People As Partners

TI 036 - Thematic

By

Richard Wettstone
PEOPLE AS PARTNERS

Outline of Procedures

SESSION I (2 hrs.)

A. Review Purpose of Group

B. Discuss Ground Rules:
   1. Both attend all sessions
   2. Confidentiality
   3. Taping? -- Can tape some interactions if group would like
   4. Giving feedback to other members of group -- Why important and how done properly (See handout)
   5. Any group would like?

C. Explain basic format of the course, handouts and resources available in Counseling Center (See list of tapes and books)

D. Explain our role as leaders -- Facilitators/Participants/Resource persons

E. 3-Part Introductions -- Rotating Time-keeper
   1. Introduce/describe partner to the group (3 minutes)
   2. Group asks questions about above partner to introducer (2 min)
   3. Partner reacts to his/her introduction/description (3 min.)

F. Summary reactions to session

G. Explain Homework:
   1. Read handout on giving feedback
   2. Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or Firo-B Scale
   3. Wettstone Compatability Scale

COMMENTS ABOUT SESSION I

The major part of session one is spent with Section E, the 3-part Introductions. The main purpose of this exercise is to get people warmed up to each other, establish some trust in the group, and help them learn a lot about each other in a fairly short period of time. The format is very structured because with eight people in the group plus two leaders which also participate in the exercises
this results in a long drawn out process if the time limits are not adhered to strictly. I have found the procedure where each person in the group takes turns keeping the time and calling out at the end of the allotted time works well. The exercise is particularly good at determining how people in the group view their partners, how they present them to other people, and how their partner reacts as they're being presented to the group. Basically, this three-part introduction exercise provides a lot of data with which to base future group discussions. The Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, the Firo-B Scale, and the Wettstone Compatibility Scale are used more or less as adjunct information and to stimulate discussion between partners and within the group. Results of these scales are compared with perceptions and reactions couples obtain from people in the group.

SESSION II. Feedback and Communication

A. Discuss elements comprising communication process (verbal and nonverbal -- giving and receiving, ego states) parent, adult, child -- 5 minutes

B. Nonverbal exercise with partner -- using touch (massage) -- 10 minutes
   1. Experience both giving and receiving roles by massaging shoulders and neck or hand of partner (6 minutes - 3 each)
   2. Discuss what it felt like as giver and receiver (3 minutes)

C. Nonverbal exercise using motion/posture, facial pantomime (No talking!) -- 10 minutes
   1. Communicate a feeling about something that happened to you today to your own partner (3 minutes)
   2. Reverse roles on cue (3 minutes)
   3. Discuss with each other what you were communicating and what it was like as sender and receiver (3 minutes)

D. Rephrasing exercise with another partner -- 15 minutes -- State Purpose
   1. Talk about a problem you have with your partner, then reverse and be listener (3 minutes each) -- Leaders model
   2. Then discuss what like (2 minutes)
   3. Each person must rephrase content and feeling before responding back to partner.

PURPOSES:
   1. To practice listening and reflecting skills
   2. To hear what other couples have problems with.
E. Rephrasing exercise with own partner in front of group. (50 minutes)

1. Talk about any issue you want, but not a big problem (5 minutes).
2. Explain purpose: attend to process.
3. Rotate role of referee/time-keeper.
4. Group members give feedback to couple on any aspect of their communication (5 minutes).
5. Couple responds (1 minute).

F. Handout contract outlines (homework) and explain what to do (5 minutes).

1. Do only first half (items 1-8) this week.
2. The list of items is not exhaustive -- add any you can think of.
3. See separate sheet for steps to follow in making a marriage "contract".

COMMENTS ABOUT SESSION II

The main emphasis of session two is to increase communication skills, beginning with nonverbal aspects and progressing to the verbal aspect. I have found some of the nonverbal exercises and excellent way to get people warmed up to working in the group and also providing them with more data and information about themselves in relationship to giving and receiving and communicating feelings to each other. I have found Rodger's rephrasing exercise to be extremely effective in getting people to develop a communication pattern that can be used at times when communication tends to break down during disagreements and other difficult situations. The rephrasing exercise tends to give couples a tool to use in discussing uncomfortable topics in front of other people and places a focus on the process of learning the skills rather than the content of the discussion.

