A MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME : A MACRO INTERVENTION STRATEGY IN COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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For my father, Bhungane, Mthimkhulu!

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I thank God the Almighty for allowing all this to be possible '*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff comfort me.*'

Abstract

The rate of divorce and family breakdown is escalating at an alarming rate. This growth of a substantial number of people experiencing divorce has questioned the effectiveness of family centered orthodox approaches to resolving marital difficulties thereby necessitating exploration of a macro intervention strategy to the epidemic of marital breakdown.

In this study methods chosen were focus group discussions and participant observation. A marriage enrichment group was formed for the purpose of giving psychology to the people, and to empower them so that they can solve their own problems, in their own communities, bearing in mind that the number of psychologists who can deal with the increasing number is limited.

Couples group meetings were held fortnightly primarily to provide an opportunity for people in intimate relationships to examine the quality of their relationships, to determine what barriers were preventing genuine intimacy, to make decisions concerning how they want to change their lives with each other and to explore their conflicts.

The need to form a marriage group arose out of the need for community psychologists to be visible and effect change in couples' struggles. An empowerment model was chosen taking into consideration that the model implies that competencies are thwarted due to social-cultural barriers and a lack of resources, and that these competencies can be strengthened through the support of local community groups, rather than large, centralized social agencies and institutions which control resources. A marriage enrichment group is used as an example of community psychology's macro empowerment intervention strategy to societal problems. The study has demonstrated that in groups couples function better and are able to resolve conflicts with the group serving as a watchdog in fostering accountability.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This chapter consists of motivation for the study undertaken, its aims and objectives. The contribution which community psychology has made to psychology and society in general is discussed. Principles of community psychology are listed as a springboard that will inform the kind of interventions undertaken in the group work process in the context of marital cum relationship counselling.

1.2. Motivation for the study to be undertaken

Community psychology is about understanding people within their social worlds and using this understanding to improve people's well-being. It's about understanding and helping. It stands on a bridge between the psyche and the social, the private and the public (Orford, 1998).

The foregoing argument suggests that psychology can no longer be practiced in clinics alone and renders individual therapies ineffective in dealing with broader societal issues. According to Orford (1998), working in a clinic presents one with an ethos likely to be an individualistic one, and the individuals concerned are extracted from their normal habitats. It therefore becomes difficult to understand and help people in their normal contexts. It is not always possible to achieve the ideal, but when one is working within a community psychology orientation, one is always

attracted to working in people's own homes, at their places of work, in their neighborhoods and with their social networks.

According to Riger, (1993) history and culture has shaped the concepts that psychologists use to explain human action. Also a value, that originally shaped psychology itself, is the belief in individualism, which lies at the heart of psychology's vision of human nature. This view is supported by the disciplines' assumptions that a healthy individual is one who which has the qualities of being self-contained, independent and self-reliant, a person who is capable of asserting himself (gender connotation used deliberately by Riger (1993) to demonstrate the male dominance evident in society) and being able to operate within the abstract and complex principles of justice and fairness.

The focus is different for community psychology, in the sense that when working with a community psychology orientation, one wishes to understand how problems have been generated in the community, to find out what needs exist and which of these are currently not being met. The practitioner also anticipates problems, to prevent them where possible, rather than being concerned with waiting for individuals to make contact. Orford (1998, p.6) supports this view in his assertion that '*once psychology is practiced outside clinics, schools and penal establishments in which it has found its institutional homes in the past and emerges into the community, then the familiar separations of clinical, educational, occupational, criminological legal and other branches of applied psychology make less and less sense*'.

Orford (1998) further argues that community psychology's basic tenet then is to transcend these artificial boundaries between the individual and society, as do many of the exciting innovations in its practice. In order to overcome the individualistic bias, community psychology aims to always consider people within the context of their social settings and systems of which they are parts, or which influence them. (Orford, 1998) challenges this individualistic bias in psychology, and therefore views people and their settings as that which constitutes an indivisible whole whose components influence each other equally.

The turn of the century has seen an increase in environmental stressors. The goal of community psychology is then to share the fruits of psychological understanding and knowledge as widely as possible within the community, since the numbers of trained mental health workers, let alone psychologists are nowhere near adequate to deal directly with these psychological problems already known to exist (Orford, 1998). This idea of sharing psychology (in community psychology) derives mostly from the strongly held belief that psychological expertise resides principally amongst residents of a community themselves and amongst the many trained service workers who have special helping roles within the community, but who have little or no special training in psychology.

Community psychology's viewpoint is that real psychology is largely practiced by those without special training, and that the work of psychologists and others with similar training should be empowering and supportive. Community psychologists have often challenged the patronizing view of believing that psychological

interventions can only be carried out by trained people, arguing that sharing psychological expertise has the advantage of empowering citizens by reversing the top-down power relations which are dominant in traditional psychology.

1.3. Statement of the problem

The emergence of community psychology as a speciality in the USA was through a desire to reduce social inequality and to right social wrongs (Seedat, Cloete & Shocket et al, 1988, p.40). There was great concern with issues such as poverty, educational deprivation, racial tension, and a sense of dissatisfaction with the apparent irrelevance of individual therapy as a way of relieving such problems (Orford, 1992).

In the South African context, community psychology is still in its infancy (Kieffer, 1984), whereas the problems identified in the USA that led to the emergence of community psychology as a discipline, are still rife in South Africa. However, South African mental health care professionals are beginning to make choices between helping individuals in need, or becoming involved in changing the conditions that affect the community as a whole, rather than individuals alone. Perhaps the principles of community psychology as offered by Rappaport (1981) will offer some form of guidelines into transforming theory into practice.

The assertion that Rappaport (1981) is making is that once principles of community psychology are translated into practice, the result is that psychology can no longer fit

into the neat, compartmentalised and fragmented approach that it usually is. We now

turn to the principles of community psychology as outlined by Rappaport (1981):

1.4.   Principles of community psychology

1.4.1. Causes of problems are an interaction over time between person and social

settings and systems, which include structures of social support and social power.

1.4.2. Levels of analysis :psychologists need to move from micro to macro level

concentrating mostly on the level of the organisation, and the community or

neighbourhood.

1.4.3. Research methods should include quasi-experimental designs, qualitative

research,   action research and case study methods.

1.4.4. Location of practice is more appropriate if it is done as near as possible to

relevant, everyday social contexts.

1.4.5. Approach to planning services constitutes bearing in mind to 'seek out',

assess needs and special risks in a community.

1.4.6. When **practicing** emphasis should be on prevention rather than on treatment.

1.4.7. The **attitude to sharing psychology with others** needs to be geared towards

formal and informal ways of sharing, and be consultative.

1.4.8. Position on working with non-professionals - strongly encourages self-help to non- professionals. The attitude should be that of facilitation and collaboration..

Rappaport's principles affirm the notion of linking the personal with the political. In this view, community psychology recognizes the importance of inequality and power relations as major contributory factors in people's problems and thus values empowerment. In other words the discipline seeks to address peoples' problems in their context. As Tricket (1996) puts it, in their interventions community psychologists need to appreciate the contexts of diversity and diversity of contexts. Tricket's argument is that psychologists need to appreciate the diverse contexts in which people are operating, which allows them to move away from individualistic approaches.

Orford's (1998) view is that one of the reasons why psychologists are comfortable with a more individualistic approach is that the person in context system is difficult to conceptualize and assess, let alone to try and modify it. The lack of leading theoretical ideas around which this new field might coalesce also compounds the problem.

1.6. Context and rationale for marital cum relationship group counselling

The rate of divorce and family breakdown is escalating at an alarming rate.

This growth of a substantial number of people experiencing divorce has led to interventions of different kinds from the more orthodox approach to resolving marital difficulties (Douglas-Hooper & Dryden, 1991, p.4) With the apparent decay of moral fiber and decreased social support systems due to urbanization, black middle class married couples have no family support systems and neighbours to support them as compared to their counterparts in the past and, as a result, this group is found wanting when it comes to social support. In addition, Men's violence to their partners, wives or girlfriends is a serious social problem in our society as empirical evidence to date testifies (O'Neill & Morgan, 2001).

On the other hand black women are triply disadvantaged due to their gender, ethnicity and poverty (Gibbs & Fuery, 1994, p.571) As compared to their men and white middle class men and women, black women as members of three low status groups, represent the epitome of powerlessness in our society. Presumably, this least favorable combination of low status positions should predict negative social and psychological consequences in black women.

It is therefore imperative that community psychologists intervene with the purpose of empowering previously disadvantaged communities especially black women, so that they can deal more effectively with issues that emanated in the context of powerlessness. It is also important to bear in mind that most women are in heterosexual relationships, and that it is not only individuals that need to be empowered, but couples, as partners affect each other.

Community psychologists also need to design programmes to address black women's needs, especially those that promote empowerment. Sensitivity and responsiveness needs to be adhered to when dealing with the unique issues facing these women. Black men and women who were previously disadvantaged constitute a very diverse group with a range of mental health issues, coping mechanisms, adaptive behaviours and service needs, hence an appreciation of the diversity of contexts should be in the minds of community psychologists at all times.

We need to value diversity and empowerment, which are central to community psychology (Serrano-Garcia & Bond, 1994). A focus on diversity challenges psychologists to think more about empowerment of groups as well as to embed our understanding of individual empowerment in cultural contexts. Giving voice to the concerns of previously silent and under-represented groups is an initial step for the empowerment of the groups and also helps us place individual empowerment in broader contexts (Serrano-Garcia & Bond, 1994, p.433). It is with this context in mind that the marriage enrichment group in this thesis was formed , to empower married couples who no longer have the support systems that their older counterparts had.

Emanating from a socio-historical context of racial and gender discrimination, empowerment of this diverse group is however a complex endeavour, filled with challenges and paradoxes. Given community psychology's commitment to the equitable distribution of psychological and societal resources, so as to empower the underserved, this difficulty is appreciated.

The need to form a couples' group arose out of the need to be visible and effect change in couples' struggles, bearing in mind that an empowerment model implies that many competencies exist which are thwarted due to social-structural barriers and a lack of resources and that these competencies can be strengthened through the support of local community groups, rather than large, centralized social agencies and institutions which control resources (Gibbs & Fuery, 1994, p. 571). Thus a marriage enrichment group is used as an example of a macro empowerment intervention strategy to societal problems.

1.6. Purpose of the study

- To demonstrate that the social nature of the human condition and experience is as relevant a subject of inquiry as the individual psyche.

- To demonstrate the constraining effects of individual centred interventions in psychology.

- Establish new community based (oriented) interventions as opposed to the current individual centred ones.

- To establish community based interventions that would equip psychologists with the following expertise:

  ➤ Taking heed of the responsibility of contributing to the solution of societal problems and taking measures towards their prevention.

  ➤ Learning and adopting the necessary skills that would contribute to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of individual, group, or societal level strategies for bringing about, and maintaining,

behavioural change, and thus make realistic estimation of the impact of psychological interventions.

➢ To link the personal into the political aspects of human suffering, so that one can recognise the role played by inequality and power relations in shaping an individual's personality.

➢ To empower citizens in the context of couples' group therapy, without imposing on them, as there is a decline in the value of marriage, and women are trapped in a world of powerlessness.

1.7. Organisation of the study

1.7.1. Literature review

An in-depth literature review on the context and rationale for community psychology and its interventions are dealt with in this chapter. Dynamics of group work in the context of marital/couple therapy are also discussed.

1.7.2. Exploratory study

The study took the form of a small in depth exploratory study of clients with marital difficulties including 14 husbands and wife couples from 7 marriages . Invitation letters (Appendix) were sent to couples identified in therapy on an individual basis. Those that responded positively were invited to join the group. Focus groups were thereafter conducted coupled with participant observation. Statements which emerged from the focus group discussions are grouped into themes which are in turn analysed.

1.7.3. Sample

Seven married couples which comprised 14 people took part in the study. These were the couples identified on a one to one clinical setting that came for couple counseling. This group was identified based on their common problems they brought into therapy.

1.7.4. Value of the study

- The study will demonstrate the importance of macro interventions in psychology, especially in communities with limited financial and professional resources.
- The study will demonstrate the possibility of translating theory of community psychology into practice.
- This study has the potential of decreasing the rate of divorce in society, as couples will develop greater insight, and be able to deal with their problems more constructively.

1.8. Resume

This chapter has offered an overview of the context in which community psychology was founded. It contextualises the purpose for the marital group work, and provides us with aims, objectives and value of the study. Principles of community psychology are cited in brief and will be applied implicitly throughout the processes of marriage group work.

CHAPTER 2 : COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY ORIENTATION

2.1. Introduction

This chapter offers an in-depth literature review on the origins of community psychology. The theory and practice of traditional psychology is argued against community psychology as an emerging and alternative discipline. An empowerment model is cited as an intervention strategy. The rationale for group work and processes involved in conducting group work are discussed in depth in this chapter.

2.2. History of community psychology

Van Rensberg and Benatar (1993) once argued that one of the most important historical forces in the moulding of both the South African health care system and the health of the people of South Africa, has been "apartheid". These writers define apartheid as *"that broad spectrum of policies, structures, laws, measures, actions and attitudes - be they formally institutionalised or informally pursued in which, and through which, race and colour are implemented as basis for differentiating, segregating and treating people in groups, and whereby race and colour are thus used and abused as criteria for either including or excluding people, or either favouring certain groups or discriminating against others"* (Van Rensberg & Benatar 1993, p. 100).

From this description it is evident that apartheid can entail many shades, be it statutory or informal apartheid, political, administrative or socio-economic apartheid or social and psychological apartheid. Therefore both as a consequence and cause, apartheid stands prominent in South African health and health care.

In past decades there has been an increasing debate about the link between psychology, politics and apartheid (Vogelman, 1986). The main argument was that because the politics of a country help to determine the life history and mental health of its people, psychology and politics are intertwined. Heller (1984) asserts that any field whose practices touch the lives of others, is confronted with value choices. Based on this argument and especially in the South African situation, the majority of people have been victims of the apartheid system and will need help to overcome the legacy of a system which disempowered them and rendered them helpless, both physically and mentally.

The consequences of apartheid are grave to everyone who lives in South Africa especially to the previously underprivileged and disadvantaged, the so called 'Blacks' and women in general. In this chapter I propose a model of empowerment as a strategy to empower those who have been disadvantaged through apartheid . Understanding empowerment demands a clarification of the conditions from which it evolves - a sense of powerlessness.

2.3.   Context of powerlessness

What apartheid did to its victims was to instil a sense of powerlessness. Kieffer, 1984, p.15.) views "powerlessness" as the "expectancy held by the individual that his or her own behaviour cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes...he/she seeks". This feeling of "powerlessness" Kieffer argues, is approached as "an attitude of being which incorporates past experience, ongoing behaviour, and continuing cognition"(Ibid.). In short, the sense of powerlessness is viewed as "a construction of continuous action between the person and his or her environment. It combines an attitude of self-blame, a sense of generalised distrust, a feeling of alienation from resources for social influence, an experience of disenfranchisement and economic vulnerability, and a sense of hopelessness in socio-political struggle"(Kieffer 1984, p.16).

Based on the foregoing argument of powerlessness, it has become imperative for psychologists to revisit individualistic interventions, taking into consideration that psychological problems in communities are caused by the socio-political circumstances of the previous political dispensation. Psychologists need to be in the forefront in helping people "overcome internalised expectations of helplessness, conflicts inherent in maintaining collective support, the strains of familial disruption, the frustrations of inequities in tactical resources, and the endurance of political intimidation" (Kieffer, 1984, p. 27).

To be able to achieve thee objectives, Rappaport (1981) calls for an "empowerment model", whereby psychologists strive to collaborate with clients in developing the emotional and practical resources they require.

Mental health professionals have been under attack for ignoring the political aspects of the problem and for choosing a more comfortable position, that of being politically neutral while serving to maintain the existing social order. Tajfel (1978) asserts that these professionals have been individualistic in their approaches to problems in living.

Intervention at an individual level is not only inappropriate, but is inadequate to resolve problems effectively. Traditional psychology has also been criticised by Heller (1984) for failing to acknowledge diversity and cultural relativity among South Africans. This shortcoming rendered the discipline inadequate in dealing with the majority of South Africans' problems and therefore could not address the imbalances of the past.

Turton and Orr (1993) illustrate this fallacy by reflecting on the counselling organisation that was established in the Johannesburg area. These writers noted that those counsellors were informed by traditional psychology and its ideology as discussed above, and were therefore ineffective in solving the problems of the township people, who came with a different life view to that of the counsellors.

The organisation was closed after six years because the psychologists applied unmodified forms of counselling to African clients. The counsellors themselves were not equipped to deal with material problems of the working class. They needed to

understand the material existence of the working class because they themselves were from a different class altogether. Turton and Orr (1993) further assert that at the time of their training, trainee counsellors were indoctrinated with bourgeoisie ideologies that stress the importance of a non-directive, non-interventionist, person centred and individualistic counselling. This approach made the counsellors have difficulty in adapting successfully to requirements of the township situation. Furthermore the service and training of the counsellors was seen to be problematic because of the apparent disjuncture between their training and the actual working circumstances. The service did not work out. It was not rewarding for working class African clients and had to close down.

2.4. Emergence of community psychology as discipline

Out of problems like the ones cited above, since the 1960's there has been a widespread dissatisfaction about traditional approaches in psychology (Heller, 1984). This has led to the "crisis" situation which gave rise to a host of movements acknowledging the fact that psychology should change. As a discipline community psychology emerged out of these perspectives / movements which sought to intervene holistically in people's problems. Seedat (1988, p. 40) puts it this way : *"This theoretical shift in emphasis represents a concern about where to locate the seat of pathology, was accompanied by a critical re-appraisal of the philosophy underlying the conception and treatment of mental illness. This concern generated controversy and debate around the dominant intrapsychic model in psychology'.*

Many writers criticised the strong intrapsychic orientation of psychodynamic therapy, for its "elitist" and "exclusivist" nature which "automatically excludes the poor" (Seedat et al, 1988, p.40). These writers were questioning traditional psychology's selectivity, in that it appeared to ignore more serious and yet socially relevant problems like substance abuse, crime, woman battering, violence etc. Seedat, Duncan and Lazarus (2001) argue that mainstream fraternity was adopted without challenging the restrictions and outcomes imposed by the exploitative economic arrangements and dominant systems of knowledge production. The position taken by psychology at this time was that of an accommodationist, seeking greater influence within the mainstream fraternity.

On the other hand, according to Lazarus and Seedat (1996) community psychology is concerned with redefining the role of psychologists towards a broader public health portfolio that embraces the functions of advocacy, lobbying, community mobilisation, networking and policy formulation (in Seedat, Duncan, and Lazarus 2001,p.3). These authors further argue that the juxtaposing of 'community and 'psychology' is another defining feature that places the accent on the psyche of the collective, and conveys ideas about an academic, activist agenda seeking to reform, redirect or revolutionise the theory, method and practice of psychology in the interest of disadvantaged groups.

Likewise, the emergence of community psychology as a specialty in the USA was a result of a desire to reduce social inequality, and to right social wrongs (Orford, 1998). There was great concern with issues such as poverty, educational deprivation,

racial tension and a sense of dissatisfaction with the apparent irrelevance of individual

therapy as a way of relieving such problems (Orford, 1998).

In South Africa community psychology which formally emerged around the 1980's

has identified a theory, method and practice of psychology that will liberate

psychology from the discriminatory approaches and hegemonic and epistemological

domination evident in Euro American psychology (Seedat, 1993; Seedat et. al. 2001,

p.4). On the other hand in South Africa community psychology came to be associated

with broad democratic movements which seek to dismantle oppressive state structures

and ideological state apparatuses which were also embodied in the disciplinary

practices of the social and medical sciences during the previous colonial and apartheid

eras.

Despite its indisputable accomplishments in South Africa community psychology still

has to achieve both distributive equality which addresses issues of political

representation and social justice; and distributive sufficiency which requires us to go

beyond issues of having to examine questions of need (Seedat, 2001, p. 5).

Psychologists need to ask themselves if their theoretical and methodological

frameworks and intervention strategies are sufficient to promote the well being of the

marginalised sectors of society. Perhaps Doise's levels of analysis can offer us a

tenable conceptual framework attempting to overcome the shortcomings of traditional

psychology mentioned above.

2.4. Conceptual framework : Doise' s levels of analysis

To appreciate the diversity of human nature, Doise's (1989) levels of analysis are pertinent to our cause of a holistic approach in order to employ relevant interventions. The first level is **intrapersonal,** which stresses internal factors like motivation, likes and dislikes etc. The second level, **interpersonal,** looks at processes between individuals in a given situation. The third level, **positional,** stresses differences in social position, deals with issues like race, gender, class etc. The fourth level Doise refers to as the **ideological** level, which focuses on the widespread ideas, values, representation and practices, which serve to legitimate and maintain the existing order. The third and fourth levels are collectively referred to as the societal level.

Intervention strategies in traditional psychology mainly operate at the intrapersonal and the interpersonal level. Wider societal issues which are often neglected can be detected by operating at the third and fourth levels. These two levels are often referred to as macro levels. Orford (1998) purports that community psychology is about the interdependence of individuals and their settings and systems at many levels including the highest or macro level. Macro- level systems are important since they define the scope of community psychology, and set the limits very wide indeed.

