

MENTAALITALKOOT - a Joint Expedition to Collective Workmanship

The Experiential Small Group Learning Process Utilizing Shared Narrative Approach as a Tool for Workplace Development and Empowerment

Meeting 1. EXPERIENTIAL NARRATIVE GROUP

A narrative, a flashing image from work

The first meeting is used to activate the narrator's experiential knowledge; his intuitive and emotional creativity. The narrator tells a short flashing memory / an image from his work, an incident which he remembers. It is important that he does not tell the backgrounds; the circumstances which have led to this incident, avoiding also any rational explanations related to it. The story is almost like a painting, a short scene from a play, only what is happening, here and now.

Group's imaginative immersion into the narrative and narrator's role, but enriching it with their own feelings

The group uses the story as a base, entering into it, exploring it with their own feelings sharing their reactions with each other, but not with the narrator, who listens attentively to group's discussion, but does not participate in it. Analyses and interpretations are forbidden in this stage.

Narrator's comments, associations

The narrator is given now time to associate and share freely whatever the group's immersion into his story has sparked off in him. The group listens actively without interrupting the narrator's free association in any way until the narrator makes clear he's done.

Joint discussion

The narrator joins the rest of the group. It is now possible to explore narrator's real life background searching any additional feelings and associations which might be possibly connected to the narrator's initial image.

Summary

The group shares now their own personal visions concerning the narrator's work life situation, avoiding any judgmental opinions, advice, consolation and encouragement, because all these external influences tend to suppress the narrator's own discoveries. The group's task is not to teach the narrator but, in the contrary, to learn from him, supporting him to find his *own* answers. The last word is given always to the narrator.

"Homework"

The meeting is finished by giving the narrator a task to freely choose himself *a goal; an ideal; a dream worth aspiring to*, for the next meeting.

Meeting 2. GOAL ORIENTED DREAMWORK

Utopia, dream, ideal

The narrator describes his dream; goal; ideal, his utopia; the most optimal, most desirable state of his future work, how distant or improbable it ever seems to be, and not letting any rational thinking to push this dream aside as foolish or irrational. The group's task is now to explore with questions the narrator's feelings connected to this dream image in order to enrich it, helping the narrator to concentrate only to it, to rip every trace of destructive rationality away from it.

The borderland between future and present

After maximizing the narrator's dream to full bloom; full vigour, the narrator is asked to start approaching backwards in time towards his present day work life, but, guided by his own feelings, to stop somewhere between this dream and his workplace reality. When the narrator has found the time/place, the group begins to search and focus to potential connections between this dream and his workplace reality by presenting questions to the narrator, continuing to avoid making any suggestions and propositions to him.

The working plan

When the ideal, which the group has helped to become visible, illuminates now the narrator's innermost hidden aspirations (often considered collectively and individually as something a sensible person would not own easily) - in fact his fuller potential, his new ideas and associations, the narrator is now able to evaluate his possibilities and obstacles better, to see his limits more clearly, and with this newly acquired knowledge build a more realistic work plan for the near future. The narrator looks for some real work situation which is approaching in the near future, telling how he could possibly prepare for it, how he plans to act in it, how to actualize the visions he has found during the utopia and borderland stages.

The group intensifies this working plan by focusing to it, but only with questions, *not* with any suggestions or group's own opinions. Every insight must be come into sight from inside the narrator only! This maximizes the information about personal and general factors the narrator considers important/meaningful in his work. In this phase the present day and work planning at the rational level are reached, enriched by the expanded knowledge the narrator has attained with the help of the group during their journey from ideal to real world facts.

Summary

Now the group has the opportunity to express their impressions about how they see the narrator's work, working habits and practices, critical factors, philosophy, possibilities, unique features, being extremely observant which resonates with the narrator. Only the narrator can judge whether or not what is being offered feels right.

Finally the narrator will be given the last word. Now he has the opportunity to summarize his experiences, thoughts, feelings. Then the process is closed. Through the narrator's increasing insight everyone in the group has learnt something more about themselves and their own work life.

As a safety factor anything the narrator has shared in the group during these meetings, remains in the group. Only the narrator is free to share it further outside the group.