

FOCUSING ATTITUDES AND SKILLS

For relating in groups, communities and personal life

FOCUSING ATTITUDES

- Openness and curiosity to oneself and the other.
- Valuing the uniqueness and mystery of the other and oneself.
- Alertness to the “more”—the underneath, deeper level, the implicit—beyond right and wrong.

RELATING ATTITUDES

- A Love of engagement and emotional responsiveness.
- An assumption of belonging—the vulnerability of our humanness.
- A willingness to leave the safe shores of like-mindedness and similarity and venture into the wild unknown waters of diversity, difference and unfamiliarity.
- An appreciation of embodied democracy—all the parts of ourselves and of others having a voice—no “group think.”
- Valuing true disagreement—looking for what we can learn from it, looking for the grain of truth or the new perspective.
- Trusting the process—looking for the little steps of opening in what can seem like chaos.
- Readiness to go to the intimate edge of the interaction, to find the meeting place. Going to the edge of relating but not over the edge—valuing bite-sized risks.

RELATING SKILLS

- Speaking up.
- Speaking out.
- Speaking from one’s felt sense.
- Speaking *to* the other rather than *at*.
- Sensing me, you and us.
- Tuning into the sense of the meeting place in the conversation.
- Using “I” statements and “WE” statements rather than “YOU” statements.
- Saying only as much as the other can take in.
- Avoiding judgmental language: “lazy,” “bullying,” “weak,” “rude.”
- Sensing what the group is trying to do, where it is trying to go—i.e., test the waters of what is acceptable, break out of constraints, compete for attention, establish norms, build structure, avoid or deal with conflict, find common ground, build safety and trust etc.
- Repairing ruptures— “cleaning up after ourselves.”
- Holding space, giving space, making space, taking space.
- “Talking about me and you when you.... I felt....”
- Watching for little steps of unfolding and development in the group.
- Carrying forward the interaction—building bridges, picking up on, asking into—bringing someone in or noticing that they haven’t been responded to.
- Noticing how the US evolves, how we are building it, bringing it out, as it is building us and bringing us out.
- Developing an “inner group” knowing the disagreements and overlaps—the needs and triggers of the members.
- Being aware of the tipping point or sweet spot between structure and spontaneity that is safe but not *too* safe.
- Making the implicit explicit.
- US THINKING: The dynamic, the dance, seeing each person as an ingredient of the whole.
- Being able to say OUCH and OOPS.
- US BUILDING: Tending the garden, celebrating the blooms.
- Offering support, taking leadership, asking for what you want.

- Developing a sensitivity to team coordination—when to speak, how long to speak. How to throw the ball in such a way that others can catch it. Usually that entails saying only one thing at a time.
- Incorporating your own pauses, asking for a group pause at times.
- Zooming Out and Zooming In—noticing the micro and macro moments—ways in which the group is an instance of larger social and cultural systems while not losing awareness of the precious, unique individual.
- Being on “its” side—protecting the “I” of the other. This doesn’t mean always being on the side of the other person but on the side of the inner life, what is trying to be said in the other while staying allied with your own inner experience.
- Suspending judgment.
- Tuning in to the needs of the group as a whole—what is “trying to be said.”
- Not taking sides—no right or wrong.
- Finding a handle or name for what is going on.
- Finding ways to ground oneself in moments of stress.
- Finding the right distance: “You don’t have to put your nose in the soup in order to smell it.” (Gendlin) Take the other and the self seriously and yet lightly.
- When someone is hurt or upset or angry in the group, it is up to the group to attend to both the one who is pouring out *and* the one who is poured out upon.