

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' TRAINING MANUAL

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Produced by the National Christian Youth Convention 2009

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2. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Small Group Leaders Training Guide. If you are reading this, you must be thinking about leading a small group either at the National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC) or in your church. This training is being run as part of the lead up to NCYC 2009 in Melbourne, but is offered as a resource for any church context.

Small Group Leaders (SGLs) have an important role in helping groups develop and grow. We want to make sure you are equipped to take on the role of Small Group Leader. This Guide provides a step by step process where we take you through what makes a good small group leader.

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this training is to equip young people for leadership of small discipleship groups. The style of the sessions is to experience leading a small group through practising and observing others. In this training, we are focussing on preparing leaders to facilitate the running of a small group of 6-10 people, based on an open discussion approach. Small Group discussions are not always about trying to find the “right” answers. The purpose of the discussion is to learn and grow by the exchange of ideas, opinions and feelings.

By the end of training you should...

Feel confident, well informed, enthusiastic, challenged and excited about being a Small Group Leader at NCYC 2009 or at your church.

You should also...

- Know what is required of you as a Small Group Leader and what the vision is for small groups at NCYC
- Be able to recall common issues that small groups face and how it feels to be part of a small group
- Have learnt some activities to help your group get to know each other
- Know about all the people you can go to for assistance with your group or with particular problems that a member of your group may share with you
- Be able to plan a small group session using the small group materials that will be provided
- Know how to care for yourself in your role

We hope that this training will provide skills and resources to help you in your role, but also provide an opportunity to grow in your faith and find out more about yourself in the process.

2.2 Why do we need Training?

Nobody knows everything! Every Small Group Leader has things to learn and ways they can grow. All of us should approach our leadership and ministry the way Paul approached his when he said “I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection! But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be” (Phillippians 3:12, NLT).

Ongoing training and development is a vital part of success in any field. Any serious sportsperson will train regularly between competition games. Training is a required part of almost every profession or job – leading a small group is no different. Every leader has certain skills and gifts, and every effective leader, no matter how many small groups they have led, should, like Paul, always be looking for the next opportunity to learn and grow. (Aberfoyle Uniting Church, Small Group Leader Manual, 2003)

2.3 Setting

The training sessions will run over 1-2 hours. They may be run by Youth Ministry staff, people with leadership experience or a small group may work through the material together. They can be run locally or regionally. Maximum benefit will come if you do it with a group of people, but it is possible to work through the material alone.

There will be time for participants to experience the scenarios and discuss the material. A number of homework exercises are also suggested.

We encourage you to get involved in the training and have a go at the scenarios – until you’ve walked in another’s shoes, you may not understand where they are coming from!

2.4 Resources

The print resource is available as a download from the NCYC website <http://ncyc.org.au> – follow the links!

We thank NCYC 2007, the Ada Purnell Trust, Trinity Uniting Church in WA, the NSW Synod Youth Unit and the DVD Team from Newcastle, NSW, for their assistance in providing resources which we have adapted.

3. UNITING CHURCH ETHOS AND YOUR ROLE

The Uniting Church ethos encapsulates these values and beliefs as expressed in the Basis of Union.

- Discipleship
- Commitment to helping people in their spiritual growth through worship, prayer and service
- Recognition of the history and traditions of the church
- Connection to contemporary thought and the unfolding revelation of God in Jesus and God’s Spirit
- Centrality of the Bible as unique, prophetic and apostolic
- Gifts and their corresponding service i.e. lay ministry, women in ministry and leadership
- Interrelated Councils respecting each other’s authority
- Commitment to unity in diversity
- Inclusiveness
- Justice
- Mission
- Reconciliation especially with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC)
- Multi-cultural congregations worshipping in 42 different languages

4. TRAINING SESSION - KICKING OFF

Welcome to this training.

In groups of 3, introduce yourselves and share your answers to 1 or 2 of these questions. [5 minutes]

- What are you excited about?
- What is your favourite food?
- What would you never give up?
- Who do you find inspiring?
- If you were a vegetable what would you be?
- Who would you most like to meet?

4.1 Faces of Me...

Look at the faces in Appendix 6 on page 42.

Circle the faces that show... (If you can't find one that suits you, draw your own.)

1. How you are feeling today
2. How you are feeling about the role of Small Group Leader
3. What you are like in new situations.

Share your answers with 3 people around you. [8 minutes]

4.2 I want to know...

Share with the whole group what you hope to get out of today's training and any questions you might want answered. [5 minutes]

5. SMALL GROUPS

There are a number of different ways a small group can function, depending on their intent, the regularity and period of their meetings, the group membership and their overall purpose. Small groups are generally formed from around 6-10 people.

Brainstorm in your group...Why do you think small groups are important? [5 minutes]

5.1 Why Small Groups?

According to the National Church Life Survey (NCLS, 2001), involvement in small groups is a significant factor in promoting:

- A sense of belonging
- Community involvement
- Sharing faith and inviting others
- Growth in faith

Of all the 'involvement' measures in the NCLS, small groups were the factor most related to church vitality. Small groups play an important role because God calls us to live out our Christian life in community, not simply as independent individuals (Mallison, 1996).

"Small Groups provide the optimal place for Transformation, Community, Compassion, and Mission to occur in the lives of Small Group members" (Willow Creek, 2006).

Small groups are a way of ensuring everyone is cared for - that the workload is shared (Exodus 18:9-22), that everyone receives care (Acts 6:1) and that leadership is provided (Titus 1:5) – everyone is cared for and no one cares for too many. Small Groups also ensure that no one stands alone, struggles alone, serves alone, develops alone, seeks alone, or grows up alone. They also promote unity in the body of the church (Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16), a sense of belonging (Romans 7:2-4) and a place to grow, serve and challenge each other (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) (Willow Creek, 2006).

Small Groups can contribute a great deal to people in their development as disciples of Christ. John Mallison (1996) says they are important for the following reasons:

Firstly, value for the individual

- Growing awareness of the presence of God’s Spirit at work in her/his life.
- Developing increasing ability to get in touch with feelings, that is, a growing self-awareness.
- Healing in areas of life where deep emotional hurts exist.
- Having a sense of belonging and security.
- Developing a growing sense of self worth.
- Becoming aware of and having opportunity to exercise spiritual gifts.
- Coming to an understanding of how one affects others in the group and hence improve one’s skill in relating.
- Experiencing real “Christian fellowship” and personal spiritual renewal.
- Becoming a more effective channel for God’s love to others.

Secondly, value for the group

- Becoming a caring, supportive, challenging community.
- Working together towards a common goal.
- Sharing a sense of commitment.

What are the most important reasons given for Small Groups? Were there some reasons you hadn’t thought of? Share your answers with the group. [5 minutes].

6. HOW SMALL GROUPS WORK

6.1 Group Stages & Patterns

A group usually goes through certain stages or levels of development. As a group is made up of individuals, it won’t necessarily progress in a specific way, but it will follow a general pattern of development. Group development may happen easily and smoothly; others are more difficult while some are not successful at all. In short term groups these stages may not be as easily identified.

As a leader, it is important to be aware of and prepared for each of these stages and their consequences. These stages can be summarised as Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning. Appendix 4 outlines the different group stages, their characteristics, implications and ideas for leaders on what to do to help the group.

Groups go through the same general patterns, from:

Uncertainty	to	Clarity
Aloneness	to	Togetherness
Conflict	to	Cohesion
Anxious	to	Relaxed
Apprehension	to	Trusting
Critical	to	Accepting
Indifferent	to	Affectionate
Isolated	to	United

All groups go through these emotions – these emotions prompt the transition from one developmental stage to the next. The group has to maintain a balance between interpersonal relationships and the task at hand, and must not get too caught up with these emotions.

Factors that might hinder the group’s development include:

- New member joining the group
- Lack of confidentiality
- Feedback not given according to guidelines
- Lack of commitment
- Members not coming to each meeting
- Lack of participation
- Lack of interest by the leaders or participants
- Conflicting goals
- Meeting too frequently or not enough
- New group leader
- Lack of feedback about contribution
- Change of task or goals
- Group size too big or too small
- Power struggle
- Personality mix...too alike/too different
- Unequal status of group members
- Inappropriate norms
- Inflexibility

(Adapted from: Kerri Hamer (1994) “Leading a Group: A Practical and Comprehensive Handbook)

There are a range of roles people may take on which may negatively impact on a small group. These include:

- BLOCKER tangents, unrelated stuff
- INTELLECTUAL or FEELINGS ONLY opposites-.both talk, rather than bringing it home
- NON-PARTICIPANT acts indifferently or passively
- STUDENT relies on authority i.e. of others or the Scriptures
- FIGHTER aggressive, works for status deflates others
- JOKER jokes, clowns, mimics, disrupts
- DOMINATOR interrupts others, won’t shut up, asserts voice
- ‘OFF THE WALL’ ANSWERS
- QUESTIONING of you or the whole study

See Appendix 3 for some quick tips in Managing Difficult Situations.

If you get time, spend some time in groups working on a few ideas of how to deal with these different types of people.

6.2 Caring in a Crisis

A crisis situation is any serious situation requiring immediate action. Crisis situations could include:

- Cases of impending physical danger such as a suicide threat
- Cases of physical or emotional abuse
- A sudden or tragic death of a family member or close friend
- Imminent relational breakdown
- Emotional or physical breakdown caused by a high stress situation.

