

## THE GROUP

I hate you, fear you, threaten to leave you.  
I planned and plot how I can deceive you.  
And then I feel myself drawn back again.

And so I mingle in.

Edging into your circle of fellowship.

I give my little cry for help.

It is disguised sometimes in laughter,  
Trailing close behind some wall of words.

It is often soft and low and seemingly  
With little interest, thought, or feeling dropped.

And then I pray; even in my fear.

I pray against my outward wishes that you heard.

I pray to GOD you felt the tremor in the word.

And you usually do.

And with slow motions and earnest voice

You stab with deft precision where I hurt

Sometimes you stab around the circle

And I marvel that I did not let the feeling show.

With my emotions festered so.

I hurt, and I curse you for the moment then;

But when the poison's gone and pressure wanes,

I thank GOD that you were there..

And that you heard and cared enough for me

To lance the inner boils and help to make me free.

## GROUP GUIDELINES

- 1.) A feeling of confidentiality is extremely important to group work. Let what gets talked about in the group stay in the group.
- 2.) Speak with the first person "I". Do not speak for others.
- 3.) Speak directly to individuals, not just to the group leader.
- 4.) Speak from your honest feelings and thoughts.
- 5.) Talk about what you are seeing, hearing and feeling in the group as it happens in the here and now.
- 6.) Read the messages from your body and be as spontaneous as possible.
- 7.) Do not have side conversations or whispering with others during group.
- 8.) Be aware of your roles as they relate to the group.
- 9.) Talk about how persons in this group remind you of other significant people in your past or present life.
- 10.) Try to have genuine interaction with others. Tell a person how he or she appears to you.
- 11.) Expect periods of silence.
- 12.) Remember that growth will happen faster and in a deeper way in an atmosphere of trust, openness and unconditional love.
- 13.) Listen actively.
- 14.) Give each member the chance to talk. If someone is dominating the group and taking up all of the time, be aware that you are allowing this to happen. It's O.K. to tell them how you feel about this.
- 15.) Group interaction can be a very emotional experience; therefore, feelings, awareness and anxieties may arise during or following morning rap. These are common and normal feelings. Do not hesitate to mention them in rap or, if they occur afterwards, to a staff member.
- 16.) You will receive from group what you are willing to give. Morning Rap is a valuable part of the Van Ness House Recovery Program, but only if you choose to use it for growth and change.

Morning rap is based on the assumption that too much of what we have learned to date may block honest communication, may get in the way of creative relationships, and therefore, interfere with intimacy and warmth with others - especially friends, associates, mates and family. The following assumptions may help us become more "open" and able to give and receive clear communication with others.

1.) Speak with the first person "I".

Instead of "People feel" or "you get to feeling" say: "I think" or "I feel such and such". This gives more of the *flavor* of you rather than broad generalities.

2.) Speak directly to individuals.

Look and speak directly into their faces. If another person asks you: "How do you feel about Bill right now?" for example, turn to Bill and say: "Bill, I feel you were very kind to me a minute ago when you said..." or "I resent you right now" or what ever rather than answering the one who asked you the question originally.

3.) Speak from your honest feelings and thoughts.

There is no taboo on either language, thoughts, feelings or expressions in this kind of group. Failing to communicate exactly what one feels - be it anger or affection, or indifference towards another - is deemed kindness by the world, and all too often is the most cruel thing we can do to one another. It is based on lying and not paying a person the compliment of being able to handle honest feelings. How can persons behave properly if they have never been honestly told how others react to them?

4.) Be aware at ALL times of our thoughts, and feelings of the moment.

Express your feelings at the earliest appropriate time. Be aware of them even if you cannot express a perception of the moment. We cannot live creatively if we cloud the present with the imagined past - a memory. The dreamed of future never comes. We must learn to freely live in only one dimension of time. THE HERE AND NOW.

5.) Read the messages from your own body.

Your own body is the most basic, tangible aspect of yourself. It is continually giving you messages. The open or closed position of your limbs, sweating palms, feeling "fidgety", rapid heartbeat, moving to a closer or more remote seat, getting up for coffee or to go to the restroom, flushed face, etc... all these and more may tell you that you are afraid, angry, irritated, worried, embarrassed, wanting to be closer to a person, anxious, etc. These messages can be noted and understood.

6.) Be as spontaneous as possible.

Too often we "mull over," think about, choose careful language, wait too long, try to be polite, wait our turn to speak or react....this may "water down" and negate our freshness, sparkle and genuineness. Try to let ideas, thoughts and feelings spill out and over as they will in order to convey the real you.

7.) Report "side conversations" to the group.

If, during a break, a meal or between sessions, you hold a side conversation with anyone, including someone who was there, in which you comment on the group, a person in it, etc., you should report it and the feelings expressed back to the group. The idea here is to speak only face to face.

