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GUIDE LINES TO ENHANCE ENCOUNTER GROUPS  
Based on Gestalt, Psychodrama, and Communication Principles

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1. FOCUS ON THE IMMEDIATE PRESENT: These guide lines describe behaviors which move you into the HERE AND NOW. When you describe another person's behavior; when you report your internal state; when you use action to communicate how you feel at the moment; and, when you look at a person and talk directly to him then you engage in HERE AND NOW behavior. As a rule, you will find that emotional encounter takes place in the HERE AND NOW. Discussion of past or future events are often ways of being indirect or distancing from others or from the emotion of the moment. Take the feeling component of a memory or anticipation and see if it fits the immediate experience too.
2. USE COMMUNICATION SKILLS: A good basic assumption is that every communication is unclear and indefinite. Assume that while language and behavioral messages appear simple and clear that they are not simple nor clear. If you accept this assumption then you will see the need to continually paraphrase and perception-check.
  - 2a.) Paraphrase: In your own words, and in a fresh way, say the essence of the other person's verbal message as you understand him. When he feels you understand him as he intends then he will feel heard and appreciated. If he does not feel heard he now has a chance to clarify for himself and to you until your final paraphrase indicates mutual understanding. Paraphrasing does not imply agreement. It only makes clear when the verbal message of the "talker" has been clearly understood by the "listener". Paraphrasing helps the "talker" to clarify his thinking and expression and to know when the "listener" has understood his intended message.
  - 2b.) Perception Check: Verify with the other person your impression of his emotional state. For example: "You appear angry with me. Am I correct? Are you angry with me?" Find out about the other person's inner feelings rather than telling him how he feels. Tell your impression, or assumption, or perception and then check with him by asking if he feels or experiences as you believe. The perception check will help you to distinguish between your accurate understanding of the other person and your fantasy, fears or projections. It may also open the door for expression by the other person or help him to clarify his own thoughts and feelings.
  - 2c.) Describe Inner and Outer Observations: Be in touch with your own physical state or inner condition. Make yourself transparent to others by describing what you feel inside you. Help the other person to become more aware by describing his physical state ("Your eyes are moist". or "Your fist is clenched"). Remember you are the expert of that which is going on inside you. Reveal it. He is the expert as to that which is going on inside of him. Ask him to tell you.

3. BE AUTHENTIC: Do what you really feel, not what you think others expect you to do. When you do new behavior, do not label yourself as "phoney". New behavior will feel "not me" until you incorporate it and make it your own through practice.
4. TALK TO A PERSON INSTEAD OF ABOUT HIM: Be specific. Look at the person e to eye and talk directly to him. Enhance the I-thou relationship. For some people this will dramatically change the degree of intimacy. Learn to feel comfortable wi personal contact through practice and desensitization.
5. PERSONALIZE: Change "it" to "I" or "You". Make all general statements into per sonal statements. (not "one often..." but "I often..." or "you often..."). When yo are impersonal say your sentence over in a personal way and notice if it makes a difference to you. You will probably find that you experience more emotion and int- imacy when you use personal pronouns. (In Japanese personal pronouns are rarel used and this guide line may be experienced as artificial. The idea is to find a lang uage form which increases intimate contact and clear ownership of emotions and ideas).
6. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT YOU DO: Use words that emphasize the taking of responsibility. Instead of saying, "I can't" say "I won't". Use words that alert you to your power to choose how you act. (In Japanese, some use "we" language, i "wareware" which is literally "I-I" or "we". "We" language decreases the sense o personal responsibility for attitudes, feelings, and actions. Find a language form which increases your sense of power and self direction). Take responsibility for what you are doing. If you are quiet, it is not because of the talkative person. It is because you choose to be quiet and you choose not to interrupt and you choose not to change the subject, etc. You choose to do exactly that which you are doing at every moment. Awareness of self and others and the knowledge that you are "re- sponse-able" are the keys to behavior change.
7. BE ASSERTIVE: ASSUME THE OTHER PERSON ALSO HAS POWER: Ask for what you want directly. Assume the other person has the power and choice to say "yes" or "no". When another person informs you of that which he wants you also have the power and choice to say "yes" or "no". To directly ask for what you want is to give information to the other. It is not demanding or controlling of the other person sinc he may decide to give or deny your request.
8. AVOID QUESTIONS: Very often questions are indirect ways of making statements. You will be more effective if you make statements instead of asking questions. The group will be more effective if each of you in the group will monitor question-asker: and ask them to convert their questions into statements. You can still solicit inforr ation by making demands for information. Limit questioning.
9. "WHY?": As much as possible dispense with WHY questions. WHY questions usu- ally turn a person to intellectualizing. Rationalizing about his behavior he will sup- ply you with a reasonable answer to your question. It is more productive to help him become aware of his behavior itself rather than his explanations about his be- havior. Descriptions of inner states ("I feel warm and tingly.") are more useful tha explanations about feelings or behavior.