SESSION III. Communication Exercises and Contract Discussion

A. Warm-up exercises -- "Playing" with partner

PURPOSE: To learn the difference between parent and adult interactions and child interaction with partner and that childlike playing can be fun, healthy, and OK.

B. Anger exercise -- 4 sentences to complete, 1 at a time without monitoring your response; print response so others can read.

1. "I feel angry when others . . . ."
2. "I feel that my anger is . . . ."
3. "When others express anger toward me I feel . . ."
4. "I feel that the anger of others is . . ."

THEN DISCUSS REACTION.

C. Learning to fight fair -- how to identify own fight style
   1. Summarize Bach and Wyden's rules of fair fighting; and give some examples of dirty fighting.

D. Continue with rephrasing exercise (with own partner) -- More discussion of issues identified last week
   1. Two couples at a time -- one functioning as referee
   2. Become more problem-oriented -- the area of discrepancy/difference from scale or contract discussion
   3. Get feedback from referring couple

E. Contract Discussion -- as many items as can get through in remaining time.
   1. Each couple shares what they have with the group.
   2. Group members question and react to each other.
   3. Overall reactions to session.

F. Explain homework:
   1. Finish writing and discussing contract using previous steps.
   2. Take FIRO-B

COMMENTS ABOUT SESSION III

Communication skill building is continued in session three with the emphasis on dealing with anger, ways to express anger, and using some of Bach and Wyden's rules of fair fighting. Rephrasing exercises at this point become more problem oriented so that conflicts which may appear as a result of writing the contract can be discussed in a rational, productive way.

SESSION IV. Contract Discussion

A. Warm-up exercises
   1. Body Sculptures -- Mainly used as vehicle for couples to give feedback to each other about how they see people relating or interacting.
B. Contract discussion -- same format as previously

C. Summary of session -- general "rap" session

D. Explain homework:
   1. Prioritize list of values on Rokeach list -- score your compatibility using sum of difference scores
   2. Discuss results of Wettstone Compatability Scale in terms of major discrepancies and C's, or undecided areas.

SESSION V. Contract Presentations and Same-Sexed Groups

A. Warm-up exercises (10 minutes)
   1. Discuss results of Firo-B with group
   2. Magic shop

B. Complete contract discussion if unfinished

C. Interpret results of Taylor-Johnson or Firo-B Scale

D. Segregated discussion groups to discuss anything related to contract outline

E. Return to large group to share reactions or ask questions of other group (15 minutes)

F. Homework:
   Make any needed revisions in your contract.

COMMENTS ABOUT SESSION IV AND V

The main focus of four and five is to discuss the contracts and to acquaint couples with their similarities and differences that they may not have been aware of previously and also to provide other couples in the group with some alternative ways of dealing with some of the issues in the contract. Body sculptures are encouraged at any point from session four on and mainly used as a vehicle for couples to give feedback to each other about how they see other couples relating or interacting. From my experience, typically the entire group becomes involved in molding two people together to represent how they interact with each other. Usually the postures represent expressions of warmth toward each other, control or power in the relationship, and patterns of communication. Also, at this point in session four, it has been found that the group is often ready for a general discussion about issues that may have come up in the group.
The committed couples group is designed for couples with an expressed commitment to each other, either in the form of a future marriage relationship, and/or a mutual intimacy beyond the typical dating relationship. The group typically meets for 6-8 sessions lasting 1½ to 2 hours each. The optimum number of participants has been found to be ten, four couples and two co-leaders.

Although the primary purpose of the group is to facilitate more intelligent mate selection by helping each couple develop a tentative "contract" or agreement to clarify their relationship, other desired goals of the group are: (1) to know each other in a pair (and oneself) in a more complete way; (2) to increase each person's awareness as to what a marriage relationship entails; (3) to identify potential conflict areas and/or bring already existing conflicts into a clearer view or perspective; (4) to learn some ways to resolve conflicts (not necessarily to finish resolving them in the group) through better communication and (5) to provide additional resources for better interpersonal relationships in the form of activities/exercises, books and handouts. The group is not designed to be a therapy group for people to work out personal problems they may have experienced for quite some time; rather its general emphasis is preventative and skill building in nature.