It follows that those who use a community psychology orientation should be free to move as required from one level of thinking to another. Orford (1998, p.7) asserts that whatever level one is working at , one should be alert to the influence of factors operating both at higher and lower levels. The following quote (Orford, 1998, p.6) bears testimony to this:

'we can and should always be ready to look 'beyond' and 'within' ... if we see husbands and wives in conflict over lost income. We need to look beyond the economy that puts the husbands out of work and now may welcome the wives into the labour force, as well as to the culture that defines a person's personal worth in monetary terms and that blames the victims of economic dislocation for their own losses. But we must also look at the parent-child relationships that are affected by the changing roles and status of their parents. In addition we must also look across to see how the several systems involved (family, workplace and the economy) adjust to the new conditions over time'.

Rappaport (1981) warned that intervening at an inappropriate level has the risk of neglecting the most important causes of the problem. A central tenet in psychology suggests that interventions at an individual level run the risk of 'blaming' the individual who might more appropriately, be seen as the victim of forces operating at a higher level. Therefore intervention may be unwittingly helping to maintain the status quo, rather that being a force in changing it.

2.6.   Empowerment model of mental health care.

Kieffer (1984) traced the origins of the concept of empowerment in community Psychology to have emerged approximately five decades ago. He argued that since the late 1970's, round about the emergence of community psychology, the notion of "empowerment" frequently appeared in discussions related to community and social interventions. Though the idea of empowerment seems to be of relevance in this socio-political change in South Africa, at the time it had been limited by conceptual

ambiguity (Kieffer, 1984). For our purposes, empowerment is viewed as a necessary long term process of adult learning and development, described by Kieffer (1984, p.17) as "the continuing construction of a multi-dimensional participatory competence".

Kieffer further asserts that this conception of empowerment encompasses both cognitive and behavioural change. Riger's (1993) criticism of Kieffer's view of empowerment is based on the notion that although his definition of empowerment includes actual control and influence as part of the concept, in a great deal of research, actual control is conflated with the sense of personal control. In his description of 'empowerment', Kieffer is also quoted in one of his writings (1994) as making an assertion that 'the fundamental empowering transformation is " from sense of self as helpless victim to acceptance of self as an assertive and efficacious citizen' (Riger, 1993, p. 281).

Likewise Riger (1993) has considered empowerment as a manifestation of people's beliefs in their efficacy. Once more the tendency of psychology to reduce complex phenomena to individual psychological dynamics (Riger, 1993) is evident in the above statement. Although Sampson's criticism of individual approaches in traditional psychology holds, he is also guilty of the same individual stance (Riger, 1993) when he argued that in psychology '*effort is expended in developing precise ways to measure and assess individual psychological states and perceptions and to evaluate individual behavioral outcomes. The social context within which these individual perceptions and activities take place is put off to the side, occasionally*

alluded to, but rarely if ever systematically addressed" (Riger, 1993, p. 281).
Empowerment in the above statement is assessed through individuals' perceptions.

Empowerment is also conceptualised as an interactive and highly subjective relationship of individuals and their environments. Kieffer (1984, p.18) studied how citizens, despite feelings of powerlessness, rise above constraints and gain a sense of power. He described the transition from powerlessness to participation competence as being characterised by a dynamic of long term development from socio-political illiteracy or "infancy", to socio-political "adulthood". Participatory competence incorporates the interconnected elements of a unitary notion of socio-political competence which are the :

a) development of more positive self-concept or self competence.

b) construction of more critical or analytical understanding of the surrounding
social and political environment.

c) cultivation of individual and collective resources for social and political action (Kieffer,1984). Kieffer's (1984) view is that interventions of self initiated efforts, which promote development of these competencies, can be seen as "empowering" at least to a certain extent. If all three are promoted at one time, attainment of greater empowerment could be achieved.

Riger (1993) views the concept of 'empowerment' as being problematic in the sense that it can potentially lead to unmitigated competition among those who are empowered, thus reverting back to the fallacy of individualism. Another problem with empowerment is that there is a preference for traditionally masculine concept of

mastery, power and control at the expense of traditionally feminine concerns of communication and co-operation. Riger (1993) concludes then that the challenge to community psychology is to develop a vision that incorporates both empowerment and community, while appreciating the paradoxical nature of this exercise.

It is in this background that we exercise extreme caution in our empowerment intervention strategies. In our context we wish to empower black men and women who share a common background of slavery, discrimination, economic exploitation, poverty and powerlessness. However, black women and men constitute a very diverse group with different needs, despite their diversity. Serrano-Garcia and Bond (1994, p. 436) are of the view that we need to penetrate the unique cultures of diverse groups to understand their ecologies. Empowerment of diverse groups depends upon acknowledgement of both similarities and differences. It involves a dynamic interaction among the following processes:

- Recognising previously ignored groups

- Celebrating unique strengths

- Recognising the diversity within groups and

- Acknowledging similarities between groups without reifying a monolithic standard

Gibbs and Fuery (1994) believe that particular cultural patterns contribute to the ways black women can be strong, resilient and adaptive in the face of multiple stresses. These authors suggest that one way to be syntonic with black African values, is generating empowerment efforts that can respect and preserve the use of

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informal support networks. It is against this background that the marriage enrichment group was formed.

The differences between the experiences and opportunities of women and men also cannot be ignored (Serrano-Garcia & Bond, 1993, p. 440). The issues that emerge from the power dynamics of gender have profound implications for empowerment. Although Black men and women are often considered together, yet in spite of their shared socio-historical context of oppression, there are also profound gender differences in the experiences of the two. Men are more economically advantaged than women. For example, 'liberation' can mean different things to men and women, for men it could mean freedom from harassment by white men and for women it could mean resisting male domination.

Appreciation of diversity in our empowerment strategies is best put by Serrano-Garcia and Bond (1994) thus:

'empowerment requires us to understand people in context, which we cannot do unless we embrace diversity both between and within groups'. As Swift and Levin (1987) have argued, acknowledging the unique resources and the empowerment deficits of groups is central to the empowerment process. Acknowledging diverse groups means recognising the dynamic, evolving influences of culture, life experience and world view.

2.7. Empowerment as a health policy

The challenge faced by the South African health system was to be part of a comprehensive programme to redress social and economic injustices, and to ensure that emphasis is placed on health and not just on medical care. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 1991)) describes "health" as not just the absence of disease, but a state of physical, psychological, and social well being. This definition implies that health is broader than it is often envisaged, and calls for a holistic approach to health services.

The South African Government of National Unity, through its adoption of the Reconstruction and Development programme (RDP) in 1994, committed itself to the development of a District Health System (DHS) based on Primary Health Care (PHC) approach. What this means is that there needs to be a health service that will :

- emphasise prevention, health education and promotion, early intervention, and rehabilitation
- be responsive to community needs placing control and management responsibilities at a local level
- eliminate inequities and establish intersectoral development links
- integrate institutional, community based and preventive programmes both within the health sector and other sectors impacting on health
- reduce waste and eliminate duplication at all levels

In short, the system that was required was to be structured in such a way that no one in need would be prevented from accessing any of the levels of care that they may require, rapidly and efficiently, and such that all will receive the highest quality of care. In fact, this system is being implemented in most of the provinces in South Africa. The question one needs to ask then is: where does psychology fit in, in this socio-political change scenario as far as health care is concerned?

2.8.   The role of psychology in health care

The relevance of psychology to South Africa and its role in the new socio-political system has been questioned by some people who were concerned about the dominant intrapsychic model in psychology (Seedat, Cloete & Shocket 1988). Some writers argued that psychology must certainly rate as one of the most irrelevant endeavours in South African Society. This argument portrays an ignorance of the contribution that psychology can make to psychological well being and to health in general. It could also be an indictment of psychologists for not being seen to be more relevant. We shall now look at strategies that the discipline of psychology can adopt to improve the psychological health of South African communities. The list is endless but we shall mention just a few.

2.8.1. Practical intervention strategies

Counsellor-client partnership cum community involvement

This strategy informed the inception of the marriage enrichment group in a significant way. Culley (1991) asserts that the way a counsellor works with clients and the

frameworks that he or she chooses are a reflection of one's values and assumptions both about others and about counselling. For an example, telling people what to do all the time could be a reflection of a counsellors view that people are incapable of taking charge of their lives, and that they need an expert to tell them what to do, in which case the expert is the counsellor. Culley (1992) further argues that individuals have the potential to discover what is right for them, if they are given the climate in which to make that discovery. If the general aim of counselling is to empower clients, then this needs to be reflected in the way counsellors negotiate the relationship from the onset.

The system of apartheid has played a major role in socialising the underprivileged into a culture of silence and a feeling of powerlessness. Kieffer's (1984, p. 15) contention is that, a way of understanding how powerlessness manifests itself is to view it as a *"submersion in a system of social relations to such an extent that the individual loses the sense of control over those relations"*. Individuals want to be more self directing and self empowered. It has been proven that people work harder to achieve goals which they have set for themselves. They are more likely to mobilise their resources and strive for outcomes which they value and want, rather than goals which are imposed. Helping clients to identify the outcomes they both want and value is part of the counselling process. The initial meeting of the marital group in this research was set to achieve similar goals i.e. to help members of the group identify their objectives so that they become part of the study.

Kieffer (1984) supports this notion further in his argument that a sense of powerlessness can be alleviated by involving clients in the decision making of the

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therapeutic relationship. Involving the citizens in the analysis and solution of the problem is one way of empowering citizens, because it is a way of restoring that internal locus of control which will eventually instil a sense a sense of power within. That is one reason why in this marital group we encouraged a citizen-scientist collaborative approach. Again, working with clients in a collaborative manner, has the advantage of reversing the top-down power relations that usually exist in our society (Rappaport 1981).

Community psychology has introduced an empowerment model of human services as a substitute for the paternalistic model that has dominated human service delivery over the century. The tendency to get "expert" opinions about the needs of populations, has been met with resistance by indigenous populations. What psychologists now do in communities is to empower people by organising groups with less power to achieve greater participation and self determination (Rappaport et al, 1984).

Community psychologists are also finding out from populations what they want to do and helping them towards achieving those goals. If what people want to do is detrimental to them, then professionals need to bring that concern to the fore. What is important here is that there should be no sense of superordinacy evident on the side of the psychologist. Swift's (1984) view of empowerment is that it is subjective and contextual, a process whereby individuals, organisations and communities gain mastery over their lives. Swift's argument is that whether communities experience real power or it is perceived, the end result is one, that is people have the sense of power. Swift (1984) further asserts that power is gained through learning new

competencies, instead of being told by experts about what is good or bad. Though the end result of power is one, it can be variable and inconsistent with one another, hence there is a call to appreciate the paradoxical nature of societal problems. Once again appreciating what we refer to the diversity of contexts and contexts of diversity (Tricket, 1996).

Riger's (1993) criticism of empowerment is that the concept of empowerment which guides community psychology, follows a research theory which emphasises agency, mastery control, and tends to overlook the role of connectedness in human life. The solution here is to balance empowerment with a commitment to the community, thereby strengthening both the community and the individual.

Likewise, interventions attempt to achieve empowerment through increase in participation in neighbourhood or self help groups, but these interventions do little to affect people's power over resources or policies. The argument here is that if the focus of enquiry is empowerment as explicated by Kieffer (1988), it becomes not actual power but the *sense* of empowerment, then the political is made personal and ironically the status quo may be maintained. In our study we were aware of this critique. However, we thought that this shortcoming could be overcome by getting as many people involved in self-help group work as possible. If more people are involved in these kinds of groups, then the awareness of societal problems can translate into lobbying for legislation by means of referendums etc.

Health promotion and preventive interventions

Another way that community psychology can make a difference in society is to embark on health promotive and preventive strategies. Community psychologists have taken the path of understanding the psychological problems from an interdisciplinary framework that is committed to action and social change. They are involved with the responsibility of contributing to the solution of societal problems, and taking measures towards their prevention (Swift, 1984). When psychologists and other behavioural scientists adopt efforts that are grounded in a sound theoretical base, they can make a significant contribution to health prevention and promotion. Psychologists' expertise and knowledge can contribute to an understanding of psychosocial determinants which put people at risk for poor health, or which facilitate the transmission of certain diseases.

Based on the foregoing argument, it is evident that psychologists are able to define the context of behaviour in terms of social, economic, political, and environmental causes. Their qualifications can contribute to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of individual, group, or societal level strategies for bringing about, and maintaining behaviour change, and thus make realistic estimation of the impact of psychosocial interventions.

2.9.   Conclusion

In summary, "empowerment implies that many competencies are already present or possible, given the niches and opportunities. It implies that new competencies are learned in a context of living life, rather than being told what to do by experts. It means realising that the forms, the strategies, and the contents achieved will be quite variable from setting to setting. It means diversity of form. It means fostering local solutions by a policy which strengthens rather than weakens the mediating structures between individuals and the larger society : neighbourhoods, families, churches, clubs, and voluntary associations. Community psychologists are beginning to learn from those "natural" support systems which are successful, and are transmitting what we learn to those which are less successful. Rappaport, Swift and Hess (1984) cautions here that success cannot however be defined in a single way, it needs to be self defined by the people of concern, otherwise we undercut by our meta-communications the very essence of empowerment (Rappaport et al, 1984, p.4).

Based on the foregoing argument, psychologists have a mammoth task lying ahead of them to address the imbalances and inequities of the legacy of apartheid in South Africa. The majority of South Africans are still trapped in a world of powerlessness. However imperfect it might be, an empowerment model of intervention has potential to reverse this situation. The above observations point to the massive challenge that confronts those involved in the development of community psychology particularly where there is a question to retain and further develop its commitment to social transformation in terms of addressing the needs of the historically unserved,

undeserved and oppressed. Within this context, the development of theory, method and practice of community psychology in South Africa as in America or elsewhere is an unfinished business.

2.10. Contextualising the marriage enrichment programme

The marriage enrichment group was formed for the purposes of giving psychology to people and to empower people so that they can solve their own problems in their communities bearing in mind that the number of psychologists who can deal with the increasing number of marital difficulties is limited. The overall purpose of using a group was to help the persons in it. This can be stated more formally as 'to benefit the persons in a group', through making as full use as possible of the potentials of the group as a medium for help' (Whitaker, 1985, p.27). The principal focus was the process by which partners in troubled marriages seek help with their difficulties and it set out to explore how people became aware of their problems, their searches for help among their own social networks, their various attempts to approach agencies and finally become clients (Branmen & Collard, 1982; Collard & Manifield, 1991).

The following instrumental purposes can be identified, that can contribute to the achievement of this overall purpose:

- Establishing a working alliance
- Working with communication
- Changing behaviour through agreements
- Creating therapeutic tasks

- Recognition of relationships between mini and macro problem areas.

2.11. Why marital/couple therapy?

It is worth mentioning here that the terms ' therapy' and 'counseling will be used interchangeably throughout this paper because the modes of action are similar. Douglas-Hooper & Dryden, 1991, p. 8) argue that 'attempts to resolve this issue in terms of some overarching theoretical plan are futile and serve no purpose. Both enterprises lay stress upon the need to value the client as a person, to listen in a non-judgmental and accepting fashion, and to foster the capacity for self help. If there is a distinction it lies in more mundane and down to earth concerns about the nature of the training, the settings in which people work and the problems and issues with which they are typically confronted'.

Evidence is strong that if the core of the problem is in the interactive processes, even though these are conducted inside the heads of the couples, then the interactive sequence is the one which needs examining, exploring, clarifying and changing (Douglas-Hooper & Dryden, 1991, p.8). This does not mean that the personal life experience of each person is unimportant, but it is the interaction of the personal experiential worlds of both partners which lead to the emergent problems.

Marital therapy has been the focus of many therapists for decades. Douglas-Hooper and Dryden (1991 p.4) assert that since the late 60's the phenomenon of committed couples has emerged, which is not necessarily a marital relationship in the old accepted sense and which includes gay and lesbian couples as well as heterosexual

couples. There are many reasons for this but the most important (for heterosexual couples) are probably the effective control over conception and the concomitant emergence of the feminist view of the rights and roles of women. These two factors alone have had an impact on the relationships formed between men and women; although they are not the only ones of course.

The other major phenomenon of the 1970's and 1980's related to these factors has been the sharp rise in divorce. It is perhaps paradoxical that the committed couple should be linked to marriage breakdown but the divorce phenomenon may have made couples cautious about formal marriage or re-marriage. For example according to Hooper and Dryden (1991) there has been a three fold increase in the number of couples cohabiting between 1979 and 1987. In 1961 there were 2500 divorces which were granted by the courts. By 1988 this figure had risen to 152000, which represents over 1/3 of a million individuals. More recently, Phillip McGraw stated that in America the divorce rate refuses to drop below 50%., and that 20% of all married couples will divorce not once but twice in a lifetime (McGraw, 2002, p.9). These alarming statistics provide more reason for couple therapy.

Marital therapy has contributed a good deal to family therapy in understanding the process of dyadic interaction, although a family group clearly possesses several more dimensions. Because of the overriding dominance of the adoption of systems theory as the metaphor of choice for understanding family and family problems, the marital dyad is consequently perceived as a subsystem of the larger family system.

It can be argued that the 'marital' dyad seen as a subsystem of the family system are also distinct from the couple seen as a self contained dyad in its own right. Hooper and Dryden (1991) however warn against identifying the couple and conjoint therapy with couples, as divorced from wider familial patterns . These authors also argue that the ability and inability to relate effectively to the other person is of fundamental importance and different from the inability to cope in the large group. It therefore makes therapeutic sense to examine such bonds in vivo, as it were, to see if anything can be done to liberate the couple in order to achieve a more effective joint life.

Clulow and Mattison's (1989) assertion is that marriage is a social and psychological institution. It is a bridge between public and private worlds. To understand adequately what is happening outside marriage involves taking into account the private relationships between men and women. Equally the private face of marriage has to be understood in the context of the social environment in which couples live their lives out together. As a result, family sociologists and therapists have a basic form of interest in common yet they rarely engage in dialogue at a theoretical and conceptual level. Morgan outlines reason for this confusion:

'Much is due to academic boundaries and the history of the divisions of academic labour. Other reasons may be as a result of some quite profound ideological and cultural traditions that pervade many aspects of our daily lives as well as our profound practices, between the individual and society and between methodological individualism and holism and between the public and private (Hooper & Dryden, 1991, p. 12).

Within the broader and social community context outlined above, marital therapy in our group work and according to Douglas-Hooper and Dryden (1991) essentially comprised of the following two components:

- Psychological development of the individual

- An exploration of dyadic interaction

In the therapeutic situation itself, the main focus of the couple fluctuate between the inner worlds and the outer realities of the partners as experienced by each other. There is always some evidence and reminders of the world beyond the consulting room for not only the social setting that the couple daily encounter together, but also their very relationship will have been shaped and influenced by it.

The role of the facilitator in our marital group therapy was to speculate about such external influences and at times relate the clients to this wider societal context.

2.12. Resume

This chapter has reviewed literature on the origins of community psychology. An empowerment model was cited as an alternative to the paternalistic approaches of traditional psychology. An overview of group process in the context of marital therapy was also was outlined.

CHAPTER 3 : COUPLE GROUP THERAPY METHODOLOGY

3.1.   Introduction

This chapter highlights the methodology of the study. Methods chosen were focus

group discussions and participant observation. The following paragraphs outline the

dynamics involved in the two approaches. The group process is also outlined.

Couples that are involved in this study were grouped for the purposes of rendering

group therapy.

3.2.   What is group therapy?

In his book, "Experiences in groups" Bion (1961) holds that the term group therapy

can have two meanings. "It can refer to the treatment of a number of individuals

assembled for therapeutic sessions, or it can refer to a planned endeavor to develop in

a group the forces that lead to smoothly running co-operative activities". Bion

maintains that "therapy of individuals assembled in groups is usually in the nature of

explanation of neurotic trouble, with reassurance and sometimes it turns mainly on

the catharsis of public confession". He says that "therapy of groups is likely to turn

on the acquisition of knowledge and experience of the factors which make for a good

spirit" (Bion 1961).

Group therapy holds as its basic tenet the concept that group experience is

fundamental to all life (Tudor, 1999) 'We *live in a social world, and live, love and*

work in social groupings. We are born into, and raised in a family grouping, we are

educated in groups, we may dance and sing in groups....' (Tudor, 1999, p.1), the

list is exhaustive. According to Bion, (1961), this means that at birth, being introduced to the first small and intensely personal group called the family, we begin the process of protection and identification within the group. The family group offers an opportunity to develop and individuate from the mass experience of humanity, as well as providing a qualitative aspect to life. In its turn the family is dependent for its survival, identity, beliefs and behaviour on membership of a wide range of formal and informal groups in the larger society- school, church, political, friendship, interest, leisure and work groups.

Conyne, (1999) states that from birth we are enlisted in, and gradually committed to groups living in a variety of forms. Gladding's (1995) view is that groups are part of our daily lives. Despite the cultural heritage of individuation and independence in Western countries, it is virtually impossible to conduct one's personal or work life without encountering group life. Conyne (1999, p.3) further claims that "it is accurate to state that most people in our society are 'group beings'.

3.3. Group work practice

According to Benson (1987), group work practice rrefers to the conscious, disciplined and systematic use of knowledge about the processes of collective human interaction, in order to intervene in an informed way, or promote some desired objective in a group setting. Group work is a productive, healthy and creative experience, carried out on the basis of explicit agreements, openly pursued and clearly arrived at, about the purpose and task of the group, rights and responsibilities of members. Therefore, it may be said that group work practice is a helping process

designed to correspond to specific instances of individual and group need, based on a view of man as in constant interaction and relationship with others.

Groups serve as important influencers of personal growth and development, probably due to their omnipresence (Conyne, 1999). As a result practitioners are constantly challenged to deliver group therapy in agencies of different kinds. This expanding demand is due to the realization of the fact that group therapy is an effective means of resolving psychological problems and dysfunction, and a move toward cost-effective interventions Conyne (1999).