8.) Be aware of the roles you take and your characteristic behavior.

It has been observed that we tend to behave similarly in many situations. For instance, some of us tend to withdraw or run away from a confrontation while others are peacemakers or compromisers. Others may behave very differently in each situation, carefully "sampling" various roles. Sometimes we behave in an Encounter Group much as we do with our mate, friends, associates or in other groups. By observing yourself and others in this group, you can come to helpful insights.

9.) Be aware of how persons in this group remind you of other significant people in your past or present life.

Different people in the group may remind you of your mother, father, mate, boss, or some other significant person in your life. Interacting with those persons can often work out old problems, affections, hurts, joys and sorrows - even if the person is not actually or completely like the person of whom he/she reminds you.

10.) Listen actively.

Good communication involves clear expression of not only what you think and feel, but also listening clearly to the words, feelings, and behavior communications of others. It is good to attempt to crawl into another's skin or "wear his shoes" in your imagination in order to understand him.

There is a strong tendency to "read in" things we feel while missing what the person is trying to convey. We also tend to "read out" or ignore things a person is trying to express because it bothers us for some reason. Techniques such as repeating back to a person what you thought he said before you answer may be helpful - if it doesn't dampen spontaneity.

One can learn to allow for one's own biases and prejudices which may distort what is going on in and around us.

11.) Don't speak for others.

Speak for yourself or ask the person present what he is feeling or thinking. Don't use phrases such as: "most men think" or "people always feel". If you feel empathy for a person or feel like defending or attacking someone, speak for what you are experiencing at that moment rather than attributing it to others or bouncing your own feelings off onto others.

12.) Try to have genuine "encounters" with others.

The aim of an encounter is not necessarily to either fight (or avoid anger) or to always be on good terms with or to "love" everyone. It is rather to realize that the basic stuff of life is to contact, feel, communicate meaningfully with others. A quarrel is often better than complacently ignoring one another. To know that you have been true to yourself while meaningfully interacting with another who is also being true to himself, is a major aim of Morning Rap. It can have favorable consequences in your relationships in and outside of the house.

13.) Expect periods of silence.

Although the periods of silence may seem uncomfortable to the newcomer or to the "old-timer", creative things can occur in our awareness and consciousness. Use silence to be aware of what's happening in you.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the assumptions and techniques we are using in conducting morning rap. To begin with, let's look at some of the similarities within our group. In addition to our alcoholism we all have at least three things in common. First before we came to the point of seeking outside help, we each tried our own Do-It-Ourself program in an effort to change ourselves. The second similarity is that we all failed. The third is that we all came to the Van Ness Recovery House for structure, help, and direction. A basic assumption of morning rap is that a major reason for this failure to "do it on our own" is that our most determined efforts can't change what we can't see, and that there is a great deal that we are not seeing clearly.

For this reason our goal in group is:

TO DISCOVER OURSELVES AND OTHERS AS FEELING  
PERSONS, AND TO IDENTIFY THE DEFENSES THAT  
PREVENT THIS DISCOVERY.

While change is the ultimate goal, our immediate purpose is to more accurately see what needs change. This requires seeking ourselves, discovering ourselves, and at a feeling level.

In examining our purpose one of the things that stands out is our emphasis on feelings. We stress feelings for several reasons. First of all, our behavior in the past has been so opposed to our value system that considerable feelings of remorse and self-loathing have been built up. It appears that we have accumulated a pool of negative feelings and walled them off with a variety of masks or defenses that prevent this discovery. This began with mild disapproval of myself, then growing remorse, and finally, a deep self-loathing. Statements such as: "I am no damn good" or "the world would be better off without me" reflect these negative feelings and attitudes. It is important to be in touch with these in order to take the First Step of the Alcoholics Anonymous Program where: "We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable."

Being in touch with the hostile feelings we have toward ourselves and the sense of helplessness and hopelessness that accompany them make the First Step a moving description instead of simply an abstract theory. We feel the powerlessness and the unmanageability. One of the important functions of group is to help us identify the defenses that prevent this discovery. We will say more about this wall of defense later on.

Another reason for stressing feelings is that many of the character defects that have disabled us for years are reflected in our feeling states or attitudes. As a result of the conflict between our value system and our repeated, chemically induced behaviors, we have formed rigid negative feeling states called attitudes towards ourselves and others. Most of us have become one or more of the following persons:

Hostile, Resentful, Angry, Self-pitying, Fearful, Defiant, Phony, Arrogant, Superior, etc. While these are represented as feelings, some have become so thoroughly a part of us as to be attitudinal in nature. They substantially color the way we see life and react to it. No longer are we persons who simply feel resentment, we are resentful persons. We discover that we are not simply persons who feel self-pity, but have become self-pitying persons. What was once a feeling has now hardened into an attitudinal posture - a character defect. If we are to change, we must first become ourselves at this feeling level.