Ultimate outcome hoped for are: (1) that this group experience will increase the confidence in those couples ready to engage in a permanent relationship by reducing the frequency of negative surprises, so (2) function as a support for those who do not feel ready to commit themselves further until certain conflicts are worked through, or who ultimately decide that it would not be appropriate to maintain a permanent relationship.
SESSION VI. Wind-up and Evaluations (Informal party or meeting) optional

A. Left-overs from previous sessions

B. Feedback time -- how people see each couple (often just a summary of feedback given in previous sessions)

C. Role reversal role plays -- for anyone wanting to discuss or work on conflict areas.

D. Completion of written evaluation questionnaire.

E. Verbal discussion of entire group experience.

F. Talk about meeting privately with anyone having more things to talk about or deal with.

COMMENTS ABOUT SESSION VI

Session six has been mainly devoted to summary of the group, feedback for couples, role reversal where it's appropriate when people are still trying to work through something that the group can help with, and primarily a way of getting feedback about the group and how it can be improved. Both verbal and written feedback from participants in the past has been very helpful in revising group procedures to make it a better group. Also at this point, group leaders are watching for people who may have some unfinished business or may have stimulated a conflict as a result of being in the group. They are encouraged, when appropriate, to continue in counseling with one of the leaders of the group. This discussion is done privately at the conclusion of the last group meeting.
The general structure or content of the group sessions is comprised of introduction and trust-building exercises, learning how to give feedback, developing communication skills, discussing openly and explicitly one's feelings and attitudes about all aspects of a marriage relationship so that each person knows what he's "buying into," observe how other couples communicate and attempt to resolve their difficulties, and experience the other partner's position by means of role reversal exercises.

BASIC RATIONALE FOR THE GROUP'S DEVELOPMENT

Just as people go to school and take steps to plan for a life's work, it seems just as reasonable for a person to make the same type of organized preparation in the choice of living with someone for an extended period of time and often for the rest of one's life. Unfortunately, there are very few organized outlets for such active preparation for marriage that presently exist in our society, (e.g., in most communities it is still taboo to live together before marriage; very few people actually request premarital counseling from competent professionals). The fact is that many American couples pass their courtship whispering sweet nothings in one another's ears.

The statistics for married couples are quite revealing. Bach and Wyden report in their book, The Intimate Enemy, that . . . "one out of every three marriages ends in divorce, and in California, the figure is approaching an almost incredible one out of every two" (p. 31). Knox and Knox (1975) have reported in their research with married couples that 94% found differences in their attitudes toward sex and children only after they were married. Eighty-five percent (85%) of them found differing values on money matters.

It is my feeling from working with couples individually and in groups that unless communication skills are specifically taught to them (or learned indirectly)
from parents who are effective at it, many people are unable to acquire a productive pattern of communication. Even more importantly, many couples are unaware of all the ways in which they actively learn more about each other in order to be able to make a more rational decision about the future permanence of their relationship. Unfortunately, many of the problems which couples are willing to confront after marriage seem to already be so deeply rooted that the most attractive alternative at that point is to choose a separation of divorce, albeit the emotionally painful and expensive process entailed. It is for these reasons that this committed couples group evolved. In summary, the emphasis in this mini-course is on growth and prevention rather than a reaction to problem after the marriage ceremony.


WHAT IS A MARRIAGE CONTRACT?

A marriage contract is a written or verbal agreement between two people, which clarifies their relationship by making more explicit each person's attitudes or expectations about any aspects that will influence their relationship, such as where to live, whether to have children and how many, division of labor, etc. Its purpose is not to function like an inflexible legal contract, but only a statement of each person's position on any important issue at that given time. The contract should be subject to revision any time it is deemed appropriate by the parties involved.

STEPS TO FOLLOW IN MAKING A MARRIAGE CONTRACT

1. Work alone and write down what you want for yourself in each area listed; don't show or discuss with partner yet.

2. Try and predict how your partner will respond to each section (you can write down if you want to).

3. Get together with your partner; discuss and compare what you have.

4. Make the best "contract" for the two of you that you can, noting the major areas of discrepancy or incompatibility.

5. Remember that anything can be changed any time either of you agree to it.
COMMITTED COUPLES GROUP
Items to be Considered in Contract

ITEMS

1. Division of Labor (Tasks and Chores)
   - Who does what -- definition of roles (e.g., "I think laundry is women's work.")
   - Procedures for revision.

