

As "form should follow function," what's the function of the questions-quandaries-quagmires one-page reduction of two weeks of diary? It's the sharing of whatever one believes the group might be helpful on, within the limits of the fact that in a brief time eleven others will want to do the same. "Co-counseling" is a recent term for this mutual-support-community function.

What's the best form for achieving this dual goal--"form" in both the physical and the procedural senses? Let's begin with pathology: the worse form is "free form"--"group sharing" ad lib, spontaneously, without either paper or order ("order" in sense of sequence and of time-limit-per-person). Long experience shows that this "relaxed style" results in the following:

- (1) Somebody, usually the most vocal person in the group, "starts." As anybody in the group has enough concerns, or enough intensity of some concern, to take the whole time the group has allotted, getting to anybody else is improbable: all are frustrated, and angry at the one who "took all the time." The error, however, lies not so much with that person as with the group, for its failure (a) to design an equitable procedure and (b) to discipline itself thereto.
- (2) Because the group "needs more time," on the illusion that design-and-discipline failures would thus be overcome, the time allotted to this segment of the group's session is extended --with the result that other components of the session are cheated.
- (3) Because of this cheating, the group decides to put the Q-sharing last in the session--and then, because the experience of Q-sharing has been so unsatisfactory, tends to let the other components crowd the Q-sharing entirely out.

Cure?

I've found the following works best:

(1) Physical form

One page (not one sheet, which would be two pages) of diary-reduction, any design one wishes--various designs being suggested in the group--by members and by the supervisor--from time to time.

(2) Procedural form

- (a) The session's manager-timekeeper decides, with the group, on the order of persons for the sharing.
- (b) Of course not every member of the group need submit a page every session, but the discipline of doing so is important both to the person (who feels "out of it" without a page) and to the group (which tends to fall first into unease and then into lethargy when only some present a Q-sheet).
- (c) The member sharing distributes the page (which I'll xerox during supper if the person hasn't seen to it earlier), the group reads it silently and then discusses till time is called.
- (d) No time need be given to anyone not submitting a Q-sheet, and no oral introduction to a Q-sheet should be permitted.

NB: Until a group has bogged down, it's hard to believe that so severe a self-discipline ("self" meaning both the person and the group) is necessary. Not after!