

GROUP GOALS AND TASKS

Module C

One of the most important aspects of groups is the ability of the group to define its goals and achieve them successfully. The main idea about a goal is that it is an *ideal* – a desired place or objective toward which people are working. Most groups have several goals – some immediate and some more distant. The immediate goals are stepping stones to the more distant, long-range goals. By understanding and identifying immediate and long-range goals it will be easier for the group to reach them.

Questions

Why do groups have goals?
Personal and Group Goals (p. C-3)

What influences the goal or task?
(p. C-6)

C-9)

Individual Goal Evaluation (p. C-11)
How do groups accomplish tasks?
(p. C-15)

Hollow Squares (p. C-V)

Goal-Setting Technique (p. C-23)

Removing Barriers (p. C-25)

Concepts

Common Interest

Tasks
Commitment
Values

Cooperation

Activities

C-I: Setting

C-II: Values Survey

C-III: Pie of Life (p.

C-IV: Group and

C-V: Tower Building

OrganizingC-VI:

PlanningC-VII:

ActionC-VIII:

WHY DO GROUPS HAVE GOALS?

Groups form when a common purpose or task exists among individuals. If goals do not exist, groups do not form. A goal can be: to have fun, to raise money, to paint a house, to establish solutions to problems, or many other things. Often groups have formed but have not established *specific* goals. Groups with vague goals sometimes do not accomplish as much as groups that have specific goals.

Whether a person commits himself or herself to the accomplishment of a goal depends on:

1. How attractive or desirable the goal seems.
2. How likely it seems that the group can accomplish the goal.
3. How challenging the goal is.
4. Being able to tell when the goal has been achieved.
5. The satisfaction or reward the member expects to feel or receive when the goal is achieved.
6. The ways in which the members will relate to other members in working toward the accomplishment of the goals (some ways of relating to other group members are more fun and involving than others).

By forming specific goals, the group can develop a group identity, which will aid them in being more cohesive and productive.

C-I: SETTING PERSONAL AND GROUP GOALS

Purpose:

To aid the individual in setting a goal for self and aid the total group in setting a specific goal. By *setting* and *achieving* goals, individuals develop self-confidence and a feeling of success; groups feel a sense of purpose and a feeling of accomplishment.

Setting:

Individuals sitting in groups either in a circle or on the floor or around a table. (8–40 people).

Materials:

Paper, pencil for each participant
Sheet of newsprint
Tape and marker

Time:

20–30 minutes

Procedure:

1. Setting Personal Goals – What does each individual want to achieve through this experience in group dynamics?

2. Have participants spend the next couple of minutes thinking to themselves about what each would like to get out of this experience.

In other words, what does each want to achieve that is possible to achieve through this experience?

Have them write down what their goals are on a piece of paper and put the paper in their pockets or some other place for safe keeping.

3. Periodically, throughout the day or weekend, suggest that the participants check their personal goals to see how well they are progressing.

Examples of potential personal goals are to:

- Get to know two people well.
- Listen and ask questions in order to gain enough information to share it with other groups.
- Feel comfortable with everyone in the group.

Suggestion:

This activity can be used with groups whose purpose is other than experiencing the Group Dynamite program. This goal-setting activity helps to orient groups toward defining and understanding their goals.

4. Setting Group Goals – What does the group want to gain from this experience? Why is the group participating in these activities?

5. Have participants as a group explore the goal or goals that they would like to achieve. Do this first through a brainstorming session (see p. F-11) where all potential goals are written on newsprint for all to see and discuss. After all the potential goals are

written, the group examines the goals and decides which ones are appropriate for their group. (See Consensus Seeking, p. G-12).

Examples of potential group goals are to:

- Learn how to work together efficiently as a group.
- Accept every person as an important member of the group.
- Learn as much as possible about our community.

Suggestion:

Post the group goals somewhere in the room so that all can see them.

HOW DO GROUPS ACCOMPLISH GOALS & TASKS?

Each individual brings special skills and interests to the group. By organizing, planning, and communicating these skills and interests they are able to establish specific tasks that will allow them to accomplish their group goals. The goals provide the framework in which the tasks are identified so action can take place.

When identifying tasks to reach goals it is often helpful to clearly state:

1. The people or group(s) concerned in your goals.
2. The specific action to be accomplished to reach your goals.
3. The environment or problem area in which the action will take place.

It is often helpful that certain things are present within the group process in order for tasks and goals to be accomplished effectively. Some of the behaviors to watch for are as follows:

1. The extent to which group members see the goals as being meaningful, relevant, realistic, acceptable, and attainable.
2. How cooperative and coordinated the group members are.
3. The degree to which both group and individual needs can be achieved by tasks.
4. How available the resources are that are needed to effect the group's tasks and goals.
5. How specific the goals are because specific goals indicate what needs to be done next.
6. Extent to which goals and tasks are realistic and can be defined and operationalized (action taken).