2. Division of Labor (Child Care)
   - Who takes care of child if both parents working (e.g., "If I have the child,
you have to take care of him three nights a week." "I'd rather have a
child than work.")

3. Professional Employment
   - Who works.
   - Employment expectations for spouse, if any (e.g., type of career, environment,
how much $$ support.)

4. Financial Responsibility
   - Amount of income desired (material values) (e.g., "I want nice furniture,
but you'd rather spend money skiing, traveling, etc.")
   - Spending -- who, how much, on what (e.g., "I'd like to save money, but you
squander it as soon as you get it.")
   - Bookkeeping (e.g., Who is responsible, joint or separate accounts?)

5. Religious Beliefs and Practices
   - Coping with different religious beliefs.
   - Religious rituals (e.g., "How are we going to express our religion; I
like to go to church and you don't.")
   - What children will be taught.

6. Primary Pair Sexual Relations
   - When (e.g., "I'm always too tired and never in the mood to make love at
night.")
   - Frequency.
   - How -- who initiates, types of foreplay, how aggressive, etc.
   - Body image.
   - Sexual communication (e.g., "Do you like me to make a lot of noises when
we're making love?")
   - Privacy rights.
7. Relationships Beyond the Primary Pair

- Intimacy without sexual relationship.
- Sexual relationship without personal intimacy (e.g., "If you ever have sex with someone while you're away on a business trip, I don't want to know about it." "I don't approve of you having any outside sexual relationships.")
- Sexual relationship with a close friend, swapping partners with friends, etc.
- Degree of openness about outside relationships.

8. Privacy Rights

- Snooping (e.g., I would rather you didn't open my mail.)
- Time alone.

9. Communication Expectations

- When best time (e.g., "You're never around when I want to talk.")
- Frequency (e.g., "I'd like to schedule time for us to talk about us at least twice a week.")
- Arguments and fighting -- when and how -- ways of handling disappointments (e.g., "I really dislike it when we fight in front of our friends.")
- Legitimate behavioral expectations (e.g., "You're supposed to be supportive when I feel down.")
- Roles being played (Parent-Adult-Child).

10. Social Needs and Expectations (Recreation, vacations)

- Time spent together and independently (e.g., "I really like having some time to myself each week to be with the guys.")
- Types of recreation desired (e.g., "I prefer going to parties and you seem satisfied to just sit and watch TV.")
- Time spent in recreation.
- Where to vacation (e.g., "I prefer camping and you like the beach.")
- Different hobbies and interests.

11. Friends

- Different friends -- who.
- Amount of time spent with friends (e.g., "I'm beginning to resent always having your friends around when we're together.")
- Number of friends.
- Confidences to friends (e.g., "I'm sorry I talked about that in front of her.")

12. Couple's Nuclear Families

- Which families to visit, when and how frequently (e.g., "If we go to your house for Thanksgiving, I expect to go to mine for Christmas.")
- Parents' dislike of partner choice.
- Dislike of partner's parents -- how to deal with (e.g., "I can't stand your mother's nagging; do I have to go?")
- Meddling of parents (e.g., handling gifts and loans).
13. Children

- Number of children.
- Spacing/timing.
- Discipline of children.
- Time with children (e.g., "if I hassle with the kids all day, you can take care of them in the evening.")
- Sex education.

14. Use of alcohol and/or other Drugs
- Who does it.
- When and where
- How much (e.g., "I really dislike your smoking so much."
  "Do you always have to drink so much when we party?")

15. Renewal and Revision of Contract

- How often.
- Procedures for.
- Dissolution of.

16. Type of Marriage Ceremony Desired
EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE
Committed Couples Group

1. How did you feel about the general group interaction? (e.g., How free did you feel in the group to express yourself and your relationship with your partner? Was there any change in the progress of the group?)

2. How could the group interaction have been changed or improved?

3. What aspect(s) of the group was most helpful? Least helpful?

4. Has this experience changed or modified your opinions and feelings about marriage and/or commitment? Did it reveal new conflict areas?

5. Do you know your partner better as a result of this experience? In what ways?
6. Do you know yourself better? If so, how?