The association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW, 1991) defines group work as:

A broad professional practice that refers to the giving of help of the accomplishment of tasks in a group setting. It involves the application of group theory and process by a capable professional practitioner to assist an interdependent collection of people to reach their mutual goals, which may be personal, interpersonal or task-related in nature (Conyne, 1999, p.5).

3.9.   What constitutes a group?

According to the following writers: Corey & Corey, (1987); Whitaker, (1985); Yalom, 1995).

- A group is a set of people who engage in frequent interaction
- Members of the group identify with one another
- A group is defined by others as a group

- Members of the group share beliefs, values and norms about areas of common interest

- They also define themselves as a group

- They come together to work on common tasks and for agreed purposes

What emerges from this list are three very important characteristics of a group:

- They are parts

- There is a relationship between the parts

- There is an organising principle

In other words, a group is organic and intentional and not just some random experience. People come together in a group to satisfy some common need or interest that can be expressed as the group purpose (Benson 1987). Emanating from this definition is a realisation that group work is a comprehensive span of applications which can be divided into four categories outlined by Conyne, (1999, pp. 6-7), which in turn will be briefly discussed below:

3.5.   Types of groups

- **Task groups** are conducted to enhance or resolve performance and production goals in work groups. Here the function of the therapist or group leader is that of a facilitator, using skills like group collaborative problem solving, team building, program development, consultation or system chance strategies (Conyne, Rapin, & Rand 1997; Conyne & Wilson, 1998; Conyne, 1999).

- **Psycho education group's** main feature is to foster transmission, discussion, and integration of factual information and skill building through the use of semi-structured exercises and group process. The main aim of this exercise is to help members of the group to develop their skills, while the group leader's role is mainly to facilitate and train.

- **Counselling groups:** this group is conducted in order to equip group members with coping mechanisms to deal effectively with daily problems, by focusing on interactive feedback, interpersonal problem solving and support methods that are available.

- **Psychotherapy groups** are conducted by group therapists in order to reduce psychological and / or emotional dysfunction through exploration of the antecedents to current behaviour, using tools like interpersonal assessment, diagnosis, and interpretation, while connecting historical forces to the present (Conyne & Wilson, 1998; Trotzer, 1989; Conyne 1999).

Other writers name the same kind of groups differently, but the function of each group basically describes the four categories outlined above. For example Corey and Corey (1987) use terms like personal growth group instead of psycho education group, and self help groups would have the same function as that of task groups.

It is, however, argued that these four group types demand special competencies from the group facilitator or therapist in order to deliver best practices in group work

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Rapin and Conyne (1999, p. 7)) describe 'best practice' as *those activities, strategies, and interventions that are consistent and current with effective and appropriate professional, ethical and community standards'*.

In our group work we adopted an eclectic approach where each type of the characteristics of group types would emerge. The style that was adopted was dictated by the setting, content, process, and climate of the day.

3.6. Planning open or closed groups, single therapist or co-therapist groups.

3.6.1. Closed or open groups: A closed group is one which starts and finishes with the same people and is run for a fixed number of sessions. In an open group member may come and go at different times for various reasons. And the time spans for the group may be set before hand or left indeterminate.

- **Advantages:**

Open group:	Closed group:
• Constant modification of group culture	• Consistent and predictable
• Greater variety of resources and skill	• Can be more cohesive and intimate
• Can be more creative, imaginative	• Easier to balance
• Good for work on initiating	

and terminating relationships • Issues of separation, termination, inclusion • Issues around change, adaptability	

• **Disadvantages:**

Open group:	Closed group
• Can be more unstable, less predictable • Lacks depth, intimacy of closed group • Sub-grouping, cliques, alliances • Hard to balance	• Tendency to get into conformity and 'group think' • Lacks the range and the variety of open group • Less able to deal with change and adaptability • Limited opportunity to deal with termination issues

Our group resembled the characteristics of a closed group as outlined above.

Below are some of the questions that the group leader should consider before conducting a group, according to Yalom (1995), which pertain to researching and justifying the need for group work.

3.7. Counselor guidelines for group work

The counselor needs to observe the following guidelines and be able to address the problems as outlined below:

A. Identify group needs or problems.

B. Does a shared need or problem exist among enough people to warrant group work?

C. Can I identify a common aim, which is likely to get agreement?

D. Can group work actually achieve gains for these potential members?

E. What sort of gains?

F. What special properties of the group do I wish to make use of?

G. Are potential members likely to see the group as relevant and helpful?

H. Will the group damage or label or stigmatize any member?

I. Is there another medium or form of intervention that can achieve the desired outcome as well as the group?

J. Why is the group setting more effective than the one- to-one setting?

K. Can I make reasonable estimates of the time involved and program cost?

3.8.   The three p's of effective group practice

Conyne, Smith & Wathen (1997) and Rapin & Conyne, (1999) state that *best practice* can be neatly organized into three P's of group work leadership, namely, planning, performing and processing. These steps are cyclical functions that group leaders need to engage in with every type and session of each group.

3.8.1.   **Planning.** This stage involves researching and justifying the need for group work. Too often groups are thrown together because they have similar difficulties. This then becomes a destructive experience when not carefully researched or planned. Current planning exercises include the following steps as cited by Conyne (1999):

- **An awareness of professional context**

Understanding the ethics that govern therapists or group leaders is the fulcrum of group work, i.e. complying with applicable licensure, certification, and an understanding of the code of ethics.

- **Development of conceptual underpinnings**

To define the type of group that one is using.

- **Conduct an ecological assessment**

Groups need to emerge from the community and the issues should address the needs of that community.

- **Implement program and evaluation principles**

Group plan, objectives and theme must be consistent with community needs. Evaluation methods must be in place prior to commencing group work.

- **Identify resources for managing the group programme**

Aspects pertaining to funding, space of work and the use or non-use of a co-facilitator should be considered.

- **Develop a professional disclosure statement**

This document can be informative in terms of the group leader's qualifications, licensure training etc.

- **Prepare the group and its members**

Yalom (1995) asserts that pre-group member preparation for all types of group with special reference to counseling and therapy groups, contributes significantly to productive group experiences. Obtaining informed consent regarding all

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aspects of the group process is also essential for the group leader to observe. There are psychological risks associated with participation in a group. It is believed that it is the leader's job to mention these risks to the members and to develop means of minimising the risks (Corey & Corey, 1987).

- **Pursue professional development and be aware of trends and technological changes.**

Training, attendance of professional meetings, research and writing including the changing complexion demographics of the country, are all important means of staying up to date with current trends in the group leader's field of work. We now turn to the second practice guideline of group work leadership , namely:

3.8.2. **Performing.** In this stage group leaders are concerned with all that occurs in actual group settings. Performing has to do with ongoing group life and the leader's contribution. This stage consists of the following best practices:

- **To know thyself**

Leaders should be aware of their strengths and weaknesses so as to be able to integrate their strengths in their work.

- **Effectively deliver group competencies**

Group leaders should develop their competencies through a combination of supervised practice, knowledge and skill. A solid academic background is desirable for group leaders, but also important is an internship experience in which trainees can get supervised in leading and co-leading groups. Ongoing training groups, as well as personal-growth groups, are essential for group leaders in training. Personal psychotherapy (both individual and group) is also valuable for those who want to become group leaders.

- **Master therapeutic dynamics and conditions and choose appropriate interventions**

Harnessing therapeutic conditions, such as cohesion, can serve to drive the group forward productively. Likewise group leaders should be able to select from a host of options those interventions that appear to have the greatest chance of success.

- **Adapt the group plan**

Leaders should adapt the group plan according to changing and emerging group situations.

- **Attend to the here and now and to meaning attribution**

According to Yalom (1995) helping group members to relate to events and experiences that are occurring in the present while paying attention to their meaning are the types of interactions that are generally associated with the highest therapeutic value.

- **Collaborate with members**

Leaders should develop guidelines for behaviour in groups and impart them to the members. Some of the behaviours leaders should stress are keeping the group's activities confidential, taking responsibilities for oneself, working hard in the group, listening, expressing one's thoughts and feelings, and applying what one learns in the group to daily life. Members should clarify their goals at the beginning of a group. Goal setting is important because:

> Goals motivate behaviour. An individual goal is the reason why a member joins a group. A group goal is a future state of affairs desired by enough members of the group to motivate them working towards its achievement.

> Goals are guides for action. Goals indicate to the therapist and members, the tasks that must be performed, behaviours and processes of interaction that must be engaged in if the goal is to be achieved.

> Goals are a way of obtaining agreement and solving conflict.

> Goals are a way of evaluating the effectiveness of group procedures. Without goals there is nothing to evaluate. Some goal which may refer to work as desired outcomes can be specified at this stage. Other goals require the approval and adoption by members and must be negotiable in the group itself. Conyne (1999) suggests a number of principles which should be adhered to by the group leader when identifying goals for the group.

In setting goals and reaching decisions collaboration with group members is essential. This exercise promotes cohesion, interdependence and productivity. It also promotes partnership between group leaders and members.

- **Include evaluation**

The new trend now is to supplement clinical judgment with process and outcome measurement. Reliance on clinical judgment alone is no longer the standard practice. Group members need to be prepared for the termination of their group experience. If members are to get the most from a group, they must focus on how they can apply what they've learned in the group to their life. If one wants to determine the impact of a group one have led, one should plan a follow up session. This session will give the members the chance to share the experiences they have had since the termination of their group.

- **Value diversity**

Diversity dimensions as captured by D'Andrea and Daniels (1997); Conyne, (1999)

present us with a helpful acronym 'RESPECTFUL' which includes the following:

Religious/ spiritual identity

Ethnic identity

Sexual identity

Psychological maturity

Economic class standing

Chronological challenges

Threats to one's well being

Family history

Unique physical characteristics

Location of residence

As Yalom (1995) puts it that, groups represent a social microcosm of society.

Therefore group leaders in addition to valuing diversity, should develop multicultural

awareness, knowledge and skills that will allow them to function appropriately and

effectively with all members.

- **Maintain a constant ethical surveillance**

Ethical codes (See Appendix) have been established by professional organisations

Such as the South African Council of Health Professions, Psychological Association

of South Africa, American Psychological Association, Association for Specialists in

Group Work (ASGW, 1998; Conyne, 1999) are a useful reference that group leaders can consult.

This means that ethical standards governing group practice are not decided by the group leader alone. Group leaders should familiarize themselves with these established codes of ethics and with the laws that may affect group practice. The latter are particularly important for leaders who are working with children and adolescents.

The third P' in the guidelines for conducting effective groups refers to :

3.8.3 Processing

This stage, suggests Conyne (1999), involves experience applying learning to future group work leadership in both short and long term. In this context processing refers to before, during and after group process evaluations. Processing in co-leadership includes giving feedback and evaluating the quality of the working relationship.

3.8.3.1. The group leader moves through five stages of processing namely

- Transpose: here the leader records events during a session without manipulation or interpretation of the data.

- Reflect: the leader infuses subjective experience such as perceptions, sensations and values with objective data.

- Discover : by discovering the group leader derives learnings and meanings that emerge.

- Apply: in this stage strategies for implementation are designed in order to be tried and tested.

- Evolve: the group leader here identifies any enduring personal and professional practice principles that might generalize to future group work leading.

Conyne (1999) refers to the first two stages as "pragmatic" processing and the remaining three as "deep processing", and further asserts that deep processing holds the most power for learning and change.

3.9.   Theoretical considerations

Effective group leaders are those who are willing to develop and refine a theory of their own, because attempting to lead groups without an explicit theoretical orientation is like flying a plane without a flight plane (Corey & Corey 1987, p. 7). Since each established group theory stresses a particular dimension of group process, these writers encourage a selective borrowing of concepts from each theory. What is important is that group leaders devote time to conceptualising group processes. The following theories are of value in attempting group work:

3.10. Theories for conducting group work

- The Carl Rogers person-centered approach which emphasises the value of listening with understanding and encouraging people to put into words what they are feeling at that particular moment.

- Psychodrama and Gestalt theories which fall under experiential theories, place emphasis on expressing feelings in action-orientated ways. This technique is useful in facilitating the opening up of sometimes buried feelings and to enable members to work through some emotional barriers.

- Some kind of cognitive work is important. This can be extrapolated from transactional analysis where the focus is on early parental messages that group members incorporated and the early decisions they made about themselves and others in response to these parental injunctions. In cognitive behavioural and rational-emotive therapy attention is paid to one's self talk' (Corey & Corey, 1987, p.5). Specifically how members problems actually caused by the assumptions they make of themselves and others.

The following summary guidelines take into consideration the feeling, thinking, and behaving dimensions of human experience.

Although there are various group techniques and theories present, Corey and Corey (1987) believe that personality and character are the most important variables in the making of effective group leaders. Group techniques cannot compensate for the

shortcomings of leaders who lack self knowledge or are poorly trained. Character traits of effective leaders, in these authors view, include courage, willingness to model, presence, caring, a belief in group process, openness, non-defensiveness, personal power, endurance, a sense of humor, imagination and self awareness. One has to think about personal characteristics and try to decide which will be assets and which liabilities to one as a group leader are.

In addition to having certain personal characteristics, good group leaders are knowledgeable about group dynamics and have skills in group leading. It is suggested that one makes frequent use of inventories presented as a means of thinking about personal areas one might need to improve, and the competencies one might need to develop Yalom, 1975; Corey & Corey, 1987; Conyne, 1999).

Group leaders are also faced with the need to take a stand on a number of basic issues, including how much responsibility for what goes on in the group is the leader's and how much the group member's; how much and what type of structuring is optimal for a group; what kind of self disclosure is optimal in a group; what the role and function of a group leader should be; and what ratio of confrontation to support should exist.

A therapeutic group is a means to an end. Participants can use the group to learn more about themselves, to explore their conflicts, to learn social skills, to get feedback on the impact they have on others, and to try out new behaviours. The group becomes a microcosm of society, in which members can learn more effective ways of living with others.

Some of the factors that operate in groups to produce positive changes in the participants are hope, commitment to change, and willingness to risk and trust what the members bring to the group, the intimacy that develops, the freedom to experiment, the opportunity to get feedback, to experience catharsis, and to learn interpersonal skills, the laughter that is often generated, and a sense of cohesiveness that develops.

The above outline of basic guidelines for effective group work is a confluence of ideas shared by writers like Corey and Corey (1987), Whitaker (1985), Yalom (1995), Hooper & Dryden (1991) and Conyne (1999).

3.11. Proposal development

In developing a proposal for a group, one needs to include the selection procedures one plans to use, the composition one plans for the group and details such as where and when one will hold the group. It is recommended that an individual screening session for all applicants and group progression take place. The initial stage of the group is crucial, for during this time the trust level is being established. During the first few meetings issues such as who will wield power in the group and whether the members will focus on themselves or others are being decided.

Group approaches to therapy have some distinct advantages over individual approaches, but they also have limitations. It is a mistake to think that groups are for everyone and anyone. The one who is designing a group should be able to state

clearly why a group approach should be of value. Such a written rationale should include descriptions of the goals of the group, the means that will be used to accomplish these goals, the role of the members, the leader's function and role, and the means that will be used to assess the outcomes.

3.12. In summary the following need to be considered:

3.12.1. Creation of the group – place, size, time, preparation, selection of members.

- *Place:* Prior to convening the group, the therapist or group leader (will be used interchangeably throughout the text) must make some important decisions about the setting. Group meetings may be held in any setting, provided that the room affords privacy and freedom from distraction. Some therapists prefer to have members seated around a large circular table, others to have no central obstructions so that the patient's entire body is visible and non-verbal responses or postures are more readily observable (Yalom, 1995).

- *Duration and frequency of meetings:* There seems to be a consensus amongst therapists that after about two hours the group becomes weary, repetitious and inefficient. Most group therapists agree that a period of at least sixty to ninety minutes is required for a group therapy session. Frequency of meetings varies from one to five times a week. Yalom (1995) prefers a twice weekly schedule, although many therapy groups in South Africa operate once a week.

- *Size of the group:* The ideal size of an interactional therapy group is approximately seven, with an acceptable range of five to ten members (Corey & Corey, 1987). The lower limit of the group is determined by the fact that a critical mass is required for an aggregation of individuals to become an interacting group.

- *Preparation:* There is great variation in group practice regarding the interviewing of patients prior to group therapy. Some therapists see the clients once or twice in selection interviews and do not meet with the clients individually again, whereas some therapists continue individual sessions with the patient until he starts in the group. Often, it requires several weeks to assemble seven clients for a group. To avoid losing the early candidates, the therapist must continue to meet with them periodically. The chief purpose of the post selection, pre-group interviews is to prepare patients for the impending group experience.

- *Selection of participants in for group work:* Unless careful selection criteria are used (Whitaker, 1987, Yalom, 1995, Benson, 1987 & Corey & Corey, 1987), the majority of people assigned to group therapy may terminate treatment, discouraged and without benefit. There is considerable consensus that patients are poor candidates for out-patient intensive group therapy if they are brain damaged, paranoid, extremely narcissistic, hypochondriac, suicidal, addicted to drugs or alcohol, acutely psychotic or sociopathic. These patients are destined to fail because of their inability to participate in the primary task

of the group. They soon construct an interpersonal role which proves to be detrimental to themselves as well as the group (Yalom, 1975).

The first consideration in the determination of group therapy suitability is the type of group therapy available. Selection criteria vary widely depending upon the structure, procedure and goals of the therapy group. Another widely accepted principal is that groups should be similar enough to ensure commonality of need and compatibility, but disparate enough to ensure that members will be stimulating and useful to each other. Some leaders select particular individuals for a group because of their similarity or disparity on certain descriptive and behavioural attributes.

Descriptive attributes classify an individual according to age, sex, marital status, occupation or other positions of interest to the group, with which a therapist can engage within the group. Either the leader can convene the group him or herself, or can be invited or required to work within an already existing group. If a therapist works with an existent group he has not convened, the only difference this makes to the planning process is that:

- The group leader does not select group members, they are already selected.

- The group leader does not determine the goals or purposes of the group although she or he may help to clarify them.

- The leader may have his or her role prescribed, or free within limits to perform that role as she or he sees fit.

- The program may be problematic if an agency calls a psychologist in with ideas that are not psychologically based. If so, it is critical to negotiate and process the request before one embarks on the program. Consideration should be guided by ethical standards.

- Agencies may define modes, objectives and directives clearly, although the group leader may have some control over content.

The foregoing arguments comprise a confluence of ideas from writers such as Whitaker (1987), Yalom (1975 & 1995), and Corey & Corey (1987).

The factors cited above were taken into consideration when planning for the group work.

We now turn to the methods used while going through the five stages:

3.13. Focus group discussions

Focus groups were conducted as a method of data collection. The group met fortnightly and took turns to host at couples homes. Each couple brought a snack to share during breaks. Topics for discussion were decided by the group. The rule however was to follow the theme for the day as set out in the programme at the beginning of the process. At times individuals brought pressing issues that were pertinent to them at the time, for discussion.

The group had been going on for a year and its effectiveness had to be evaluated.

For the sake of clarity, a focus group is a unique method of qualitative research which involves a group of people discussing a specific set of issues, problems or research questions (Hennink & Diamond, 1999 p.113). It is *a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive non-threatening environment. It is conducted with approximately seven to ten people by a skilled interviewer ...group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in discussion* (Krueger 1998, p.18; Hennink & Diamond, 1999).

The purpose of conducting focus group discussions was to explore the range of perspectives around a particular issue or to obtain detailed qualitative data from a predetermined group of people (Hennink & Diamond, 1999). Unlike a group interview, whereby a moderator asks the group questions and participants individually provide answers, it is a non-directive interview technique which encourages discussion between participants. Interaction between participants is the key feature of focus groups.

According to Hennink and Diamond (1999), this method has been used since 1930 by social scientists, it was primarily developed in market research in the 1950's. Focus groups emerged in response to the limitations of other methods of interviewing such as the influence of the interviewer on a respondent's comments and the limitations of predetermined closed questions on enabling spontaneous responds or identifying new issues. The main aim for focus groups is to encourage a range of responses which provide insights into the attitudes, perceptions, behaviour or opinions of participants about a particular area of psychological research..

3.14. Advantages

The advantages of conducting focus group discussions as mentioned earlier, are the development of non- directive interviewing techniques, whereby the interviewer plays a minimal role in the process of information gathering. Hennink and Diamond (1999) argue that the emphasis in focus group on non-directive interviewing shifts the attention from the interviewer's agenda to the interaction between group participants, which reveal issues of importance to be identified by the group members, rather than imposed by the researchers.

The key characteristics of a focus group is that it creates a *'permissive environment which enables participants to feel comfortable to share their views, even if they oppose those of other group members, without fear of censure or judgment'* (Hennink & Diamond, 1999, p.114).

During the past four decades, most applicants of focus group research have continued to be in market research to determine the viewer's preferences and behaviour of consumers (Krueger, 1988; Hennink & Diamond, 1999). More recently focus groups have become an increasingly popular method of qualitative data collection and have been used to investigate a wide range of research issues in the social sciences.

The group itself comprises individuals with similar characters or experiences related to the topic for discussion. The discussion is focused on a particular area of interest and is usually confined to a limited number of issues to enable participants to explore each issue in detail. The group is guided by a moderator who for our purposes is the

therapist cum counselor, who introduces the topics for discussion and facilitates the group discussion.

3.15. Disadvantages

Focus groups are not without limitations. Although they are designed to identify a range of responses from participants, they are not designed to be representative, therefore the results are not generalisable across a population. The process of data analysis is also difficult and time consuming. Comments need to be analysed in the context of group discussion as participants may change their views during discussions. In other words response is influenced by the group discussion itself. It is suitable for exploratory evaluation and exploratory research.