C-V: TOWER BUILDING

Purpose:

To provide a specific task so that group behavior patterns emerge and can be observed. To allow groups to identify important aspects of taking action on a specific task.

Setting:

Large room or group of rooms so that participants can move freely within their groups without distracting other groups.

Time:

1 hour

Materials:

Each group will need a packet containing tower-building “junk” such as:

Scrap paper

Tape

Rubber bands

Straws

Cans

Marking pencils

Paper cups

Miscellaneous items

Procedure:

1. Divide the participants into groups of 8 to 12 and distribute materials to each group.
2. Tell them their task is to build a tower using the materials provided.
3. Move through the task according to the following schedule:
 - a. Group works for 5 to 10 minutes while being observed by an observer.
 - b. On a given signal from the person in charge, all work on the tower building stops and the observers discuss the first questions with their group (see questions on next sheet).
 - c. Continue with another 5- to 10-minute work period. Follow this with a discussion led by the observer of the second series of questions within the group.
 - d. Continue with a final 5 to 10 minutes of work (this can vary a little to ensure that every group has time to complete their plans).
 - e. Then, ask the groups to explain to the total group what their tower means to them, what experiences they had within the group, and what feelings they had about the experience.
 - f. To reinforce the experience, participants might want to write down what they learned about themselves and about working in groups.

Processing:

Discuss with all groups the answers to question sets and feelings about the experience.

Notes to the observers:

1. Try to observe:

- Involvement or commitment of each group member
- If a plan was established
- Behavior needed to carry out plan

2. When reporting to your group:

- Try as much as possible to use questions rather than give facts. It is more effective if the group themselves discover what is happening than if the facilitator tells them what is happening.

- Give your reflections on what was happening in the group.

C-V: TOWER BUILDING – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question Set 1:

1. Does your group have a plan?
2. Does your group have a leader, or are a number of people sharing leadership?
3. How did the group go about making plans?
4. How many people were involved in acceptance of the plan if there was one?
5. How committed were most people to this plan, if there was a plan?
6. Does anyone feel left out?
7. If some people are left out or not interested, what can the group do to involve them?
8. Do you feel your group is using its members and materials most efficiently?

Question Set 2:

1. How do you feel about tower building now?
2. Has your tower been changed or modified?
3. Is there cooperation in the building?
4. Who is doing what to build the tower?

Question Set 3:

1. Do you feel it was a coordinated effort?
2. How do group members feel about their towers?
3. Does everyone in the group feel that their tower is satisfactorily completed?

C-VI: HOLLOW SQUARES

Purpose:

- To have participants become aware of the dynamics of *planning* when the task is to be carried out by others.
- To have participants become aware of the dynamics of *implementation* when plans are made by others.
- To become aware of the importance of *communication* between planners and implementers in order to complete the task correctly.

Setting:

Room large enough for planners, implementers, and observers to work and move around freely. Access to two other rooms where planners and implementers can be isolated.

Group of 10 to 16 (4 planners, 4 implementers, rest observers).

Time:

About 1 hour

Materials:

Briefing sheets

Hollow Square patterns

Key

Coded envelope with four of 16 puzzle pieces for each planner

Briefing sheets for each observer

Briefing sheets for implementers

Pencils for all.

Procedure:

1. Select four planners; present them with briefing sheets and isolate them in another room.
2. Select four implementers; present them with their briefing sheets and isolate them in a room separate from the planners.
3. The remaining members become observers. Present them with their briefing sheets. After each observer reads the sheet, have him or her choose a member of the planning or implementing team to observe during the exercise.
4. Explain to the observers that their task will be to gather around the outside of the area where the planners and implementers will be working. They are to observe their person, take notes, and be ready to discuss their observations at the end of the activity.
5. Have the planning team come into the room. Ask if they have read the briefing sheet. If there are any questions, tell them that all they need to know is on the briefing sheet.
6. Distribute a puzzle piece envelope, Hollow Square pattern, and key to each planner (see following pages). The activity will now continue on its own.

Processing:

Have observers make comments.

How early did planners call in the implementer team? Were they ready for them? Has the planning team set up artificial constraints that were not written in the formal rules? How much did this restrict the efficiency of task completion?

HOLLOW SQUARE *PLANNING TEAM* BRIEFING SHEET

Each of you will be given a packet containing four cardboard pieces which, when properly assembled with the other pieces held by members of your team, will make a hollow square design.

