

(2) Having contact with other group members outside of the training group strengthens my sociometric position in this group.

(3) I get the feeling in this group that there is personal information that some people have that not everyone knows.

(4) I have a central position in this group.

(5) I have a peripheral position in this group.

(6) My position in this group is neither central or peripheral.

(7) I would like more time to get to know the people I do not know well, or people who do not know me well.

(8) There are identifiable cliques in this group.

I have also prepared eight flip chart pages with each statement as the heading and a large square set on one of its points, with a (+) indicate to the left of center and a (-) on the opposite side. I have placed a dotted line from top to bottom to indicate ambivalence. Each group member identifies their two points on each line (+ and -) and draws a line out to the margin and writes their name. The distance from the bottommost point indicates the

strength (or intensity) of their true or untrue response.

Discussion of the information

Once this data is collected, the group members indicate the statement they want to explore first, and also indicate at least two others that they feel are really important to cover. One group member agrees to make copies of all the data and to send it to group members within the next day.

The action exploration involves each person taking the position within the square which represents both their true and untrue positions. Group members may step outside the square and take a look at it. Then, group members take turns being in the square on their own, and elaborating on the issue. They are encouraged to refer to specific events which are part of their answer. If there is unfinished business which surfaces, it can be immediately dealt with or reserved for a later time.

Working in Action

The car ride

One of the subgroups drives home together. They replay a typical post group ride, choosing an actual training session and approximating the experience. I then have a series of car rides, with group members coming up to act as if they are riding home together from this training session.

Tell me one thing I don't know that others do

Next I run an event where each member of the group sets up a brief scene where they show the group something about him or herself, that some of the people in the group know, but not everyone in the group. The purpose is to close the gap of uneven disclosures.

Advantages and disadvantages

This is an exercise where the positives and negatives of sociometric positions are explored. Each of the positions, central, middle and peripheral is the focus. One side is identified as "advantages" and the other side is identified as "disadvantages". Group members come up and speak about the position and role play the advantages and disadvantages.

Trying out a new position

A target sociogram having the central, middle and peripheral positions identified is positioned on the floor of the training room. One at a time each group member comes up and speaks their usual position and also share a desire they have to experiment with one of the other positions. They also reveal why this is important to him or her. Group members respond by making suggestions of ways they or the group as a whole could support this choice in the training setting. For example, Tracy wants to try the peripheral position. Group members tell her she will need to decline roles when chosen, and to drive home on her own for a few weeks. She agreed to try this, but reserved the right to be less fixed in one position over another.

Psychodrama Trainer (TEP) Jean Campbell wrote an excellent answer to this question and posted it July 03, 2007 on sociometryquestions@yahoogroups.com People wanting to familiarize themselves with her answer may go online and scan the email for that date.

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