What should you do in a crisis?

Do not try and handle it alone! Involve other, more qualified and experienced people in the situation as soon as possible. At NCYC go to a chaplain.

You should always check with the person or people concerned first before talking with anyone outside the group in ways that identify the person.

For more information on dealing with situations such as vulnerable people, sexual misconduct and abuse, refer to Appendix 5.

7. HELPING YOUR SMALL GROUP TO WORK WELL

Lots of things you do can help or hinder how well your group works.

Here are some handy hints:

1. Make sure you're not talking too much.

The more input you give, the less likely they are to contribute. The skill of good leadership has more to do with asking good questions than with giving clever answers.

2. Allow people plenty of time to answer questions.

Don't just allow a token 5 seconds and then launch into answering the question yourself. Try to feel comfortable with silence in the group, it doesn't mean nothing is happening.

3. Direct questions to individuals.

This means asking, "Allison, do you think that...", or "Chris, how would you feel if..." When you do this, allow group members the freedom to say "I don't know". It may help to ask those who are more likely to answer initially.

4. Ask clarifying questions

Sometimes people don't answer because they don't understand the question. Ask the group, "Does that make sense to you?" If you find that the material is over their heads, you may need to rephrase questions as you go.

5. Allow people to write their answers

Some people find it easier to think on paper. Give group members the opportunity to write down their answers individually before they share them.

6. Share in small groups

Perhaps your group members don't know each other very well. By giving them the chance to share in pairs, you will reduce the threat involved in answering the questions.

7. Involve every group member (when & where you can)

Actively involve all the members of your group in some way. It could include reading the bible, sharing leadership roles (to lighten the load for the leader), bringing something to share (eg. food, special item of clothing to show). Every member of your group has gifts from God that they can use and strengthen.

(From Top Gear Book 1, JBCE c. 1991)

8. LEADERSHIP

8.1 What is an Effective Leader?

Write down your answer. [2 minutes]

Share your answers. [5 minutes]

What are some of your aims as a Small Group leader?

Share your thoughts with the group. [5 minutes]

Ten Things to Work At:

1. Character and service...integrity and a servanthood attitude (not a doormat)
2. Preparation and responsibility...no substitute for preparation and taking role seriously
3. Gifts and abilities...focus on developing and using your gifts
4. Teamwork and information...teams take work and information is power (share it around)
5. Boundaries and limits...set and know your limits in terms of 'safe place' and energy
6. Context and culture...learn about who people are, stories, background etc
7. Good News...the life and love of God are good news
8. Discipleship...in the end it's about growing our own, and others, faith and leading out of a sense of call
9. Develop leadership skills...everyone can and should learn
10. Reflection and self awareness...these are the path to learning, growing and being effective.

Read through the list. Identify up to three items which you think are most important for Christian leaders.

9. SMALL GROUP EXPERIENCES – THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

You know when your small group is working well, and when it's not working at all. Before we lead a small group, we need to reflect on our own experience.

9.1 Sharing our Experience

In groups of 3 or 4, share:

1 positive small group experience and why it was positive

1 negative small group experience and why it was negative [10 minutes]

9.2 Top Ten Leadership Skills

Spend 90 seconds writing down what you think are the top ten important skills in leading small groups, both things to include and things to avoid.

Make a separate list of any questions you have or any things you know you need to learn more about.

Compare your list with others in the group. [10 minutes]

9.3 Leadership Stuff

Here's a list of thoughts from other Small Group Leaders on what a Small Group Leader is about...

- Comes out of 'who you are', what you're looking for.
- Formation/preparation versus training – life-long learning versus some isolated skills.
- Time and energy – it takes heaps of both.
- Facilitator or leader – focus on the needs and hopes of 'the other'.
- Building relationship - the bedrock of what we're about 'representing Jesus'.
- Role model – having a realistic picture of being 'yourself', vulnerable and real.
- Creativity – use your own ideas and personality.
- Fun – the bottom line.

- Empathy – or feeling what it’s like for the other person ‘walk a mile in their shoes’.
- Empowerment – building others up, encouraging.
- Team leader – delegating, monitoring, measuring the pulse etc.
- Non-verbals are important – send the right messages.
- Create participation – your role in groups.
- Warm and understanding – a basic goal.
- Don’t expect to be perfect – don’t be too hard on yourself.
- Don’t expect to BE the whole list – start by working at 3 or 4 key things.
- Integrity – just be authentically yourself, mind your words, be consistent, warm regard for everyone.
- Task versus maintenance – balance between working through tasks & meeting the needs of members.
- Mix up when you share – speaking last is too much like it’s the right or authoritative answer.
- Open questions – not just yes or no answers.
- Experts – it’s OK to say “I don’t know”.
- Silence – don’t be afraid to give people thinking time before someone ventures a comment.
- Pray – an important part of preparation and group time but needs to be what the group understands.
- Ask the question behind the question – listening for what a person is really sharing. Listen actively.
- People need to join – silly games/questions are there to crack the ice with your group.
- Non-verbals – sometimes more important than words.
- Setting and seating – be in a roomy comfortable place with minimal distractions.
- Learn names – people’s smiles light up when you remember.
- ‘Off the wall’ – some responses are to get a reaction. Treat with respect as you continue discussion.
- All responsible – how a group works is the responsibility of everyone in the group.

Choose up to 5 of these to discuss in the larger group (and go through the rest as homework!). [5 minutes]

A small group leader...

is: Someone who encourages and enables group members to discover insights and build relationships.
 A person who helps others to meet their goals, enabling the group to fulfill its purpose.
 An advocate to reduce the risk of group members being attacked or taken advantage of.
 The person who structures group time and plans ahead.
 The facilitator who stimulates relationships and participation by asking open questions.
 An affirmer, encourager, challenger.

is not: A person with all the answers.
 Responsible for everyone having a good time.
 Someone who does all the talking.
 Likely to do everything perfectly.

The Leader’s role in discussions is to act as a Facilitator. The leader as a facilitator plays four important roles:

1. Catalyst – gets things started eg. Read questions out or ask question to get people thinking.
2. Guide – directs and re-directs discussion to keep on track eg. Ask secondary questions seeking further information, by feeding back or summarizing what has been said or re-phrase or re-focus a question. Moves the group on and keeps time.
3. Clarifier – helps group to understand what each person has said, by asking questions to seek more information.
4. Affirmer – encourages and affirms each person’s contribution (very important for new groups or when personal and vulnerable feelings are shared)

(adapted from Aberfoyle Uniting Church, Small Group Leader Manual, 2003)

9.4 Developing Good Questions

As a Small Group Leader developing good questions is an important part of encouraging and promoting discussion. Some points to help you develop good questions include:

- Be **CONCISE** – keep questions simple and uncluttered.
- Be **CLEAR** – if a question doesn't make sense to you, it won't to others...reword it!
- Be **CONSIDERATE** – and ask non-embarrassing or forcing questions.
- Be **CREATIVE** – rather than clever. This means being **OPEN** as opposed to...
- **LEADING** – You don't think God would do that do you?
- **GUESS THE LEADER'S IDEA** – What are three motives behind Paul's speech?
- **LIMITING** – confining things to church experiences.
- **YES/NO** – Are there times to use YES or NO questions?

Usually it is the secondary (or follow up) questions that are most important. Some forms of secondary questions include:

- **Extension questions** – invite expansion beyond an initial comment, probing deeper into the feelings that lie beneath. E.g. "That's interesting. Can you tell us more about how that made you feel?"
- **Clarifying questions** – seek more specific information, usually picking up on the initial comment. E.g. "You mentioned praying more at school. How has your school life changed as a result?"
- **Re-directing questions** – use the comments of one member to draw another into the discussion. E.g. "That sounds like a tough situation. Brendan, I think you've been in similar situations, how did you respond?"
- **Focus questions** – pick up on individual comments and focus or refocus discussion around this comment. E.g. "That's a really interesting point that Jen made, can we talk more about that?"

(adapted from Aberfoyle Uniting Church, Small Group Leader Manual, 2003)

9.5 Active Listening

Good questions and open sharing are only effective if we listen well. Leaders need to spend more time listening than talking in Small Groups – your effectiveness as a Leader depends on it!

Good listening is not just a passive exercise, but an active skill. Listening is one of the fundamental ways we show people how much we care for them. It is a physical, intellectual and emotional process involving giving someone your undivided attention. Active listening not only involves the way we listen, but also affects what we say and how we say it.

How to actively listen to others...

- **Decide to actively listen** – remove or ignore distractions and give your undivided attention.
- **Body language** – Be aware of posture and facial expression (look alert!). Make eye contact where culturally appropriate.
- **Receive the message** (in full) before you respond – don't interrupt or assume you know what they are going to say before they have finished!
- **Response** – show you understand what they have said by encouraging them, giving feedback and using secondary questions.

(adapted from Aberfoyle Uniting Church, Small Group Leader Manual, 2003)

Some ideas to help you with active listening...

- Use **"I"** statements – own what you are saying.
- Use open-ended questions.
- Give non-verbal affirmation.
- Think about the question behind the question.

9.6 Use of Silence

Don't be afraid of silence – it's a natural part of any dynamic discussion. Silence allows people time to think about comments that have been made and to formulate further thoughts.

