



9 HOW GROUPS WORK TOGETHER

OBJECTIVE:

- a) To analyse some aspects of group behaviour; and
- b) To look at factors which can help and hinder a group's work

A NOTE ON TRAINING METHODS

The 3 exercises outlined in this section are experiential. They require people to take part in a structured activity and from this involvement to learn some aspects of group behaviour. What happens during the exercise, i.e. the process, is more important than the result, i.e. the product. So always allow time for discussion on what happened during the task.

(i) - A Murder Has Been Committed

GENERAL INFORMATION

This exercise is suitable for groups of 12-27 people. It requires a certain amount of literacy as each person has to be able to read out the clue they have been given. The time the exercise will take can vary. You may want to set an upper time limit but groups usually want to complete the task. If you use this exercise be prepared to vary your training schedule.

PREPARATION

You will need to have the 27 clues written out. Each clue needs to be written on a separate sheet of paper.

TIMING

Solving the Murder can take from 15 minutes to 1 hour. You will need an additional 45 minutes to do the feedback and second stage of the exercise.

WHAT TO DO

Have everyone seated in a circle and then read out the following explanation.

This is adapted from Lifeskills Teaching Programme No. 4, by Hopson and Scally, Lifeskills Communications, 1988

“When they have arrived at the solution allow a few minutes relaxation before moving on to the feedback”

“We are going to engage in an exercise in group problem solving. A murder has been committed and each of the pieces of paper I am holding in my hand contains a clue that will help solve the mystery. You must discover the murderer, the weapon, the time of the murder, the place of the murder and the motive. All these can be discovered from the clues which you will have. Any time you think you know all five answers and all the group agrees, you must put them to me. I will only tell you whether all five answers are right or wrong. If part of the answer is incorrect I will not tell you which answers are wrong.

You may set about solving the murder as soon as all the clues have been distributed. You may not, however:

- a) Pass your clues around or show them to anyone else.
- b) Leave your seats or move from your chair.
- c) Write anything down. This means all clues must be shared verbally.”

Give out the 27 clues in any order, one to each person. Go round the circle a second time, if necessary. Each person should have one or two clues. It does not matter if some have one and others have two.

NB The exercise is not effective with less than 12 people.

Once you have given out the clues do not interfere or answer questions from the group. Leave them entirely alone but observe carefully all that happens. Only answer when they have put a solution to you. When they have arrived at the solution allow a few minutes relaxation before moving on to the feedback.

CLUES - See separate sheet.

SOLUTION - This must not be seen by the group before or during the exercise.

After receiving a superficial gunshot wound in the thigh from Mr Jones, Mr Kelley went to Mr Scott's apartment where he was killed by Mr Scott with a knife at 12.30 a.m. because Mr Scott was in love with Mr Kelley's wife.

After the group has completed the task, seek general reactions.

- what did people think of the exercise?
- how did the group approach the task?

- how well did the group work together?

Allow 15 mins for this.

Then split the group into sub-groups of 5-8 and ask each group to produce two lists, preferably on newsprint.

The two headings are:

What helped the group work together

What hindered the group working together

Give them 10 minutes to do this.

Bring the group back together and compare and contrast the lists.

Give out copies of the handout 'Some Aspects Of Group Work' and/or highlight some of the main points made in the handout.

