

Robinsons on Parallel Group Dynamics—We all participate

At the International Adlerian Psychology School in Switzerland several of us from nine countries studied groups with Karen John, Ph. D., a psychologist involved in consulting, training and research from the UK. Thankfully, English was the language of our discussions. Besides all we learned from each other's cultures, we also learned from each other's professional experience as group leaders and facilitators. We were from Bulgaria, Cameroon in Africa, Nederland, the United Kingdom, India, Switzerland, Germany, Slovakia, Turkey, and the USA. It was an incredible experience.

What we participants learned applies so much to our daily lives that some of the gems of wisdom are very worth sharing in our column. All groups have a task from

- Planning an outing to
- Selecting and burying a gift
- Managing an organization
- Discussing personal issues
- Learning about groups

Whatever the group's task, for it to be effective and productive, the task/goal needs to be up front, clear, obvious and known by everyone in the group. However, as many of us know, there is always something else going on, which is often hidden and far from obvious. This is called group PROCESS or group DYNAMICS.

These dynamics may be anything from fears to anxieties to hopes. They may be competition, feelings of belonging (or not), power issues, drawing people in (or leaving them out), emotional responses, different approaches, and different experiences. A

group will not exist very long if it has no purpose of if the members of the group do not maintain their relationships.

The three core functions of a group, whether it is a counseling group, a church group, a club group, a committee, a civil group, a business/school group or a “pod” of teens are these:

1. Accomplishing the group goals
2. Recognizing the needs and behavior of the group members
3. Maintaining itself (What besides the goals brings members back to the group each time?)

Dr. John relied heavily on Betty Lou Bettner’s Crucial C’s in studying the group process. The Crucial C’s are CONNECT, CAPABLE, COUNT, COURAGE. They fit into the group process this way:

IF I HAVE THE CRUCIAL C’S

I feel secure

I can reach out

Make friends

I Cooperate

I believe

I belong

IF I DON’T HAVE THE CRUCIAL C’S

I feel insecure, isolated

I’m more susceptible to peer pressure