

Community Skills Workshop Draft Notes 12/05

Please Note: I plan to change the listening section to focus more on how to listen well. You will also notice that diversity is listed as a Secondary Process (underlying processes that are not on the agenda or in the format of the meeting but effect everything). I plan to change this to show that for historically oppressed people diversity and oppression is often primary. – April Cotte

Listening

Listen with compassion and boundaries.

Often, being quiet while the speaker speaks is the best method.

What kind of listening would the speaker like?

(I list different kinds of listening here to imply that we can ask people to show up in different ways for us. The name and definition is not something concrete to memorize- just alternatives to use fluidly in the moment).

Active

Body position and attention

Mirroring- "I heard...", "Did I get it?"

"Is there more?"

Do they feel heard?

Counseling

Am I supporting their growth?

Create a safe space for emotions to be expressed.

Supporting venting

Am I helping them to get clearer about it?

Am I getting attached or escalating something?

Actively supporting them to discharge, release, heal and grow.

Problem solving

Listen then restate the problem.

Support them to list alternative solutions.

Offer alternatives.

Advantages and disadvantages of each

What is stuck here?

Coaching

Offer feedback, "what I see..."

Can use past observations and experience.

We differentiate gossip from listening here because, the listener joins in, and the information is not public knowledge or from a direct source.

Tools for releasing: Yell, cry, laugh, shake, salt water cleanse punch pillow, throw rocks

Magical tools for listening: Boundaries, grounding, aura modification, chackras, one hand on heart for self and one hand out for the speaker, candle or fire, salt water, create a drain in the ground, call in allies...

Feedback

The important thing is to compassionately and directly share your experience.

If you don't use the perfect form, it is ok. Form can help make what you share easier for the other person to hear.

When you _____, I feel _____, it would help me if you _____.
Observation Feeling Request

Observation without evaluating

- Specific (can include behaviors, body posture, volume, tone and actions)
 "When Moth read the agenda and you turned and asked Germ how his weekend was..."
- Not exaggerated e.g. "you always, never, every time, whenever..."
- Sometimes, the observation and request are enough. There may not be a feeling. (e.g. A vibes watcher or facilitator or group member might say,
 "I observe that Bird has spoken 3 times while others have not spoken."
 "I am concerned that we are making a decision about crones with only one crone here.")
- When there is emotion, it is important to name the feeling.
- Good observations help us keep the focus on the behavior not the person (e.g. "When you said the action that we did in Bean Town was small potatoes..." is different than "You are an action snob.")

Feeling

Many of us have had few opportunities to name our feelings so it is like a foreign language. The more we practice, the easier it gets.

"It makes me feel" is not a feeling statement because it puts the responsibility on the other person and allows us to deny responsibility for our own feelings. It is profound to change "It makes me feel..." to "I feel..." A great sense of ownership ensues.

Non-Violent Communication

- A feeling is not being expressed when the word feel is followed by: that, like, if, or by the pronouns I, you, he, she, they, it or by nouns. (e.g. "I feel like you hurt me." Replace that with I feel hurt).
- The above are observations and can be experienced as judgments. Continue to ask, "so what do you feel?" You can point out when the speaker is using non-feeling words that are more focused on the other person's behavior. We want to know how it feels to the speaker when that happens.
- In my experience, there is a grey area with many "ed" words (eg. "I feel wronged, attacked, betrayed, mistrusted...") Sometimes it is the best the speaker can express at the time. We can coach them to refine it but sometimes as a listener or the person receiving the feedback we can take it with a grain of salt and compassion and still find a way to "hear" the speaker and imagine what that might feel like.

Stages of Group Development

All groups go through stages of development described by numerous theorists. They can repeat many times in the group's life span and usually increase in their level of intensity.

- Forming- Getting to know each other
- Norming-Creating ways the group does things (intentionally or unintentionally)
- Storming-Group and individual conflict, expression of differences (overt or covert)
- Performing- If differences are addressed well through the storm, the group can create

new norms and reach new levels of excellence together

We can support group health in each of these stages by some of the following:

- Forming: Introductions, bonding, naming if there is an agenda
- Norming: Create goals and guidelines together (intentional and inclusive norms), name unintentional norms as we notice them
- Storming: Provide ongoing opportunities to share feedback with each other (positive and constructive), create healthy environment for expressing differences of opinion, name and explore secondary processes, facilitate conflict
- Storming is a necessary stage for the group to go through in order to perform- if it is there, invite it in and address it. Healthy storming can bring greatness to a group. Storms that are put down and ignored continue to rear their ugly heads in increasing intensity until we address them.
- Performing: Acknowledge and celebrate accomplishments and when and how the group is working well together

Group Conflict

The following is a format one can use to address group conflict:

Issue Define issues and break them down to focus on one issue at a time

Voice Name feelings and needs behind the positions.