Determining the size of the group.

According to Whitaker, (1985), when conducting focus group discussions, the group should not be too small as to preclude the energies of the group, and interactional dynamics which contribute to the potential value of the group as a helping medium. It should also not be so large as to lose the potential for direct face to face interaction.

Whitaker (1985 p. 5) asserts that a small group is a flexible device and may be planned to rely on open discussion, topic based discussion, activities, exercises or games or on some combination of these. Before obtaining the group, therapists should decide on a place to meet, duration of sessions, what kind of activity for example, opens discussion etc.

Another method which was used in this study is participant observation, which we now turn to:

3.16. Participant observation

Participant observation is the method of data collection, most closely associated with contemporary field research or ethnography (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992, p.273; Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992, p.129). In participant observation the investigator/observer becomes part of the situation being observed, that is, the observer attempts to attain some kind of membership or close attachment to the group he or she wishes to study (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997, p. 84). The observer's direct participation in the activities of the observed often entails learning their language, their habits, their work patterns, their leisure activities and other things.

Scientists and non-scientists alike rely on observation to learn about behaviour (Shaughenessy & Zechmeister, 1997, p. 89). Ackroyd & Hughes (1992, p.127), argue that every member of society is an observer or an inquirer, and therefore, uses observation to learn about their culture. Culture is characterized by being learned, shared with others and adapted to the environment.

Ackroyd & Hughes (1992, p.129) state that the development of participation observation arose accidentally out of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s. The city of Chicago was growing rapidly, and there were dramatic changes due to the influx of immigrants from other parts of the world and from within the United States of

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America. Chicago sociologists pioneered and developed a variety of sociological research methods including the survey, the use of personal documents, intensive fieldwork, ecological analysis and ethnography.

Participant observation as a method of data collection in qualitative research, derives from the Verstehen tradition (Frankfort-Nachmias Nachmias, 1992, p.271). According to the Verstehen (German for "Empathy") tradition, when involved in participant observation, social scientists must understand both the historical dimension of human behaviour and the subjective aspects of human experience. This can be done through the process of actively participating in the daily lives of the observed.

To distinguish scientific observation from nonscientific observation, scientists need skills and knowledge. Scientific observation is based on precisely defined conditions, it is systematic, objective and careful recording is maintained.

As a technique of research, participant observation distinguishes itself by breaking the barriers between observer and participants, between those who study and those who are studied. Participant observation or what some can call the art of ethnography, is usually viewed among a number of techniques of social research - archival survey, demographic and experimental. What distinguishes participant observation is the study of people in their own time, space, in their own everyday lives. It is often referred to as natural sociology, studying objects in their 'natural habitat' as opposed to the unnatural setting of the interview or laboratory.

Ackroyd & Hughes' (1992, p. 127) view is that the most well known of observational methods in qualitative research is participant observation. Participant observation is a method of data collection also largely utilized by ethnographers. Creswell, (2000, p.11) defines ethnography "as a type of qualitative inquiry in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting during a prolonged period of time by collecting primarily observational data."

Wilcox's (1982, p. 458) argument states that an ethnographic investigation aims, 'to focus on a setting and discover what is going on there.' The research process follows two broad phrases described by Van Heerden (1999, p. 69). The first, is an open– ended, loose and exploratory phase, in which the researcher attempts to be as close as possible to issues and patterns prevalent in the situation being studied. At the end of this phase a set of issues and patterns appear to have emerged, that are studied in the second phase.

According to Buraway (1991), participant observation shatters the glass box from which researchers observe the world and puts them temporarily at the mercy of their subjects. Instead of watching respondents through two way mirrors, reconstructing them as traces they leave in archives, or analyzing their responses to telephone interviews, or reducing them to demographic data points, the ethnographer confronts participants with their corporeal reality, their concrete existence in their response.

Buraway (1991) criticizes conventional social science for privileging its knowledge by first separating the observer from the participant and then placing the observer above the participant. Conventional science usually divides society into two parts,

one of which is superior to the other. He argues that in conventional science, the subject becomes an object, a dupe of social forces, whereas the subject lies beyond social determinism, exercising autonomy and rationality.

Ethnographers on the other hand challenge this bifurcation and they insist on sharing a common world with those they study. They believe that participant and observer are commensurate though not identical entities. Ethnographers also recognise that both sides have theories about the other as well as about themselves.

Instead of standing above society, contemporary ethnographers veer toward absorption into the society. They are more likely to forsake the authority of silence and enter into dialogue with their subjects. Ethnography becomes a collaborative enterprise of participant and observer. Buraway (1991, p.2) views participant observation as a collaborative enterprise which has its counterpart in teaching. He asserts that instead of teaching students as empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge ('here is the truth, swallow it') and instead of students regarding themselves as passive recipients of pedagogic wisdom ('just tell me what I've got to know'), we can try to construct learning as a mutual relationship between educator and the educated.

However, Buraway (1991) cautions researchers that to achieve the above goal is neither easily pursued nor ever completely successful. To achieve this goal entails disrupting the structures of micro power. Display of power for example is evident in educational institutions' examinations, syllabuses, grading etc.

3.17. Shortcomings of participant observation

A setback in participant observation is that there is inherent conflict and tension between the observer and participant. Anxiety is an intrinsic part of field work. The spin off of this conflict is that the greater the tension the better the product.

The appeal of participant observation usually lies in the integrity it gives to those one studies.

Evaluation of research:

The researcher needs to communicate findings to the participants in this field work. Handing back, or rather communicating findings to people one has analysed is an ideal way of validating, developing and reconstructing, but it also has risks that might not be worth taking. Reversing the top down power relations evident in traditional research entails allowing participants to contest the researcher's explanations. This ideal is fine in principle but in practice it could turn friends into enemies and so compromise what one wanted to say as to make it worthless. Counteracting the domination of 'expert' over 'neophyte' calls for an altered vision of teaching and ethnography (Creswell, 2000) where research becomes less of transmission of knowledge and more of dialogue.

Too close contact with the participants can lead to loss of objectivity or to contamination of the situation. The problem of objectivity is compounded by the problem of validity, intensive research limits the possibility of generalisation. It is sociology's 'uncertainty principle': The closer one gets to measurement on some dimensions, intensity and depth, the further one recedes on others' objectivity and validity.

In observation, the basic tools for data collection are the sense organs, although mechanical devices such as video cameras and recorders are often used nowadays (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992, p.246; Shaughessy & Zechmeister, 1997, p.86). To the degree that observers must rely on their senses, the inadequacies of personal observation must be recognized. As Ackroyd and Hughes (1992, p.137), argue, what we see and hear are influenced by our mental and physical states. Observer fatigue and boredom are critical factors in many studies (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). Because of the limits of sense organs, observers may literally not see or hear what goes on, or may misinterpret what is observed.

According to Ackroyd & Hughes (1992, p.138), even the best trained researcher may produce biased data because of selective perception. People tend to "sense" certain phenomenon more than others. A major feature of this role is obviously the necessity for a great deal of pretense, and this may cause observers to be self-conscious about not revealing their true identify, and therefore in return severely jeopardize their observation by attempting to give a convincing performance (Ackroyd and Hughes 1992, p.135). The researcher may also go 'native', that is, become so immersed in the role chosen as to lose research perspective. The very process of observation may influence the phenomenon that is being observed. That is, human subjects often behave differently because they are being observed.

3.18. Critique

Buraway (1991) makes an assertion that situated at the crossroads of humanities and natural sciences, social sciences combine both understanding and explanations. Understanding he argues is achieved by virtual or actual participants in social situation through a real or constructed dialogue between participants and observer, or what we call the scientific dimension.

From the above standpoint Buraway says we seek to avoid two reductions, the positivist and the humanist postmodern. Firstly the positivist reduction reduces social science to the natural science model and suppresses the hermeneutic dimension. With this view the interaction of participant and observer is a source of bias, a nuisance to be minimised rather than the distinguishing feature of allowed science, indeed without which there could be no social science. Positivism demands we aspire to the position of the neutral outsider, rather than allowing us to regard ourselves as inextricably part of the world we study.

According to Buraway (1991, p.3), the second reduction we should seek to avoid is the humanist postmodern suppression of the scientific dimension. Here scientific theories are exposed as simply another world view, this time that of the observer, which is in no way superior to the world view of the participant. Social science is reduced to dialogue between insider and outsider aimed at mutual understanding – 'comprehension of self by detour of comprehension of another'.

The advantage of participant observation is the distinct virtue of highlighting the limitation of both forms of reduction. It brings together both the perspective of the participant who calls for understanding and the perspective of the observer who seeks causal explanation.

3.19. Group process

Our group meetings were designed primarily to provide an opportunity for people in an intimate relationship to examine the quality of their relationships, to determine what barriers were preventing genuine intimacy, to make decisions concerning how they want to change their live with each other and to explore their conflicts. The processes of the group work were influenced by Corey and Corey's (1987, pp321-333) guidelines to conducting workshops for couples. The group comprised seven couples who were married in a conventional sense. My husband (who at times took the role of a co-facilitator) and I made the eighth couple. The selection criteria did not exclude couples who were living together. However these couples seemed not to have the group therapy commitment that married couples did.

The group met fortnightly at couples homes and took turns in hosting the group meetings. Sessions were three hours long with breaks in-between. At times groups would prolong the sessions when discussing a contentious matter. For the most part couples would determine what topics they wished to be explored according to the list identified at the beginning, which are put into themes below. Couples were also asked to think before they arrived for the meeting about what they wished to deal with

in the group. The content thus varied from meeting to meeting. If there was a clash

of interest, then the group would vote on a topic. Fortunately group members always

reached a consensus on what topics to discuss in each meeting. There was great

cohesiveness in this particular group. Themes that regularly emerged can be

summarized as follows (See Appendix):

Theme 1. The expectations trap

- Expecting too much from one's marriage.

- Finding out if there is more to intimacy than sex.

- How to make the most of one's in-law relationships.

- How to handle children in marriage.

- Finding time for one's partner and children.

- How much one expects the other partner to do around the house.

Theme 2.   Communication

- Deepening communication between partners.

- Decisions based on whether to tell ones partner everything.

- How to handle conflict in relationships.

- When is forgiveness needed in a relationship?

- When is it time to seek professional counseling?

Theme 3.   Spirituality in marriage/ relationship.

- The meaning of submission in a Christian sense.

- How does one grow spiritually as a couple.

- What happens when the other partner is not a Christian.

The foregoing list was identified by couples themselves in the initial meeting. The idea of grouping them into themes was drawn from Gaither, Tchividjian, and Alexander-Yates (1992) in their book about "Marriages : Questions women ask".

Other topics that were a focus of discussion included:

- How to remain separate individuals while benefiting from an intimate relationship

- The myths about marriage and how they lead to unrealistic expectations

- Sex roles as they affect a marriage

- Alternatives to traditional marriages

- Open versus closed marriages

- The importance of commitment in a relationship

- How to reinvent a relationship

- The sources of conflict in a marriage

- How to detect communication pitfalls and learn to express one's thoughts and feelings directly

- How to deal with stress

3.20. Initial stage

All the couples that attended the meetings had been in individual psychotherapy. The first meeting was held at a neutral venue in town and we introduced each other and outlined the purpose of the group. We asked the following questions inspired by Corey and Corey (1987):

- What is it like for you to come today?

- What are you hoping to get from the group meetings?

- What are your pressing issues you would like to be dealt with in the group?

The members cited a list of issues which are listed into themes above.

Outside conducting focus groups discussions, at times the remainder of the time was devoted to working in pairs with someone other than their partner. The reason for doing this was that it is said that it breaks up the exclusive focus on the couple and generates more honesty (Corey & Corey, 1987). This pairing also helps the members to get acquainted with each other and it builds trust. We ask the members to work approximately fifteen minutes with one person of the opposite sex and then change partners.

Before each new set of dyads was formed , we suggested a question to the members, the answer to which they could discuss with their partners. These questions laid the groundwork for later group work by getting the members to begin thinking about themselves and their partners. During later meetings we delved in depth into the

issues raised by these questions which also include suggestions by Corey and Corey (1987):

- Why did you come to this particular couples group?

- What are you hoping to leave with?

- What are you afraid you might find out about yourself, your spouse or your relationship? Explore your fears about getting involved in these meetings.

- How would you describe your marriage?

- How do you imagine your spouse just described your marriage?

- Become your spouse and describe what it is like to be married to you.

- What changes would you like to make in your relationship with your partner?

- If no change took place in your marriage, what do you imagine your future would hold? How do you think your partner answered that question?

- How would your life be different if you were not married?

We would sometimes rove about and listen in on people working in dyads, and at times we joined a dyad, pairing members to form twosomes. At times we talked with each other about our initial reactions to group members. After the pairing the group usually reconvened to share reactions to the work in dyads. Goals of the meetings emanated from this initial meeting. Members expressed fears and reservations and these were dealt with so that they did not interfere with the progress of the group work.

3.21. The working stage

The direction of the group was somewhat unpredictable after the first meeting. This was so because the facilitator did not tightly control the process with techniques and themes (Corey & Corey, 1987). Our philosophy was that these groups function best if there was some structure to provide a focus but enough flexibility is needed so that the members can draw up their own agenda. The main function of the facilitator in this stage is to see to it that the discussion stays on a meaningful, not superficial level, and to encourage members to participate. At times techniques would be used in order to deepen the level of interaction. Two approaches : 'emotional intelligence' and 'examining partner's values' are cited in this chapter as example of what was used in later meetings:

3.22. Retreat

The group took a retreat in the mountains of Drakensberg. Going on a retreat had the special feature of being away from the usual city distractions. It is believed (Corey & Corey, 1987, p. 322) that this setting improves the quality of the work done; 'maybe for the fist time in years, a couple can be alone together in nature , and all the couples can reflect without disruption on what they are learning in the group'.

Members arrived at 8:00 on Friday evening and left at midday on Sunday. In the interim we all lived together , and everyone helped with the preparation of meals. This communal living is another special feature that enhances the experience (Corey & Corey, 1987).

3.23. Why emotional intelligence

Firstly the concept of emotional intelligence was introduced to the group in a
workshop form. According to Daniel Goldman, most people spend more time than
they would like thinking about why they lost control or misunderstood others (Dunn,
2001 p.5). Dunn asserts that to mature and be congruent in the company of others ,
we have to connect with our inner selves and our uniqueness. A high Intelligence
Quotient (IQ) is not enough to guarantee success in life.

When one has a high Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ), one is adept at
interpreting the emotional roots of one's own thinking and behaviour and choosing
one's actions to influence outcomes. One is also capable of good insights into the
behaviour of others. To change behaviour is a difficult task. In order for one to
change one needs both a high EQ and practical techniques for dealing with others
when stressed by change issues. It is worth mentioning here that improvement cannot
be achieved solely by attending a workshop or reading a book, but that skills
associated with emotional intelligence develop throughout life.

Salovey and Caruso (Dunn, 2001) summarise emotional intelligence as:

- Perceiving and identifying emotions- the ability to recognise how you and those
  around you are feeling.
- Assimilating and using emotions – the ability to generate emotion, and then
  reason with this emotion.

- Understanding emotions – the ability to understand complex emotions and emotional 'chains', how emotions transition from one stage to another.

- Managing emotions – the ability which allows one to manage emotions in oneself and in others .

Below are the two models of emotional intelligence that were used as guides to measure how much emotional intelligence one has achieved. The Mayer and Salovey model 'other intelligence', and the Kubler Ross Change Curve (Dunn, 2001, p.49).

DIAGRAMS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The different Emotional Intelligence Assessments

Managing Emotions – the ability which allows you to manage emotions in yourself and in others.

The Mayer and Salovey Model: 'Other Intelligence' (1997)

Managing Emotions		Perception of Emotion

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
20/10/1698 -v2

Understanding Emotion   Integrating Emotion

The Genesis Assessments

The Kübler-Ross Change Curve

Couples were also introduced to a quiz that tested their emotional awareness. Competencies like awareness of feelings, personal insight and self assurances were assessed (Appendix B) from a questionnaire adapted from Dunn, (2001, p.79).

The emotional exercises were introduced to help couples deal better with their daily environmental challenges and to help them predict their successes in life , including personal and interpersonal pursuits (Dunn, 2001). This exercise proved to have been invaluable to participants in the workshop (see transcripts), as one of the group members said during the evaluation focus group discussion:

'The programme on emotional intelligence was empowering'.

3.24. 'Examining couples values'.

This exercised served a very important function at the couple therapy meetings. Couples were encouraged to examine openly the compatibility of their values. They explored the extent to which they agreed on (Corey & Corey, 1987, p.328):

- The value of a sexually exclusive relationship

- How children should be reared

- How money should be spent

- The importance of doing things together as a couple or as a family

- The importance of self-awareness and personal growth

- What constitutes success

- Religion and a philosophy of life

- What constitutes a good sex life

- The need to devote time and energy to renewing the relationship

- Divisions of tasks and responsibilities

The purpose of this exercise was to help couples clarify their values as separate individuals and as couples, and to help them communicate in an honest way about what they value, rather than teaching couples what to value. Corey and Corey (1987) are of the idea that couples will be more effective in their relationships if they talk openly about their values and respect one another's differences.

3.25.   The final stage

The final stage processes leant heavily on Corey and Corey's (1987) guidelines on how to run effective groups. Corey and Corey (1987) assert that in the final stage, emphasis is put on reviewing of what was learnt during the sessions. Participants gave feedback to one another individually and as couples. Members formed dyads much as the same as they did in the initial session. At this time participants told their partners how they imagined it would be to live without them. The advantage of this one to one format in giving and receiving feedback is that it tends to lessen the defensiveness of the receiver and to increase the independence of the giver's observations.

The following chapter deals with group members' feedback on the programme.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, couple group therapy methods adopted to obtain information from the group members were outlined. Theories that guided the process were identified. The process of group work was also highlighted. What follows now are results and discussion of the processes of group work that took place.

In summary, we assembled participants in a focus group format to think of ways to sustain the growing process they had begun. Members were also asked to identify the significant things they had come to understand about themselves and the manner of relating to their spouses as a result of joining the group. They were also encouraged to state briefly some of their decisions for change. Participants identified the following strengths of group work:

4.2. Strengths

- **The power of positive thinking:**

Eh, how do we deal with particular problems and eh - lessons we learnt are ways of dealing with problems eh, of which there is no clear cut way of saying this particular problem is like this or that, but there are ways that we have tried to in order to be on

top of that particular problem, you see. Even the way we think has changed
especially after joining the group. A person can now look at things that happen in the
community in a positive way even if someone was doing something negative.

- **Understanding the contribution that one's baggage play in one's present misery.**

We also understood that our past baggage play a major contribution towards our
present misery.

- **Understanding the behaviour of children**

We also understand how today's children behave, how they affect one as a parent,
and also how to handle them.

- **Loving yourself as a woman against all odds boosts ones self esteem**

We don't look after ourselves then we become frustrated in the end and say we cannot
afford this and that. It has become difficult to do the things I like, just to go to a hair
salon is an undertaking, I can no longer afford...going to a beauty salon makes me
feel good because it would boost my appearance ... to buy something new for myself,
no matter how small, will make me feel good.

- **Developing insight into the in-law issue that has plagued many marriages**

For me among other issues I think I have benefited is the issue of the in-laws. Eh this
issue continued to haunt us in the family and when the group discussed that, I

realized it was common to all of us and among other things that I have learnt that eh was that specific to in-laws was that, in-laws should just be regarded as part of family. Their love is skewed, especially when it comes to a husband there is always a problem between the wife and her mother in-law, with regard to the mother in-law issue.

From these deliberations it became easy for example my wife not to problematise my relationship, you know eh... with my mother. Seeing the difference you know we were able to separate issues. My love for my wife is different from my love for my mother. They are not in competition. Whatever obligations I have, but these obligations are not in competition. I think that is one thing I personally benefited from that topic. Because that continued to haunt my family for some time.

- **Making the difference between perceptions and reality:**

For me I think on top of what Themba and Thandi (fictitious names) have said eh what I learnt among other things is that what I consider a problem on my side actually I realized as we were discussing that it is not a problem eh ... even what I considered a problem was really my perception, the way I look at things, the way I do things I problematise them you see...eh whereas if I could look at the problem differently it would cease being a problem or it would be managed in a different way than I managed it before...

- **Group therapy versus individual therapy where interaction with people eases one's burden in terms of realising that what one stresses over is**

normal phenomena that everyone experiences. Also the group acting as a

buffer and a safe place to express oneself without fear of losing control or

being intimidated by the partner.

Among other things what I learnt from the group is that the group helped me with

offloading my baggage, a baggage that I was going to carry alone became

everybody's problem as soon as I brought it to the group's attention.

The group formed that channel of communication that was difficult to achieve in our

households, and we were looking forward to that and now it seems like you are all by

yourself... yes, we will go back to our irrational thinking because the group is no

longer there. That watch dog so to speak is no longer there.

Another group member echoed the same sentiments:

...so it is easy to express yourself in the group ...you can talk indirectly, but actually

talking to your spouse. So the group made it easier to relieve those tensions, eh like

we would be in a bedroom you see, and be unable to say what you want to say for

fear of stirring a conflict. But the group had that advantage of being able to express

yourself without fear. In a sense that once issues were raised within the group setting

it would be easy to follow up on them at home.

I thought it was good for the group to act as a buffer for as long as people did not

become too dependent on the group, which seemed to be the case at times. One group

member puts it this way :

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...in such a way that now that the group is no longer there, we may revert back to our old ways of doing things.