Some people need time to gather their thoughts before they share. (Many “quiet people” are not really quiet; they just never get enough silence to formulate their own thoughts before sharing).

(adapted from Aberfoyle Uniting Church, Small Group Leader Manual, 2003)

9.7 You Are Important

By Leigh Pope

You are important,
I offer you my time – not always easy
I really want to hear what you have to say:
I will listen...
without laughing
or putting you down by acting superior
or rushing in with my answers
I will stay with you
I will try to understand what is important for you –
not to me
I offer myself as a sounding board
so you may verbalise your thoughts and feelings
....in confidence

I see you...I hear you
and although I can never completely feel what you feel
I will try as best I am able; for I value you,
and respect you as another human being
with feelings, hurts, joys, hopes and values;
things you are unsure of and things you are
certain of
And I see alternatives
I will offer those for your consideration
I do this because I love you,
and I am motivated by the power of God within me...
the power I see in the ministry and death and
resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What can we learn from this poem, about listening?

Write down anything that you want to remember. [5 minutes]

10. PREPARING TO LEAD YOUR SMALL GROUP

Here are some helpful hints on how to prepare for your small group.

- Read the notes through carefully before you start.
- Check whether you think the questions and activities will work for
 - the age level of your group
 - the size of your group
 - the location in which your group meets
 - the amount of time you have available

- Mark any activities that you will need to adapt or delete.
- Work out how you might adapt the activities to suit your group.
- Always make sure you have the materials and equipment you will need.
- Think about who you could ask to read passages in the material or lead the prayers.
- Read the session through again.
- Note any places where you want to add a personal story or illustration.
- Spend time praying for the group members and asking for God's guidance as you lead the session.
- (Don't underestimate the power of food! Whether sharing a simple supper, a four course meal, or a big block of chocolate, sharing food has an amazing ability to break down barriers and get people talking.)

10.1 Using a "Readable" Bible.

In discussing and studying the bible in Small Groups, it is important to use a translation that is easy to understand. While the New Revised Standard Version or New International Version are accurate and reliable, the Contemporary English Version is much easier to understand, especially for people who are not good readers or for whom English is not their first language. While limited for serious "study" of the scriptures, a paraphrase such as The Message is very readable and can often help bring difficult passages alive for the group.

The focus of small group discussion, in relation to the Bible, is:

- Understanding what the scripture is saying;
- Connecting to the scripture to our personal experience; and
- Exploring our responses to the Biblical material with each other in the safety of a small group.

It is about a "reality to be lived" more than a "truth to be learned". It is a practical rather than abstract approach.

11. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE THE GROUP MEETING TIME

Small groups help form relationships between the members of the group. But when groups begin to spend time outside the regular group meeting, then authentic relationships blossom and real community begins to develop. For those in small groups at one-off events, try emailing your members after the event. For those in close proximity to their small group, plan an outing, sit together in church, have lunch – do something that is outside of church!

12. NCYC SMALL GROUPS

It is important to note the difference between Small Groups that are run in church congregations and a conference like NCYC. Church small groups are usually established out of a group of people who recognise the need to meet together and are often like-minded and have similar cultural and theological understandings. NCYC Small Groups are made up of a range of people from diverse backgrounds and theological perspectives, ages and maturity. This diversity can be a new experience for Small Group Leaders who are used to leading groups of like-minded individuals – and particularly if they have had no experience with different cultures. This can present a huge challenge for the Small Group Leader as well as the other group members.

12.1 Role of Small Groups at NCYC

Small groups are an important part of convention, providing opportunities to make connections, reflect on past events and prepare for the time to come. Small groups are a way of ensuring all delegates are connected and cared for and no one stands alone. They provide delegates with a sense of belonging, companions for the journey and a place to grow, serve and encourage one another.

13. NCYC 2009 SMALL GROUP LEADERS

This section focuses on Small Groups and Small Group Leaders at NCYC 2009. If you are not involved with NCYC, you may still find this information helpful to put your training into the context of an event or camp.

13.1 Small Group Leader Supports

Each Community will have a Chaplain who will be available to Small Group Leaders. If you have any issues/concerns, you should contact that person. The Convener of the Small Groups Team (Isabel Thomas Dobson) will be available during Convention at a time and place to be advised.

Community Leaders or Chaplains should be your first point of contact to deal with any issues that arise.

13.2 Small Group Structure & Materials

Small groups of 6-8 delegates with 1 leader will be formed within each Community. Small groups are programmed to run for 30 minutes in Community Time.

Have a look through the Small Group Material in Appendix 1. Be familiar and confident with the material. Remember to take the additional resources – A3 sheets and pencils distributed at the Briefing Session on Day 1 – to the first and last sessions. Remember to keep to time as Community Worship follows Small Group time.

Trial the first session in your group [10 minutes preparation, 30 minutes to do, 10 minutes to reflect]

Homework...

Try out different scenarios with a group of friends – people not listening; not able to speak English, etc. How would you deal with these appropriately?

13.3 Themes & Mission Immersions

More information about the NCYC Program Themes is available on the NCYC 2009 website. Small Group time will be the final activity of a theme, and will offer an opportunity to reflect on the Bibles Studies and the previous day.

On the Wednesday of Convention there will be a Mission Immersion program – “Submerge”. The submersion groups will be led by an experienced leader, such as a Chaplain or a Community Leader. Small Group Leaders may be asked to volunteer to help lead these groups. You are not required to do this unless you feel comfortable taking on this level of responsibility. There will be time set aside on Thursday for specific debriefing on those experiences in addition to the Small Group time.

14. INDIGENOUS, MULTI & CROSS CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the best things about the Uniting Church is our celebration of cultural diversity. We have many congregations around Australia who worship in Aboriginal and Islander, Asian, Western and Pacific Island ways and languages. We also have strong links with partner churches around the Asia-Pacific region. We acknowledge that culture plays a significant role in understandings of spirituality, and that sharing spiritual experience in others’ cultures deepens our understanding of and relationship with God.

NCYC 2009 is committed to:

- the appreciation and inclusion of people from diverse cultures
- the provision of culturally sensitive environments and “safe places”

- discouraging racism in explicit and implicit forms

As followers of Christ, we are called to love our neighbours, including people from other cultures. The sharing of cultures at a convention such as NCYC gives young people from all backgrounds the opportunity to have their views on people from different cultures challenged, and hopefully, be changed from ignorance to understanding and respect.

14.1 Racism

Racism, either implicit or explicit, is not acceptable and is a barrier to creating community. God values all people equally. DON'T do this:

Little racism:

- Being suspicious of someone on the basis of their race only
- Just avoiding or ignoring that group of people or person.
- Making condescending jokes. (Some Aussie jokes are cruel)

Accidental racism:

- Baby-talking or talking loudly to someone for whom English is second or fourth language.
- Patronising – making decisions for other people without asking them.
- Trying to solve a problem by using more abstract words, when action is needed.

Blind racism:

- 'They should want to do it our way.'
- 'Their food smells.'
- 'I refuse to go near.'

There have been cases of blind racism in previous NCYC – do not repeat this. Here we are in a Spirit community; God has made us different, and Christ has made us one. What an experience this can be! We all come with our own cultural bias. Let's watch, encourage, support and value each other.

14.2 Inclusion & Appreciation

People from many cultures (from Australia and Overseas) have been invited to contribute to the program and community life in a variety of areas, including rallies, nite life, festival and electives, and as speakers, bible study leaders, volunteers, chaplains, community leaders and small group leaders.

We have two teams (Indigenous and Multicultural/Overseas) particularly representing indigenous and cross-cultural delegates and interests, and all teams are being encouraged to consult with these teams in order to broaden the cultural diversity of the entire convention.

All attendees at NCYC are being encouraged to be inclusive of and build friendships with people from cultures different to their own.

14.3 Being Culturally Sensitive

Delegates from similar cultural groups often spend time together, creating a feeling of safety amongst the members as they know they are supported and understood. Small Groups can therefore create a very stressful environment for delegates of different cultures as they are segregated from their group

The Indigenous and Multicultural/Overseas Teams are working to ensure there are safe places for non-dominant culture delegates to be, including the Indigenous Tent and the Multicultural Space. These teams are also working to resource other teams with ways of creating a culturally sensitive convention. You can actively be culturally sensitive by:

14.4 Spoken & Body Language

Speak clearly, and use "Proper English". Use simple words, and don't be afraid to repeat things, but do not raise your voice. Beware of using jargon and slang, and try not to use analogies, as these generally have no

meaning to attendees from other cultures. If you must use them, take the time to explain anything you are saying. Think about what you are saying before you say it, trying to make sentences as clear and short as possible. Give others plenty of time to speak.

Communication is not only speech, but also 'body language'. When we try to give meaning to what we say, we use all kinds of gestures, facial expressions and tones of voice. To a person familiar with our culture and language all this seems fine, but to someone from another culture body language can be misinterpreted and can even be perceived as offensive. In such a short time we are unable to learn about all the cultures at NCYC, just try and be open to learn when the opportunity arises.

14.5 Gender Roles

We must be aware that gender roles differ greatly from one culture to another, and it is important to be sensitive to these differences. For example, for some delegates it may be the first time they have experienced a female person in a role of authority. They may have difficulty with members of the same sex holding hands, or feel it is inappropriate for members of the opposite sex to be left alone together.