Reflecting what you heard

Empathize or put yourself in their shoes: "If I was in _____'s shoes, I can imagine feeling _____ . That seems really hard."

Ownership by as many people as possible

Plan and Requests

- One person speaking at a time
- One issue at a time
- Voice: Ideally venting happens outside group so this "voicing" is using I feel statements but sometimes the only way someone can voice it is through venting so we can try to hear them in this context.
- Reflecting: Amago therapy teaches a great method for listening and reflecting: "I heard _____ Did I get it right? ... Is there more?..." Sometimes people in conflict are unable to reflect because too much of their stuff is in there. In that case, focus on empathy.
- Empathy and ownership can happen in any order. Sometimes people need to hear that others empathize with them before they can take ownership.
- Anyone can empathize with anyone to help lubricate the process- it makes people feel good. If people perceive this as taking sides, ask people to empathize with the most unlikely other people or with someone from each side.
- If people are stuck in "positions or sides," find the feelings, interests, needs, and desires underlying these.
- Flow with where things need to go but remember the parts because they can help. An acronym that I have used is: VOSP (Voice, Ownership, Shoes, Plan)
- Empathy and ownership healthily move conflicts. I make sure this happens every time.

When does the whole group need to be involved in a conflict?

- When many people seem attached.

- Is it about two individuals or are they manifesting a conflict that is about the whole group?
- Roles people can play in a group conflict: Address it, escalate it, take sides, be overtly complicit- collude, be covertly complicit, be oblivious, ignore it....
- If it occurs in front of the whole group, it involves the whole group and all may need to be part of the resolution otherwise seemingly disconnected group members may stay hooked and the conflict will rise up again.
- If it is time for the group to storm, even the tiniest conflict between 2 or more people can "open the can of worms" or the "Pandora's box." This is good. We need the worms to process or compost the conflict. Once the box is open, we can see what we have and live in truth with it. The rest of the group may need facilitated resolution for secondary conflicts that come up.
- If the conflict began in the group and is taken outside of the group to be addressed, a report back is essential help the group move forward afterwards.
- Anyone not hooked or able to unhook and hold a space for all aspects can facilitate group conflict.

Magical Tools for Group Conflict:

- We are working with big fire and water. Remember this is a natural process. All is well.
- Before or During: Ground, breathe, facilitators stay in our bodies though we are around such powerful energy, psychic pillars in the four corners of the room that reach to the sky and deep into the earth to hold the space, salt water, some rocks, lavender
- Afterwards, cleanse space with incense or sage, wash hands, reiki self, food, water, nurturance for all...

Secondary Processes

By secondary processes I mean things that affect the group process that are not on the surface. The more we understand secondary processes and learn to discuss them and name them, the more we can work with them rather than reacting to them working us. How do we acknowledge these in a nurturing, growth oriented way? How do we set boundaries regarding what level of growth work the particular group or meeting can support?

- Stages of Group Development
- Basic Needs: Survival- Food, Shelter, Water, Safety
- Dr. William Glasser's Basic Needs: Survival, Love and Belonging Freedom, Fun and Power
- Diversity
- Power/Rank
- Oppression
- Cross Cultural Groups
- Air-time
- Experience
- Deflated/Inflated self
- Learning styles
- Communication styles
- New people enter/ Recent event
- Geography of the Room
- Relationships

- History and past experiences
- Triggers from past wounds/ traumas / experiences
- Emotions
- Anarchy and activism style for working with illegitimate system
- Body Language
- Access to Information
- Astrological Signs

Some Resources

Truth or Dare and The 12 Wild Swans by Starhawk

Work by Dr. William Glasser on Reality Therapy and Control Theory (teaches listening and understanding)

The Peace Book. 108 Simple Ways to Create a More Peaceful World by Louise Diamond

Getting the Love you Want by Harville Hendrix

Negotiating to Yes

Sitting in the Fire by Arnold Mindell

Nonviolent Communication by Marshal Rosenberg.

The Way of Conflict by Deidre Combs

Books and articles by the Center for Girls Development and Women's Psychology on Healthy Resistance (Annie Rogers, Carol Gilligan, Janie Ward et al)