10. "HOW" FOCUSES ON BEHAVIOR: If you must ask questions, ask HOW. How will you get what you want? Where and how in your body do you experience? In what behavior (how) do you want to engage? HOW describes internal events, external behaviors and directs attention to behavior rather than to rationalizing about motives.
11. AVOID MAKING INTERPRETATIONS: Tell how you feel. Tell how you experience. Tell the person the effect he is having on you, but avoid telling him what's going on inside him. If you must interpret, first give the observable behavioral data which has led you to your inference, then give your inference and ask if you are accurate. (eg. "Your eyes are moist. Your voice is quavering. You are looking away from me. I believe you are hurting and don't want to tell me. Am I correct?") Interpretations are often projections. That is, we interpret the other person in the light of our own dynamics. IF YOU INTERPRET ABOUT ANOTHER PERSON, PLEASE TRY THIS EXPERIMENT: SAY THE EXACT SAME THING ABOUT YOURSELF TO TEST IT OUT AS A PROJECTION. Say all the words again out loud about yourself which you said interpreting the other person. Experiment and see what you experience when you try the idea out as though it applied to you. If the statement does not fit, you do not have to own or keep it. If it does fit about yourself, then you should declare that in addition to making an interpretation about somebody else you also are revealing something about yourself. Group members need to encourage the procedure. To repeat: Whenever you make an interpretation first test it out as a projection saying it out loud about yourself. If it still applies to the other person then give the behavioral descriptive evidence to support your inference. These descriptive behaviors may then be consensually validated by checking out if other people in the group share your observations.
12. USE BEHAVIORAL DESCRIPTIONS: If a person is leaning toward you or away from you, you can describe his position relative to you. If his voice is loud or soft, you can describe its quality. The most useful feedback is a behavioral description of him (rather than an inference about his underlying motivation) tied to a report of how you experience relative to him. That is, give him information about you as well as about him. (eg "when you touched me and told me you were concerned for me, I felt both tearful and hesitant to respond to you")
13. ACCEPT YOUR BODY SIGNALS AS MESSAGES TO YOURSELF: Tune in your body. Are you aware of any tension or incipient movement? Exaggerate the movement and see what you do. A feeling is literally a body state - a set of body feelings which you experience. An emotion is the label you assign to these body feelings. Experiment to see what you do that makes you more tight and what you do to make yourself feel more content or joyous. Read and follow your body signals.
14. EXCITEMENT: Your heart is beating fast. You feel tingly. Your breathing is rapid. You are alert. If you label yourself as "anxious or scared" then you will look for danger and then you will engage in avoidant or defensive behavior. The same body cues are often signals of excitement. If you interpret your body arousal as excitement then you will be more likely to take creative risks. You will be more ready to attempt new behaviors and to move beyond the limits which you have previously set for yourself. Anxiety is often a symptom of rehearsing future behavior. If you engage in the behavior NOW, the anxiety will dissipate. Look at the context in which

your body state occurs. Before you label your body state consider if you are aroused, alerted and excited or if you are anxious or scared. The label you place on your feelings often limits your behavior. Describe your body state and see if others in the group share your label for your emotion.