7. What parts of the contract did you find:
   Most meaningful:

   Least Meaningful:

8. What would be your comments about leader involvement?

9. Would you recommend this type of group to a friend?

10. Additional comments, feedback, suggestions: (continue on back)
HELPFUL RESOURCES RELATED TO THE ENRICHMENT OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Books Available in Counseling Center:

5. McCary, James L. Human Sexuality. (Hardback)

Cassette Audiotape Programs Available in Counseling Center:

1. "Making Marriage Work" by Dr. Carl Whitaker; produced by Instructional Dynamics Incorporated.
2. "Overcoming Sexual Inadequacy" by Dr. Stephen Neiger; produced by Instructional Dynamics Incorporated.
Below is a list of 17 values arranged in alphabetical order. Your task is to arrange them in order of their importance to YOU as guiding principles in YOUR life.

Ambitious (hard-working, aspiring)
Broadminded (open-minded)
Capable (competent, effective)
Cheerful (lighthearted, jovial)
Clean (neat, tidy)
Courageous (standing up for your beliefs)
Forgiving (willing to pardon others)
Helpful
Honest (sincere, truthful)
Imaginative (daring, creative)
Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient)
Intellectual (intelligent, reflective)
Logical (consistent, rational)
Loving (affectionate, tender)
Obedient (dutiful, respectful)
Polite (courteous, well-mannered)
Self-Controlled (restrained, self-disciplined)
WETSTONE COMPATIBILITY SCALE FOR COUPLES

The 50 items in this questionnaire refer to various situations affecting compatibility in relationships. For each item circle the letter that best represents your feelings or attitudes about it nowadays. Be sure to consider each item individually in terms of the way you view it and answer every question.

A--Emphatic No  B--Mostly No  C--Undecided  D--Mostly Yes  E--Emphatic Yes

1. A B C D E Do you like to belong to clubs and social organizations?
2. A B C D E Should women have as much right to propose dates to men, as men to women?
3. A B C D E Could you be happy in a relationship in which the household chores were shared, if both partners held a full-time job?
4. A B C D E Do you feel that a woman should give up her job to care for a child if both parents are working?
5. A B C D E Do you believe in a God who answers prayer?
6. A B C D E Do you prefer spending money for immediate recreational enjoyment rather than saving it for use in the future?
7. A B C D E Is it all right to fight with your partner?
8. A B C D E Do you enjoy the social company of members of the same sex more than that of the opposite sex?
9. A B C D E Would you enjoy social activities out more than a quiet atmosphere at home?
10. A B C D E Should a married couple be entitled to open each other's mail?
11. A B C D E Can happiness in marriage be achieved without good sexual compatibility?
12. A B C D E Do you see yourself as owning your own home within five years after marriage?
13. A B C D E Do you usually respond to an open display of affection?
14. A B C D E Should a married couple have separate checking accounts?
15. A B C D E Are you usually even-tempered and happy in your outlook on life?
16. A B C D E Do you usually say openly what's on your mind when you are angry at your partner?
17. A B C D E Is it all right for a married man to take another woman to lunch?
18. A B C D E Should everyone have some time to himself/herself?

19. A B C D E Should you go where the male is offered a job if both male and female are offered equally good jobs in different localities?

20. A B C D E Do you enjoy entertaining friends?

21. A B C D E Should fathers be involved in feeding and diapering a child?

22. A B C D E Should our divorce laws be more strict?

23. A B C D E Would you like to have children?

24. A B C D E Do you enjoy visiting your parents frequently?

25. A B C D E Do you feel that most household chores such as dishwashing, laundry, and dusting should be done by the woman?

26. A B C D E Should credit cards be used only for emergency purposes?

27. A B C D E Should physical punishment sometimes be used in disciplining children?

28. A B C D E Do you think romantic love is important to a successful relationship?

29. A B C D E Would you rather have a relatively quiet mate than a vivacious one?

30. A B C D E Do you like to attend church regularly?

31. A B C D E Do you prefer large parties to small ones?

32. A B C D E Would you approve of your partner having a sexual relationship with someone else if the opportunity arose?

33. A B C D E Should couples sometime take separate vacations?

34. A B C D E Do you prefer to have a lot of different types of friends?

35. A B C D E Are you strongly attracted to members of the opposite sex?

36. A B C D E Do you have ups and downs in mood without apparent reason?

37. A B C D E Should children be allowed to choose their own religion?

38. A B C D E Could you be happy in a relationship with a partner who has different interests than you?

39. A B C D E Are you often disgusted with people who smoke marijuana?

40. A B C D E Do you think the importance of sex is greatly over emphasized today?
41. ABCDE Is stealing sometimes justifiable?

