

The OIRF System for Intervening in Group Process
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In a process-oriented group, the leader needs to be monitoring the group for nonverbal reactions and repetitious behaviors. For instance, let's say that Karen is talking about the death of her mother and Sue starts fidgeting and looking at her watch. It is important for the group leader to bring Sue into the process by asking her what is going on. Don't be afraid of interrupting one member to inquire into another member's behavior, because you can always go back to the original speaker and resume. Of course, you don't want to interrupt someone in the midst of tears or strong emotions, but remember: Your job is to facilitate group interaction, and sometimes people are holding back and depriving the group of their honest expression. On other occasions, some members may be exhibiting repetitive or chronic ways of relating, and again it is important for the leader to bring this to the member and the group's attention.

Note that there are three levels of focus in this system (see handout titled "Levels of Group Focus): personal, dyadic, and group. So let's take the first situation and look at how you might intervene using this system at each level of intervention.

OBSERVATION WITHOUT INTERPRETATION

Personal:

You might say, "Sue, I've noticed that you have been fidgeting and just looked at your watch..."

Dyadic:

You might say, "Sue, I've noticed that ever since Karen began talking about the death of her mom, you have been fidgeting and just now you looked at your watch..."

Group:

In this case, you don't focus exclusively on Sue's behavior, but use it to describe generally what you're observing in the group's response to Karen. You might say, "I've noticed that ever since Karen began talking about the death of her mom, no one has spoken for a long time..."

OPEN-ENDED INQUIRY

Individual:

You would follow by saying, "What are you feeling right now?" or "What are you aware of?"

Dyadic:

You would follow by saying, "I'm wondering how Karen's story is affecting you?"

Group:

You might follow by saying, "What is going on right now? I'd like to hear from everyone..."

RESPONSE FROM MEMBER

Personal:

Sue's response may pertain only to her own worries or distractions, and have little to do with whatever else is going on.

Dyadic:

Sue may admit that her fidgeting has to do with Karen's story. If it does, then it may be a good idea to get Sue to tell Karen how it is affecting her.

Group:

Sue may admit feeling uncomfortable being in the group, in which case it might be important to have her tell each person, in turn, what makes her uncomfortable about being a group member.

LEADER FACILITATES GROUP INTERACTION AROUND ISSUE