15. BE AWARE OF YOUR BODY STATE: Your internal state is a message to yourself. Tune in to it. Share it. Respond to your feeling state. Describe it to others rather than interpret it. ("My heart is beating fast", rather than "I am anxious".)
16. TAKE A COUNTER-PHOBIC APPROACH: A good assumption is that you have capacities in excess of your expectations. The only way that you can discover that this is true is to take a risk and to creatively engage in behaviors that you see as beyond your capability. Discover how you scare or limit yourself. Do the thing that you are afraid of and experience the consequences. If you don't take risks you limit your learning and spontaneity.
17. MODEL THE BEHAVIORS THAT YOU WISH TO OCCUR IN YOUR GROUP: Instead of telling people how they should behave (e.g., "Why don't we all be more open?" show this openness yourself. Be the way you want others to be. Set the norms for group by engaging in the behavior that you would like to see accepted.
18. CREATE A CLIMATE WHERE DIFFERENCE IS ACCEPTED: Do your own thing and permit others to do their own thing. It is not necessary for everyone to be the same in order for you to be self-directing and free. If someone says how he feels or what he wants you do not have to do anything. Openness about what you feel is different than a demand for a change or response.
19. DON'T BE HELPFUL. DO BE RESPONSIVE: You can be considerate, concerned and available without being "helpful". We want to provide a climate in which a person can discover that he can be self-directing; that he has strengths and potentials and resources which he can more fully utilize. Engage with each other with the assumption that the other person has strength. Too ready a willingness to be "helpful" (to take over) for the other person implies that you expect that he cannot help himself. Being "helpful" blocks the opportunity for both of you to discover that he does have the ability to be self-supporting.

This guideline about helpfulness gives people the most trouble. It is written for the person who plays "Red Cross Nurse" and who leaps in with first aid often when it is not needed! If you are moved to another person because you are uncomfortable and are trying to reduce your own discomfort, or because "he is needy and you should help" then hold off. Stay with your discomfort. Give him time for self discovery. However, if you are moved toward another because you feel tender and want to reach out, then do it. Especially do it if it is hard for you for then you will be into expanding your own repertoire of interpersonal responsiveness.

20. LOOK AT THE PROCESS: Consider the system in which you are operating. For example, a talkative person seems to dominate the group. If you examine that which

is happening you will find people keep engaging the talkative member. They ask him questions or talk with him about his talkativeness, or fight with him in order to get him to be quiet. These behaviors keep the process going and suggest that the "problem" has some utility for the system. (If the talkative member became quiet, then the quiet members would have to talk about themselves). THE CONDITION MAY BE CHANGED NOT BY FORCING THE OTHER PERSON TO BE DIFFERENT, BUT BY YOU ENGAGING IN A DIFFERENT WAY. When you act differently, you change the system.

21. USE ACTION AS A COMMUNICATION: Show as well as tell. Do as well as talk about. If you feel close to somebody, move close to him. If you feel distanced by someone's comments, immediately move away from him. If you feel out of it, close your eyes, or physically move away from the group. These actions are first steps in communication. After moving, you can then talk about how you felt in moving or others in the group can react or relate to your movement. The action should be used as a communication. Your gross obvious movements make explicit how you are feeling and reacting. It makes the implicit (covert) explicit (overt). It gives the other person immediately feedback about your condition. Subtle movement should also be recognized and used as communications. However, the gross movements are more explicit and more easily seen. You will enhance the group if you show where you are by physically moving as appropriate. This makes the process more visible and open to examination. Movement will also serve as confrontation and/or reinforcement to others.
22. STAY IN THE FIELD: You are asked to use enacting as a communication. However, the communication will be more effective if it has two-way communication possibilities. If you feel like withdrawing then withdraw to a corner of the room but do not leave the room. This makes it evident that you want to withdraw or have psychologically withdrawn, but at the same time permits others to either respect your withdrawal or to engage with you about your withdrawal. If you leave the room your communication is one-way and the communication and resolution possibilities are closed for the moment.
23. RISK RATIO: Following these suggested procedures should create a climate of openness, trust, frankness and warmth. This type of climate maximizes the chance for positive outcome when you risk new behaviors. The cutting edge for growth and discovery is at the line at which you go beyond your own self imposed limits. Risking is sometimes uncomfortable; sometimes exciting. Staying the same is often "comfortable" or at least familiar. We want to develop a climate where the chance for learning, increased self-actualization, and interpersonal impact is worth the risk of temporary discomfort. If you are too comfortable or bored consider if you are holding back and what might happen for you if you took a risk with yourself or others