14.6 Saving Face

Many delegates from other cultures will be highly embarrassed if they are made to feel that they have done something wrong. Don't raise your voice or accuse them, and if possible try to give them an obvious and comfortable way out of a problematic situation.

14.7 Money

Do not promise or offer money to ANY delegate. If delegates are having financial problems, please refer them to the Indigenous team or Multicultural team.

14.8 Dress

Please be aware that many cultures are modest and conservative when it comes to dress. In some cultures, shorts and sleeveless tops are very rarely worn outside of the home, and particular care is given to making sure that undergarments cannot be seen at all. Most OS delegates will take great care in being modest, and will probably seek more privacy when changing in dormitories or showers than what other delegates might. Think about your own dress standards.

14.9 Yes may not mean Yes

To try to please others and be polite, many indigenous and multicultural delegates will answer yes even if they don't mean it.

To avoid creating problems, try to avoid yes/no questions, and instead ask open-ended questions. For example, instead of asking, "Do you want to go to the shops?", you could ask, "Where would you like to go now?"

14.10 Time

Many cultures are less guided by time. It is important to make sure that overseas delegates are on time for transport, etc. But please remember to be patient and somewhat flexible and give adequate notice about time.

14.11 Food

Many of the delegates from other cultural groupings will be used to different food than what will be generally offered at NCYC. Please encourage them to try eating the food available. Additional food supplies, such as rice and drinks, will be available during the week from the Aboriginal and Overseas delegate's spaces.

14.12 Temperature

Melbourne is likely to be quite warm in January, but the weather can be changeable. All delegates need to be reminded of the need for sun safety and hydration.

14.13 Illegal Drugs, Alcohol & Smoking

Illegal Drugs and Alcohol

NCYCo9 is an Illegal Drug and Alcohol free event.

Consumption of alcohol is strictly prohibited for the duration of NCYCo9. Any alcohol found will be confiscated. NCYCo9 reserves the right to cancel the registration of any person consuming alcohol or visibly affected by alcohol. If a delegate is under the age of 18 years, a parent or guardian will be contacted and the delegate's registration cancelled. Anyone supplying alcohol to people under 18 will have their registration cancelled. NCYCo9 has a legal requirement to deal with any reported use of illegal drugs by any participants. Any person found in possession of an illegal substance or who is visibly affected by illegal drug consumption will have their registration cancelled. In cases of illegal drug use, the police will be notified. All incidents will be reported to the Convention Coordinator and appropriate action will be taken.

Smoking

It is illegal to sell or supply cigarettes to persons who are under 18 years of age. NCYCo9 has a responsibility to deter underage smoking and to provide a safe environment for nonsmokers. Smoking will only be permitted in designated smoking areas. Various NCYC sites will have different smoking requirements which must be adhered to. Smoking is illegal on all school sites e.g. accommodation venues and within enclosed venues. In the case of underage smokers, cigarettes will be confiscated.

** Please note that any costs incurred as a result of disciplinary procedures related to alcohol and/or illegal drug use with any NCYCo9 delegates will be borne by that delegate.

14.14 Other

Remember that we are all here to glorify God, and have a great week at Convention together. Consider how you might feel if you were in a strange land with 2000 people you didn't know all around you. It is always better to ask than assume! Take time to:

- Build friendships:
 - Give greetings that communicate respect for the other.
 - Make time to eat with people you don't yet know, and to hear each other's story.
 - Introduce this friendship to others.
- Build hospitality:
 - Give way to the needs of the visitors where appropriate.
 - Appreciate (not just tolerate) the unique difference of the other.
 - Create a place for each person's unique contribution in groups and meetings.
- Build one-ness:
 - Pray out loud – hearts together – in different languages.
 - Disagree by affirming only what you can respect, then silence.

It is not every day that we have the opportunity to share the richness of our cultures with one another. NCYC is an opportunity for us to experience the beauty and excitement of cultural diversity and the building of relationships.

You are not expected to know how to deal with every situation (such as dealing with language barriers), but you are expected to seek help where you need it. The Indigenous Support, 2nd Gen Delegates and Overseas Delegates Teams will be available during Convention and will be liaising with the indigenous, overseas and multicultural delegates. If you have any indigenous or cross-cultural concerns/issues to

discuss, talk with your Chaplain or Community Leader – they will put you in contact with the appropriate person.

15. ASSISTING DELEGATES WITH DISABILITIES

There will be a number of delegates with disabilities attending NCYC. You may have a delegate in your small group who has an intellectual or physical disability or mental health issue. You don't need to understand every disability – just be sensitive and encouraging.

Delegates with significant disabilities that require a carer will attend with their carer – either relatives or people from their church who know them well. However, remember, having a disability does not mean that a person does not understand, so don't forget to talk to the delegate, not the carer.

The Abilities Team will assist delegates and leaders so everyone can enjoy participating in NCYC09. During convention the Abilities Team will have a presence in a room close on the main MLC site. The team can be contacted through Lynda Anderson 0421446887, Abilities Team Leader.

15.1 What is a Disability?

The most accepted term is 'people with disability' as it defines the person first and then, if required, noting the impairment or the disability after. Thus, refer to 'people with vision impairment', not 'the blind man'. Disability is used in a broad context, incorporating physical disability, mental health issues, intellectual disability and chronic health causing disability. Disability is caused by barriers or laments of social organisation which take no little account of people who have impairments. An impairment is an illness, injury or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a long-term effect on physical appearance and/or limitation of function within the individual that differs from the commonplace (UnitingCare Australia, 2003). A person who has a disability is a **person** – the disability is not the person, it does not define them. Did you know that 1 in 7 people have a mental or health condition, or learning difficulty that affects their everyday life?

15.2 Including People with Disabilities

When working with people with disabilities it's important to work with the person first, as a delegate at NCYC with the same rights to participate in the convention as all other delegates. Then ask them how you can assist them to participate, given their disabilities.

When working with people with disabilities, understand yourself and where you've come from. The presence of people with disabilities can raise questions of our own personal mortality and apprehensions towards disability. It's important to acknowledge your own awareness and experience of disability or knowledge of friends or family with disabilities. Many people fall into the trap of treating people with disabilities with pity out of their own perception that living with disability must be a negative experience.

15.3 Tips to Enable Inclusive Participation

The following suggestions apply for delegates with disabilities, from indigenous and multicultural backgrounds and those who did not come with a youth group, for whom the large convention may be overwhelming. These delegates are more likely to become isolated or lost in the crowds of convention. Many groups attending convention 'stick together' as part of the large crowd, and those with disabilities can be 'left behind'.

1. Environment

- Choose a quiet place where everyone is at the same level. Not everyone is comfortable sitting on the ground. All delegates to be sitting at the same height and not an overpowering stance of leader.
- Be away from auditory distractions so that people can hear.
- Be in the shade.

2. Participation

- Include all members of the small group in all activities. Note that participation may not mean talking about each question.
- Start with 'ice breaker' activities in which people can begin to share non-threatening information about themselves; such as favourite food, how they got to NCYC etc.
- Invite participation, but do not enforce it, especially in the first couple of days. Some people are shy and need time to feel secure to share with others.
- Invite people to pray, do not expect it. If inviting to pray for each other in turn, offer a subtle way to indicate no, such as squeeze the persons hand next to you when you have finished, or if you do not want to pray out loud.
- Encourage concentration of delegates (thinking time) a balance between silence and opportunities for giving answers if desired. If a delegate does not seem to be participating have a quiet chat and find out their reasons for non-active participation: maybe they need to do the prayer, other ways for encouraging participation if unable to read or write.
- Be aware of energy levels and utilise a variety of learning styles. Many people require a 'change' after 15-20 minutes of concentration. This could be in the form of a song, chat to your neighbour about what has been discussed, show of hands, different voice telling a story or a reading, an image or anecdote, a question for people to answer in their notebooks, or draw. As the week of convention progresses, delegates may be more enthused or tired and less attentive, or a mixture of both.
- Don't assume anything about people with disabilities and what they can and can't do
- Remember that a physical disability does not necessarily coincide with an intellectual disability – and vice versa.
- Try not to ask personal questions regarding the disability and how the person acquired it. A person with a disability might want to keep that part of their life private, and they will share more information if they feel safe and when they choose. Not every special need is visible, concentration, reading learning and other disabilities exist. Ask instead, "How can we make it easier for you to participate fully in NCYC? Is there anything we need to know?"
- People with autism spectrum or epilepsy may experience sensory problems if too much sensory information is given at one time i.e. loud music and flashing lights.
- Where possible, use the delegate's abilities to assist in small groups. They may be able to share a bible reading, choose a game to play, choosing a song, say a prayer.

3. Communication

- Use inclusive language, such as, "All who are able, please stand."
- Don't assume everyone can read or read English. Use symbols where possible. If people choose not to read aloud, acknowledge that it's OK. They may be able to participate in non-reading parts of small group, or by summarising the discussion at the end of the session.
- Keep instructions clear, short and simple. People with learning difficulties can have trouble concentrating and processing lots of different input or large amounts of input in a short period of time.
- A person with a learning disability may find it confusing if presented with too much information or instructions given at the one time.
- Interaction issues for those that are shy or like to be passive. At the end of each session, highlight the 2-3 key points that you want delegates to remember.