CLUES

1 Mr Kelley's blood stains were found on the carpet in the hall outside Mr Jones' apartment.

2 It was obvious from the condition of Mr Kelley's body that it had been dragged a long distance.

3 When the police tried to locate Mr Jones after the murder, they discovered that he had disappeared.

4 The lift man said that Miss Smith was in the lobby of the apartment building when he went off duty.

5 Miss Smith said that nobody left the apartment between 12.25 a.m. and 12.45 a.m.

6 Miss Smith often followed Mr Kelley.

7 Mr Jones had told Mr Kelley that he was going to kill him.

8 The lift man saw Mr Kelley's wife go to Mr Scott's apartment at 11.30 p.m.

9 The lift man said that Mr Kelley's wife frequently left the building with Mr Scott.

10 Mr Kelley's body was found in the park.

11 Mr Kelley's body was found at 1.30 a.m.

12 The lift man went off duty at 12.30 a.m.

13 Mr Kelley had been dead for one hour when his body was found according to a medical report.

14 Mr Kelley's wife disappeared after the murder.

15 Police were unable to locate Mr Scott after the murder.

16 Mr Kelley had destroyed Mr Jones' business by stealing all his customers.

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| 17 | Miss Smith saw Mr Kelley go to Mr Jones' apartment building at 11.55 p.m. |
| 18 | Mr Kelley was found dead with a bullet hole in his thigh and a knife wound in his back. |
| 19 | Mr Jones shot at an intruder in his apartment building at 12.00 midnight. |
| 20 | The lift man reported to police that he saw Mr Kelley at 12.15 p.m. |
| 21 | The bullet taken from Mr Kelley's thigh matched the gun owned by Mr Jones. |
| 22 | The knife found in Miss Smith's yard had Mr Scott's fingerprints on it. |
| 23 | The lift man saw Mr Kelley go to Mr Scott's at 12.25 a.m. |
| 24 | Only one bullet had been fired from Mr Jones' gun. |
| 25 | Mr Kelley's bloodstains were found in Mr Scott's car. |
| 26 | A knife with Mr Kelley's blood on it was found in Miss Smith's yard. |
| 27 | When the lift man saw Mr Kelley, Mr Kelley was bleeding slightly, but did not seem too badly hurt. |

(ii) - Tower Building

This exercise asks each group to build a free standing tower with the materials supplied. It is up to you to select these materials. Children's building blocks, such as 'Lego', are ideal but a pack of playing cards, sticky tape, drawing pins, string or pieces of wood will do just as well. Usually groups are given the same materials, for example the same number of building blocks, same length of string etc. as this adds a competitive edge to the task.

PREPARATION:

Prepare a set of materials for each group. Have copies of the 'Some Aspects of Group Work' handout available.

TIMING:

The exercise will take about 1 hour.

METHOD:

Divide the group into sub-groups of 5 - 8 people.

Explain the task - you can either read out the instructions or write them on newsprint - one copy for each group. Each group has been given the task of building a free standing tower with the materials supplied. Each group has the same materials.

- a) Build the tower as tall as possible.
- b) It must include one arch and one window.
- c) It must stand free long enough, for it to be measured without the aid of artificial support.
- d) You have 20 minutes to build the tower.

During the exercise spend some time in each of the groups observing proceedings.

After 20 minutes allow some time for people to have a look at each of the towers and measure them, if necessary.

Bring the group back together in a circle. Ask for some general comments:

- What did people think of the exercise?;
- How did the groups approach the task?;

- How did the groups work together?

After this discussion brainstorm ideas around two headings:

What helped the group work together?

What hindered the group working together?

Give out copies of the handout 'Some Aspects of Group Work' and/or highlight some of the main points made in the handout.

VARIATION:

You could appoint an observer for each group. Their job would be to watch what happened as groups were doing the task and their comments would be taken during the feedback. If you do use observers make sure you give them a clear briefing on what to look for.

This exercise is from an original concept by Kevin Ford.

OBSERVER'S ROLE

Your task is to observe the group at work.

- 1 Note the interplay between members of the group.
- 2 Look out for the different ways in which people contribute to the proceedings by:
 - doing things
 - asking questions
 - making positive proposals
 - offering alternative suggestions
 - describing why ideas won't work
 - encouraging the testing of ideas
- 3 Note whether the various comments being made follow one another logically and relate to what the group is trying to do.
- 4 Note when the group starts to work whether they all know what they are supposed to do.
- 5 Watch how the different personalities react to each other.

(iii) Getting things into the right order

GENERAL INFORMATION:

This is a little different to the previous exercise as it involves one sub-group doing the exercise whilst the other sub-group watches. The second group then has a chance to do the exercise after reflecting on the performance of the first group.

PREPARATION:

You will need two copies of the same magazine. Ideally the magazine should have 20-40 pages. All the pages of both magazines should be mixed together and placed in one pile.

TIMING:

The exercise will take about 1 hour.

WHAT TO DO:

Split the large group into two. Groups should not be larger than 8 so if you have, say, 20 people you could ask 4 to act as observers.

