

## The Group as a Laboratory

It can be useful to think of your group as a laboratory, where you can experiment with new ways of communicating and relating to others. In these “experiments”, the important thing is to do something different from your usual, then ask your group for feedback. Have fun with it. Old familiar ways of behaving will not result in productive experiments. A new behavior may seem difficult at first, but with practice, it gets easier. The new behavior can expand your range of options and be available whenever you need it. Or, depending on the results of experiments, you might decide *not* to add that behavior to your repertoire. Try experimenting with just one new behavior at a time.

For example:

### **If you relate to people by:**

- 1.) Complying, giving in, self-effacing
- 2.) Resisting suggestions, holding back
- 3.) Always talking; filling any silence with words just because you feel uncomfortable
- 4.) Waiting for someone to say something, then reacting
- 5.) Always smiling, even when annoyed or angry
- 6.) Explaining or justifying
- 7.) Trying to get people to stop feeling a certain way
- 8.) Being polite. Not showing anger or being judgmental
- 9.) Readily expressing anger. Having a “short fuse”
- 10.) Always helping others or putting others’

### **You might experiment with:**

- 1.) Saying no
- 2.) Taking a risk; Trying something new
- 3.) Being silent for a few minutes and getting in touch with uncomfortable feelings; talking about those feelings.
- 4.) Initiating something yourself for someone else to react to
- 5.) Talking without smiling. Sharing feelings in a healthy way
- 6.) Simply responding with what you feel (e.g. “I have an impulse to explain.”)
- 7.) Accepting the way they feel. At the same time, exploring your own impulses and feelings
- 8.) Getting in touch with one’s anger and exploring it; expressing it to others; admitting judgments
- 9.) Checking to see what feelings are underneath the anger (e.g. hurt?)
- 10.) Asserting your needs in relationships, in

needs before your own

order to obtain more of a balance

11.) Deflecting praise

11.) Accepting praise and merely thanking the person for acknowledging you

12.) Feeling bored, but being too polite to say anything about it

12.) Talking about your feelings of boredom

13.) When attacked, defending yourself

13.) Not saying anything in rebuttal, but explaining the *feelings* you have

14.) Being afraid, and hiding your fear

14.) Being openly afraid and letting everyone know it

15.) Always complimenting others

15.) Respectfully telling others exactly how you feel about them

16.) Trying to get approval from or be liked by everyone

16.) Being who you are and not caring about what others think; surrounding yourself with those who do accept you for who you are

17.) Giving advice

17.) Acknowledging, "I feel like giving you advice," but refraining from giving it. Ask the other person what they need

18.) Always helping other people

18.) Asking for help. Allowing others to help you.

19.) Always asking for help.

19.) Helping someone else.

20.) Controlling your feelings or suppressing them

20.) Experiencing your feelings and exploring them

21.) Keeping things secret

21.) Disclosing something about yourself that is hard to say

22.) Playing it safe

22.) Take a few risks

23.) Fear of being vulnerable

23.) Sharing more and allowing others to support/relate to you; not always assuming that they will react negatively