

SWRK 409
SOCIAL WORK WITH GROUPS
(Ragg, 2010, Garvin, 2011-2012)

Working at the Differentiation Stage of Development

At this stage the group has resolved most issues that can interfere with work. There is less competition and more collaboration in how the group approaches situations. The worker becomes less active and adopts a more laid back position allowing the members to develop direction and work together with minimal interference.

The worker must accomplish two tasks:

1. Facilitating group focused work.
2. Promoting individual goal achievement.

Facilitating Group Focused Work

As the group works, the worker stays somewhat disengaged and observes progress toward goals. Periodically, the worker intervenes to help the group continue their progress.

1. **Scanning.** The worker moves into a participant observer mode and monitors the group interactions, relationships and progress. If the group is working fine, no action is taken.
 - Mentally disengage from the content
 - Mentally engage at the process level
 - Compare the observations to the goal direction
 - Identify the need for intervention
2. **Process Comments.** When the worker notices an interaction, response or action (can focus on any of the four response systems) seems to interfere with group or individual goal achievement, they describe their observations back to the group.
 - Observe the process
 - Describe the observation
 - Engage the group (member) in a response“I notice that whenever John talks, Joanne starts to giggle. What is up with that?”
3. **Redirection.** When the group seems bogged down or seems to be sidetracked, the worker redirects the group back toward work.
 - Observes the lack of progress
 - Describes the observation
 - Contrasts the observation to the desired goal“You said that you wanted to get done early today but I notice that everyone is involved in side conversations, how will that help us get done?”
4. **Clarification.** If the sidetracking or bogged down state appears due to confusion or a lack of shared understanding, the worker interrupts the process to ask questions or clarify the group level understanding.
 - Observes the lack of progress
 - Identifies confusion or lack of cohesion at the group level

- Shares a question that can begin to build consensus among the members
“I notice that some of you are arguing the same point but don’t seem to be in agreement, What exactly is every one’s point?”
5. **Focusing.** If the energy of the group seems scattered or diffused, the worker will intervene to bring focus to the group.
 - Observes the shift in the energy
 - Describes the observation
 - Refocuses the group
“You guys have been discussing this issue for a long time and I hear the same points being brought up repeatedly, I fear we will never get to snack time.”
 6. **Prompting.** When the group appears reticent to act or reach a consensus, the worker must often prompt some action.
 - Observes the resistance to finish the issue or take action
 - Describes the observation
 - Challenges movement
“We have been talking about this for a while now and people just keep going in circles, what are we going to do?”
 7. **Restraining.** If the group is rushing or not taking care in the decisions that they make, the worker often slows the group down so things can be more carefully considered.
 - Observes the rushed decisions
 - Assesses that the rushing is counter productive
 - Shares observations
 - Re-focuses the group on the issue.
“Wait a minute here. All of a sudden we are making major decisions with hardly any discussion, are we all truly comfortable moving so fast?”

Promoting Individual Goal Achievement

The leader monitors the individual in the group concurrent with the group wide interactions and progress toward their goals.

1. **Here and Now Activation.** When the worker notices interactions that seem counterproductive or related to member issues, the worker seeks to put the issues on the table for focused work.
 - Observes the process
 - Interrupts the group direction
 - Refocuses on the member-related issue
“Hey ... wait a minute, what just happened between Joe and Sandra?”
2. **Laddering Process Comments.** With individuals, a series of process comments over a period of time can reinforce personal change goals and motivate change.
 - Observes an interaction or process
 - Mentally links the process to member goals/issues
 - Highlights the behavior/interaction
 - Highlights people’s emotional responses to the behavior/interaction
 - Highlights how the behavior/interaction sets the stage for others opinions

- Highlights how the behavior/interaction forms one's self opinion
3. **Building Identification.** When one member's issues parallel another member's, the worker highlights the issues simultaneously so both individual can work toward resolution (vicarious and active work).
 - Observes the parallel
 - Reflects on the issue
 - Invites the other member to relate
 - Reflects of the commonality
 4. **Bridging to the Past.** When a member's responses in the group are parallel to past issues or behaviors, the worker highlights the similarity for the member.
 - Observes the parallel process
 - Interrupts the direction
 - Reflects on the similarity from present to past
 - Invites the member to engage
 5. **Setting-Up Confrontation.** When a member's behavior or interactions impact another member(s), the worker engages the other members to confront the behavior.
 - Observes the impact of behavior or interaction
 - Stops the process
 - Invites members to share their experience
 6. **Pre-emptive Prodding.** When a member has a pattern of responding in specific ways, the worker intervenes with a process comment early in a situation before the patterned behavior can occur.
 - Observes the pattern over time
 - Observes that an upcoming issue may trigger the response
 - Predicts the potential response before the issue arises
 7. **Challenging.** When a member has a pattern of responding and does not seem willing to alter the pattern, the worker puts the issue on the table and then invites the members to challenge the maintenance of the response.
 - Observes the pattern over time
 - Observes the maintenance efforts
 - Waits for an example
 - Highlights the issue for the group
 - Invites a response