Your Task

During a period of 25 minutes you are to do the following:

1. Plan how the sixteen pieces distributed among you should be assembled to make the design.
2. Instruct your implementation team on how to implement your plan (you may begin instructing your implementation team at any time during the planning period – but no later than 5 minutes before they are to begin the assembling process).
3. You may not show the KEY at any time.
4. You may not assemble the entire square at any time (this is to be left to your operating team).
5. You are not to make on any of the pieces.
6. Members of your implementation team must also observe the above rules.
7. When time is called for your team to begin assembling the pieces you may give no further instructions, but you are to observe the operation.

You will be observing a situation in which a planning team decides how to solve a problem and gives instructions to an operating team for implementation. The problem consists of assembling 16 pieces cardboard into the form of a hollow square. The planning team is supplied with the general layout of the pieces. This team is not to assemble the parts itself but is to instruct the implementation team on how to assemble the parts in a minimum amount of time. You will be silent observers throughout the process.

Suggestions:

1. Each member of the observing team should watch the general pattern of communication but give special attention to one member of the planning team (during the planning phase) and one member of the implementation team (during the assembling period).
2. During the planning period watch for the following behaviors:
 - a. Is there balanced participation among planning team members?
 - b. What kinds of behavior block or facilitate the process?
 - c. How does the planning team divide its time between planning and instructing? (How early does it invite the implementation team to come in?)
3. During the instructing period watch for the following behaviors:
 - a. Which member of the planning team gives the instructions? How was this decided?
 - b. What strategy was employed in orienting the operating team?

- c. What assumptions made by the planning team are not communicated to the implementation team?
- d. How effective were the instructions?
- 4. During the assembly period, watch for the following behavior:
 - a. What evidence do the implementation team members illustrate that instructions were clearly understood or misunderstood?
 - b. What nonverbal reactions did planning team exhibit as they watched their plans being implemented or distorted?

HOLLOW SQUARE *IMPLEMENTATION TEAM* BRIEFING SHEET

1. You will have responsibility for carrying out a task for four people according to instructions given by your planning team. Your planning team may call you in for instructions at any time. If they do not summon you, you are to report to them anyway. Your task is scheduled to begin exactly 25 minutes from now. After that, no further instructions will be permitted.

2. You are to finish the assigned task as rapidly as possible.

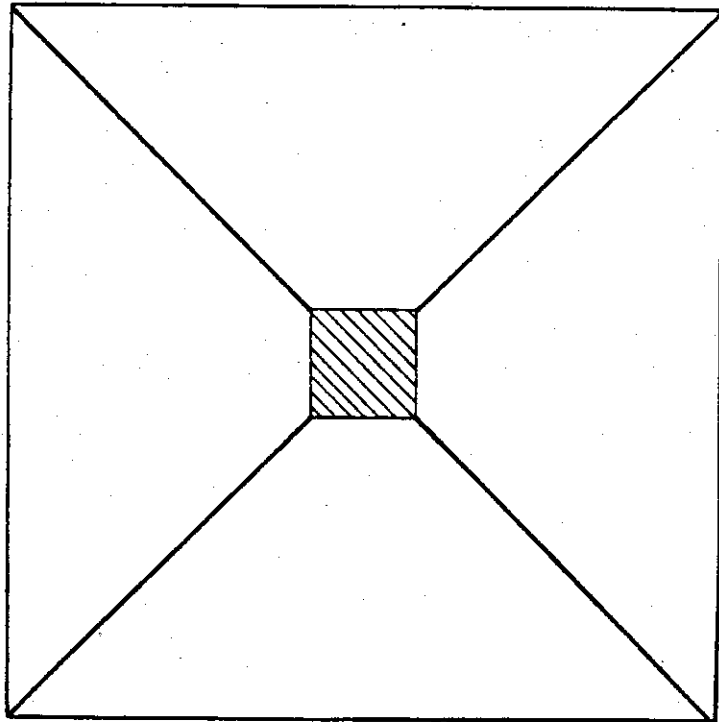
3. During the period when you are waiting for a call from your planning team, it is suggested that you discuss and make notes on the following questions:

a. What feelings and concerns do you experience while waiting for instructions for the unknown task?

