Handbook

Group Leader Training

English Edition

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I. Resources of the human mind

1. The true self of human beings

In their deepest core, every human being is perfectly in order. This realm of heart – the true self of every human being – is created by nature. It exists from birth, cannot be destroyed and is complete in and of itself. There are different aspects of the heart, like the ability to love, that need to be developed throughout the course of one's lifetime. For example, a person needs to experience love and care through his parents or caretakers as well as make effort on his own, in order to reach his full potential to give and receive love.

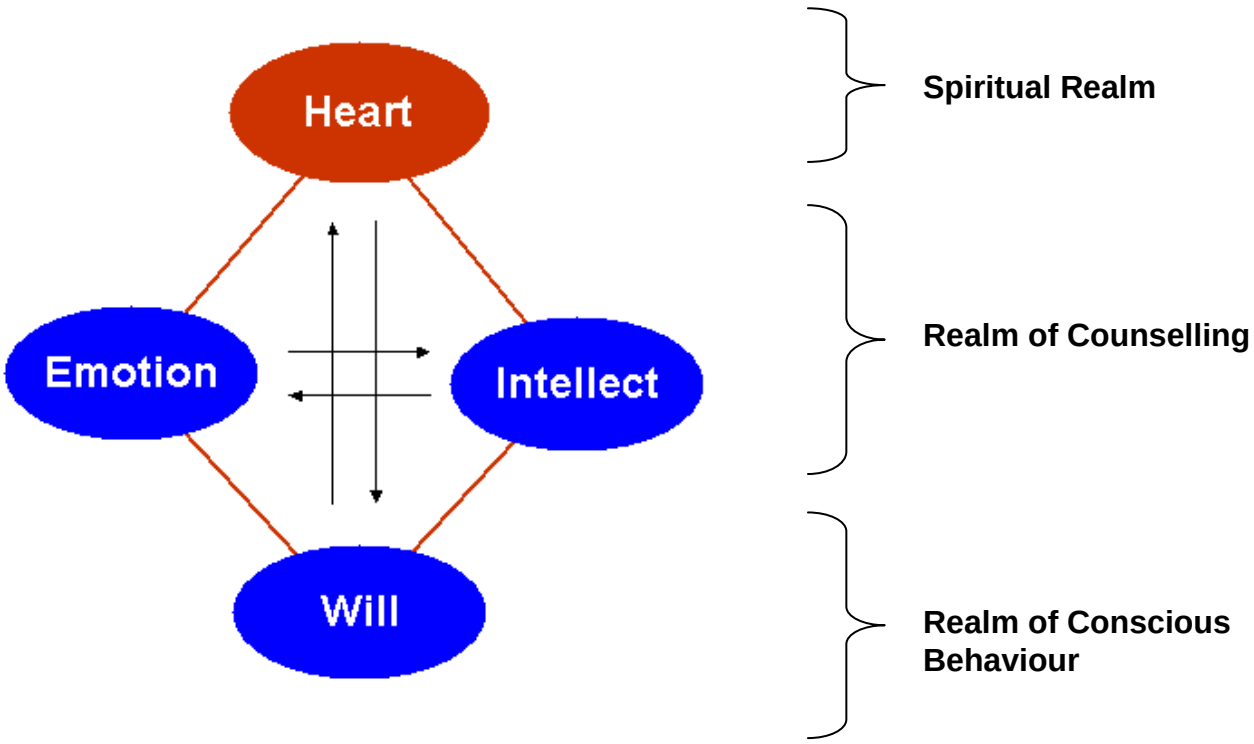
We believe that through this true self we can gain access to our higher consciousness, spirituality, the Divine and the source of love in order to receive spiritual nourishment. The true self contains our ideals, values and original character. Once a person lives in accordance with his most inner core and in unity with the Divine, he will find deep satisfaction and fulfilment.

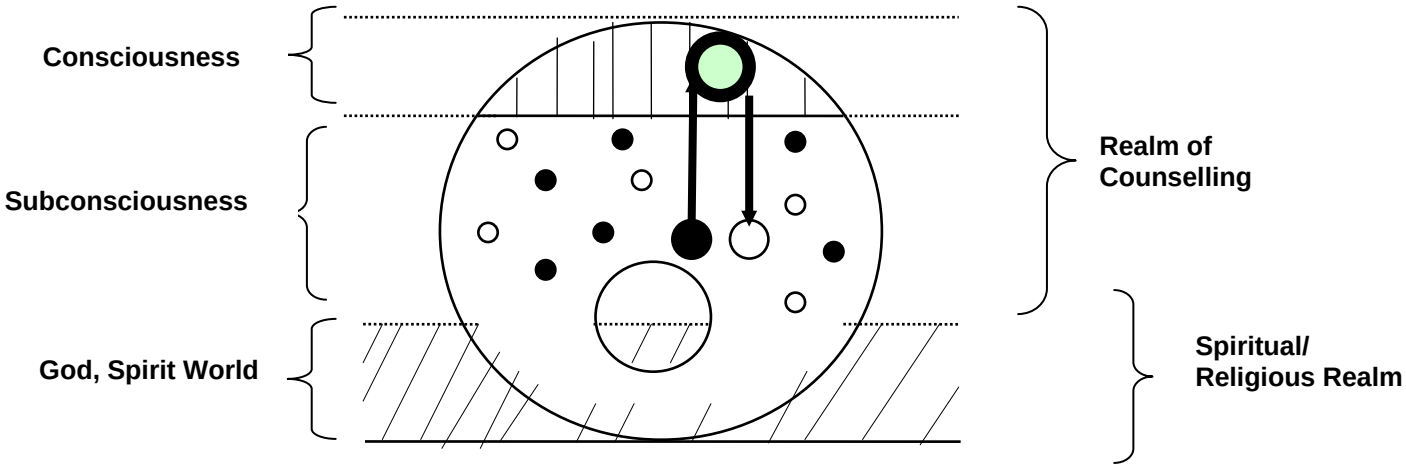
The true self of human beings does not need to be programmed or healed.

Instead, by dissolving blockages that hinder access to our true self the necessary resources for development and healing are naturally released

2. The different levels

Blockages and disturbances in the human psyche are found mainly in the intellectual and emotional realms





The blockages in the intellect are false attitudes, concepts, beliefs, values etc. They can be brought into the conscious realm by means of reflection and questioning and in this way be dissolved. The way this works is through re-assessing, clarifying and resolving the issue.

In order to dissolve blockages in the emotional realm or change the structure of emotional patterns, they need to be dealt with in the context of the emotional realm.

Every feeling that is causing strain and distress has its origin in a concrete experience with a particular person. Strong unpleasant emotions that don't find any adequate expression manifest themselves in our body as energy blockages and in our sub-conscious as a conflicting experience.

If the inner pain is bearable, these blocked feelings can usually be digested and dissolved through the natural self-healing mechanisms of the human mind. These self-healing mechanisms include e.g. dreams, reflection or sharing with other people. The feeling becomes conscious again at a later point in time and can be digested through the right treatment. Once emotions are detected, recognized, named, accepted and expressed, they will flow naturally and dissolve.

If experiences are so painful that they can't be digested through the self-healing mechanisms, they be will be suppressed into the unconscious and will only surface again in a very safe environment, like e.g. in a partnership or therapeutic situation.

A person is especially vulnerable towards emotional injury in early childhood. If a child doesn't experience a safe environment in which he/she can express pent-up feelings and experience healing, he has no choice but to suppress them into the sub-conscious.

After a single painful experience the child will use every opportunity to express these pent-up feelings again. If the parents or caretakers behave

repeatedly in a way that's painful for the child then he will shut himself off from these unpleasant feelings by suppressing them.

However, these suppressed emotions are by no means dissolved. These feelings are stimulated again in similar experiences, and they may become exaggerated out of proportion to the actual event. In this way, we may become overly sensitive to certain forms of behaviour and it can negatively influence our relationships.

The suppressed emotion and the resulting reaction will become a deeply ingrained pattern over time.

The emotional and reactionary patterns that originate from such suppressed emotions are very hard to change because they contain immense emotional energy. But this energy can be reduced when these pent-up and suppressed feelings can be expressed at a later point in time, and when the emotions are met with acceptance, validation and understanding. On the foundation of the suppressed emotions being released, the reactionary behaviour can also be resolved.

Our emotional patterns cannot be fully digested while the negative feelings are aroused,

We need to take some time to reflect and work on them at a later point in time. It is necessary to reflect about an emotional reaction afterwards while giving enough space to the emotion.

In the process of changing the emotional patterns it is necessary to take responsibility for one's own emotions. To do so, we need to admit that the origin of those intense feelings lies within myself; the other person is merely acting as a trigger.

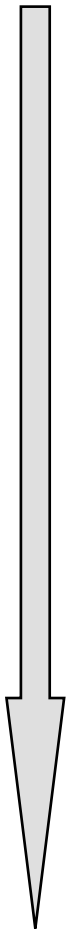
Usually, our intellect justifies the negative feelings and resulting actions, and in this way only reinforces the pattern. The purpose of the emotional work is to identify those justifications that hinder the process of growth and seek to avoid them in the next emotional situation. It is important to give the right attention to the emotions by allowing them to surface, receiving and accepting them and to express them in a safe way.

This process liberates me so that I can get in touch with the resources of the heart on a deeper level. The pattern of reacting according to my true self enhances my development and leads me to realizing my potential. I can now create a new pattern with the help of the impulse of my heart and my intellect. The goal then is to solidify this new pattern mentally by consciously imagining it over and over again. The old pattern can only then be replaced by the new one when I apply the new pattern consistently.

People can experience change on different levels. Change on a higher level will affect the lower levels.

Change on different levels

(Robert Dilt's theory of the unified field)



Heart	**Spirituality**	Relationship to God, orig. trust, faith, meaning of life, Universal love
Heart	**Identity**	Self-image, deep values, character/identity
Intellect/ Emotion	**Beliefs/ Attitudes**	Fundamental ideas that we consider true and use as a foundation for everyday life
Intellect/ Emotion	**Abilities**	Skills, knowledge, understanding, talents, strategies at our disposal
Will	**Behaviour**	Concrete actions that we carry out
Will	**Environment**	Situations, fellow human beings, circumstances that we react to and influence

II. Utilizing the Healing Power of the Group

1. The Principle of Self-Help in the Group

The group acts as a supportive environment so that one's own perception and behaviour can be more easily understood and resolved.

What is happening in the group is not just mutual pampering and mothering but it is a supportive environment which enables every participant to develop in a self-responsible way. The group is training for real life, not a replacement for life. How does this work? It's not so much about talking about what happened in the past but how the past is affecting us now.

The healing power of the group is based on everybody's commitment to go through this process in a self-responsible way so that they can better perceive and create themselves, their life and their circumstances.

There are two more important conditions for a lively group-dynamic; they are concern with oneself and empathy. Every participant gets actively involved once something concerns him, and he supports others in their experiences.

The healing power of the group becomes effective through empathy, mutual validation, joint participation and faith in everybody's ability to solve their problem themselves.

Also important conditions are spontaneity and reflective observation (what's happening with me, what can I understand and learn from this?). The unconscious process becomes most obvious during spontaneous behaviour. Spontaneous behaviour is only possible when relationships are genuine and open.

Self-reflection encourages the process of development and offers new insight. New insight enables new behaviour; this in turn enables new habits, and finally, these new habits create our character.

Spoken words as a medium Addressing issues in the group make them more substantial than just thinking about them. Spoken words serve as a purifier, offer relief from tension and help actively to re-create. Many times problems only become substantial when talked about and it becomes possible to distance oneself from an inner conflict.

Sharing creates a condition for other participants to take part in the issue. In this way, the medium of the spoken word becomes an essential element to help create relationships.

New insight through 'participating resonance'

Participating resonance means that the different participants check themselves whether certain experiences that are shared by others trigger similar feelings within themselves. This should then also be shared with the group. Over the course of the group's development every participant will get an opportunity to share about his issues and how he deals with them. Through 'participating resonance' I can learn from resources of other participants and expand my own resources. It is important to understand that everybody needs to figure out their own solution, but they can gain valuable insight based on the solutions shared by others.

Remember: The solution lies with the one who has the problem.

Summary

The healing power of the group is based on:

Self-Responsibility Every participant is responsible for his own growth but he can receive valuable support through the group.

Genuineness, Sincerity and the willingness to share about oneself openly and honestly. This requires truthfulness and sincerity towards oneself and others.

Faith, Trust and Acceptance This means to trust the other person that he can master and take responsibility for his own fate, and to accept differences so that everybody can go their own way. Faith and acceptance are also based on trust in oneself and others.

Love/Solidarity The quality of a mutual relationship is determined by love and solidarity, this is when everybody accepts the uniqueness in each other, stands by one another and supports each other's development.

2. Developmental Phases of the Group

The developmental group work of *Project Partnership – Love as a way and opportunity*

is a combination of work that is both focused on certain themes as well as one's own experiences. The course of the group is not pre-determined but develops in accordance with the involvement of each participant.

However, we can often observe groups going through similar phases in their development. Each of those phases presents a particular challenge and opportunity for both the group leader and the participants. The group leader should consciously recognize the feelings and needs of the participants during each phase and consider them respectfully.

To do so, the following description can provide valuable orientation:

We distinguish between phases of strangeness, orientation, trust, differentiation and conclusion.

Phase of Strangeness

For many participants the beginning of a new group is often characterized by curiosity, tension and insecurity. People don't know each other yet and haven't found their place in the group yet. There are no rules, roles or norms yet and the behaviour patterns are not yet set in this particular group. As a result, fundamental needs of belonging, safety and acceptance are not being fulfilled yet by the group. This can cause the above mentioned feelings in the participants. During this phase, participants often tend to get closer to fellow participants who are like-minded or focus on the group leader. For the group leader it is important to bear in mind that unspoken rules and norms are often created particularly during this time.

Phase of Orientation

Step by step everybody finds their place and role within the group. This happens through the participants themselves - but also through the expectations and reactions of the group. There is a danger that roles out of role playing activities in the group can become firmly established and this can make change and development more difficult later on.

Phase of Trust

This phase is also called the ‘phase of us’. The different participants begin to identify with the group and feel more courage to get involved. Based on the established trust it becomes possible to reveal tensions, different opinions, needs and expectations in a safe and supportive environment.

Phase of Differentiation

Once the group has positively accomplished the phase of trust, the different situations of each participant can be addressed. The ‘us’-consciousness comes about not only through experiencing and digesting similar things, but through the common concern to develop individually and in a self-responsible way and to support each other in that. On this foundation, we can consciously recognize and reveal the differences among the participants. It is important for the group leader to make sure that differences are not seen as a problem but as encouragement to confront each other in a productive and respectful way.

Phase of Conclusion

It is recommended to determine the time period at the beginning of the group together (based on principled themes). Otherwise there is a danger that the group dissolves at a point of working out a deep conflict. It is important to bear in mind to only move on to the next theme when the participants agree on it.

For the concluding reflection it is important for the group leader to make sure that feelings of separation, detachment and letting go that possibly arise at the end of the group are consciously recognized and digested.

III. Abilities of the Group Leader

1. Self-Perception of the Group Leader

The role of the group leader is different from that of the seminar trainer in that the seminar activity is focussed on particular themes while the group work is focussed on personal experience. The purpose of seminars is primarily that of conveying content, knowledge and insight while group work serves as company, support and fostering one’s development.

While the seminar trainer determines the quality of the course with his personal knowledge and experience, for the group leader it is important to create the conditions so that the resources of the group can be fully utilized.

The group leader trusts in the resources of each participant and he doesn’t feel responsible to find everybody’s solution to their problem. It is not his responsibility to support through advice and care but he supports by empathetically being responsive to the participants and dealing with the

developmental process of the group internally. He makes sure that the group carries the individuals' process as a whole.

The group leader should not become dominated by the feelings of the participants but rather remain himself, with a reflective and empathetic frame of mind.

Attitude

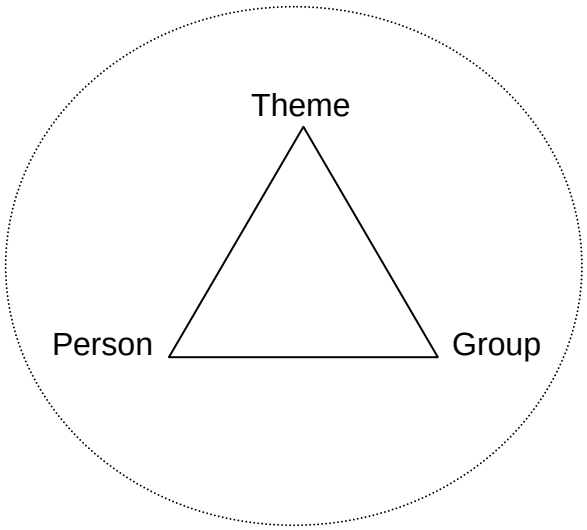
Each reaction towards the group's participants should be characterized by respect for human dignity and self-responsibility. We express this by accepting each participant unconditionally as fellow human being in spite of their shortcomings and by trusting that they can find their own solution. The strength it takes to solve one's problems and the way we try to take charge of our life dignifies us, and we should respect each other for that.

In the course of the group the group leader should not become dominated by the feelings of the participants but rather remain himself in a reflective and empathetic frame of mind.

2. Skills for Group leading

There are always three essential factors involved in the group's happenings that the group leader should be constantly aware of. First, there is the theme that is dealt with, then it is personal experiences and finally the process of the group dynamic.

The three factors:



Group Dynamic

The reaction and behaviour of the group leader is crucial during each group meeting and will determine the creation and development of a good group dynamic.

A) Using different methods, he has to make sure that sharing doesn't remain on an intellectual level but that emotions are addressed and revealed.

B) He leads the reaction of the group members with his own reaction by offering acceptance and understanding to the person revealing themselves.

C) He makes sure that the group also shows enough acceptance and understanding towards this person.

D) He allows and makes sure that other participants are also given necessary space to share their experience.

Tasks and Skills of the Group Leader

a) Raise certain Themes

- Explain what's planned
- Explain code of conduct
- Introduce the theme

b) Deal with Feelings properly

Empathetic Understanding (Acceptance and Active Listening)

To validate the participant in his inner experience - through empathetic understanding, we can convey to him that we accept him as he is and that his perception of the problem is understandable.

- to validate the feelings and experience of the participant:
  - "Hm; Yes, you see"
  - "That must have been difficult."
  - "I understand."
- to name the feeling
- By carefully watching the reaction of the participants, the group leader can gain valuable insight about how his behaviour affects each participant. Through this, he can sensibly deal with each person, and continuously develop his ability of empathetic understanding.

c) Intervention in order to protect the Group Dynamic

Intervention if a Participant's Feelings have been hurt

If participants react with advice, judgement, valuation or lectures towards the person revealing himself and if they begin to moralize or try to pacify him, the group leader needs to stop this and encourage them to practise empathetic understanding.

- "Stop, may I interrupt! It is really important that … is now met with sufficient space and acceptance!"
- The group leader asks the participant who is sharing about himself:"How are you dealing with this. Was this helpful?"

Sharing on an intellectual Level only

If communication among the group remains primarily on an intellectual level, there are methods to lead the discussion onto deeper levels.

- express one's own feelings and perceptions
- ask the participants about their feelings and perceptions regarding the theme
- address the situation directly
- use appropriate methods (i.e. meditation, worksheets for self-reflection)

Dealing with Conflict and Tension in the Group

It is important for the group leader to be prepared that both hidden and open conflicts may surface any time. Usually, these are expressed between two participants or between a person and the group. What the group leader can do:

- Hidden conflicts can be named and brought into the group: "It would be much more helpful not just to discuss the issue but to express everybody's feelings about it." When feelings are given enough space, the conflict may subside.
- Help the person who is repeatedly contributing to the polarization, to understand his situation and behaviour better through a personal talk. Through this he can later bring his issue into the group.
- Encourage the group to reflect about how unexpressed norms and role playing behaviour can affect the group negatively, e.g. one person may always talk while another hardly says anything; one may always try to dominate the group or the discussion; somebody may try to play the clown; etc.
- If people make open accusations suggest open feedback: "I would like to suggest that everybody gives feedback to the accused person on how they perceive him."
- Open feedback is also appropriate if one person has a negative self-image. "I would like to suggest that everybody here gives him feedback

on how they perceive him (to the person believing that their behaviour is disturbing or unpleasant)."

Establish Balance within the Group

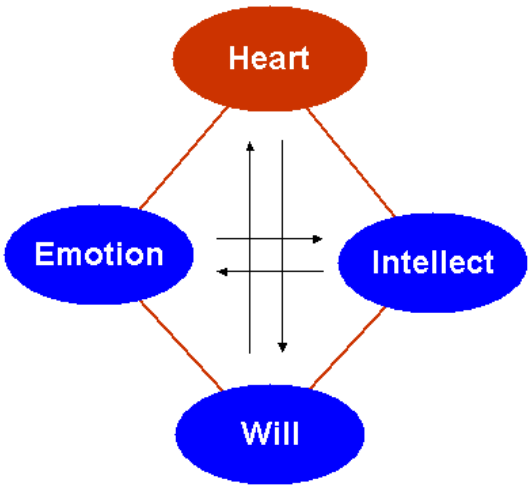
The group leader should always be concerned about integrating every participant into the group dynamic. There are several ways of working towards this.

- Make sure that everybody is taken seriously and receives the attention required.
- Recognize insecurities and offer support if someone is not integrated.
- If two participants express opposite experiences regarding the same theme and then belittle the other person's experience, the group leader should make them aware that two people can absolutely perceive the same situation in different ways. "One person perceives it like this, the other one like that. That's fine."
- He makes sure that group meetings don't develop into exclusive dialogues or discussions among just a few members
- He makes sure that they only go on to the next theme when all participants agree on it.

3. Activate Resources

An important potential of the group lies in utilizing the resources of its participants. The most essential resources are within the heart of each individual person. Therefore, the ultimate goal of developmental group work is to activate the resources of the heart.

<u>The four levels:</u>



In order to activate those resources it is first necessary to dissolve blockages on the emotional and intellectual levels.

The group leader should offer support if he notices that blockages on one of these levels obstruct the developmental process of the group or its participants.

The first step is for the group leader to decide which level needs to be addressed.

Then he can bring the attention of the group or individual members to the appropriate level through specific questions or selected reflections. In this way the people affected can become more consciously aware of their undigested feelings as well as hindering concepts. The atmosphere in the group may help to resolve undigested emotions as well as gain new insight. This frees up the individual participants to activate their resources.

Resources and Blockages on the four Levels		
Level	**Resources**	**Blockages**
Heart	Love Longing Purpose Values Faith, Conscience Sincerity Motivation, Needs Intuition, Inspiration Connection with higher Consciousness	*Note 1
Emotion	Liveliness Enthusiasm Joy Hope Confidence Spontaneity Creativity	<u>Undigested Feelings such as</u> Disappointment Fear Guilt Worries Anger, Resentment, Hatred Pondering Hurt
Will	Discipline, Perseverance, Determination, Single-Mindedness, Drive, Ability to assert oneself, Consistency	Disharmony between Intellect and Emotion Goals set too high/idealistic Goals that are not in accord with the heart Unclear plans Indecisiveness

Note 1: Unfulfilled fundamental needs, attitudes and motives that are not in accordance with the Principle of Love, as well as lack of taking responsibility impede the development of our ability to love. The development of our ability to love is the core of our personal growth. We grow and develop by dissolving blockages, activating resources and by loving those close to us.

Questions that help dissolve Blockages	
Level	**Question**
Intellect	**Non-specified Nouns (People; they; nobody; others ;)** Who or what exactly…? **Non-specified Verbs (he *hurt* me; she *helped* me)** How exactly…? **Comparisons (better; worse)** Compared with what…? **Valuation (good; bad)** Who decides about this…? Based on what do you assess this…? **Nominalization (Decision; opinion; view)** Who speaks here about what…? How does he/she do this…? **Modal verb of possibility (can not; not allowed)** What would happen, if you did it…? What stops you from doing it…? **Modal verbs of necessity (must; have to; should)** What would happen, if you did it/not did it…? **Universal generalization (Business people are self-centred)** (Ask for a counter-example) Was there ever an occasion when…? **Complex equivalence (Since you are not looking at me while I'm** talking, **you are not listening)** Why does this…automatically means that…? **Cause and Effect (You make me angry; the kids drive me crazy)** What exactly is this caused by? What would have to happen not to cause this? How exactly do you make yourself feel or react like this in relationship to what you have seen or heard? **Mind reading (he doesn't like me; she thinks I am…)** How do you know that?

Emotion	How was that? How did you perceive that? What was the worst part? How do you feel about it now? When did that start? Who does that remind you of? Where do you feel this emotion in your body? What would you have wanted to say or do back then? Will you let me show you what this emotion wants to do with you? Who was the worst one? When was it the worst? What do you wish for? What would be good for you?

Questions to activate Resources:	
Level	**Question**
Heart	What is truly important for you (values)? What is your deepest desire? What hurts you most deeply? What moves you most deeply? As a result of this, which are your personal principles of life? Through which rituals do you connect with your most inner core? What are your basic needs? What does your inner voice tell you? Is that in accordance with your conscience?
Will	What do you wish for? What are your goals? What do you want to achieve? What do you want to have? Are you willing to invest yourself consistently for that? What are the possibilities? What's your plan? Did you really make a decision? *Note 2

*Note 2: In our life, we need to make decisions all the time. For the decision-making process we need to utilize all four levels. When all four levels are in unison with a decision, resources of the will like consistency, persistence, determination etc. are activated and ideals, goals and desires can be realized.

Selective Reflection

Another possibility to activate the resources of the heart is selective reflection.

When this level is addressed through the activity in the group, the group leader may utilize existing resources in order to activate even more of them.

It is not appropriate to go to these levels if the negatively perceived emotions and the blockages in the intellectual realm have not been given proper attention beforehand.

We talk about selective reflection when the group leader takes passages out of member's remarks and e.g. rephrases them in his own words. 'Selective' does not mean to react upon certain remarks of a participant through the spectacles of the group leader and to valuate them, but to highlight certain aspects.

IV. Code of Conduct

Rules of the Group

1. Be responsible for your feelings and actions. Be clear about what you want to contribute to this session and what you would like to get out of it.

2. Don't expect to be motivated to participate by others, but be clear about your own motivation.

3. Guide yourself. Determine by yourself when you want to speak or be silent, whether you want to be active or passive. But make a decision about it and don't make others responsible for it.

4. Represent yourself, say "I…" and not "we…" or "people…" when in reality you talk about yourself.

5. If you absolutely want to make remarks about others or share observations about people or facts, then state what it has to do with you, as far as you are aware of it.

6. Only one person should talk at a time. If several people talk at the same time, many things get lost. Everybody can only listen to one person at a

time. When several people talk simultaneously, it is a good idea to stop and find a solution for the situation.

7. Feelings are important and are part of a person. Therefore, they should not always be held back or interrupted. This refers to both pleasant feelings as well as the ones that are looked at rather negatively. Through both types of feelings I know that I'm alive and have the ability to feel. Speaking openly about emotions promotes a climate of trust.

8. If you experience a disturbance within yourself or the group that you can't digest on your own or that you believe hinders the group from growth-oriented work, then do address this openly.

9. Be aware that it is easy to invalidate feelings of others by giving advice, judging, valuing or lecturing as well as through moralizing or trying to calm them down.

10. If possible, when you ask a question, explain why you're asking and what this question means to you.

11. Try to be genuine and honest, to be true to yourself, and to act and speak based on that - but do also choose what you want to keep to yourself and what you want to share. Be sincere and selective.

12. Confidentiality. Whatever I hear and say in the group, is absolutely confidential! I can open up and explode only when I can trust that you don't tell a third person afterwards what I have said or done here. That means, when I talk to other people after the meeting I only talk about my own experiences. I will not name other participants or give away details by which they could be identified.

<u>Some helpful behaviour patterns for the group</u>

- Practice empathetic understanding and participating resonance
- Willingness and desire to talk about one's own experience and feelings. Let others participate in my own experience.
- Sincerity and openness
- Desire to help myself and to grow and develop.
- Respect and accept one another
- Willingness to create relationships of solidarity with others
- Have faith in others that they can successfully work through their problems
- Affirm others when they succeed with something.
- Encourage others to explain their problems in more detail, if necessary.

V. Methods

Besides the resources of the group itself, there are many different methods available that the group leader can utilize in order to support the process in the group. The different methods each have their own effect and purpose and can be used to achieve specific objectives. The most essential objectives can be achieved as follows:

1. Convey realizations, insight and understanding

This happens in the group by learning through a model. The group leader can support this aspect through brief lectures as well as instruction leaflets and exercises taken from handbooks 1-3.

2. Activate the inner process

The inner process of each participant gets activated through the addressed themes, the atmosphere in the group and the participating resonance. The group leader may foster this more by using supporting methods such as meditation or appropriate questionnaires and also by sharing about himself openly.

3. Heal, digest and clarify

Emotions and blocking attitudes that have surfaced are rearranged, clarified and digested. This works through worksheets, partner- and drawing exercises, but especially through the exchange and empathetic understanding that the group shows towards each individual.

4. Activate resources

The developmental group work can foster the activation of resources through mutual acceptance, joint participation, faith in the other person and the common desire to take responsibility to grow and develop. The resources of each participant are set free once existing blockages are dissolved. The group leader can help to activate resources and dissolve blockages by drawing special attention to the required realms using specific questions or selective reflection. Besides that there are also different exercises available for the group leader like e.g. meditation, worksheets, drawing exercises etc.