EXPLAIN THE PROCESS.

- a) Each group will have the same task - to put the mixed up pages of the two magazines back into order. They can organise themselves how they want.
- b) The group which goes first will be timed. Whilst they are reordering the magazines the second group should watch what they do and how they do it.
- c) After the first group has completed the task there will be a 10 minute break before the second group does the same task. Group A will use this time to reflect on how they worked as a group and how they could have improved their performance. Group B should use the time to plan how they will work together more effectively in order to improve on Group A's time.
- d) Group B then do the task. (Ask one of Group A to remix the pages.)

Bring the whole group back together and have a general discussion on the exercise.

- How did the two groups approach the task?
- What lessons did they learn about working in groups?
- What helped and hindered them?

Split the group into sub-groups A and B again and ask each group to produce a list of '10 Handy Hints for Working Together'. Give them 10 minutes to do this.

Compare and contrast the lists and then give out copies of the handout 'Some Aspects of Group Work' and/or highlight some of the main points made in the handout.

SOME ASPECTS OF GROUP WORK

It is important to be aware of the forces at work in the life of a group and to become more skillful in encouraging the group members to recognise the needs of others in the group.

The success of any group depends on the ability of its members to exchange ideas freely and to feel involved in the life and decisions of the group.

Every group should begin with some understanding of its TASK.

To achieve this goal or task, the members will be able to select different procedures which will be governed by the needs of individuals in the group.

GROUP NEEDS

What is going on?

One useful analysis of group life defines three main areas of need in a group:

1 Task Needs - e.g.

- Need to get a job done
- Need for a worthwhile goal
- Need for a clear goal
- Need for agreement about the goal
- Need for a plan of action calculated to achieve the goal
- Need to be able to recognise when the goal has been achieved

2 Individual Needs - e.g.

- Need to belong
- Need to contribute
- Need for status
- Need for power
- Need for dependency
- Need for freedom
- Need for recognition of particular problems

These are soon found to overlap or impinge upon the TASK NEEDS.

3 Maintenance Needs

The need for relationship between the members to enable the group to stick together until the job has been done.

e.g.

Need to improve understanding

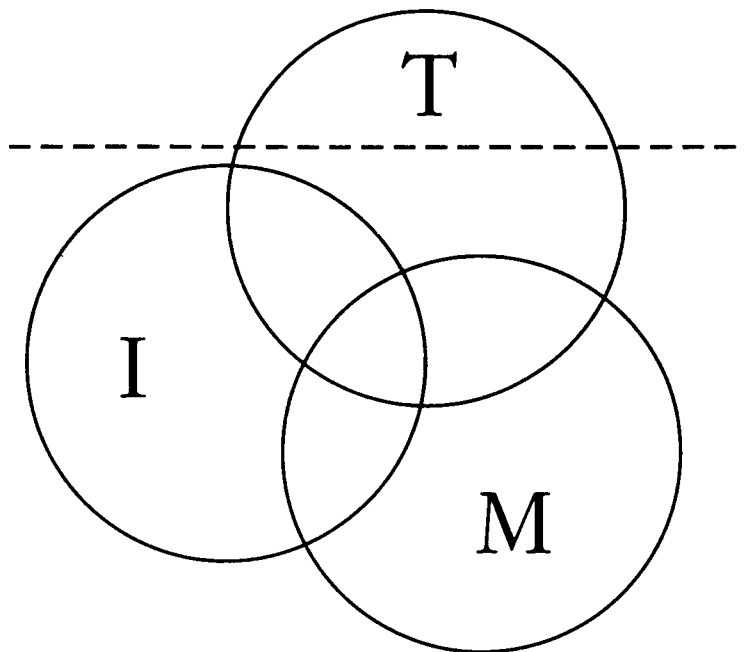
Need to facilitate co-operation between members

Need for members to support each other even when disagreeing

Need to obtain clarity

These, again, overlap with the other areas of need.

At first sight it is only some of the task needs of a group which are visible and obvious. But, as with the iceberg, the major areas of need in the life of a group lie hidden beneath the surface:-



The strength and the continued life of the group depends on the degree to which these three types of need in the group are recognised and met.

This handout is taken from an unknown source