4. Belonging

- Encourage all small group members to mix and say hello to members throughout convention
- Encourage the small group leaders to notice delegates from other groups that are not mingling with other people and interact with them.
- If not at convention with a carer or youth group or friend, ask the small group to include the delegate in their convention activities.

16. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS & ISSUES

16.1 Confidentiality

Ideally, anything that is shared in the group is kept in strict confidence. However, sometimes you will need to refer delegates on to get further help. It is important to tell your group that the information that they share will be kept within the group, unless you feel concerned that the person needs further help. Small Groups are not therapy groups and as a SGL you are not expected to sort out issues for delegates – you are expected to refer them on to a Chaplain, or for specialist issues, the Special Incident Team (refer to NCYC 2009 Care and Coordination Manual for full procedure). You should accompany the person when you pass the information on.

16.2 Vulnerable Delegates

NCYCs are great fun for most people. However, for some people it is enormously difficult to fit in easily to all the activity and excitement.

Consider some of these scenarios:

- Sally and her boyfriend, Jack, are coming to NCYC, but they recently broke up, and Jack's new girlfriend Rosie is coming to NCYC now. Sally wanted to pull out, but her parents made her hang in there.
- Paul's exam results were so bad that he can't get them out of his mind. He doesn't want to go back home because his parents will be at him about it.
- Aaron is nearly 30 and has learning difficulties. Aaron's congregation paid for him to come to NCYC (The ladies sold lamingtons all year, and are convinced he will find a 'lovely girl', and that it will do him the world of good.)
- David is from a remote indigenous community, and never been to a city before. He has come with some members of his family, which makes him feel safer.
- Ali is from Bali, and is fearful of the attitudes of Australians about terrorist activities in Indonesia. He has never spoken to a resident of Australia before.
- Jillian is a victim of inappropriate sexual conduct by a church leader in her home town. Nobody knows about it yet, except her best friend. She wonders whether she will tell somebody about it at NCYC, but is not sure whether she will be believed, and even more frightened about the consequences of her disclosure.
- Graeme is angry. Note sure why, he just is. He is so passionate about life, but so frustrated by his limitations that he just gets angry. He wants to argue with people at NCYC about it all, doesn't matter who, just anyone.

These are all real examples (names altered and stories condensed) from past NCYCs. These young people are vulnerable, and need care. How would you deal with these situations?

What should I do?

- Small Group/Community Leaders should share any particular concerns they may have about an individual with a Chaplain or Community Leader.
- Make use of Chaplains to befriend people who seem alone or isolated.
- Note any behaviours which seem incongruous (e.g. person doesn't laugh when everyone else does, or laughs at serious times, frequent crying, refusing food)
- Don't jump to conclusions but try to engage such a person in a quiet conversation, reflecting where they are, how they are.
- Don't point out unusual behaviour in public,
- Share any uneasiness about a particular situation with someone else and ask for their opinion/reaction, where appropriate and in accordance with confidentiality.
- If in doubt, ask an experienced Chaplain.

17. SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Every interaction that takes place between humans is important and has the hand of God in it. As followers of Jesus we are given the example of a life that is lived in constant relationship with God. As humans we know that every relationship we enter into has a wide and varied expression. One thing that is of the utmost importance in a relationship is that it is filled with respect, love and safety.

Genesis tells us that God did not wish us to be alone and so we are drawn into relationships with those around us. Some of those relationships remain at a friendship level, some progress to become lifelong partnerships in this world. Every relationship is special, different and deserves to be honoured.

The Christian viewpoint adds a different perspective on the term 'safe sex'. For many people safe sex means only protection against sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy. For a Christian, safe sex takes in to account the welfare of the whole person, your relationship with that person and with God.

Gone are the days when sex before marriage was hardly heard of. How does this cultural perspective impact upon our understandings and actions? A Christian understanding of sexual intercourse insists that you take seriously the emotions, social and spiritual impact of the relationship on you and your partner. This understanding cannot end with some kind of physical 'protection'. If you are considering a sexual relationship, or are currently involved in a relationship where sex is part of its expression, then you may wish to consider this question:

- How can our actions in this situation best reflect the love, faithfulness and grace of God that is expressed in Jesus Christ and reflected in us?

It is important that sexual expression be related to the level of intimacy, trust and honesty in a committed relationship. To help decide this, ask the following questions:

- Will this sexual expression enrich and enhance the relationship?
- Sexual activity can make us very vulnerable. Is the relationship in a place where both partners will respect those vulnerabilities?
- Is the decision to engage in sexual behaviour a truly equal and mutual decision? Does each partner respect and adhere to the other's 'No'?
- Is this sexual activity reflective of a faithful, committed relationship?

17.1 'Safe Place' and Sexual Misconduct Issues

Physical interaction with another person, without consent, is a criminal offence. Physical interaction can include physical and sexual abuse – see definitions below. Harassment and vilification are also unacceptable.

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) takes seriously the issue of Sexual misconduct and providing safe spaces, in all aspects of its work, which are free from abuse and harm, including NCYC 2009.

“The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people are made in the image of God, and as such we accept every individual regardless of race, age, creed or gender. As a Christian community we believe that God reaches out to us in love and acceptance, and that our relationships with each other shall express love and commitment and not be abused. As a community of faith we are committed to providing a place in society where human beings can explore what it means to be made in the image of God. As an expression of this commitment, the Uniting Church in Australia recognises its responsibility to provide worshipping and pastoral communities that are free from abuse. We seek to provide a safe environment for all people to explore and express their faith in Jesus Christ.”

Excerpt from the UCA Policy for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct (1997):

It is imperative that Small Group Leaders understand what that means for this role and what action they are required to take.

Sexual Misconduct includes:

- Sexual Harassment: any unwelcome sexual advance, or unwelcome request for sexual favours to a person, or engagement in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to that person, in circumstances in which a reasonable person, having regard for all the circumstances, would have anticipated the person complaining would be offended, humiliated or intimidated;
- Sexual Assault: any unwelcome sexual behaviour that may occur along a continuum from verbal insult to sexual intercourse, which makes a person feel threatened or afraid.
- Sexual conduct prohibited by criminal law; or
- Sexualisation of a pastoral relationship or relationship of responsibility: any interaction, sexual or otherwise, in which a person engages in sexualised behaviour with or towards a person with whom he or she is in a relationship of responsibility.

17.2 Relationship of Responsibility

As a Small Group Leader, you have a designated position of leadership or responsibility, which has an associated or perceived power in relation to the delegates in your group. This position of authority, like any, should not be abused.

The UCA expects that as a leader you will:

- model behaviour that values each individual as made in the image of God;
- ensure that NCYC and its structures are free from abuse, harassment and vilification;
- recognise harassment and vilification if it occurs and deal with it by notifying the appropriate authority.
- report inappropriate and illegal behaviours.

The Uniting Church in Australia rejects all activities or comments, which are:

- designed to harass a person or group of persons; or
- made or done in a deliberately malicious, or divisive manner and where the intent of such activities or comments are to discredit, or defame, or express hatred and animosity or inflict injury or incite hatred or contempt for a person, or group of people.

17.3 Abuse

In general, abuse is categorised in five ways:

1. Physical Abuse is commonly characterised by physical injury resulting from practices such as punching, beating, shaking, biting, burning or otherwise harming an individual.
2. Sexual Abuse occurs when someone in a position of power to the person uses his or her power to involve another person in sexual activity. This can include a range of behaviours including: sexual suggestion, exhibitionism, mutual masturbation, oral sex, penile or other penetration of the genital or anal region.
3. Emotional Abuse tends to be a chronic behavioural pattern directed at an individual whereby their self esteem and social competence is undermined or eroded over time. An individual can also experience emotional abuse by being exposed to a dysfunctional environment which includes domestic violence.
4. Neglect is more to do with children and is characterised by the failure to provide for the child/young person's basic needs. This can occur through direct and deliberate action or by omission or deliberate inaction to care for the child/young person.
5. Stalking is when one person persistently follows or attempts to contact another or makes repeated unwanted advances.

As a leader, you are expected to behave in a manner that is free from harassment, abuse and vilification.

If an Abuse Allegation is made....

Chaplains and Community Leaders are identified at NCYC as people to whom attendees can disclose an episode of abuse or assault. If someone in your Small Group (or someone else you know at NCYC) discloses an episode of abuse or assault, listen for a short time to establish rapport, and then find a Chaplain. Take the person with you if possible. The Chaplain will refer the person to the Incident Response Coordinator, as soon as is appropriate/possible.

Leader Do's and Don'ts

- Do act appropriately – delegates are looking up to you as their role model!
- Do use appropriate Language – swearing is not appropriate.
- Positive, affirming.
- Don't talk about people negatively, ie gossip.
- Be as politically correct as possible ie not prejudiced, sexist, racist.
- Inclusive language.

Do be cautious in your body language and be aware of other's sense of personal space – don't start hugging delegates if you hardly know them (or even if you think you know them well).

Ask their permission for personal contact (they must agree to it and it must be appropriate).

Be aware that delegates from other cultures will have different understandings of this – what you perceive as 'normal', may be very inappropriate to another culture.

Note that it is inappropriate for a leader to begin a relationship (boyfriend/girlfriend) at NCYC with a delegate under their authority (e.g. Small Group member). You should tell someone ASAP even if you are thinking about this!