- **Learning to defer gratification and controlling ones emotions**

Like if I had a problem that I felt I could not handle, I could just postpone it without any frustration. I could easily wait for that day to come because the day would come and I could easily talk about this problem in a group. So when the day came I would be relieved because you also know how my wife is...

In the past I would have problems of being unable to control my emotions, you know, until the problem is solved. But now I am able to continue with life as if nothing is happening until the day we meet in the group.

Another member echoes these sentiments in this way:

I was saying that one of the things the group had to do was to remove the desperation that would sometimes prevail when one has a problem between one and his or her partner, like you would like the problem to be solved there and then and if that does not happen it becomes a frustration. Whereas what the group would do would allow you to deal with the problem without any sense of desperation. When you come home and continue with the problem at least the platform has been created, it's not as bad as it was for you to deal with the problem.

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- **Changing one's attitude from viewing conflicts in marriage as 'problems' to seeing them as 'challenges' and also becoming emotionally intelligent.**

What I have achieved was to understand the behaviour of my partner and not only of my partner, but I have discovered that even in general I understand people better, someone can say a negative thing to me and that would not hurt me like it would before I joined the group. The group has also changed my attitude towards the problems I had at home, they are no longer problems any more but I view them as challenges. I have also learnt that problems will always be there because we live anyway. As long as we live we will always have problems, the way we look at things now we know that they are compounded by our attitudes and perceptions.

In summary, strengths identified were as follows:

> - Eye opener of some issues overlooked.
> - Strengthened relations in a significant way enriched life and relationship with partner.
> - Some thought that their issues pertained to themselves only but realised in the group everyone had similar problems.
> - They were able to correct previous mistakes and expectations.
> - The in-laws issue was clarified.
> - The group taught them to focus on the positive.
> - Fostered an understanding that in a relationship there are strengths and weaknesses and one needs to integrate the two.
> - Learnt to accept mistakes and to know that one is not always right.

- ➢ Learn to be honest with feelings and not bottle up.

- ➢ Felt it easier to talk about pertinent issues in the group.

- ➢ Confidentiality principle made it easy to talk about sensitive issues.

- ➢ Learnt that problems are part of normal life.

It was also necessary to evaluate how people felt by being in a group for the first time, and group members responded as follows:

'Every one was reserved at first'. The following statement supports this statement:

...when I first came to the group I was reserved, but I realized that the people that I was afraid of were sharing problems, we've got the same problems. Then I began to unfold and became open about sharing my problems...

Another member had the view that sharing the same problems as group members eased their anxieties about being seen as the other, and that brought them closer to one another :

Ok as I mentioned earlier, when the group started we were strangers to each other, but as time went on it became clear that we were sharing the same problems. It is because when you meet people for the first time, it is not easy to quickly divulge your personal problems. So as issues were discussed and laid on the table and being trashed out, it was revealed that as a group we were sharing one and the same problems. Oh that alleviated our fears, we then started to open up. Problems which

were discussed changed from being general to be more personal. For example, I

would say I so and so have these specific problems, instead of generalising.

- **Roles were switched easily, there was no superordinacy / subordinacy roles felt between the facilitator and the members.**

'It has been a revelation for us eh you know where psychology is brought to the

people and not people going to psychologists. You know, eh, it was a major thing to

have someone who had knowledge in a non-threatening way and who was prepared to

impart that knowledge in a non-dominating way. Even us who had little knowledge

about psychology and human behaviour, we felt like, at the end of the day we felt like

lay psychologists. So I think the group needs to come together again and take it from

where we left. What was learnt in the group could be transferred to life in general'.

- **Another member reiterates the issue of partnership between the group leader and group members in this way:**

We could mmm anybody could sort of steer the meeting on the day and the person

would get respect that that person deserves as the leader on the day. There was no

sense of superordiacy or subordinacy, we were all equals irrespective of the kind of

knowledge that a person has on the subject or social standing. So that was the

strength of the group.

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- **Commitment of members, confidentiality and pulling together was also cited as a strength of the group.**

When there was an issue brought forward for discussion, all members became involved and committed to solving a particular issue, so in that way it was easy to arrive at solutions, because everyone gave his or her input as members identified with that particular problem. Members were also actively involved in trying to resolve issues brought forward.

Indeed there was commitment...yes I also realized that commitment contributed to the growth of the group itself because people felt bad if they did not come to meetings, people had this thing that if I don't come what is going to happen to the group. Another thing is the trust that people had among each other, it was a major contributory factor. At no stage did people feel that whatever they say in the group meeting will be used against them or be repeated in settings where it would not be advantageous to repeat those things. So I think the level of confidentiality was high and yes, and the fact that people could easily switch on roles from being a leader to being a follower or being led by other people.

- **It is evident that the group work was beneficial to its members and they have achieved their objectives, as one member recalls:**

Eh I think to a great extent yes, we have managed to reach our objectives. What we need to do now I think we need to come together as a group again to review what we went through in terms of the content and if there are still outstanding issues we need

to regroup and start another programme. Because there is still willingness among people , in fact people are complaining about when the group is going to resume again. I think there is no doubt about the fact that the group is needed.

Although group members cited a host of strengths of the group, there were also weaknesses.

4.3.   Weaknesses identified

Some members felt that time keeping was a problem as members arrived late for meetings, and that made them finish very late. Another weakness cited was that members felt the members who were difficult in the group were creating disharmony among group members and they did not like it. They attributed this to the failure to select the right people for group work:

I think among other things the irregularities of the meetings was a problem, eh also the inability to keep time was one of the important weaknesses. I think the non-selection of some people who were actually not at the same level as the rest of the people in the group. It became a problem for being in the group or it even created a problem for the group. I think that is one of the major weaknesses of the group. Failure I think to select and identify people that may or couples that may prove detrimental to the group in future.

Another member felt that we should have had an open group to allow more prospective members to join at any time they wished to do so:

The group did not grow in numbers it became a... we ...ended up being friends as

couples. We did not invite people who were going to bring in different situations,

problems, and different ways of you know, of behaviour. We got to know each other

and understood each other in such a way that we ended up being friends. You see

that became a weakness...

The facilitator's answer to this was as follows:

Its true that the group members got close, but the thing is the aim of forming the

group itself was to get a closed group that was going to work together, grow and

review at the end of the group period. Because if you keep on getting new members it

would be chaotic, eh like in the group you said you grew as a unit as you got to know

each other. That means that it was possible that new people were going to destabilize

the group and as a result members would have to go forwards and backwards.

Getting closer to each other may look as a weakness, but it was the sole purpose of

establishing a group to determine the number of people who need to be in the group

and thereafter close membership ...

4.4.   Focus group discussion evaluation

A focus group discussion was also held at the end of the term specifically to evaluate

the effectiveness of the group. The questions that the group were asked and those that

the group leader used for self-reflection were guided by Whitaker's work from his

book on 'Using groups to help people' (Whitaker, 1985, p.389) Results are outlined below:

4.4.1. Evaluation of a facilitator

Questions that the facilitator asked are summarised below with answers:

4.4.2. Did the members of the group benefit from the experience as I hoped?

It is evident from the group members' responses that group members' objectives were achieved to a great extent.

4.4.3. Was the group effective and efficient as a medium of help for its members?

Some members felt that as they got closer to each other they got comfortable with each other, and started revealing their darker secrets. When they realised that they had similar problems this became helpful to members. Initially they felt that their problems were unique to individual couples. Therefore this suggests that the group did become a medium of help to its members.

4.4.4. What did the group members think they have gained?

Above is a host of issues identified by the group as being of benefit to them. The following list comprise of a summary of these benefits:

- Being in the group helped people to be more open about their problems. Fears disappeared.

- Insight into problems led to alleviation of anxieties.

- The group provided new ways of solving problems.

- The notion one was the only one who had a particular problem disappeared.

- People realised that they were all experiencing similar problems.

- The group offered a support system.

- The group became a means of controlling bad behaviour.

- It became the watchdog.

- Couples realised that problems were not unique to individual couples.

4.4.5. What were the further outcomes of conducting the group, and am I satisfied with them?

As I was conducting group work for the first time there were unintended consequences. For example, I ignored the warning to not include members that were disturbed as I thought that being in the group would have a healing effect and would foster some insight into these members. It did not turn out that way. For me this was a good lesson that I will not repeat when I run such a group the next time.

4.4.6. Did I anticipate correctly the frontier and/or preoccupying concern of the population I was working with? If not in what ways would I now modify and\or amplify my understanding of that population? Would I modify design, structure, our leadership approach?

I was born into the same population and that made it easy for me to anticipate reactions and concerns. Without going to formal statistics, I was thoroughly familiar with the rate of family breakdown in the community and the lack of resources to surmount this problem. Based on the comments of the focus group discussions it was evident that the members themselves were satisfied with the structure, content and process of the group work. If I had to run the group again the structure, design and or leadership approach would be more or less the same.

4.4.7. Am I satisfied with the details of my planning?

The details of my planning were informed by literature I scrutinised prior to gathering the group and the invaluable guidance of my supervisor. Where the planning phase falls short is in the drawing of the contract. I feel that it was not tight enough and members did not follow it strictly.

4.4.8. Did the composition work, or not? Was the combination of persons in the group such that the group jelled and the members were able to work together constructively most of the time?

Members jelled in an amazing way. As mentioned one member said they ended up being friends, to illustrate the level of cohesiveness of the group.

4.4.9. Did I do enough groundwork and the most useful kind of groundwork with my colleagues, and with my agency or institution? What should I do next time which is different?

Although I had supervision and had read profusely on the subject of conducting

groups as a medium for help, perhaps it was going to be more beneficial for members

of the group to invite other colleagues to provide a different view and style of

leadership.

4.4.10. Am I satisfied with the kind of communication I maintained with my colleagues while the work was going on?

I am not satisfied with the feedback after each session. Most of the time, because the

group finished very late and did not manage time effectively, there would be no time

for feedback on the present session. Also being one of the group made it difficult for

me to take notes and at the same time be an active participant. After the session I

would be extremely exhausted. Towards the end of group work, I took ill and that

compounded the problem.

4.4.11. Would I, in future, like to work with a co-therapist or worker, or do I prefer to work alone? What do I look for in a co-conductor?

It would be very useful to work with a co-therapist, because, as I indicated above, if

I had a professional co-conductor work and duties would have been shared. This

would have meant less burden on me as the sole-facilitator.

4.4.12. **If I were to conduct a group again with persons drawn from the same population as before, would I open in the same way or in a different way?**

I would still do more or less the same things as before such as, identifying objectives with group members, drawing a contract of rules and regulations, meeting at a neutral venue and not in a consulting room setting. The only setback I had was not to draw a structured contract. That I realised was very important to do. Therefore I would draw a contract with members that we could refer to everytime something got out of the norm of the group.

4.4.13. How do I feel now about the devices I adopted for monitoring and evaluating the group?

I feel the formative monitoring of the group was extremely inadequate. It is the summative evaluation that was done thoroughly. Perhaps if we had a formative evaluation it would inform the sessions that were still to follow. What could have happened can only be imagined now.

4.4.14. Did events occur which limited benefit for particular persons? Were these inside or outside my control? Did I make errors or miss opportunities for benefiting members?

The event that occurred was that there was one couple that members felt was very disruptive. This couple experienced a lot of pain and there was huge anger emanating

from their previous experiences in their marriage, and these hostilities were brought into the group setting. Members could not handle this situation. I also missed opportunities where I could have done more damage control and the couple had to resign. Again I attribute this problem to my inadequate screening at the beginning of the group work.

4.4.15. Who benefited most, and what can account for this?

I am of the opinion that everybody including myself benefited from this group work. We all pulled together and learnt together, though in different stages. The end result was that we were all happy at the end of the group. The workshop on 'emotional intelligence' was the hallmark of our benefits.

4.4.16. What have I learned about my own style of conducting a group? Am I satisfied with my style or do I wish to change it in some way?

Although I was happy by letting people run the group themselves, there were times I feel I talked the most. With hind sight, I should have been more of an observer. Fortunately my husband hinted on this weakness when we got home, I was aware of it and I tried to control my talking and let members do most of it, so that I could get time to observe and make sense of what was happening.

4.4.17.   Should I continue to work in groups, or do I prefer some other helping mode?

Groups are a wonderful way of helping people. I had observed that there were no resources in the community I was working with to deal with the escalating rate of marital breakdown, family disruption and divorce. Again, as African people prefer to work in groups than as individuals, group members were very comfortable working together. I would definitely continue working with groups in future. Already the process of forming another group is underway.

4.4.18. What kinds of persons do I prefer to work with in groups? Are there some populations I should avoid working with, because I get very little or no reward from doing so, or because I don't seem to work well with that kind of person?

Selection of group members is essential in running effective groups. It is also important to put people with similar situations together. Very disturbed people need intensive psychotherapy before they join a group. Yalom (1995) argues that it is not advisable to combine these people with other people who have insight to situations as they can cause a lot of disruption.

This was also evident in our group work. As for not working with certain populations, I have studied multi-cultural counselling in community psychology and learnt the skills from this course. I do not envisage not working with certain populations for as long as I have done my home work and studied the population very

well. My objectives must also be clear as to what I wish to achieve. Having done that it should not be difficult to work with any population. There are limitations however, and being aware of that it may be difficult to work with anybody and everybody.

4.4.19. The next time I work with a group, would it be a good idea to build work with the group into a wider programme? If so, what form might that wider programme take?

Thoughts of having the group members be facilitators for the next group have pre-occupied me. I think that if these members could facilitate the next group, and the next group facilitate the next, we could be building a host of lay couple counsellors that would benefit the community much more than they would if I were to be the one who facilitates all the time. These members have learnt the basics and I see no reason why they cannot run group work effectively and efficiently. I am also thinking of getting more professionals to oversee these groups and offer the necessary support.

4.4.20. When I next conduct a group, what kind of professional and personal support will I need and how will I find it?

Nearby my place of work there are universities that train psychologists. I am thinking of going to introduce the programme to them and offer the trainees and interns involvement in group work. The lecturers can supervise these programmes.

CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the results of running group work. A summative evaluation of the group process was done. The facilitator is also reflecting on the strengths of the group work including limitation of the study are implied through out the summative evaluation. Whereas in this chapter, a summary of the whole process of doing group work is offered by the group leader in an evaluative form.

5.2. Conclusion :

The main objective of this study was to give psychology away to the people (Rappaport, 19770. The guiding principle is in line with Edwards' (1999) view that community psychology is a psychology of, with, by, and for the people. Consistent with the main objective of the study is reiterated in the principles of community psychology as identified by Levine and Perkins (1992) that help has to be located in the situation where the problem arises. Likewise help should have the potential for being systematized through using natural resources of the setting or through introducing resources that can become part of the setting.

Throughout group work, knowledge and skills were shared among non-professionals and professionals with the aim of helping communities help themselves. Intervention at a community rather that at an individual level with the intention of ensuring successful development of a community as a whole, became the focus of the study.

The minutest element of society is family. If we have healthy families we are sure to have a healthy community, that will in turn develop into a healthy society. The crux of family breakdown evolves around, to mention a few, issues of breakdown in communication, inability to resolve conflict, in-laws influences etc. Although the study comprised of only seven couples, it has succeeded in demonstrating that in groups couples function better. Unlike with individual therapy, couples can identify with other couples' problems, solutions are adhered to with the group serving as a watchdog, people become responsible for their actions and in turn become accountable.

5.3.   Self reflections of a facilitator and group leader

To be in a group with people who come from different life orientations has not been an easy task. People came with their defenses, some were not ready to expose their vulnerabilities in a group form and projected their feelings onto other group members including the facilitator.

People came at different levels of maturity. Assumptions were made in the group that we are operating at the same level. When it was discovered that we were not as homogenous as we thought we were, conflict arose. At times it was difficult to juggle around with being one of them and being a facilitator who had studied human behaviour. Lessons learnt were that right at the beginning of the sessions, People needed to be thoroughly screened. In some instances couples were invited without

thorough screening to join the group and only realized later that they were not yet ready for group work.

Fortunately in one of the couples there was a very disturbed individual who opted out at the beginning. Group members attributed this problem to the failure to select the right people to join the group. I must say in this instance that when I selected the group members I was aware of the dynamics of this couple but I thought that they would benefit from working in a group, thereby learning from the rest how to deal with their issues as they were common to all couples that were in the group. Unfortunately it turned out to be the opposite.

What remained were people who were more committed and were willing to work hard at giving and taking advantage of being a member of a group.

Most writers (Conyne, 1999; Yalom, 1995; Corey & Corey, 1987) stress the importance of negotiating a contract prior to commencing the group. In our case although couples signed the agreement form to join the group there was no binding contract with rules and regulations that they committed to, and I viewed that as a shortfall. Although the formalities of beginning a group were done it was evident that at the time people were anxious and did not assimilate most of the issues discussed at the first meeting. It was also essential to review the ground rules during sessions from time to time to check if people still agree with the rules set.

The fact that I was sometimes a group member sharing issues of my own felt like too much self-disclosure, and at times being a facilitator and specialist in the field, contaminated boundaries.

Freeman (1992) argued that the most viable community psychology is the development of community based psychology that involves a commitment to cross boundaries to treat the whole person. He suggested a fusion between the various traditions, that is the dissemination of psychological skills, community participation, holistic primary care and cultural integration.

Seedat, Duncan and Lazarus (2001) argue that there is very little debate about the need for boundaries between practitioner and client for both their needs. The most important thing is to disseminate knowledge to people who do not have knowledge thus 'democratising knowledge' (Seedat, et.al. 2001, p.43). The benefit of this situation is that for group members it was seen as an advantage because they identified with me. There was equal partnership.

Again running a group with a partner sometimes compromised and at times benefited one's own marital situation. It is hoped that the group work helped couples to relate more meaningfully with each other. In that way their conflicts will be constructively solved and thus in turn reduce the rate of divorce in society. Already word of mouth has spread about the couples group and more enquiries are made by couples who want to join the group. Group members themselves cannot wait to resume the group again (see appendix).

What was intensely valuable was to constantly receive professional supervision and reading, without which I would not have survived doing group work for the first time on my own without consultation.

The programme was empowering to group members because there was collaboration between group members and the facilitator in identifying aims and objectives. Success at the end was defined by the members themselves and not by the group leader. To a great extent the programme instilled a sense of control over their issues, as Kieffer (1984) puts it , it was 'empowering'.

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APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A:

TAPE RECORDED TRANSCRIPTS

APPENDIX B:

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE GROUP WORK

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INVITATION

APPENDIX D

SELF AWARENESS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

<u>TRANSCRIPTS (tape recorded at the end of the group work): a summative</u>
<u>evaluation</u>

Mmm, mina nje ngisaqala ukuzwa ukuthi igroup yakhiwe obani ifriend yami
yangitshela ukuthi kwagqama ukuthi kunabodoctor, psychologist, dentists, istatus
nje ngangisisaba ngingakafiki kwi group itself so mangifika ngangawabona
lamastatuus ekwakushiwo,, ngafika ngabona nje abantu aba right, natural and
masiqhubeka singena kumaproblems/ issues ngazothola ukuthi while I was reserved,
hawu these people ebengibasaba were sharing problems, we've got the same
problems. Lapho ngaqala manje umuntuwakwazi ukuba open saqhubeka nje up until
then.

Ok njengoba bengishilo ukuthi kusaqala igroup sasingazi ukuthi as the time goes on
as couples kuzovela ukuthi sisherisha the same problemsso ukuthi uma usaqala
ukubona abantu it is not easy ukuthi usheshe udivulge amapersonal problems and
izinto ezivery personal to you, so as issues were discussed and laid on the table and
being trashed out kwatholakal ukuthi as a group we are sharing one and the same
problems oh lokho kwa alleviata ama fears kithina saqala uku open up -a.
Amaproblems esawadiscussa ashinsha from being a general aba more personal ukuthi
mina ngiwu langa nginamaproblem awukuthi nokuthi...

Njengoba saqhubeka njengegroup yiziphi izinto esazifunda emindenini yethu?

Eh, how do we deal with particular problems and eh- ama lessons esawafunda

yizindlela zoku deal(A) namaproblems eh, of which there is no clear cut way ukuthi

this particular problem ikanje kodwa there are ways ezizamekayo ukuba on top of that

particular problem uyabona. Nokuthi ama oh indlela yokucabanga kwethu iye

yashinsha especially umuntu esejoyine igroup. Umuntu useyakwazi manje ukuthi

into eyenzeka emphakathini or ubuka into, usuyakwazi ukuthi uyinike ianswer

ngendlela epositive nomangabe umuntu ubenza into enegative, like ngikhumbula

njengoba ngangibuka this kid's film, Lion King niyamkhumbula? So ulona,

inkawu le, kambe iwubani leyankawu? (Rafik – *group offering help*) Ya ekhuluma no

Simba kade ebalekile ekhaya because azi ukuthi uyena obulele uBaba wakhe so ethi

embona uSimba kushukuthi kwijungle la ayehleli khona ambuze ukuthi ungubani

wean abeseyasho lo ukuthi mina angizazi ukuthi ngingubani bese ethi yena you are

Mufasa's son. Ubona ukuthi izinto uzinterpreta ngendlela epositive, omunye umuntu

mhlaumbi angaunderstandi ukuthi usho ukuthini mauthi look at the water you will see

your reflection elaphaya akuyona eyakho yekaBaba wakho. Nokuthi izinto

ezingamagaggages ethu zine contribution kwimisery yethu, ezintweni ezi current.