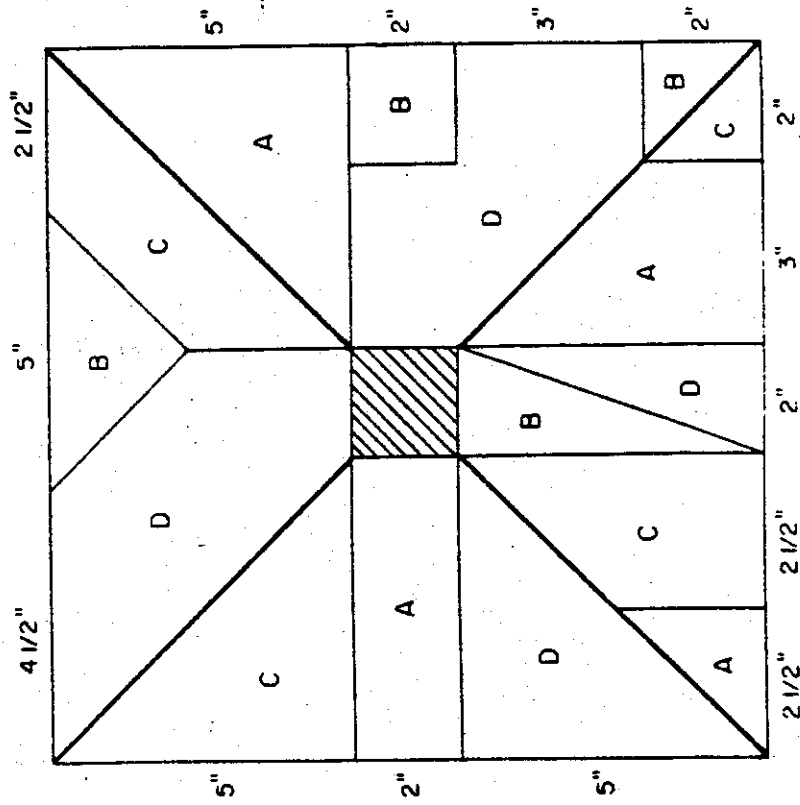
b. How can the four of you organize as a team?

(Notes recorded on these two questions will be helpful during the discussion following the completion of the task.)

Hollow Square Pattern



Hollow Square Key



C-VII: GOAL SETTING TECHNIQUE

Purpose:

To provide a technique for groups to help them establish goals and tasks.

Setting:

Large room

Time:

1 hour

Materials:

Newsprint

Marker

Paper

Pencils

Procedure:

Follow the instructions on the following sheet in terms of what action should be taken to accomplish goal or task.

Processing:

See instruction sheet.

C-VII: NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE

This process brings people together but *manages their communication initially to facilitate the generation of ideas* as opposed to generation of discussion.

This process permits *and ensures input by each person*, allows a group output, and allows a group judgmental decision all *in one setting*.

Phase One

1. State the problem or question in concise terms. Perhaps write in on the blackboard.
2. Each individual jots down his or her own ideas (limit time for this).
3. Group selects a recorder.
4. Recorder – on a piece of newsprint – lists the ideas as given by the group in round robin order, *one idea per person until all ideas are on paper and with no discussion*.

Phase Two

1. In round robin order, each person briefly clarifies his or her ideas and others may add support or lack of support for the idea (consider whether to limit time for this).
2. Group is given an opportunity to combine similar ideas under one heading.

Phase Three

1. Each individual privately ranks the ideas with a numerical rating; for example, 10 points for #1, 8 points for #2, and so on. (Make the point spreads large enough so the end result in phase four more clearly shows the group decisions.)
2. Recorder takes down the votes of all persons in the group.

Phase Four

1. Write the voting results on the piece of newsprint for all to see. Permit active interchange for a few minutes here, so the group can enjoy their ability to set priorities.

Phase Five

If you have separated a large group into small groups, you now do this:

1. Each group selects a reporter.
2. The reporter states the decision(s) of his or her own group (for example, “The two highest priorities selected by our group were” The reporter briefly explains the ideas, while you write them on the piece of newsprint.
3. Each reporter follows in turn to state his or her group’s ideas.
4. Each smaller group repeats the steps.

Naturally it is important that the group be given some encouragement that their decisions mean something, that action will follow, and so on.

You should explain beforehand that this process will:

1. Allow everyone to have an input.

2. Result in decisions.
3. Ensure that decisions will be made by voting.

C-VIII: REMOVING BARRIERS

Purpose:

To allow group members to take a stand on a group goal and be willing to publicly affirm it, to have chosen it from alternatives, freely, and to acknowledge the consequences..

Setting:

Comfortable room for small groups of three to five members

Time:

30 minutes

Materials:

Paper and pencils for all participants

Procedure:

1. Ask group members to write at the top of a paper some goal or task they would set for the group and themselves. (It should be an action that they are having some difficulty taking.)
2. Then they are to draw a line lengthwise down the middle of the paper.
3. On the right-hand side of the paper they are to list all the barriers (perceived or real – within or without themselves) that seem to be keeping them from accomplishing the task or action.
4. On the left-hand side of the paper they are to list steps they could take to make that task easier to accomplish (remove barriers).
5. On the back of the paper, they are to develop a plan of action to achieve that task.

Processing:

Allow for sharing of ideas to entire group.

Optional:

Set the task for the group, allow them to work individually. Then discuss with the entire group.