What should I do?

If you are concerned about an individual (for whatever reason) you should share any particular concerns you may have about an individual with a Chaplain or Community Leader and ask for their opinion/reaction. Make use of Chaplains to help out – use them to befriend people who seem alone or isolated, or need additional one-to-one help.

If in doubt, ask an experienced Chaplain.

Frequently asked questions:

SGL Q: Can I meet with delegates outside of SG time?

A: Of course – we want to encourage that! But remember never meet totally alone with a delegate in your care (particularly of the opposite sex). Invite a Chaplain, or some other person that you trust, to be part of the discussion, or at least be in plain view of other delegates when you meet with the person, and tell someone else that you are meeting with them.

SGL Q: I really like someone in my group and think I would like to ask them out.

A: Wait until after NCYC is over before asking them out to make sure you are not abusing your position of power. It may put other group members off if you are flirting with someone else and could be seen as giving them preferential treatment. Talk with someone to let them know you feel this way.

SGL Q: If someone shares with me that they have been sexually abused before or during NCYC, what should I do?

A: Do not discuss it in your Small Group – acknowledge it is a significant issue and encourage that person to share with a Chaplain or someone with appropriate training. Offer to go along with them when they first go to meet the Chaplain, for moral support. You are not expected to counsel the person or take action, other than to refer the matter. Also, you may need additional support from Chaplains for the other group members – remember, just ask for help!

SGL Q: Someone in my group is making derogative comments about another group member which I think could be perceived as abuse. What should I do?

A: It is important to deal with it as soon as possible – don't wait! If you see something happening and you think it is wrong, say so. Others are probably thinking the same thing. Remind people of your Small Group covenant. Talk with the persons involved to see how they are feeling, and/or a Chaplain.

If you are prepared for these issues, then you will be more able to effectively deal with them if they arise. We don't want to scare you – just prepare you!

18. QUESTIONS??

If you have any questions which still have not been answered, either ask your training presenter now, or contact the Small Group Leader Coordinator: Isabel Thomas Dobson Ph 03 5443 1625 or email:

Isabel.thomasdobson@victas.uca.org.au

19. CLOSE

Thanks for joining us for this training for Small Group Leaders.

Find yourself a mentor or someone you can talk to about your role before and after NCYC.
Pray this prayer with them before you take on the role of Small Group Leader...

Loving God,
who loves and cares for me
Help me
in my role as a Small Group Leader
Encourage me
to be myself and to know that I am all that you need me to be
Teach me
to love, to listen and to be with you always
I pray that through your grace
you will equip me for the task of leading a small group
Make me like Jesus - a servant leader
Listening, speaking and acting
from within your deep love
for me and all creation. Amen

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APPENDIX 1 – SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

The Role of Small Groups at Conventions

Small groups are an important part of convention, providing opportunities to make connections, reflect on past events and prepare for the time to come. Small groups are a way of ensuring all delegates are connected and cared for and no one stands alone. They provide delegates with a sense of belonging, companions for the journey and a place to grow, serve and encourage one another.

Those items marked with (DS) in the Small Group Materials are used with permission from *Deep Speak* © St Luke's Innovative Resources, Geoff Barker, Michelle Lane Jenner, Brad Welsh 2006.

Converge – Sunday 4th January

Mark 1: 1 – 13

Gather:

Introduce yourself – name, where you're from and what you do

Converge Activity:

Take some time to draw and share your journey to NCYC on the sheet provided by the group leader. Use the questions to help you.

What do you most like about where you live? (DS)

Purpose of Small Group Time:

This is a place to be honest and safe, to share and connect with others and a space to stop and reflect on our NCYC journeys.

Covenant:

We say this together to remind us that this is a safe place and that what we share with one another stays in this group.

Read the Covenant together:

We have come together, to this place, on journeys long and short.

Now and always we are in the presence of God.

We offer ourselves to this time,

As much as we can,

To share, to listen and to encourage one another

As we discover more about ourselves and God.

The Journey So Far...

What has been your best/worst experience so far?

What questions do you have about this?

How do you see or have you seen God in this?

Deep Speaking:

What motivated you to come to NCYC?

What are you hoping to get out of NCYC?

Prayer:

Welcoming God,

You have embraced us as we have gathered here to get to know one another.

Thank you for this time.

Thank you for this safe place where we can be open and honest with one another and you.

Leaders Notes re visual activity

- Paper, crayons
- Describe/outline task
- Use time cues in your handbook
- If needed discuss covenant together

We pray that each of us will have experiences that show us more of ourselves and you.
Amen.

Sending Out:

We go out to continue our journeys, sent in God's love and care. Amen.

Points to Ponder/Journaling:

Why did I come? What do I hope for?

Record your journey to NCYC on the Converge activity.

Merge – Monday 5th January

Mark 1: 14 – 20

Mark 2: 13 – 17

Covenant (read together):

We have come together, to this place, on journeys long and short.

Now and always we are in the presence of God.

We offer ourselves to this time,

As much as we can,

To share, to listen and to encourage one another

As we discover more about ourselves and God.

The Journey So Far...

What has been your best/worst experience so far?

What questions do you have about this?

How do you see or have you seen God in this?

Deep Speaking:

Which do you prefer – blending in or standing out? (DS)

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? (DS)

Prayer:

Leading God,

You continue to call people to follow you.

Thanks you that...

Help us...

Sending Out:

We go out to continue our journeys, sent in God's love and care. Amen.

Point to Ponder/Journaling:

Jesus says, "Come as you are, now." What do I bring?

What is God calling me to do?

Leaders Notes

Deliberately open to cater for different experiences.

If questions 'fail' ask specific questions about Bible Study highlights

Prayer: given as a guide and allows space for whoever is comfortable to share their own prayers – either out loud or silently. Finish the prayer however is best for your group.

Urge – Tuesday 6th January

Mark 10: 32 – 45

Mark 12: 28 – 34

Covenant (read together):

We have come together, to this place, on journeys long and short.

Now and always we are in the presence of God.

We offer ourselves to this time,

As much as we can,

To share, to listen and to encourage one another

As we discover more about ourselves and God.

The Journey So Far...

What has been your best/worst experience so far?

What questions do you have about this?

How do you see or have you seen God in this

Deep Speaking:

What makes a best friend? (DS)

How do you cope when things fall apart? (DS)

Prayer:

Encouraging God,

You call us to live lives of love and service to others.

Help us to live in ways which transform the world.

We pray for...

We pray that...

Sending Out:

We go out to continue our journeys, sent in God's love and care. Amen.

Point to Ponder/Journaling:

What is love? (DS)

How might I live out this love with God and with my neighbour?

Leaders Notes

If you have a lot of spare time you may use points to ponder as discussion questions.

Submerge – Wednesday 7th January

Mark 4: 21 – 32

Covenant (read together):

We have come together, to this place, on journeys long and short.

Now and always we are in the presence of God.

We offer ourselves to this time,

As much as we can,

To share, to listen and to encourage one another

As we discover more about ourselves and God.

The Journey So Far...

What was your submersion and experience yesterday?

What has been your best/worst experience so far?

What questions do you have about this?

How do you see or have you seen God in this

Deep Speaking:

What's the most important thing to you right now? (DS)

If you had a magic wand and could change something about the world, what would it be? (DS)

Prayer:

Challenging God,

You plant seeds in unexpected places. We thank you that when we think we have nothing you equip us beyond measure.

Help us...

Thank you...

Sending Out:

We go out to continue our journeys, sent in God's love and care. Amen.

Points to Ponder/Journaling:

What do you think is your main purpose in life? (DS)

Leaders Notes

THERE IS COOL DOWN!

There will be more opportunity to discuss further issues that come out of the immersion in that time.

Emerge – Thursday 8th January

Mark 8: 22 – 38

Covenant (read together):

We have come together, to this place, on journeys long and short.

Now and always we are in the presence of God.

We offer ourselves to this time,

As much as we can,

To share, to listen and to encourage one another

As we discover more about ourselves and God.

The Journey So Far...

What has been your best/worst experience so far?

What questions do you have about this?

How do you see or have you seen God in this

Deep Speaking:

What's becoming clearer to you during NCYC?

What's most important to you about Jesus?

What does it mean to believe in God? **(DS)**

How will you live your beliefs so that others can see God in you?

Prayer:

Transforming God,

You bring life and hope.

Thank you...

We pray...

Sending Out:

We go out to continue our journeys, sent in God's love and care. Amen.

Points to Ponder/Journaling:

What is stopping you?

Verge & Diverge – Friday 9th January

Mark 9: 2 – 18

Mark 6: 1 – 13

Covenant (read together):

We have come together, to this place, on journeys long and short.

Now and always we are in the presence of God.

We offer ourselves to this time,

As much as we can,

To share, to listen and to encourage one another

As we discover more about ourselves and God.

The Journey So Far...

What has been your best/worst experience so far?

What questions do you have about this?

How do you see or have you seen God in this

Deep Speaking:

Who or what has had the most impact on you this week?

What was your biggest regret this week?

What will be good about going home and what will be hard?

Diverge Activity:

Take some time to draw and share what you are taking home from NCYC on the sheet provided by the group leader. Use the questions to help you.

What will you do as a result of your experiences at NCYC?

Time to say goodbye:

Share contact details and messages and take photos.

