

Group Freedom, Leadership, and Strength

THE GROUP. A group is more than a collection of individuals held together mechanically. It consists of persons who have organically interrelated their efforts in clarifying and serving common purposes, thereby fulfilling a maximum number of interests. The group's degree of maturity increases as common purposes and problems are attained, and as common ways of thinking, acting, and producing are worked out and accepted by all members. The goal is neither independence, nor dependence, but interdependence.

LEADERSHIP. All group work is predicated on leadership. This is the act or thought which contributes to the promotion of an enterprise as a whole for common ends. It is the function of many, not of just one. Leadership must be measured in terms of functions to be performed in helping groups to grow and to operate productively, not in terms of qualities inherent in certain persons. It seems probable that the functions of leadership can be best identified and learned as one practices the skills of productive group work in a variety of group settings.

FACTORS OF GROUP STRENGTH

1. Membership based on interest and free from authoritarian status relations.
2. Intercommunication among group members characterized by common understanding, semantic sensitivity, and permissiveness to discuss freely and not defensively.
3. Evaluation and analysis by the group of its own functioning and ability to accept and profit thereby.
4. Willingness to accept and share leadership functions and membership responsibilities, as well as sensitivity to and encouragement of the potential contributions of each member.
5. Group cohesion sufficient to permit the assimilation of new ideas and new members, to use conflict instead of being destroyed by it, to hold long-term goals, and to profit both from failure and success situations.
6. Ability to locate and use available resources and to detect and correct fallacies in the group's thinking.
7. Sensitivity in the detection and control of group pace, tensions, fatigues, sociometric factors, and emotional atmosphere.
8. Ability of group to integrate member ideologies, needs, and goals with common group practices, ideology, and goals.
9. Coordination in moving from group decisions to execution of action.
10. Ability of the group to create new functions and sub-groups as needed and to terminate their existence when appropriate.
11. Ability of group members to distinguish between persons liked or disliked and persons with the abilities required to get the job well done.