Most of us are badly out of touch with our feelings, particularly the ones we have been describing. But as you will see, it is not just these negative feelings that are hidden and controlled. Our positive feelings of joy and love are also locked away by the defenses that seek to hide the negative feelings from view. It appears that our defenses are not selective. The man who has hidden away his anger is also crippled in any spontaneous display of affection or gratitude as well. While the majority of our focus in group is on identifying our destructive negative-feelings selves, the acceptance of these feelings frees the positive ones as well. Until we accept ourselves as we really are, we cannot change.

Most of us have ignored our feelings for years in an effort to see the facts. In group Feelings are Facts. "How does that make you feel?" is a question we should ask frequently to help us and others focus on these Facts.

Since our feelings are new to most of us, let's look at the ones we use everyday: Mad, Sad, Glad, Afraid, Ashamed, Hurt.

Our immediate purpose is to Discover and Identify in order to see clearly who I am and what needs changed. Acceptance of What Is is very difficult, however, because we don't know that we don't know. We are in many ways blind and self-deluded, but we insist that: "I know who I am and where I'm going" or "I know what's best for me." We are deluded, and we don't know it. In fact, most of us deny it. One of the major symptoms of our disease is that our self-awareness, judgment and perception of ourselves have become warped. Not reminding ourselves of and changing this symptom is what allows us to fall back into the same destructive behaviors again not having learned anything from the last one. How many times has a friend or relative said: "I saw you building up to it, but you insisted that everything was O.K." The assumption that self-delusion is a fact is basic to recovery.

One of the ways we illustrate this self-delusion is with the Johari Window. The window's 4 panes represent four aspects of our total self. As the diagram indicates, only the top 2 panes are visible to myself. Number three and four are hidden from my view. This is descriptive of the self-delusion that keeps me from seeing what I'm really like and allows my slow disintegration to continue with only a slight, if any recognition on my part of how bad things have become: A more accurate picture of myself is essential to recovery.

## MYSELF

O T H E R S	1 Open	2 Secret
	3 Blind	4 Subconscious

Window #1 is open. This is visible to Self and Others and contains material I am willing to share with you....my interests, vocation and virtues to name a few.

Window #2 is secret. I know things about me that I don't want you to know. I fear the loss of esteem if you see me as having such feelings as hostility, suspicion, inferiority, resentment or self-pity. Revealing these feelings is called LEVELING. I level with you when I take the risk of letting you really know me by spontaneously reporting my feelings. Leveling is one of the two most important techniques in self-discovery.

We are blind to Window #3, and yet it is seen by others. The tone of our voice, the tilt of our head, tell others things about us that we don't see. Many times a perfect stranger can see more in us in half an hour than we discovered in years of self-examination. When someone tells us how we appear to them, they are confronting us. CONFRONTATION is the second vital technique in breaking through self-delusion to self-discovery.

The existence of the large blind area illustrated by Window #3 means that we are dependent on others taking the risk of confronting us with this material if we are to ever come to know it. "It takes at least 2 to know 1."

Window #4 is subconscious and not visible. While leveling and confronting often result in a glimpse into the unconscious, this is a bonus and not a goal of group.



## CONFRONTATION

It takes courage to risk confronting. We have all traded our honesty for the approval of others in the past. However, if we care about our fellow house members, and if we want them to be honest with us in return, we will present them with our picture of them.

Confrontation is defined as: Presenting a person with himself by describing how I see him. Confrontation is most useful when spoken with concern and accompanied with examples of the confronted behavior or Data.

"You seem self-centered to me because you only talk about yourself."

"You seem hostile because of the sarcastic answers you give."

"Your voice sounds so sad I see you feeling sorry for yourself."

"Your face is so red you seem very angry."

"John, each time Joe confronts you, you explain yourself instead of leveling with him. How do you feel about what Joe told you?"

"John, you go into a long silence after each confrontation instead of leveling. How are you feeling when you withdraw in silence?"

For the most part defenses, including attitudinal postures, are unintentional and automatic shields against a real or imagined threat to our self-esteem. By allowing others to point out the defenses we are using, we have a better chance of letting down this wall that is locking others out and keeping us prisoners. Coming to recognize these blocks to self-discovery may enable us to look behind them to discover the feelings concealed from view. Long explanations may hide feelings of inadequacy and guilt. Since defenses and attitudinal postures do hide us from ourselves, as well as from others, it is important to identify them. A lot of this is new, so while you are getting use to it, just TRUST YOUR IMPULSES. Spontaneous expressions tend to be much more honest. It is more helpful to be Revealing than to be Right.