42. ABCDE Should children have religious training?

43. ABCDE Do you believe in cohabitation before marriage?

44. ABCDE Should couples spend most of their recreational time doing things together?

45. ABCDE Could you be happy in a relationship with a partner who was not very affectionate?

46. ABCDE Would you prefer living in the city rather than the country?

47. ABCDE Should sex education begin with young children in the home?

48. ABCDE Is it important for couples to fight in order to resolve a conflict, even if it must be in front of friends?

49. ABCDE Do you feel that going into debt is a necessary way of life for you to live comfortably?

50. ABCDE Do you like going to night clubs for social entertainment?
"Feedback" is a way of helping persons change behavior. It is communication to a person (or a group) which gives that person information about how he affects others.

Some criteria for useful feedback:

1. **It is descriptive rather than evaluative.** By describing one's own reaction, it leaves the individual free to use it as he sees fit. By evaluative language, it reduces the need for the individual to react defensively.

2. **It is specific rather than general.** To be told that one is "dominating" will probably not be as useful as to be told that "just now when we were deciding the issue, you did not listen to what others said and I felt forced to accept your arguments or face attack from you."

3. **It takes into account the needs of both the receiver and giver of feedback.** Feedback can be destructive when it serves only our own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end.

4. **It is directed toward behavior which the receiver can do something about.** Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded of some shortcoming over which he has no control.

5. **It is solicited, rather than imposed.** Feedback is most useful when the receiver himself has formulated the kind of question which those observing him can answer.

6. **It is well-timed.** In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior (depending, of course, on the person's readiness to hear it, support from others, etc.).

7. **It is checked to insure clear communication.** One way of doing this is to have the receiver try to rephrase the feedback he has received to see if it corresponds to what the sender had in mind.

8. **When feedback is given in a group, both giver and receiver have opportunity to check with others in the group the accuracy of the feedback.** Is this one person's impression, or an impression shared by others?

Feedback, then, is a way of giving help; it is a means for establishing one's identity.

**DO'S:**

1. Let a person know what he or she does (not is) that makes you feel a certain way.

2. If giving negative feedback, let it be specific enough that a person can change.

**DON'TS:**

1. Don't judge.

2. Don't give advice ("I think you should...")
Essential to achieving better relationships among people is "interpersonal feedback". In order to effectively relate to other people we need to know something about the way we are affecting and influencing them. Feedback provides a way in which we can evaluate this impact. If we are interested in changing our behavior in some way, feedback can provide us with a fuller understanding of what this behavior is and the direction in which we might work in changing it.

The importance of feedback in automated electronic systems is well known, and the concept of an automatic reporting device which serves as a new input calling for corrective action in a system is well established.

Giving interpersonal feedback is a difficult skill and requires a good deal of experimentation and practice in order to do well. Involved in good feedback is, of course, some accuracy in stating one's reactions. This requires that the giver of feedback be in fairly good contact with his own feelings and judgments, and that he have adequate language for communicating them. On the receiving side, one needs the ability to receive feedback without necessarily feeling attacked or condemned. This requires some confidence or security on the part of the recipient so that feedback can be tolerated by him and utilized for corrective action. On either side of this communicational exchange, a special attitude about one's self as a measuring instrument is required. Thus, each party must have some ability to view himself as a fallible measuring instrument, approximating but not reaching complete accuracy. This is because A's reaction to B depends in part upon A's own characteristics.

In order to clarify some misconceptions about what is meant by feedback, a definition is in order. By interpersonal feedback is meant the communication of an individual's own feelings or reactions to the behavior of the person to whom it is directed. While feedback may involve a summary statement or perhaps carry
along with it an interpretation of the behavior, it is not basically an interpretive conclusion nor hypothesis as to causes. Rather, feedback is concerned with a specific piece of observed behavior exhibited by another, and is a means by which the person observing the behavior can report back to the individual his own reactions to it, the way in which it affected him, and his judgment of the person emitting the behavior. Giving feedback is not "psychologizing" or native interpretation. It is simply a reaction to what was observed.

