

INDIVIDUAL ROLES IN GROUPS

THE INITIATOR

He/she starts the meeting, introduces the matter to be discussed and sets the ball rolling. Usually this function falls to the person who has brought the group together and who may be identified as the leader. However the initiator has a broader role, at various times in the life of a group, individuals are responsible for changing the direction of the group or for providing some new impetus. The initiator takes initiative- i.e. brings a new state and new possibilities/new dimensions/new perspective to the group. He/she motivates/guides/provide direction to the group.

THE CLARIFIER

The function of the clarifier role is to encourage people to be specific, and avoid unclear generalisations. The clarifier understands the individual contributions and brings out their precise meaning in relation to the group's task. They make connections between individual contributions, identifying how they relate together. The clarifier is characterised by statements like *are you saying that ...* and *it seems to me that what you are saying is ...*

THE INFORMATION GIVER

They provide information, which is necessary and relevant at that particular time to help the task get done. The information giver may have the knowledge to hand in terms of that individual's particular skills and experience, or may volunteer to find out certain information. The information may be of a technical nature or, by contrast, it may relate to understanding what the exact nature of the task is.

THE QUESTIONER

It is the questioner's role to ask basic or fundamental questions about the task of the group. These questions relate to the task itself and may help define its exact nature or they may enquire about some of the assumptions that group members may have made as they have worked on the task. The main characteristic of the questioner's role is that it has the ability to take a step back from what is going on and, where required challenge the group on any assumptions it may be making. The questioner has to ensure that the questions that they ask do not ridicule any individual or undermines the groups' ability.

THE SUMMARISER

This role pulls various contributions together in a conclusive manner. They do not add anything new to the group's thinking but rather provides the facility whereby the group can check what it has achieved. They help the group to reflect on its progress so far and providing a base line for the next phase of the group's work. This role is especially important if a group gets stuck and lacks direction.. This role can be taken up formally in the form of somebody taking on a secretarial function, taking notes and occasionally feeding this information back to the group – or informally somebody in the group does a brief resume of what's been said up to that point. The summariser, in identifying what a group has already achieved, will help the group look at how it wants to move forward

SHARING EXPERIENCE

This role is demonstrated when somebody in the group makes a personal statement ,shares something about themselves, of their lives, or their experience related to general issue that the group is working on. This allows the group members to talk to each other as people. The demonstration of this role can have the effect of allowing the group to relate on a deeper, more intimate level. The role is characterised by statements like *'that happened to me once when, or I have some friends who are very concerned about this'*.

THE PROCESS OBSERVER

This role often shows itself when the group has become a little stuck. The process observer literally takes a step back from what the group is ostensibly doing and examines how people are relating and why they might be saying that they are saying.

This role will then show itself by statements like *I wonder if we need to look at why we seem to be going round in circles here, or I think perhaps a few of us have got into bit of verbal point scoring here.*

This role allows the group to acknowledge that it does have an emotional life which may block progress. It also has the facility for providing ways forward, for the individuals in the group to acknowledge the reasons for the hold-up and thus to clear way for getting on with the task.