Nokuunderstanda kangcono manje ingane ukuthi ibehaviour yazo, ingane zamanje

ziyakwazi ukuthiwork on u. Sakufunda ukuthi ingane mayiofike empilweni yakho

wean ungabi sempilweni yayo ingane. Konke ke lokho kwaqala manjenokuthi

njengabantu abashadile mhlaumbe abakwi middle age masishadile especially thina

abesifazane ipassion asi- siyahluleka ukuyi identifya. Ipasssion yethu we became low

kuma priorities ethu yet its vice versa. We must get our priorities right, like

awusakwazi nokuzithengela iperfume ubheke izingane , ukuthi ingane inakho yini

likhu, eh ubheki ukuthi uBaba wasekhaya unakho yini ukuthi … you add up imali

isincane ungasakwazi uku afforda kodwa unamapriorities akho.

So you say we don't look after ourselves as women?

We don't look after ourselves bese siba frudtrated ekugcineni ukuthi I cant afford this and that. Ukwenzikhanda lami eh ipassion, angisakwazi ukwenza izinto engizithandayo angisakwazi uku afforda. Ukuya esalon nje it makes me feel good ngoba I know kuzoshinsha I appearance yam. Ukuthenga into enhle ngisho noma kuthiwa imali incane kanjani that will make me feel good.

Ok is there anything you want to say/add?

I think mina on top of what u Themba (fictitious names) no Thandi has said eh mina into engayifunda among other things ukuthi what I consider a problem on my side actually I realized as we were discussing ukuthi it is not a problem eh nokuthi even what I considered a problem was really my perception, indlela engiyibuka ngayo, indlela engenza izinto ngayo ngiyayi problematisa, yabona. Eh whereas if I could look at the problem differently it would cease being a problem or it would be managed ngendlela engcono kunale ebengi manage (a) ngayo. Among other things izinto engizifundile kwi group ukuthi I group yangi siza kumthwalo, umthwalo obuza kuba ngowamngedwa, ngakwazi ukuthi ngiwuthathe ngiwenze umthwalo wegroup. Sahlukaniselana ngomthwalo. Like if I had a problem that I felt I could not handle, I could just postpone it without any frustraton. I could easily wait for that day to come because the day would come and I could easily talk about this problem in a group. So when the day came I would be relieved because niyamazi owakwami naye sometimes unjani. (laughter).

So I would just wait and say kwenzeka lokhu nalokhu. So that made it easy in the past in the meantime I would have problems, you know, until the problem is solved. Kanti manje bengikwazi ukuthi ngiqhubeke nempilo yam kukhona lento engiyiphethe kodwa ngingayenzi iproblem until the day we meet.....(inaudible)

That's it, kanti nami kwelami icala amaphutha ami bengazi ukuthi azo exposwa. So yangifundisa izinto eziningi on both sides. I think among other things yilokho engakufunda. (Laughter)

For mina among other issues I think I have benefited is the issue yama in laws. Eh indaba yama in-laws continued to haunt us in the family and when the group discussed that I realized it was common to all of us and among other things that I have learnt that eh was that specific in-laws ukuthi in-laws should just be regarded as part of family. Uthando lwabo especially when it comes to a husband there is always a problem between the wife and her mother in-law, with regard to the mother in-law issue.

From these deliberations it became easy for example my wife not to problematise my relationship, you know eh... with my mother. Seeing the difference you know we were able to separate issues. Uthando lwami for yena and nothando lwami for umama amathando ahlukene. They are not in competition. Amathando uyabona whatever obligations I have but these obligations are not in competition. I think that is one thing I personally benefited from that topic. Because that continued to haunt my family for some time.]

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Ok now what have people achieved as a result of being in a couples' group?

Engikuachievile uku understanda I behaviour yepartner yami and not I partner kuphela, uthole ukuthi even in general abantu sengiyakwazi uku understanda ngendlela abantu abacabanga ngayo nomuntu angasho into erongo ingangi hurti mina. And ishinshe ne attitude kumaproblems esinawo endlini ukuthi iproblem ayisabi problem but ibe ichallenge siyi face up until siyinqobile. Futhi eh nokuthi amaproblems will always be there ngoba siyaphila.anyway. As long as we live wewe still have problems but asesiwona ama problems manje but - ngendlela umuntu ase-inkinga ye attitude we perceive them as challenges.. eh angazi ukuthi wena baba wasekhaya ukuthi ubuka kanjani?

Eh akesithi inkinga ebesinayo lana endlini I personalize it. Icommunication problem up to now aykapheli , eh , kodwa lapha kwi group that channel was always there uyabona? So kukula ukukhuluma egroupini ezinye izinto. .You can talk indirectly, kodwa talking to your spouse. So igroup made it easier that you know, your tensions wasn't there uyabona. Eh like we would in a bedroom uyabona lento lena so ibi ne advantage ngaleyondlela. Uyabona kuwukuthi manje once that issue has been raised egroupini sezizobuya manje isikade isithanjiswe egroupini. Sesizoyiayina out manje ngokwethu manje (inaudible)

Kangokuthi manje njengoba igroup ingasekho kuzophinda siphinde back to square one.

I group ibi forma leya channel yokuthi kukwazi ukukhulumeka and we were looking forward to that and now it seems like you are all by yourself. Ya, we will go back to our irrational thinking ngoba ayisekho that watch dog so to speak.

I was saying that one of the things the group had to do was to remove the desperation that would sometimes prevail uma nine problem between ipartner yakho like you would like the problem to be solved there and then and if ayenzekanga lokho kuba yifrustration. Whereas what he group would do would allow you to deal with the problem without any sense of desperation.

When you come home and continue with the problem at least the platform has been created its not as bad as it was for you to deal with the problem.

Ok if there is nothing else. Can we move on to the next step. What were the weaknesses of the group?

I think among other things its irregularities of the meetings eh ukugcina isikhathi eh one of the important weaknesses is that I think was the non-selection some people were actually not at the same level as the rest of the people in the group. It became a problem for being in the group or it even created a problem for the group. I think that is one of the major weaknesses of the group. Failure I think to select and identify people that may or couples that may prove detrimental to the group in future.

Who else has any more comments about weaknesses of the group?

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Iweakness engiyibonayo ukuthi igroup did not grow in numbers it became a... we... sigcine seiba amafriends kakhulu as couples. We did not invite people abebezoza mhlaumbi with different problems and different ways of you know, of behaviour. We got to know each other and understood each other ngendlela yokuthi bese we became friendsuyabona, so lokho I feel kubeyi weakness ngoba asibanga nabo nabantu abashaya amakhosikazi wabo like nje I was kwenye I course laphaya e conditioning unit (laughter)

Ukuthi unkosikazi wafika noBaba ekhaya wafika wahlala phansi (laughter). Ehlala pphansi umama wangamkhumula ibhanshi, ukuthi ushayelwa lokho ukuthi awungikhumulanga ibhanshi. Uphuma ngapho enkantolo eVerulam waza eThekwini wazovulicala elinjalo. So it did not get to leyo level esiyibona thina iridiculous kodwa izinto ezenzakalayo uyabona lezo.

Its true kona ukuthi le group got close but the thing is igroup yona ngokwayo was to get a closed group that is going to work and grow and review cause if u get people eh like in group you said you grow as you got to know each other that means new people were going to destabilize the group and the group would to go forwards and backwards. It may look as a weakness but it was the sole purpose of having a group and determine the number of a group and close. You see how the group grows....

Do you have any more comments on the weaknesses before we proceed to the strengths?

Eh enye into ebiyenza kubukeke sengathi kunama weaknesses bekuthi mhlaumbe uma kune issue ethinta abantu abaningi kugcine sesi focuse mhlaumbe abanye abantu abathandi mhlaumbe idiscusswe kwi group igcine ise idirection ishinsha manje and we ended upsekukhona izinto zilengile kushukuthithe one eh uzama uku attenda laba abanento asabashiya ngalesosikhathiehe, then igcine ishiyeke kanjalo. I think yilokho ebengikubona kuyi weakness yethu so far.

Do you want to talk about the strengths?

Ya, just to add one more point on about I issue ye weaknesses. I think one of the weaknesses that I personally picked was the dependence on the group. Although it was good to have a group to rely on it eh, for iproblems that we had. But sometimes I had a feeling we were beginning to depend on it kakhulu. Whereas the purpose was really to skill us so that when we have problems at home we can handle without depending on the group as such.

Oh ok, so can we perhaps reflect on the strengths of the group?

I think where the group became strong was to grow as a unit umh, this was evidenced by when the group had a problem with one of the numbers of the stokvel you could clearly see when issues if they were handled at our group level they would not have been a problem at all. I think that's one of the things in the group that developed a unit. I think the group was quite rapid ???

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Onke amamembers uma kukhona iissue ediscusswayo they all have input uyabona, so lokho iproblem ebekiwe la on the table we attacked on all angles, ibipokwa yiwo wonke umuntu okhona uyabona, so in that way ama solutions abeshesha atholakale, bekushesha kubekhona iprogress ngoba everyone ubekhona, ngoba they identified themselves naleyo problem enje ebikhona ngoba they were actively involved in trying to resolve leyo issue ekhona.

Enye into there was commitment. Ya, nami ngiyabona ukuthi icommitment yiyo eyenza ukuthi igroup ikhule ngoba people felt bad if they did not come people had this thing yokuthi if I don't come what is going to happen to the especially the other thing there was the trust that people had there among the group. At no stage did people feel ukuthi whatever they say in the group meeting will be used against them or be repeated in settings where it would not be advantageous to repeat those things. So I think the level of confidentiality was high and ja, and the fact that people could easily switch on roles from being a leader to being a follower or being led by other people.

We could anybody to sort of steer the meeting on the day and the person would get respect that that person deserves as the leader on the day. There was no sense of superordiacy or subordinacy, we were all equals irrespective of the kind of knowledge that a person has on the subject or social standing.so that was the strength of the group. Do you want to add Thandi?

Eh, mina ngicabanga ukuthi senikusho konke eh (laughter) hayi nje so far (inaudible).

...eh where to now, do you know?

Eh mina I think we have reached the end of phase 1 and mina njengomuntu

owasungula igroup, ngicabanga ukuthi my aim to do that was to bring the group

together to share psychology with people so that ordinary people can deal with their

problems seeing that there is not enough funds or most people to acquire the

necessary knowledge and there is not enough psychologists to deal with the problems.

And the other thing there are no more the societal structures that were there to help

families who were going through difficulties. Like the neighbours uncles and aunts.

Now people live isolated in suburbs. Again middle class professionals have no one to

turn to it times of marital difficulties, as they are busy protecting their image of being

proper families. They have no outlet for their frustrations whereas they are not

immuned to family disputes. As a result there is a high rate of divorce and family

violence among middle class Black Professionals.

I felt therefore perhaps if we as psychologists are visible and mingle with the people,

we could impart psychological excpertise and lifeskills to more people. So can people

reflect on the objectives of the group that were set at the beginning?

Eh I think to a great extent yes, we have managed to reach our objectives. What we

need to do now I think we need to come together as a group again to review what we

went through in terms of the content and if there are still outstanding issues we need

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to regroup and start another programme. Because there is still willingness among people, in fact people are complaining about when the group is going to resume again. I thing there is no doubt about that the group is needed. It has been a revelation for us eh you know where psychology is brought to the people and not people going to psychologists. You know, eh, it was a major thing to have someone who had knowledge in a non-threatening way and who was prepared to impart that knowledge in a non-dominating way. Even us who had little knowledge about psychology and human behaviour, we felt like, at the end of the day we felt like lay psychologists. So I think the group needs to come together again and take it from where we left.

Thank you very much for your time and I hope you have learnt from me as much as I have learnt from you. From your responses it is evident that the group and my personal objectives have been achieved and that it a plus for all of us. I also hope that you will further impart the knowledge and the skills you have learn as individuals in using this group as a vehicle for your learning process, to other community members and the struggle for happy and healthy families and in turn, healthy communities goes on. I do not know when the group will resume but if the need is pressing for you can go ahead, you have learnt the principles of forming and running a group. As for me I am still busy with this research and in between I have to attend to my ill health. Unfortunately I wont be able to join you this time but if you need me as a guest someday please feel free to invite me. It may be possible to attend. I also cannot wait until my health improves so that I can join you once more. Its been a helluva experience. Thanks again for not making it difficult for me as I was running this group for the first time. Actually we were all first times. You were in a couples

group for the first time too. I also hope that in the process I did not hurt some people, but if I did my apologies, it was a learning curve for all of us. Thank you once more and God Bless.

Transcripts translated into English

Mmm. I first heard about the group from my friend who told me that doctor psychologists and dentists were on the front. These positions terrified me even before joining the group but when I came in I did not recognize these positions. I only saw ordinary and flexible people. As we went on into problematic issues, I discovered that while I was reserved, these people were sharing problems, we've go the same problems. As a result I become free and open to disclose up until then.

Ok as mentioned earlier, when the group started we were strangers to each other but as went on it became clear that we were sharing the same problems. It is because when you meet people for the first time it is not easy to quickly divulge your personal problems, so as issues were discussed and laid on the table and being trashed out it was revealed that as a group we were sharing one and the same problems on that alleviated our fears, we then started to be open up. Problems which were discussed changed from being general to be more personal for example I am Langa I have these and these problems.

As we were getting on as a group what did you learn from your families? Eh, how to deal with particular problems and the lessons that we had are tricks of dealing with problems, of which there is no clear out way of dealing with problems but there re methods which are tried to overcome these particular problems. Our way of thinking changed especially after joining the group. Now we know that it is something that happens within the community. No it is easy to give answers in a positive way even to negative actions, like I remember when I was watching this kid's film Lion King, do you remember? So this one is a monkey, by the way who was that monkey? (Rafik – group offering help) yes one which was speaking to Simba who absconded from home hence he knew he was the one who killed his father. So he was sitting in the jungle when he saw Simba, he then asked who he was he told him that he is Mufasor's son.

So you can interpret this positively and another person may not understand what do you mean if you say look at the water you will see your reflection that one is not yours but is your father's reflection. Things that are our baggage has contribution to our misery, in

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current issues. You have better understanding about children's behavior that today's children can work on you. We learned that a child should arrive to your life you should not be not be in the child's life. All that started now and that if you are married maybe those who are in the middle age especially we females we are failing to identify our passion. Our passion became law when it comes to our priorities right, like you are unable even to buy yourself a perfume hence you are concentrating on children you want to see if they are having this and that, you are concentrating on husband's needs you end up running short of money to afford your own priorities.

(So you say we don't look after ourselves as women?) We don't look after ourselves at the end we are frustrated for failing to afford this and that. To go to salon makes me feel good because I know it will change my appearance, to buy something good not matter how little it is make you feel good.

(Is there anything you want to say/add?)

I think to add on top of what Themba and Thandi has said what I learned from the group among other things is that what I consider as a problem on my side actually I realizes as we were discussing that it is not a problem and that even what I considered as a problem was really my perceptions, the way I look and the way I do things I am problemasing myself, your see. Eh whereas if I could look at the problem or it would be managed in a better way than the method I have been using. Among other things that I learned from the group is that the group unloaded my personal load. I surrender the load to the group and we shared it. Like if I had a problem that I felt I could not handle, I could just postpone it without any frustration. I could easily wait for that day to come because the day would come and I could easily talk about this problem is a group, so when the day come I would be relieved because you know how is my husband is at times (laughter)

So I would just wait and say this and that happened, so that make it easy in the past, in the meantime I would have problems, you know, until the problem is solved.

I was able to go on with life irrespective of this issue however I did not consider it as a problem until the day we meet (inaudible)

That's it on my side as well I did not know that my mistakes will be exposed. So it taught me many things on both sides. I think among other things this is what I have learned (laughter)

For me among the other issues I think I have benefited is the issue of in-laws. Eh the issue of in-laws continued to haunt us in the family and when the group discusses that I realizes it was common to all of us and among other things that I have learned was that those specific in-laws should just be regarded as part of family. Their love especially when it comes to a husband there is always a problem between the wife and her mother in-law, with regard to mother in-law issue.

From these deliberations it became easy for example any wife not to problemarise my relationship, you know eh…with my mother seeing the difference you know we were able to separate issues. There is a different love for my mother and for my wife. They are not in competition. Love you see whatever obligations I have but these obligations I have but these obligations are not in competition. I think that is not thing I personally benefited from that topic, because that continued to haunt my family for some time

(Ok now what have people achieved as a result of being in a couple's group?).

What achieved is to understand my partner I discovered that even in general people I am able to understand how they think even if one can say something negative but it won't hurt me, and it changed our attitudes towards problems in the house that problem is no more a problem but it is a challenge to be faced up until we overcome it, and that problem will always be there as long as we live. Anyway as long as we live we will still have problems but they are no more considered as problems now but it is a problem of attitude we perceive them as challenges. Eh I don't know how you see it my husband

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Eh let us say problem we had in this house was personalized communication problem up to now is not yet over, oh but her in the group that channel was always there you see. So it is easy to talk in the group about other issues. You can talk indirectly but talking to your spouse so a group made it easier that with no tensions. Eh like we would do in a bedroom this group was advantageous in that way. Once these problems are raised in the group they become easier. So now can we go out on our own? (inaudible) therefore since there is no group it means we will go back to square one.

Group formed that channel for self disclosure and we are looking forward to that and now it seems like you are all by yourself, so we will go back to our irrational thinking because there is no more that watch dig so to speak

I was saying that one of the things the group had to do was to remove the separation that would sometimes prevail if there is a problem between your partner, and how would you like the problem to be solved and if that did not go according to your plans that would lead to a frustration. Whereas what the group would do allow you to deal with the problem without any sense of desperation. When you come home and continue with the problem at least the platform has been created its not as bad as it was for you to deal with the problem.

Ok if there is nothing else. Can we move on to the next step. What were the weaknesses of the group?

I think among other things its irregularities of the meetings eh it keeps time and its one of the important weaknesses is that I think was non-selection some people were actually not at the same level as the rest of the people in the group. It became a problem for being in the group or it even created a problem for the group. I think that is one of the major weaknesses of the group. Failure I think to select and identify people that may or couples that may prove detrimental to the group in future.

Who else has any more comments about weaknesses of the group?

A weakness that I am identifying is that a group did not grow in numbers but it became a ...we as the couple, we became friends. We did not invite different people who would perhaps come with different problems and different ways of behavior. We got to know each other and understood each other as a result we become friends so I feel that was a weakness since we did not have people who are physically abusing their wives as I was in the course at conditioning unit (laughter)
Wife and the husband arrived together in their home and a husband punished his wife just for sitting down without taking the coat off from husband(laughter). A partner came from Verulam court to Durban to open that case, so it did not get that level with us, it may sound ridiculous but such things are happening outside.

It is true that a group members become close to each other but the main aim of the group was to get a closed group that is going to work and grow and review cause if you get people eh like in a group you grow as you got to know each other means new people

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were going destabilize the groups and the groups would to go forward and backwards. It may look as a weakness but it was the sole purpose of having a group and determine the number of a group and close. You see how the group grows......

Yes, just to add one more point on about the issue of the weakness. I think one of the weaknesses that I personally picked was the dependence on the group. Although it was good to have a group to rely on it we, for the problems that we had. But sometimes I had a feeling we were beginning to depend on it. Whereas the purpose was really to skill us so that when we have problems at home we can handle without depending on the problem at home we can handle without depending on the group as such.

Do you have any more comments before we proceed to the strengths
Some other things that appear to be weaknesses in the group are those issues affecting many people and end up focusing to other people, people do not like discussing in a group end that might lead to the change of direction and that will cause unfinished issues in a group. I think that is the only problem we are facing in the group..

Do you want to talk about the strengths?

Yes, just to add one more point on about the issue of this weaknesses. I think one of the weaknesses that I personally picked was the dependence on the group. Although it was good to have a group to rely on it eh, for the problems that we had. But sometimes I had a feeling we were beginning to depend on it. Whereas the purpose was really to skill us

so that when we have problems at home we can handle without depending on the group as such.

Oh ok, so can we perhaps reflect on the strengths of the group?

I think where the group became strong was to grow as a unit umh, this was evidenced by when the group had a problem with one of the numbers of the stokvel you could clearly see when issues if they were handled at our group level they would not have been a problem at all. I think that's one of the things in the group that developed a unit. I think the group was quite rapid ???

If there is an issue under discussion all the members must have input on the existing problem and we attached on all angles. The solutions were easily available and there must be a progress because every member will be present and identify themselves and the existing problem because they were actively involved in trying to resolve the issue.

Another thing there was commitment. Yes I think the commitment is the only thing that makes a group to grow because people felt bad if they did not come people had this thing there was the trust that people had there among the group. At no stage did people feel that whatever they say in the group meeting will be used against them or be repeated in setting where it would not be advantageous to repeat those things. So I think the level of confidentiality was high and yes the fact that people could easily switch on roles from being a leader to being a follower on being led by other people.

We could anybody to sort of steer the meeting on the day and the person would get respect that person deserves as the leader on the day. There was no sense of superodiacy or subordinacy, we were all equals irrespective of the kind of knowledge that a person has on the subject or social standing so that was the strength of the group. Do you want to add Thandi?

Eh I think that says all eh (laughter) not so far (inaudible).

...eh where to now, do you know?

Eh I think we have reached the end of phase 1 and as the person who organized the group, I think my aim to do that was to bring the group together to share psychology with people so that ordinary people can deal with their problems seeing that there is not enough funds or most people to acquire the necessary knowledge and there is not enough psychologists to deal with the problems. And the other thing there are no more the societal structures that were there to help families who were going through difficulties. Like the neighbors uncles and aunts. Now people live isolated in suburbs. Again middle class professionals have no one to turn to it times of marital difficulties, as they are busy protecting their image of being proper families. They have no outlet for their frustrations whereas they are not immuned to family disputes. As a result there is a high rate of divorce and family violence among middle class Black Professionals. I felt therefore perhaps if we as psychologists are visible and mingle with the people, we could impart psychological expertise and life skills to more people. So can people reflect on the objectives of the group that were set at the beginning?