Most of us tend to think we already know ourselves and are afraid of looking bad, so it is hard for us to take the risk of being revealing and genuine. But what have we really got to lose? Remember how unsuccessful our previous attempts to change have been? Since we can't change something until we really see it and accept its existence, we should ask ourselves: "Do I really accept something if I keep it a secret?" Risking openness is the Key. When you are tempted to withdraw into silence, remember that we are all in the same boat, and a common feeling of everyone when he is introduced to group is fear.

Frequently, in place of confronting a person with some Data that we have observed (what they said - how they look or sound, etc.), we make the mistake of guessing, of asking questions, and giving advice:

"I bet you fight a lot with your lover."

"Did your parents raise you very strictly?"

A guess or a question is not a confrontation.

The other mistake is advice giving instead of confrontation:

"Don't let people walk all over you so much."

To state this as confrontation would be: "You seem like a doormat the way you let people walk all over you."

This way we are not playing God by advising, but we are letting the person see himself from another point of view and trusting him to seek advice if he wants it.

Confrontation is descriptive of what we have observed in the person we are confronting. It is descriptive of behavior. We are not confronting when we are telling a person who and what he is. Rather, confronting is firmly based on observation of behavior. Behavior is an aspect - one aspect - of an individual, not his entire being or identity. Guesses, advice, or discussion about something we have not witnessed is not confrontation. In a sense, when we confront, we hold up a mirror to let another person know how he appears to us.

We are most useful as confronters when we are not so much trying to change another person as we are trying to help him see himself more accurately. Change, if it comes, comes later when the person chooses it and enlists the spiritual help that the 6th and 7th Steps of the AA Program describe.

Picture a gardener preparing a proper environment within the soil so that the seeds he plants may receive the gift of growth from a "Power" greater than himself. Imagine a physician cleaning a wound to provide an environment to receive the gift of healing. The change we are all seeking might be more correctly labeled healing or growth and, while it is largely a gift of a Power greater than ourselves, the necessary environment for the gift is a honest picture of who and what we are like now. Because of our egocentric blindness and self-delusion, we are all dependent on others for that completed picture. Confrontation provides it.

## LEVELING

To respond openly to being confronted is to level. We level when we take the risk of being known by spontaneously reporting our feelings. For example: We level when we let someone know we are hurt - or afraid - or that we are angry.

Using these feelings as an example of leveling is probably useful for two reasons: Anger, bottled up, or fear that is kept hidden seem to lead to more relapses than any other feelings. - Also, anger and fear (along with affection) are usually the hardest feelings for us to report. Frequently people make the mistake of assuming that the purpose of group is to make someone angry. Anger is an important feeling. But it is only one feeling among many that we want to discover and level with.

If, instead of leveling, we respond without naming a feeling, we are hiding. The ways we hide our feelings are many, and we call them defenses. Each defense serves to keep us from being known. One of the most helpful things that the group can do is to help a member identify his defenses.

Defenses which we all use to some extent are:

Rationalizing	Minimalising
Justifying	Evading, dodging
Projecting	Defiance
Blaming, accusing	Attacking, aggression
Judging, moralizing	Withdrawing
Intellectualizing	Silence
Analyzing	Verbalizing, talking
Explaining	Shouting, intimidating
Theorizing	Threatening
Generalizing	Frowning
Debating, arguing	Staring
Quibbling, equivocating	Glaring
Sparring	Joking
Questioning	Grinning, smiling, laughing
Switching	Protecting
Denying	Agreeing
Being smug, arrogant	Complying

Some examples of various defenses are:

- Rationalization: "It's not my fault because..."
- Explaining: "And then I thought..."
- Humor: "Reminds me of a funny..."

Projection: "You look like I feel..."  
 Attack: "If you say that I'll..."  
 Seduce: "Keep 'em honey..."  
 Tears: "Oh, I feel -- boo, hoo..."  
 Blaming: "He made me..." "You make me so ..."  
 Play Dumb: "I don't know how I ..."  
 Put Downs: "That's the dumbest thing I ever..."  
 Self Put Down: "I'm the dumbest..."  
 Diversion: "I feel that too, and I had a friend..."  
 Denial: "I do not!!"  
 Diminish: "Oh, it's not that important..."  
 Anger: "No, damn it, I'll..."  
 Sarcasm: "Tsk, that's real good for a queen..."  
 Intellect: "I read this article that said..."  
 Pout: "Whimper, simper..."  
 Self-pity: "Everything I try turns to shit..."  
 Minimize: "It's (I'm) not that important..."  
 Compliance: "You're right, I'll work on that..."  
 Superior: "That may be O.K. for you, but..."  
 Filibuster: "...and then she said no, so I..."

Try leveling with that feeling of fear for a starter and discover how that makes you feel. You'll probably find, as others have, that when you report a feeling you modify it. Keeping it a secret seems to increase its power. If we don't begin *now* to risk being genuine and self-revealing, when will we ever really do it?