WAYS OF GIVING FEEDBACK

1. Postural movement and facial gestures. Such things as frowns, smiles of understanding, restless movements, and the like are simple ways of reporting to an individual your reaction to his behavior. Often this type of reaction is given almost unconsciously as an automatic response.

2. Repetition of summary of a statement made by a person. This feedback method simply shows some understanding of what the person is saying. It conveys perhaps a minimum amount of useful information, but at least demonstrates to the behaving person that his words are getting across.

3. Asking questions. This is a feedback method designed to indicate some confusion or lack of understanding as to what the person is conveying. It simply states, "I do not understand you," or, "you are confusing me," but in such a way as to encourage more interaction.

4. Sharing of the feeling or reaction. This is perhaps the most useful form of feedback for more involved reactions to behavior and is necessary to communicate strong emotional reactions. Such statements as, "You are boring me;" "I am getting angry at you," are examples of this type of reaction.

5. Reporting larger and repeated behavior patterns. For example, "you always seem stiff and reserved, even in informal situations." Here a statement is made which summarizes several observations by the giver.
WAYS OF REACTING TO FEEDBACK

1. Blindly accepting it. This is uncritical swallowing of a bit of feedback without analyzing or thoroughly digesting it. Involved in this type of response is a tendency to blame one's self, to automatically feel that one is doing something wrong or bad, and that the person giving the feedback is in some way punishing or being critical.

2. Reinterpretation to fit one's self-concept. This is a rationalizing response in which the recipient of feedback might say, "Well, maybe I was boring you, but this is the way I have to express these points if you are going to understand me," or, "You don't understand what I'm trying to convey." Here only limited responsibility for accepting the feedback is demonstrated and the recipient is attempting to get by without having to fully face up to what is communicated.

3. Blocking it out. This is a response in which feedback is either not heard, not understood, or in some other way denied or repressed. An example of this would be an individual indicating at some later date that he did not hear a comment of feedback made to him by some other member of a group. Sometimes this is confused with a lack of overt response by the recipient. Thus, we often receive feedback without indicating that we have taken note of it.

4. Rejects and attributes it to others. This is a denial of feedback which implies that the feedback tells more about the personality of the individual giving it than it is a reflection of some behavior on the part of the person receiving it. Obviously, all feedback responses tell us something about the person giving it, but here the recipient projects the responsibility for the feedback upon the giver and does not separate out his own behavior and its consequences. A more constructive approach would be for the recipient to get reactions of others as to whether the feedback tells more about the giver or about the receiver.
5. Acceptance of feedback with critical examination and testing for validity.
This is the most constructive use of feedback in which the recipient listens to
and attempts to understand and to digest what is being said. Rather than to
blindly accept a point, the recipient will check out the comment by asking some
other individuals if they have similar reactions, or by recalling instances where
similar feedback was given to him. Example: "I hear what you're telling me, but
I'll have to think about it. How do the rest of you feel about this?"

For feedback to be most effective it is helpful to keep the following points
in mind:

a. Each person is the best expert on his own personal feelings or reaction
to another individual's behavior. When you feel bored by something that
another person says, it does not mean that other people in the group are
bored also, but your own boredom is as much a fact of life as "one and one
makes two."

b. Feedback items should be an expression of one's own feelings. While
it may be true that other people are also bored or irritated, it is a
gross assumption to say that, "all of us are being bored," when you know
only that you are bored. The giver of feedback must accept responsibility
for his reactions as his own and not necessarily similar to those of
the other members of the group.

c. Both positive and negative feelings and reactions are equally useful
in feedback. Feedback is not a form of criticism but a form of reporting
observations and reactions.

d. Feedback becomes the property of the recipient and he alone needs to
decide what to do about it. Whether the recipient wants to defend or
rationalize his behavior, blindly accept it, or digest it, it is his
business to decide. Only the recipient can integrate feedback into his
learning and determine whether or not he wishes to make some readjustment
or change because of it. Likewise, each person needs to set his own pace
as to the speed and intensity with which he wants to think about, react to,
and make any changes in response to feedback.