Eh I think to a great extent yes, we have managed to reach our objectives. What we need to do now I think we need to come together as a group again to review what we went through in terms of the content and if there are still outstanding issues we need to regroup and start another program. Because there is still willingness among people, in fact people are complaining about when the group is going to resume again. I thing there is no doubt about that the group is needed. It has been a revelation for us eh you know where psychology is brought to the people and not people going to psychologists. You know, eh, it was a major thing to have someone who had knowledge in a non-threatening way and who was prepared to impart that knowledge in a non-dominating way. Even us who had little knowledge about psychology and human behavior, we felt like, at the end of the day we felt like lay psychologists. So I think the group needs to come together and take it from where we left.

Thank very muck for your time and I hope you have learnt from me as much as I have learnt from you. From your responses it is evident that the group and my personal objectives have been achieved and that it is a plus for all of us. I also hope that you will further impart the knowledge and the skills you have learn as individuals in using this group as a vehicle for your learning process, to other community members and the struggle for happy and health families and in turn, healthy communities goes on. I do not know when the group will resume but if the need is pressing for you can go ahead, you have learnt the principles of forming and running a group. As for me I am still busy with this research and in between I have to attend to my ill guest someday please feel free to invite me. It may be possible to attend. I also cannot wait until my health improves so

that I can join you once more, its been a halleluva experience. Thanks again for not making it difficult for me as w was running this group for the first time. Actually we were all firsts times. You were in a couples group for the first time too. I also hope that in the process I did not hurt some people, but if I did my apologies, it was a learning curve for all of us. Thank you once more and God Bless

A summary of the transcripts translated into Zulu.

Mmm, mina ngaqala ukuzwa ngeqembu ukuthi lakhiwe obani ngathola ngomngani wami kwagqama ukuthi lakhiwe ngodokotela, nososayensi bezengqondo nodokotela bamazinyo, izikhundla zabo ngangizesaba ngingakafiki ngisho eqenjini uqobo. Kepha umangifika ngangazibona lezikhundla ebezishiwo ngafika ngabona abantu abakahle ngokwemvelo futhi masiqhubeka singena ezindabeni ezithinta izinkinga ngazithola ukuthi njengoba bengiwunyube kanti lababantu ebengibesaba babelana ngezinkinga nami enginazo, kulapho ke nami ngaqala manje ukuvuleleka ngalesosikhathi.

Uyabona njengoba bengishilo ukuthi kusaqala iqembu sasingazi ukuthi ngokuqhubeka kwesikhathi njengabashadikazi kuzovela ukuthi sinezinkinga ezifanayo, ukuthi uma usaqala ukubona akulula ukusheshe uveze ingaphakathi lakho kepha lokho ngokuqhubeka kuxoxiswana kusatshalalwa kwatholakala ukuthi njengeqembu sinezinkinga ezifanayo lokho kwanciphisa ukwesabana saqala savulekelana saxoxa ngezinkinga zasuka ekubeni ezejwayelekile zabheka ngqo nomuntu ngamunye siqu sakho ukuthi yena njengoLanga nginalezinkinga. Njengoba siqhubeka njengeqembu yiziphi izinto esazifunda emndenini yethu?

Sibhekana kanjani nalezinkinga nanokuthi zifundo zini esazifunda lapho kungekho ndlela emfushane yesixazululo kepha kunezindlela yokuqoba lezonkinga. Indlela yokucabanga kwethu njengezithandani iye yashintsha ikakhulukazi umuntu esehlanganyele neqembu. Umuntu useyakwazi manje ukuthi into eyenzeka emphakathini noma ubuka, usuyakwazi ukuba nezimpendulo ngendlela eyakhayo nomangabe umuntu enza into engafanele.

Ngikhumbula ngibuka lesithombe sabantwana sebhubesi "Lion", Nkosi "King"

niyakhumbula? Lona uLona inkawu le, kmbe ingubani leyankawu? (Rafik-iqembu

liyasiza) Ya ekhuluma noSimba kade ebalekeile ekhaya ngoba azi ukuthi uyena obulele

uBaba wakhe, ngakho-ke kuthe embona uSimba kushukuthi kusemenweni lapho

kungehleki khona ambuze ukuthi ungubani wena abeseyasho lo ukuthi mina angizazi

ukuthi ngingubani bese ethi yena uyindodana kaMufasa. Ubona ukuthi izinto uzichaza

ngendlela eyamukekile, omunye umuntu mhlawumbe akaqondi ukuthi usho ukuthini

nanokuthi buka emanzini uzobona umfanekiso wakho, kulapho akuwona owakho

okababa wakho. Nokuthi izinto zanamuhla nokuqonda kwethu zinomthelela osizini

lwethu ezintweni zanamuhla nokuqonda indlela ukuthi izingane ziziphatha kanjani,

izingane zanamuhla ziyakwazi ukukusebenzisa. Sifunda nokuthi ingane inempilo yayo

wena ungabi sempilweni yengane. Konke lokhu into eqala manje ngaleyondlela

njengabantu abashadile abafundile nabazisebenzelayó ikakhulukazi thina abesifazane

asinaso isihe siyahluka ukusibona isihe senza singakwazi ukubona okubalulekile

ezimpilweni zethu. Kufanele siqale ngokubalulekile kithina kuqala kepha akunjalo.

Kumele sibheke izidingo zethu njengoba ungasakwazi ukuthenga isinukisa mnandi

"perfume" ubheke izingane, ukuthi ingane nobaba wakhaya banazo izidingo zabo, ugcina

usunemali encane ungasakwazi ukubhekana nezidingo-ngqangi zakho.

Ngakho ke uthi asizinakekeli njengabantu besifazane

Asizinakekeli besesiyakhungatheka ekugcineni, uthi angikwazi ukubhekana nalokhu

nalokhu. Okusegqondweni yami isihe, angisakwazi ukwenza izinto engizikhonzile

namandla okuzikhokhela. Ukuya kolungisa ikhanda kungenza ngiphatheke kahle

nokushintsha ngibukeke kahle. Ukuthenga into enhle ngisho noma kuthiwa ngemali encane kangakanani lokho kuyangithokozisa.

Kukhona yini okunye ofuna ukukusho noma ukwengeza?

Ngicabanga ukuthi mina ukwenezela kokushiwo nguThemba noThandi into engiyifundile phakathi kokunye ukuthi ebengicabanga ukuthi yinkinga yami akusiyona kepha indlela engiyibheka ngayo ngenza into ngendlela engididayo kanti umangase kubuke inkinga ngendlela ehlukile inkinga ingaxazululeka ngendlela engcono kunale ebengizoyizulula ngayo. Kwezinye izinto engizifundile eqenjini ukuthi langisiza kumthwalo sahlukaniselana izinkinga kwangabi umthwalo wami ngedwa kwaba ngoweqembu. Njengokuthi uma nginenkinga engizwa ingikhathaza ngiyakwazi ukuyibeka eceleni ngiyibekele elinye ilanga ngaphandle kokukhathazeka ngilindele usiku la ngizokhuluma ngayo eqenjini sihlangene. Uma usuku selufikile ngiyakhululeka ngoba ngiyamazi indlela ubaba wekhaya enza ngayo. Ngakho ke ngizovele ngilinde lokhu kwenze izinto zabalula kanti esikhathini esiphambili bengihlala nenkinga ize ixazululeke ngalesosikhathi.

Kanti manje ngiyakwazi ukuqhubeka nempilo yami ikhona leyonkinga kodwa ngingayenzi inkinga kuze kufike lolosuku esihlangana ngalo.

Nazo ke, nami bengingazi ukuthi icala namaphutha ami azovela obala. Ngifunde lukhulu macala onke. Ngicabanga ukuthi kwezinye izinto engakufunda yilokhu:

Ngakumina kwezinye izinto ngicabanga ukuthi ngizuzile indaba yabasemzini nendlela yokukhathazeka komndeni ngokuqhubeka sixoxisana ngabona ukuthi kuyinto ejwayelekile kithina sonke kanti kwezinye izinto futhi ngifunde ukuthi abasemzini kumelwe bathathwe njengengxenya yomndeni. Uthando lwabo ikakhulukazi ngakumyeni kuhlale kunenkinga phakathi kukaMamezala noMakoti myelana nezindaba.

Kusukela kulokhu sekulula njengonkosikazi ukuzikhipha ekuzixakaniseni ngothando lwami noMamezala. Ngokwazi lomahluko sesiyakwazi ukwahlukanisa, uthando lwethu njengomakoti nomkhenyana lwahlukene nothando lukaMama. Akugqobheliswana, nazifungo enginazo azigqobhelisani.

Mina ngikuzuzile kulesihloko, ngoba lokhu bekuhlale kuwukhathazile umndeni wami isikhathi impela.

Ingabe yini abantu abayizuzile ngenxa yokuba seqenjini lezithandani?

Engikuzuzile ukuqonda isimilo somlingani wami hhayi umlingani kuphela nendlela abantu abacanga ngayo nomuntu angasho into eyiphutha ngingaphatheki kabi kanti futhi ishintshile nendlela yokubuka izinkinga, ezinkingeni ezisendlini azisabi zinkinga seziba inselelo okufanele sibhekana siyinqobe. Nanokuthi izinkinga zohlale zikhona inqobo nje uma siphila. Inkinga lezi sezamukeleke njengenselelo, angazi-ke ukuthi wena baba wasekhaya ubona kanjani?

Inkinga ebesinayo lapha endlini siyenze yaqondana nomunye wethu. Inkinga yokuxhumana kuze kube manje ayikakapheli, kodwa eqenjini lowomgudu ubulokhu ukhona kulula ukukhuluma eqenjini ezinye izinto. Ungakhuluma ugwegwise kepha ubukhuluma nomlingani wakho. Iqembu lenze kwalula, ukukhathazeka kwakungekho. Ekamelweni lokhu kushuba kwesimo kuthole indawo ngaleyondlela. Ukube lendaba beyikhulunywa eqenjini besizobuya seyithanjiswe iqembu. Sezoyixazulula ngokwethu manje kungezwakali. Kangangokuthi manje njengoba iqembu lingasekho sophindela lapho esaqala khona.

Iqembu belakha umgudu wokukhuluma futhi sibheke phambili manje awusenabani, sesophindila kuyo leyandlela yethu engusikhwili phambana yokucabanga ngoba phela abasekho abaqaphi.

Bengisathi okunye iqembu okwamele likwenze ukususa ukuzikhathaza okwakunokuvela uma unenkinga nomlingani wakho njengalokhu ufisa inkinga ixazululeke lapho ngaphandle kokuphuthuma. Kanti eqenjini buvumeleka ukubhekana nenkinga ngaphandle kokuphuthuma. Uma usufika ekhaya uqhubeka nenkinga akusenani ngoba inkundla isivulelekile akusekubi njengoba bekufanele kube uwena ubhekane nenkinga.

Yebo ke kukhona okunye. Singadlulela phambili. Yini ebe ubuthaka beqembu?

Ngicabanga ukuthi kwezinye izinto ukuhluleka kokugcina isikhathi esimiyo, nendlela yokunyula amalunga, abantu babengekho ezingeni elifanayo iqembu lonkana, ngicabanga lokho ukuthi lokhu kube nomkhulu umthelela wobuthaka eqemjini. Kube yinkinga ukuba seqenjini kwaba yinkinga ngisho kwiqembu uqobo. Ukuhluleka ukuhlunga nokubona abantu noma abalingani abangaba umthelela omubi eqenjini kwikusasa lalo.

Ubani onombono eminye ngobuthaka kweqembu?

Ubuthaka engibubonayo ukuthi iqembu alikhulanga ngesibalo sigcine sesi ngabangani njengezithandani. Asimenanga abantu mhlawumbe abanezinkinga ezehlukile nezindlela ezahlukile zokuziphatha. Sazana ngalendlela yokuthi sibengabangani kangangoba asibanga nabo abantu ababeshaya abakhosikazi abo njengakwesinye esisithole laphaya e"conditioning unit" kuyahlekwa.

Ukuthi unkosikazi wafika noBaba ekhaya wafika wahlala phansi, kuyahlekwa. Ehlala phansi uMama wangamkhumula ibhantshi. Uphuma ngapho enkantolo eVerulam weze eThekwini wazovulicala elinjalo. Kepha akukaze kufike kulelozinga thina esilibona lingubuwula kodwa kuyinto ezenzekayo.

Kuyiqiniso ukuthi leliqembu libe nokusondelana kepha njengeqembu kwakumele kuzwanwe, kusetshenzwe, likwazi ukukhula, liphinde libuyekeze okwenziwe. Uma uthola abantu abasha usenqenjini niyakhula ngokwesibalo ngalenkathi senazana kube sekuba ukudonseleka kweqembu phansi liyishaye emuva naphambili. Kungabukeka

njengobuthaka kodwa inhloso enkulu ukub neqembu elinesibalo esinqunyiwe nelizwanayo. Uyabona ke ukukhula kweqembu.

Kukhona enifisa ukukuphawula ngobuthakathaka ngaphambi kokuba siqhubekele kwesibengcono kukho?

Eh enye into ebiyenza kubukeke sengathi kunobuthathaka bekuthi mhlaumbe uma kune ndaba ethinta abantu abaningi kugcine sesixakekile mhlawumbe abanye abant abathandi mhlawumbe kuxoxiswane ngoyo eqenjini igcine ise ishinsha manje sigcina sesinezinto zilengile kushukuthi omunye uzama ukunaka laba abanento asabashiya ngalesosidathi. Kepha ishiyeke kunjalo. Ngicabanga yiloko ebengikubona kubuthathaka bethu okwa manje.

Ningathanda ukukhuluma ngamandla eqembu?

Ya, ukwengeza nje iphuzu elilodwa ngobuthathaka beqembu. Ngicabanga ukuthi okunye kobuthakathaka engibuqhelile kube ukunci kakhulu eqenjini. Nokuba kube into enhle kubeneqembu othembele kulona nezinkinga ebesinazo. Kodwa kwasinye isikhathi nginefmizwa yokuthi sesiqala ukunci kakhulu eqenjini. Kanti inhloso enkulu eqinsweni kwakukuba sibenekhono lokuba sikwazi ukubhekana nezinkinga esingaba nazo emakhaya ngaphandle kokuncika eqenjini.

Yebo ke singakwazi mhlawumbe ukucabanga ngamandla eqembu?

Ngicabanga ukuthi iqembu liye laqina ngokukhula ebunyeni loku kufakazeleke kakhulu

ngesikhathi iqembu liba nenkinga nelinye lamalungu esitokfela, kwakubonakala

ngokusobala ukuthi ukuba indaba yayiphethwe ezingeni liqembu yayingekhe ize ine

yinkinga nakancane. Ngicabanga ukuthi loko enye yezinto eyakulisa ubunye eqenjini.

Ngicabanga ukuthi iqembu belishesha impela???

Amalunga abebamba iqhaza ukuba kukhoa ingxoxo uyabonekwenza kuthi

inkingaeveziwe siyihlasele macala onke,ibicazululwa nguwo wonke umntu okhona,

ngaleyo ndlela izixazululo bezisheshaukutholakala bekushesha kubekhona ukuqhubela

phambili kuba wonke umntu ubekhona ngoba bebezibandakanyanaleyo nkinga

ikhonabebamba iqhaza ngokukhuthalaekuzameni ukuxazululaleyondaba ikhona

Enye into bekukho ukuzinikela, ya nami ndiyabona ikuthi ukuzinikela yiyo into eyenza

iqembu likhulekuba abantu babephatheka kabi umabengazanga becabangaukuthi uma

ngingezi kuzokwenzekani. Ikakhulu inye into ibikhona kukwezethembaeqenjini. Asikho

isikhathi lapho abantu babenemizwaukuthi uma bephawulaokuthile eqenjini lakho

kuzosethsenziswa ukuze bajivazekenoba ibe kulokhukuphindwaphindwa izintoesimweni

lapho bengekhebusizakale mpelaNgako ke ngicabanga ukuthi izinga lemfihlo

beliphezulu, nacho ukuthi bekubalula ukuthi abantu bashintshisane ngezikhundla busuke

ebuholini babuye abalandeli.

Noba leliphi ilunga laliba nethuba lokuphatha umhlangano esukwini likwazi ukuthola

ukuhlonipheka okufanele njengomholi wosuku. Unqondo wokuziphakamisa

wawungekho noba owokuzibukela phansi sonke sasillingane. Ngale kolwazi umntu
ayenalo ngesihloko okwakusuke kukhulunwya ngaso noma isikhundla emphakathini.
Loko kwaba ngamandla eqembu..

Mina ngicabanga ukuthi senikutsho konke siyaphi niyazi? Mina ngicabanga ukuthi
sesifike ekugcinene njengomuntu owasungula iqembu intloso yam yayikukwabelana
ngolwazi ukwenzela umuntu akwazi ukubhekana nezinkinga. Okunye izakhiwo
emphakathini zokusizana nemindeni emishadweni yabo azisekho. Abantu abanayo
intuba yokukhipha ukuxakeka kwabo. Ngenxa yaloko izinga lokuchitheka kwemindeni
liphakeme. Thina Bantu esifundele lomsebenzi sihlose ukwabelana nekhono lokubekana
nenkinga zomshado.

Manje abantu senengakwazi yini ukubukeza izinjongo zeqembu ebezishiwo ekuqaleni?

Mina ndicabanga ukuthi sikwazile ukufinyelala ezinjongweni. Sesingaqla manje olunye
uhlelo. Iqembu lonna liyadingeks ngempela. Kumnandi ukuba nomuntu emphakathini
ongaziqhenyi ngokwabelana ngolwazi. Sigcine nathi sesinolwazi likubhekana
nezinkinga eliseqophelweni eliphezulu.

Ngiyabonga kakhulu ngesikhathi senu futhi ngiyethemba ukuthi nifundile njengoba nami
ngifunde okukhulu kinina. Ngenxa yempilo ebuthakathaka angeke ngikwazi ukuba nani
kuhlelo oluzayo. Inkosi inibusise.

APPENDIX B

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE GROUP WORK

Appendix
ASGW Best Practice Guidelines

Association for Specialists in Group Work
Best Practice Guidelines

Approved by the Executive Board March 29, 1998
Prepared by Lynn Rapin and Linda Keel,
ASGW Ethics Committee Co-Chairs

The Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) is a division of the American Counseling Association whose members are interested in and specialize in group work. We value the creation of community; service to our members, clients, and the profession; and value leadership as a process to facilitate the growth and development of individuals and groups.

The Association for Specialists in Group Work recognizes the commitment of its members to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (as revised in 1995) of its parent organization, the American Counseling Association, and nothing in this document shall be construed to supplant that code. These Best Practice Guidelines are intended to clarify the application of the ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice to the field of group work by defining Group Workers' responsibility and scope of practice involving those activities, strategies and interventions that are consistent and current with effective and appropriate professional ethical and community standards. ASGW views ....

group members, necessarily embrace a certain potential for ethical vulnerability. It is incumbent upon Group Workers to give considerable attention to the intent and context of their actions because the attempts of Group Workers to influence human behavior through group work always have ethical implications. These Best Practice Guidelines address Group Workers' responsibilities in planning, performing and processing groups.

SECTION A: BEST PRACTICE IN PLANNING

A.1. Professional Context and Regulatory Requirements

Group Workers actively know, understand, and apply the ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Best Practice, the ASGW Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers, these ASGW Best Practice Guidelines, the ASGW diversity competencies, the ACA Multicultural Guidelines, relevant state laws, accreditation requirements, relevant National Board for Certified Counselors Codes and Standards, their organization's standards, and insurance requirements impacting the practice of group work.

A.2. Scope of Practice and Conceptual Framework

Group Workers define the scope of practice related to the core and specialization competencies defined in the ASGW Training Standards. Group Workers are aware of personal strengths and weaknesses in leading groups. Group Workers develop and are able to articulate a general conceptual framework to guide practice and a rationale for use of techniques that are to be used. Group Workers limit their practice to those areas for which they meet the training criteria established by the ASGW Training Standards.

A.3. Assessment

a. *Assessment of self.* Group Workers actively assess their knowledge and skills related to the specific group(s) offered. Group Workers assess their values, beliefs, and theoretical orientation and how these impact upon the group, particularly when working with a diverse and multicultural population.

b. *Ecological assessment.* Group Workers assess community needs, agency or organization resources, sponsoring organization mission, staff competency, attitudes regarding group work, professional training levels of potential group leaders regarding group work, client attitudes regarding group work, and multicultural and diversity considerations. Group Workers use this information as the basis for making decisions related to their group practice, or to the implementation of groups for which they have supervisory, evaluation, or oversight responsibilities.

A.4. Program Development and Evaluation

a. *Group Workers identify the type(s) of group(s) to be offered and how they relate to community needs.*

b. *Group Workers concisely state in writing the purpose and goals of the group.* Group Workers also identify the role of the group members in influencing or determining the group goals.

c. *Group Workers set fees consistent with the organization's fee schedule, taking into consideration the financial status and locality of prospective group members.*

d. *Group Workers choose techniques and a leadership style appropriate to the type(s) of group(s) being offered.*

e. *Group Workers have an evaluation plan consistent with regulatory, organization, and insurance requirements, where appropriate.*

f. *Group Workers take into consideration current professional guidelines when using technology, including but not limited to Internet communication.*

A.5. Resources

Group Workers coordinate resources related to the kind of group(s) and group activities to be provided, such as adequate funding; the appropriateness and availability of a trained co-leader; space and privacy requirements for the type(s) of group(s) being offered; marketing and recruiting; and appropriate collaboration with other community agencies and organizations.

