

1976 AAVS/AVAS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

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MINI-WORKSHOP - "Career Development for Volunteer Administrators"

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2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

3:45 - 5:15 p.m.

SUGGESTED READING: "What Color is Your Parachute?"
Richard Bolles
Ten Speed Press
(Paperback) \$4.95

A DESIGN FOR: CONSULTING AS A HELPING RELATIONSHIP *

GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF DESIGN

- * To learn the dynamics of the helping relationship.
- * To practice giving, receiving, and observing helpful consultation.
- * To share and explore common training problems in a helpful climate.

PROCEDURE

The trainer begins with a brief lecturette on the consultant's role and discusses "The Helping Relationship."

The entire group is then divided into triads in which each member will alternatively practice the role of "consultant," "client," and "observer," in three different situations (cf. Instructional sheets (A), (B), and (C)).

The "client" presents an interpersonal problem he has in his job situation. The consultant practices giving help while the third member observes the interchanges between them. The whole process takes about 30 minutes. During the last 10 minutes, the observer discusses his findings with the other two.

Following the initial 30 minute segment, it is helpful to call all the triads back together and have each report helpful and unhelpful experiences. This discussion can improve the next two segments.

The second and third segments are then held each time changing both the membership of the triads and the roles played so that all persons get a chance to perform each of the roles.

The trainer ends the exercise by again soliciting the helps and hindrances that were observed and by recording them on newsprint. Some time may then be spent evaluating the exercise as a whole.

THE HELPING RELATIONSHIP

Carl Rogers, in his now classic article, "The Characteristics of a Helping Relationship," defines a helping relationship as

one:

"in which at least one of the parties has the intent of promoting the growth, development, maturity, improved functioning, improved coping with life of the other. The other, in this sense, may be one individual or a group. To put it another way, a helping relationship might be defined as one in which one of the participants intends that there should come about, in one or both parties, more appreciation, more expression of, more functional use of the latent inner resources of the individual."
(Rogers, 1961)

The key issues for providing interpersonal help lie in first, assisting the client to realize that he can change only his own behavior which then may or may not bring about a change in others; and, secondly, helping the client to develop three behaviors that Argyris has identified as being essential to bring about an improvement in interpersonal relations. These behaviors are:

1. Openness to Experience - We all see the world through our own eyes, and it is helpful to enquire how others see things.
2. Being descriptive rather than judgemental - While values differ for all of us, it is more helpful to say what you like or don't like, and how things affect you, than it is to say "that's wrong" or "that's bad" in an absolute sense, or to otherwise label someone by saying, "You are a _____!"
3. Avoiding attributing motives to others as reasons for their behavior. It is much better to enquire of someone, "Why did you do that?"

(Argyris, 1968)

Developing the above three behaviors requires practice and patience. The consultant must role model them if he expects the client to begin to develop a more positive interpersonal orientation.

(A) INSTRUCTIONAL SHEET - THE CLIENT

SUGGESTIONS

1. Think of a situation or problem in your job or family situation which you would like to change or resolve. Select a problem which is of *real concern to you*.
2. In presenting the problem, try to be brief and specific. At the same time, indicate some of the symptoms of the problem and the reasons for your concern.
3. After explaining the problem, the consultant will ask you some questions which may help you to clarify the situation and explore possible solutions.
4. You alone know your problem. Try to present it as clearly as you can.

(c) INSTRUCTIONAL SHEET - THE OBSERVER

SUGGESTIONS

1. Your task is to observe and to listen as carefully as you can. You cannot communicate to either of the other persons. During the last ten minutes of the interview, comment briefly on what you saw taking place in such a way as to encourage the client and consultant to think and talk about their experience and your observation.

2. *Ideas:*

It may be helpful to:

- a. Ask yourself during the interview, "What is going on between the client and the consultant?"
- b. How does the consultant set a climate for the relationship? Do his remarks help the client to open up and speak freely?
- c. How carefully are the client and the consultant listening to each other?
- d. Are both client and consultant working through a definition of the problem and its causes before trying to think of solutions?
- e. Is there a point at which the communication between the client and the consultant seems to "click." How did this come about?

SUGGESTIONS

1. Your task is to help the client define, or perhaps, redefine, his problem and his relationship to it in sufficiently specific terms so that he can see some ways to solve it.
2. *Ideas:*
 - a. How does the client see himself in the situation? What is his role and responsibility in the problem?
 - b. What seem to be the fundamental difficulties?
 - c. What solutions have been tried? With what results?
 - d. Who else might be concerned or involved in the situation or problem besides your client?
 - e. Are there any indications from the client's behavior that he may not see some aspects of his own involvement in the problem? If so, can he do something about his part in the solution?
3. *Cautions:*
 - a. Try to keep the options open. Resist the possible temptation to say such things as, "The real problem seems to be," or, "You should do," instead, help the client to gain insight by sharing your perceptions with him.
 - b. Try to remember that everyone's experience and perceptions are different. Resist the urge to say such things as, "We had the same problem and solved it this way.", or, "It's not difficult." The problem may be quite difficult for the client.
4. *Guidelines:*
 - a. Focus on questions that elicit responses such as, Why? How do you know? What does this or that mean? How does that affect you?
 - b. Try to help the client focus on alternative options for his own behavior that he can employ rather than focusing on what others ought to do to solve the problem.