Prayer:

Pray for each other and then say together the sending out.

Sending Out:

We have spent time together, sharing, listening and encouraging one another.

We have shared our highs and lows and our experiences of God.

We now leave this place, on journeys long and short,

Remembering that now and always

We are in the presence of God.

Points to Ponder/Journaling:

What do you hope for after NCYC?

Leaders Notes

Messages – may include warm fuzzies, thanks, encouragement etc.

Leaders Notes

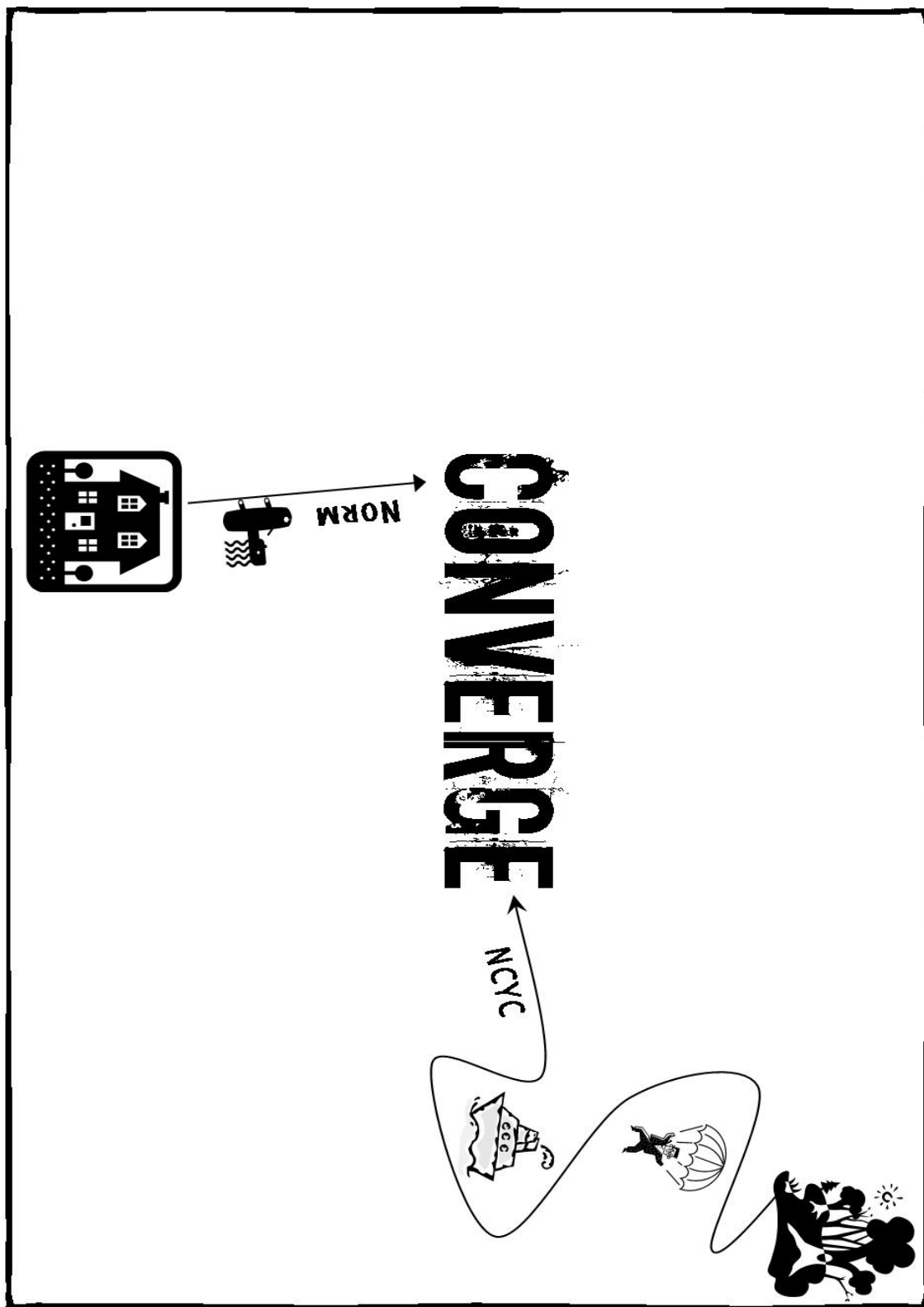
Re visual activity –

Mirror image of arrival activity – adding gifts/discoveries/ what taking away/journey home

- Need A3 activity sheet
- Pens, pencils, textas, crayons
- Describe/outline task

HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?



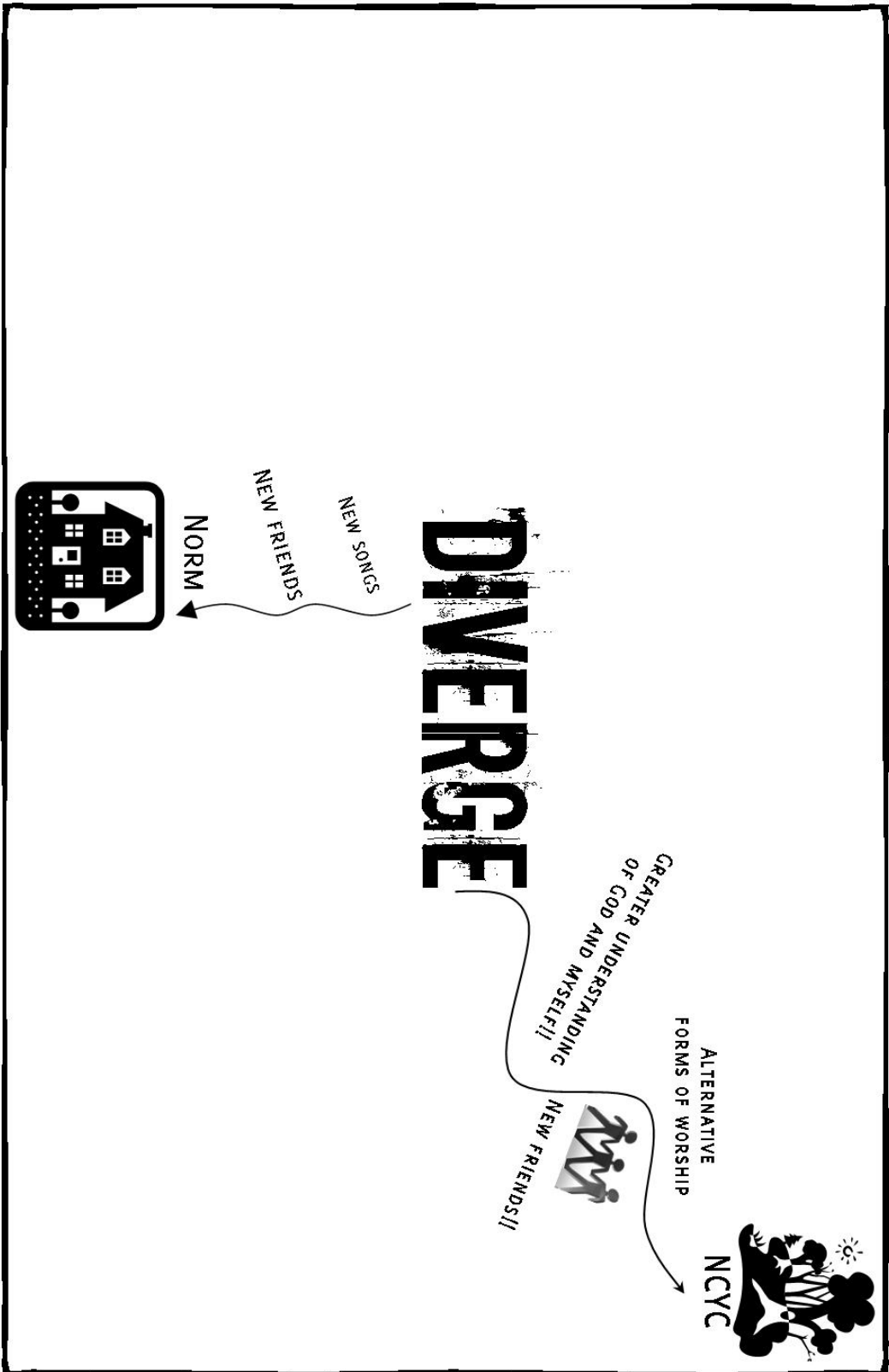
HOW LONG DID IT TAKE?

WHO DID YOU TRAVEL WITH?

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARN'T?

ABOUT GOD?

ABOUT YOURSELF?



WHAT GIFTS ARE YOU TAKING HOME WITH YOU?

APPENDIX 2 – REFLECTIONS ON YOUR FAITH JOURNEY

Go through this information and do the exercise in your own time.

Encouraging someone to faith – some basic understandings that may be helpful:

- Most times the person responding doesn't need teaching but rather encouragement
- Coming to faith is not a destination, it's a place on the journey
- Empathy, affirmation and encouragement are three of the key traits to develop
- This time is a pastoral time – Pastoring is not crisis counselling, but nurturing faith formation
- Helping a person to own faith is a life centred activity – not a technique, theory or theology lesson
- Your task is of critical importance. The number of young people who drop-out of faith expression from the time they are helped to faith before they become a part of the mission and life of a church is appalling.

