

Robinsons on Parallel Group Skills are Life Skills

In the Summer School class in Adlerian Psychology in Switzerland at ICASSI, the international institute for counselors, parents, students, teachers, therapists, and families, the group class taught by Karen John, Ph. D, was an exercise in living. Most of the activities that we participate in are in groups. The knowledge and skills that one needs for groups are life skills.

For example, these questions are useful if you are to reflect on your behavior in a group:

How do I behave in a group?

What is my responsibility in a group?

What does the leader of a group do?

What kind of leader do I prefer? (Bossy, lazy, in charge, democratic, autocratic?)

What are the rules of the group?

Does this group discriminate?

Do I have skills in observing others?

- In listening to others?
- In communicating clearly?
- In questioning?
- In creating a warm, welcoming environment?
- In offering encouragement?
- In offering direction?
- In offering feedback?
- In accepting feedback?
- In managing my own authority?
- In sharing personal information appropriately?
- In showing empathy and caring?
- In using humor appropriately?
- In showing I am paying attention verbally and non-verbally?
- In being objective?

- In giving support?
- In challenging and confronting individuals or the whole group?
- In showing honesty and genuineness?
- In being open to learn about myself?
- In hearing the music behind the words (underlying feelings)?
- In not discriminating?
- In not oppressing?
- In being human and therefore fallible and apt to make mistakes?

The above competencies are a challenge for group leaders, group members, and each of us in-group situations in the “real world.” Dr. Karen John was wise enough to know that we are all on a continuum between competent, fairly competent, not yet competent and no experience. We all had areas we needed to work on. Karen told us to use the group experience to meet our needs whether personal, or professional. She had each of us to lead a group during our week together. One by one we led the group, meeting the needs of each other and the group as we matured in our abilities.

Some of us did introductory activities. Some of us had the rest of us start a picture, and each member of the group added to the picture (it was a round robin draw—fun). Some of us had the group write cards of caring. Some of us role played different characters. This class was an adventure and we all learned and grew as professionals and as persons.