A.6. Professional Disclosure Statement

Group Workers have a professional disclosure statement which includes information on confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality; theoretical orientation; the nature, purpose(s), and goals of the group;

the group services that can be provided; the role and responsibility of group members and leaders; Group Workers' qualifications to conduct the specific group(s); specific licenses, certifications, and professional affiliations; and address of licensing/credentialing body.

A.7. Group and Member Preparation

a. *Group Workers screen prospective group members if appropriate to the type of group being offered.* When selection of group members is appropriate, Group Workers identify group members whose needs and goals are compatible with the goals of the group.

b. *Group Workers facilitate informed consent.* Group Workers provide in oral and written form to prospective members (when appropriate to group type) the professional disclosure statement; group purpose and goals; group participation expectations, including voluntary and involuntary membership; role expectations of members and leader(s); policies related to entering and exiting the group; policies governing substance use; policies and procedures governing mandated groups (where relevant); documentation requirements; disclosure of information to others; implications of out-of-group contact or involvement among members; procedures for consultation between group leader(s) and group member(s); fees and time parameters; and potential impacts of group participation.

c. *Group Workers obtain the appropriate consent forms for work with minors and other dependent group members.*

d. *Group Workers define confidentiality and its limits (for example, legal and ethical exceptions and expectations; waivers implicit with treatment plans, documentation, and insurance usage).* Group Workers have the responsibility to inform all group participants of the need for confidentiality and potential consequences of breaching confidentiality and to state that legal privilege does not apply to group discussions (unless provided by state statute).

A.8. Professional Development

Group Workers recognize that professional growth is a continuous, ongoing, developmental process throughout their career.

a. *Group Workers remain current and increase knowledge and skill competencies through activities such as continuing education, profes-* sional supervision, and participation in personal and professional development activities.

b. *Group Workers seek consultation and/or supervision regarding ethical concerns that interfere with effective functioning as a group leader.* Supervisors have the responsibility to keep abreast of consultation, group theory, and process and to adhere to related ethical guidelines.

c. *Group Workers seek appropriate professional assistance for their own personal problems or conflicts that are likely to impair their professional judgement or work performance.*

d. *Group Workers seek consultation and supervision to ensure appropriate practice whenever working with a group for which all knowledge and skill competencies have not been achieved.*

e. *Group Workers keep abreast of group research and development.*

A.9. Trends and Technological Changes

Group Workers are aware of and responsive to technological changes as they affect society and the profession. These include but are not limited to changes in mental health delivery systems; legislative and insurance industry reforms; shifting population demographics and client needs; and technological advances in Internet and other communication and delivery systems. Group Workers adhere to ethical guidelines related to the use of developing technologies.

SECTION B: BEST PRACTICE IN PERFORMING

B.1. Self Knowledge

Group Workers are aware of and monitor their strengths and weaknesses and the effects these have on group members.

B.2. Group Competencies

Group Workers have a basic knowledge of groups and the principles of group dynamics and are able to perform the core group competencies, as described in the ASGW Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers. Additionally, Group Workers have adequate understanding and skill in any group specialty area chosen for practice

(psychotherapy, counseling, task, psychoeducation, as described in the ASGW Training Standards).

B.3. Group Plan Adaptation

a. *Group Workers apply and modify knowledge, skills, and techniques appropriate to group type and stage and to the unique needs of various cultural and ethnic groups.*

b. *Group Workers monitor the group's progress toward the group goals and plan.*

c. *Group Workers clearly define and maintain ethical, professional, and social relationship boundaries with group members as appropriate to their role in the organization and the type of group being offered.*

B.4. Therapeutic Conditions and Dynamics

Group Workers understand and are able to implement appropriate models of group development, process observation, and therapeutic conditions.

B.5. Meaning

Group Workers assist members in generating meaning from the group experience.

B.6. Collaboration

Group Workers assist members in developing individual goals and respect group members as co-equal partners in the group experience.

B.7. Evaluation

Group Workers include evaluation (both formal and informal) between sessions and at the conclusion of the group.

B.8. Diversity

Group Workers practice with broad sensitivity to client differences, including but not limited to ethnic, gender, religious, sexual, psychological maturity, economic class, family history, physical characteristics or limitations, and geographic location. Group Workers continuously seek information regarding the cultural issues of the diverse population with whom they are working both by interaction with participants and from using outside resources.

B.9. Ethical Surveillance

Group Workers employ an appropriate ethical decision making model in responding to ethical challenges and issues and in determining courses of action and behavior for self and group members. In addition, Group Workers employ applicable standards as promulgated by ACA, ASGW, or other appropriate professional organizations.

SECTION C: BEST PRACTICE IN GROUP PROCESSING

C.1. Processing Schedule

Group Workers process the workings of the group with themselves, group members, supervisors, or other colleagues, as appropriate. This may include assessing progress on group and member goals, leader behaviors and techniques, group dynamics, and interventions and developing understanding and acceptance of meaning. Processing may occur both within sessions and before and after each session, at time of termination, and at later follow-up, as appropriate.

C.2. Reflective Practice

Group Workers attend to opportunities to synthesize theory and practice and to incorporate learning outcomes into ongoing groups. Group Workers attend to session dynamics of members and their interactions and also attend to the relationship between session dynamics and leader values, cognition, and affect.

C.3. Evaluation and Follow-Up

a. *Group Workers evaluate process and outcomes.* Results are used for ongoing program planning, improvement, and revisions of current group and/or to contribute to professional research literature. Group Workers follow all applicable policies and standards in using group material for research and reports.

b. *Group Workers conduct follow-up contact with group members, as appropriate, to assess outcomes or when requested by a group member(s).*

C.4. Consultation and Training With Other Organizations

Group Workers provide consultation and training to organizations in and out of their setting, when appropriate. Group Workers seek out consultation as needed with competent professional persons knowledgeable about group work.

LINDI MASEME

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P.O. Box 10869
Marine Parade
Durban, 4056
FAX: 3065124

Date: ....

Address:...................

....

....

....

Dear ....

Marriage counselling forms a major part of my therapeutic work and is one of my major areas of interest. My experience in working with married couples has prompted me to establish a **Marriage Enrichment Group**, the central aim being to help married couples identify ways of enhancing their relationship with each other and reducing areas of potential conflict.

Our first group meeting will take place on .... and will be aimed at identifying group objectives and goals. I would appreciate it if you would kindly complete the section below, indicating whether or not you and your partner wish to join the group, and returning it to the above address as soon as possible.

* **Please note: Rules of confidentiality will apply to the group.**

***Group therapy rates will apply (1/4 of the individual therapy rate per session)**

Yours truly,

L. MASEME

RELATIONSHIP AND MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT GROUP PROGRAMME

By Lindi Maseme (2001)

This programme is designed with a central aim to help married couples and people in relationships identify ways of enhancing their relationship with each other and reducing areas of potential conflict.

The programme seeks to answer the following questions that are divided into three themes :

THEME 1: THE EXPECTATIONS TRAP

SESSION 1

Am I expecting too much from my marriage/ relationship?

SESSION 2

Is there more to intimacy than sex?

SESSION 3

How can I make the most of my In-law relationships?

SESSION 4

Can our marriage handle children?

SESSION 5

How do I find time for my partner and my kids?

SESSION 6

How much should I expect my partner to do around the house?

THEME 2 : COMMUNICATION

SESSION 7

How can I deepen the communication between my partner and myself?

SESSION 8

Do I need to tell my partner everything?

SESSION 9

How do I handle conflict in my relationships ?

SESSION 10

When is forgiveness needed in a relationship?

SESSION 11

When is it time to seek professional counselling?

THEME 3 : SPIRITUALITY IN MARRIAGE/ RELATIONSHIP

SESSION 12

What does submission really mean?

SESSION 13

How can we grow spiritually as a couple?

SESSION 14

What if my partner isn't a Christian?

It is worth mentioning here that some questions are more than casual, and some subjects are more than superficial. This programme offers thoughtful answers to the most asked questions. Some ideas are drawn from three world renowned psychologists (Gaither, G.; G.G-Tchividjian; and S. Alexander-Yates), each reflecting a wealth of experience, perspective, and expertise. The content is specially arranged to draw you into the discussion- and always leaves you with practical ideas to put the information to work in your life. It's the next best thing to a long talk over a cup of coffee!

Whether you are courting, engaged, newly-wed, or have been married for years, you will find this programme brimming with warm, wise, and thoroughly workable counsel. Do make the best of it!

PROGRAMME : 04/03/01

WELCOME

INTRODUCTIONS + INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS

INTRODUCTION OF CONTENT

SETTING OF DATES

PROCESS

EVALUATIONS

CLOSURE

APPENDIX D

SELF AWARENESS QUESTIONNAIRE BY DANN, 2001

Developing your Emotional Intelligence Quiz

The first half of this quiz tests your self-awareness competencies: awareness of feelings, personal insight and self-assurance. Tick one response to each question, 1–20. Using the legend below, add up your score selecting the corresponding commentary as a guide to your present level and needs.

Grade	Legend and scoring Instructions	Score
Always	There are no exceptions, you would have to think consciously about behaving any other way and changing what you have always done.	Add 4 points for every tick
Routinely	Every week you would present yourself this way or react this way with few exceptions.	Add 3 points for every tick
Sometimes	At your best, this is what you would be seen doing.	Add 2 points for every tick
Rarely	It would be considered unusual for this to be what you say, think or do.	Add 1 point for every tick
Never	There would be no exceptions; you do not present this way to people at any time.	No points

Awareness of feelings: Recognising one's emotions, their effects and capability to deal with them.

Self-awareness competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Always
1 Do you know which emotions you are feeling and can you accurately label them individually?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2 Can you say why you are feeling those emotions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3 Do you recognise the chain from experiencing an emotion to taking action based on it (ie the links between your feelings and what you think, do, and say)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4 Do you recognise how your feelings affect your performance, the quality of experience at work and your relationships?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5 Do you have a guiding awareness of your values or goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 Are you aware of any gaps between espoused values & actual behaviour?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Personal insight: Knowing one's key strengths and frailties

Self-awareness competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Always
7 Are you aware of your strengths and weaknesses to the degree that others familiar with you would agree with you?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8 To what extent do you make decisions in relationships based on your values? (ie experience emotional boundaries in relationships.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9 Are you, or do you consciously make time to be reflective? (Understanding the power of learning from experience even if reflection is not your natural style?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 Are you open to candid feedback?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11 Are you objective about others feedback and able to generate positive strokes for yourself appropriately?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Self-awareness competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Always
12 Are you open to new perspectives?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13 Are you committed to continuous learning and self-development?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14 Would others say that you show a perspective about yourself and a sense of humour?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Self-assurance: Sureness about one's self-worth and capabilities.

Self-awareness competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Always
15 Do you present yourself with self-possession; have poise but with warmth?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16 Can you celebrate diversity in personal and professional life?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17 Do you voice views that are unpopular and go out on a limb for what is right?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18 Are you decisive using emotional and analytical information and able to make sound judgements?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Self-awareness competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Alw
19 Are you decisive despite uncertainties (perceptions of risk) and pressures?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20 Are you generally recognised as self-confident?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Self-awareness scores

Score = 80–60

Congratulations! You have a high to exceptional awarenes of your own emotions, thoughts and resulting behaviour. You would have the ability to reflect on incidents that did not go well or did not go as expected and to analyse your part in that sequence of events. You would recognise the difference between *doing* something differently and *being* differently about something.

You would monitor your attitude and think about how it affected your performance and how it resulted in an unexpected response from others. You may only be self-aware after an event when you get flashes of inspiration about what you could have done differently.

Your developmental step is to become self-aware either prior to, or during, an unhelpful interaction. You will be ab to use your increased self-awareness to gain improved self-regulation in managing your emotions and holding back unhelpful impulses. You probably prepare for potential conflict by thinking out what could happen and devising tactics or strategies to achieve more helpful outcomes.

Score = 59–40

Well done, you should be pleased with the results and these would reflect the quality of your relationships at work, home and socially. If you find that relationships are of concern, then review your quiz responses when you have some time set aside for yourself. You should as a rule have answered most questions as 'routinely' or 'sometimes'.

Reflect on the reasons that you put a 'sometimes' response. Write down specific incidents that remind you of times when you did not display emotionally intelligent behaviour. Think about the environment you were in and write down what negative influences were acting on you. Record both your physical and mental state. Think back to incidents as a child that led you to have moments of personal insight and self-discovery.

Think about the behaviour of others and record what triggered emotions and unhelpful responses in you. If possible, enrol others in helping you to relive an event in slow motion for the purpose of greater understanding. Think about questions that you could ask others in the future to check out how you are coming across and being understood.

In the future, try to stop yourself proactively from repeating mistakes. Alternatively, catch yourself in the middle and calm yourself or ask for co-operation in others to avoid a poor outcome. Preparing and rehearsing for handling difficult interactions may well be very rewarding. Do not be shy to ask for help from those that you perceive as having greater skill than your own.

Score = 39–20

The way you act or the responses that you get from others may puzzle you. You may feel misunderstood a significan amount of the time and not understand what you do that gets you the frequently occurring results. Enlist the help of a friend. Get them to complete the questionnaire as if they are scoring it about you. Go through the responses and discuss with them what happens to you by reflecting on specific events that you have shared or that have been reported by others.

Score = 19–0

Thank you for being so honest. Showing integrity is a grea EI strength. You would benefit from doing the exercises in the *Understanding Emotional Intelligence in a Week* book for a period of three months. Alternatively or in addition, doing a course would help you to increase your self-awareness and prepare you to develop your EQ further at home and work. This score does not mean that you necessarily have poor social skills in relating to others, just that you are not particularly aware of how or why you behave the way you do.

The second half covers self-control competencies: self-regulation, authenticity, accountability, flexibility and self-motivation. Tick a single response to each question 21–43. Using the legend, add up your score selecting the corresponding commentary, as a guide to your present self control and development needs.

Self-regulation: Managing emotions and holding back unhelpful impulses.

Self-control competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Always
21 Are you able to stop acting on impulse?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22 Are you able to remain collected, positive and unflustered even at testing times?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23 Are you able to identify when your behaviour is unproductive or unhelpful?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24 Do you manage distressing emotions well, reducing anxiety associated with these situations?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25 Would others say that you are capable of remaining lucid and focused under pressure?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Authenticity: Being true to yourself and others.

Self-control competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Always
26 Are you able to build trust by displaying congruent behaviour, ie by your words and actions being aligned?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Self-control competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	A...
27 Would others say you are beyond reproach, acting ethically and that you are challenging of your own motives?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28 Even when in the minority, are you capable of standing up for your values?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29 When you slip back to old bad habits, do you have a sense of humour and some compassion about it?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Accountability: Taking responsibility, owning your performance.

Self-control competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Alwa
30 Do you take responsibility for your actions and inaction where appropriate?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31 Do you clear up assumptions and misconceptions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32 Do you keep promises?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33 Do you hold yourself accountable to objectives?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Self-control competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Always
34 Would others say that you prioritise what is important or urgent (or both) every day?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Flexibility: The ability to embrace and adapt to change including overcoming barriers.

Self-control competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Always
35 Do you allow for change in plans and accept the need for some uncertainty?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36 Are you capable of letting go of hobby horses and accepting shifting priorities during a challenging period of change?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37 Are you adaptable in how you perceive events or different peoples?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38 Are you open to issues that confront you with personal implications?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39 Do you explore your personal issues with others?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Self-motivation: Positively managing your outlook.

Self-control competencies	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Routinely	Alw
40 Are you driven to improve and meet high standards?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41 Would people say that you look for the opportunity first before the problem?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42 Do you demonstrate commitment in relationships and explore barriers and boundaries?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43 Do you show persistence in overcoming setbacks and pursuing positive outcomes?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Self-control scores

Score = 88–66

If you have answered most questions as Always or Routinely – congratulations! (If you have achieved this score through a wide variation of responses [noughts and fours] you should look at the development guidance in the other Score Guides as well.) You have a high to exceptiona capability to moderate your behaviour. You would have t ability to reflect on incidents that did not go well and to analyse the chain of emotions which lead to unhelpful behaviour. You would recognise when the chain could ha

been broken and the point at which you could have chosen to behave differently.

If your ability for self-control is combined with a high self-awareness (and it is not necessarily so in all cases) then your developmental areas will be to increase your awareness of others and your social skills. You can also increase your coaching capability so that you can help others achieve what you have achieved for yourself.

Subjects for development: mentoring, being a role model, coaching skills, facilitation, change agency. Generate a development plan around those aspects of any competence that you have had lower scores in which includes using your strengths.

Score = 65–44
Well done, you should be pleased with the results. You should as a rule have answered most questions as 'routinely' or 'sometimes'. Reflect on the reasons that you put a 'sometimes' response. Write down specific incidents that remind you of times when you did not control your behaviour or display the characteristics that you would ideally wish to demonstrate. Think about the environment you were in and write down what negative influences were acting on you. Think about what stimulated a chain of emotions and unhelpful responses in you.

Think back to incidents as a child that may be leading you in the present day to assign incorrect motives to the behaviour of others. Think about questions that you could ask others in the future to check out what their motive is for

their behaviour or their responses to you. In the future, try to stop yourself proactively from repeating mistakes. Alternatively, catch yourself in the middle and calm yourself or ask for co-operation in others to avoid a poor outcome. Getting a better result will outweigh any temporary feelings of 'losing face' or 'giving ground'.

Score = 43–22
The way you act or the responses that you get from others may puzzle you. You may feel misunderstood a significan amount of the time and not understand what you do which gets you the results that frequently occur. Enlist the help of a friend. Learn to ask for specific feedback from others.

Get into a pattern of preparing for, conducting and reflecting on interactions with people. For example, you may have regular meetings both at work, socially or in the community. If you are experiencing regular or ad-hoc difficulties then do some head clearing before the next event. Get a friend to complete the questionnaire as if they are scoring it about you. Go through the responses and discuss with them what happens to you by reflecting on specific events that you have shared or that have been reported by others.

Score = 21–0
Thank you for being so honest. Showing integrity is a grea EI strength. You would benefit from doing the exercise in the grades above and doing a course which would help yo to increase both your self-awareness and self-regulation. This score does not mean that you necessarily have poor
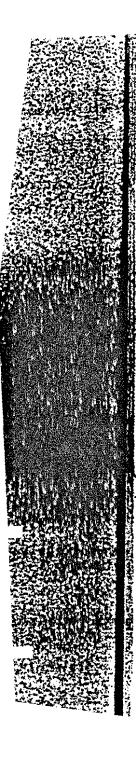
social skills in relating to others, just that you are not particularly aware of how or why you behave the way you do.

Summary

So far, you have been given information about the number of leading EI assessments for you to consider doing one as part of your development and maturity. You have been to real life stories by individuals who experienced EI development for the first time and by practitioners in the field. You have been given part of my story for the last three to four years using EI assessments and development for my company's benefit as well as my own. Now you need to make some decisions, even if it is just to reflect on the content of the book for a while.

As you read through the book you were asked to make notes as they occurred to you and to ask yourself:

- Do I want to know what my EQ is at present? Yes or no?
- Does one of the different approaches to EI assessment appeal to me? Does one of the approaches align with my company's competency framework or HRM initiatives?
- Do I want to develop my EI and gain more emotional knowledge, emotional competence and abilities?
- What is my personal Business Case for investment in EI discovery and development?
- What situations in my life could be alleviated by managing them in a more Emotionally Intelligent way?

Development planning

Remember, there are two types of learning, so cramming or swotting up in books will not enhance your EI significantly.

1 Cognitive: Cognitive learning is about absorbing new data and insights into existing frameworks of association and understanding. Emotional learning involves that and more. We also need to engage that part of the brain where our emotional signature is stored. Changing habits such as learning to approach people positively rather than avoiding them, to listen better or to give feedback skilfully is much more challenging than simply adding new data to old.

2 Emotional: Emotional learning involves new ways of thinking and acting that are more in tune with our identity – our values and beliefs and attitudes. If you are told to learn a new Word Processing program, you will probably get on with it; however, if you are told that you need to improve control of your temper, you are likely to be upset or offended. Thus the prospect of needing to develop greater emotional intelligence is likely to generate resistance to change. You should test your readiness to change by committing to continue the development started whilst reading this book within 24 hours of closing it.

If you have completed the quiz in this book, you have begun to understand some EI development priorities. Whilst this is an important part of the process, you may find that historical commitments overwhelm you if you go straight to EI development priorities. PDPs are compiled frequently in a well-meaning way. However, real life intervenes: work deadlines and family priorities. The PDP becomes a subject of guilt rather than renewal. Generating fewer, more realistic learning outcomes with sensible milestones should achieve better results and high morale.

Decide what life/work balance is important to you, discuss it with people close to you and come up with a workable scheme to generate some space in your life for you. This may entail renegotiations of existing relationships with partners and children, co-workers, bosses, friends and family.

Consider asking someone to coach you or set up mutual coaching sessions. If a mentoring scheme is available at work or through a relevant institute, ask to be considered. Prepare a set of desired learning outcomes as part of your preparation.

Review development priorities for changes every month. Have you or the business moved on or become divergent? List what is both urgent and a priority first, then list everything else in order of importance.

Reflection exercises

Our emotional intelligence is both innate and shaped by circumstance and environment. The good news is that it can be enhanced in adulthood. Complete this exercise after a short period of developing an EI competence. Ask the following questions in self-study or with a friend or colleague: