

Good Practice for Groups

- ensuring that your transition initiative is
productive, cooperative and healthy

by Sophy Banks and Peter Lipman

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Good practice for Groups

These principles come from Constellations work which looks deeply into how people behave within groups – from families to nations. It names four areas which need to be kept in good order for people to be able to relate in a healthy way.

Theme	Detail	Suggestions
Identity and Belonging		
Criteria for inclusion and exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who belongs in the group? • This might be to do with the group's purpose or ethos. It might be based on skills and experience or on how someone sees the world. • Who cannot belong and why? 	This can be evolving and fluid but helpful to have some statement – so the group itself is clear why it's formed, when its work will be done.
Size of group and whether it's open or closed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the group's size? • Can anyone come? • Can people attend as observers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open groups are suitable for networking, socialising. • Closed groups are useful for building trust for support, and for getting work done. • Groups that stay open will stay in the forming stage.
Process for recruiting / inviting new members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the group is closed, when will it be possible to join? • How will this happen? 	How can (potential) new members be made to feel welcome and safe?
Process for members leaving / being asked to leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will members leave? • Are some replaced automatically? • What if someone doesn't behave in accordance with the group ethos or ground rules (see below) 	Clarity around this from the outset helps when things start to get messy
Celebrating the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we remember to nurture and look after ourselves? 	
Exchange – Giving and Taking		
Review regularly what each member gives and takes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it balanced? • Are some giving much more than others? • What can be done to bring this more into balance? 	Long term imbalance in giving and taking is unsustainable.
Giving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • skills • money • resources • emotional support 	

Taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning • achieving personal aims • social contact • having fun • personal development 	
Place		
What is each person's place in the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role does each person take on? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are usually obvious roles – minute taking, bringing biscuits. • And then more subtle roles – bringing humour, easing tension, confronting difficulty. • It can be helpful to name and value these roles.
What places are there?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What roles should be fulfilled to make the group healthy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider mapping out roles to see whether any aren't being filled
Supporting development for each person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What roles do people want to grow into? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal growth is often a key benefit of being involved in voluntary projects.
Conduct		
Ground rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are meetings called? • How are they facilitated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that new people are aware of existing ground rules. • Review from time to time
How do we behave when we're together?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic ones – such as be on time; don't interrupt someone speaking; don't dominate the speaking space. 	
How will we sort things out when we don't stick to ground rules or there is conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there someone internal or external who could help or mediate? • Put this in place early if there are signs of difficulty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't spend lots of time thinking through what might go wrong. • Think about how employment law requires employers to behave – we should do things at least as well as this...?

Some good starting points for reference works on Groups:

- Truth or Power - by Starhawk
- Sitting in the Fire - by Arnold Mindell
- Deep Democracy - www.deep-democracy.net/

Contact Details

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