We each need to build our: spirituality; availability; reliability; confidentiality; credibility; responsibility; sociability (and lots of other -ility's). (Adapted from a Fuzz Kitto handout, 1993)

Faith Shaping – the task of acquiring your own faith

Some would say that faith is hard work or it never comes easy. We can understand some of this as tasks of growing or shaping faith. Not so much levels of maturity, or flags on a mountain side, but some of us jump all over the place...experiencing different things and responding accordingly. An analogy is the potter or wood carver, shaping and re-shaping until the created object reaches the desired shape.

EXPERIENCING FAITH where feelings and tone are important. This is often experienced as part of a group, espousing the values of God's Community.

CONSOLIDATING FAITH or making sense of some fragments. Opportunities to think, talk and reflect... seeking guidance and learning. Many will often revisit this task.

CHOOSING or deciding what's important. Encourage thinking; model your own beliefs and values; learn the skill of creative doubt.

CLAIMING or deciding to who or what you will be true. Need authentic invitations or challenges and careful follow up. One step in a lifetime process. Encourage open mindedness.

DEEPENING things aren't always black and white.

SEARCHING search, rebellion, distance, no givens.

RESPONDING with your own life.

Know Your Own Story

It is important for each of us to know something of our own faith journey, in order to be able to share that. Take time to reflect on your faith – past experiences; significant people and events; and questions.

Think of some of the SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS in your life's journey.

- Was Jesus, God or whoever in this moment?
- What was your image of God in this moment?
- Was this a forward or a backward movement?

A Basis for Caring – a starting point for Leaders

We need to be Good News – incarnationally – to the people we are caring into the Kingdom

Do not try to be pushy - forced deliveries can cause damage

Do not be so laidback or cool that you retard their response - there is a certain air of urgency needed

Don't play down/water down the call to faith -it is for a changed life and lifestyle

Basic Assertive Rights

The right to act in ways that promote your dignity and self respect, as long as others' rights are not violated in the process

- The right to be treated with respect and courtesy
- The right to say no and not feel guilty
- The right to experience and express your feelings
- The right to take time and slow down and think
- The right to change your mind
- The right to ask for what you want
- The right to feel good about yourself
- The right to ask for information
- The right to make mistakes
- The right not to act assertively all the time

(Adapted from The Assertiveness Option Jakubowski, P & Lange, A (1978))

APPENDIX 3 - DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Some quick tips for Managing Difficult Situations

To manage the situation you must first manage yourself.

- Focus on what you have direct control over.
- Know what's in your circles of concern and influence.
- Plan to respond rather than react – particularly verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Remember that you can always come back if you were bushwhacked the first time.
- Plan to be persistent.
- Don't get caught up in wishing them to change.
- Develop your own 'coping statement' e.g. "I'm not comfortable with this but I'm going to stick with it because it's important".

Seek to understand before being understood.

- It is important to diagnose a situation before prescribing a solution. Analyse before you advise. Even in a difficult situation it's important to listen first. Just naming a problem can sometimes help.
- Often people come in saying one thing and the complaint or problem is actually something else. There are more often difficult situations than difficult people...try not to personalise and generalise, the way difficult people do.
- Am I clear in my communication?

Beliefs are important.

- Believe in the worth of each person. See the other as worthy of respect, as well as treating yourself with respect.
- Try to see differences between people as a strength, not a weakness.
- Remember you can be hard on the problem, soft on the person.
- Be committed to win/win situations. Help each other to save face and find solutions that work for both.
- Focus on needs rather than solutions.
- People will often use the term "I need..." in relation to a solution. We should assist them to find accurate ways to express things as needs. This lends itself to exploring options rather than getting stuck on one possibility. Define needs vs. solutions.
- Stress common areas of disagreement. Is it fair? Can you find a common yardstick?

For Particularly Difficult People

Get some distance between you and the behaviour...labelling can help understanding. Difficult people tend to generalize and personalize, so get them to be specific by using questioning techniques.

Often "Levelling" or honest sharing of feelings can help

Characteristics and Strategies for Particular Types of Difficult People

THE TANK

They come out charging, not always physically. They can be abrupt, accusing, overwhelming and intimidating. As people they are heavily into win/lose and have a strong need to prove themselves, often working from shoulds and musts.

To cope with tanks you need to assertively stand up for yourself or you will be lost under the assault and in future they won't even notice you. This takes persistence, and a need to accept the fear of confusion you may be feeling, but persevere in any case.

Coping Steps:

- Give them a little time to run down, especially if they seem unnaturally emotional.
- Don't give them too much time to run down. Don't worry about being polite, just get in. Often a question is a good way, even if you need to interrupt their answer to give your view.
- Be clear and calm, try to sit them down, but get their attention. Sometimes firmly saying their name is a helpful way.
- State your own options and perceptions assertively, yet forcefully.
- Avoid a head on fight. Use time out if you need to.

THE SNIPER

Unlike the tank, they don't come crashing down on you, but take pot shots from cover. Like tanks they have a strong sense of how others 'should' act and how problems 'ought' to be solved. They are usually more skilled than the tank.

Coping Steps:

- Surface the attack. Ask questions like, "That sounded like a dig, did you mean it that way?" Expect the question to be laughed off, but don't let it go unremarked.
- Provide an alternative to a direct contest.
- Seek group confirmation of denial of the Sniper's criticism. "Does anyone else see it that way?" rather than, "What can we do to improve it?"
- Deal with legitimate problems – even if the snipers solutions are not the appropriate ones.

THE EXPLODER

Basically an adult tantrum. Usually occurs when a person feels psychologically threatened or frustrated. Exploders first feel angry, then blaming or suspicious.

Coping Steps:

- Give them time to run down. Empathy can go a long way here. If they don't run down then you may reach a stage of saying firmly and strongly STOP! (Name) STOP!
- Show your serious intentions.
- Interrupt the interaction. Try and get a breather. Be willing to leave (time out) making sure you say something like ..."I'll be back at ..."

THE TRIANGULAR COMPLAINER

They either dump on you about other people or complain about you to other people. They feel powerless, and lack control, particularly in their own lives. Often they can also have perfectionist leanings.

Coping Steps:

- Listen attentively.
- Acknowledge without agreeing.
- Switch to problem solving, particularly specific problem solving questions.
- Level in the face of expected frustration.

Material prepared by David Guthrey November 1996 for Youthworkers Inservice Conference

Drawn from:

Bramson, RM 'Coping with Difficult People' 1981 Business Library

Covey, S 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People' 1990 Business Library

Mackay, M et al 'When Anger Hurts 1989

Rogers, W 'Supporting Teachers in the Workplace' 1992 Jacaranda Press

APPENDIX 4. – GROUP STAGES

STAGE	CHARACTERISTICS	IMPLICATIONS	WHAT THE LEADER CAN DO TO HELP
<p>1. FORMING Group meets together for first time.</p>	<p>Feelings of discomfort that are found in any new situation. Members are cautious, anxious, and polite and try to avoid conflict. Trying to find out about the group – purpose, goals, roles, suss out leader. Questions of self: Will I get on with the others? Will I feel welcome? Will I trust these people?</p>	<p>This is a cautious period where participants are generally on guard and tend to feel inhibited in the group. True feelings not disclosed. Reluctant about participating and answering questions.</p>	<p>Be aware this is NORMAL and has little to do with your leadership. Relax! Be welcoming and enthusiastic – establish a friendly atmosphere ASAP. Set aside any nervous or anxious feelings (or inadequacy!) – these can easily project onto the group. Use “get to know you” games to help members feel relaxed with each other. Build a sense of belonging. Clarify expectations and discuss with the group that feeling uncomfortable is normal. More leadership will be needed at this time to give the group a sense of direction and purpose.</p>
<p>2. STORMING Defining the boundaries of the group.</p>	<p>Initial period of caution is followed by a period of predictable storming as individuals react to the demands of what has to be done. Members question authority. Members feel increasingly comfortable to be themselves and express their concerns, likes and dislikes.</p>	<p>In this freeing up stage some conflict may start to arise. Members’ preconceptions about others start to change and some changes in alliances may occur. Power challenges within group, sometimes with negative results. Leadership potentially questioned or even challenged. Conflicts over issues discussed at a personal level rather than objectively and professionally.</p>	<p>Group needs to feel safe – they need to know they will be listened to in a non-judgemental way by you. Leader may need to set up a structure so that conflict can be approached in a positive, constructive way. Remind members that it is the issue, not the person, under question. Conflict over leadership style should be assessed calmly and assertively. Act on any valid concerns! Continue activities developing cohesion, sharing, mixing and accepting differences. Sometimes members drop out at this point as unable to resolve issues eg. Expectations, goals, leader/participant style, involvement or commitment.</p>

<p>3. NORMING Group settles in together.</p>	<p>The group defines what behaviours are acceptable within the group. Group becomes more willing to co-operate to achieve tasks. Team spirit develops.</p>	<p>Reflects the general feelings of trust and cooperation. Important that trust continues to grow. Members able to overcome feelings of annoyance towards others, to allow group to function in harmony and acceptance of individuality. Conflict dealt with in a much more positive way.</p>	<p>Continue to monitor the group's Task/ Maintenance level (i.e. balance of group building to focus on task at hand). Leader may play less key role in the group as others take on more responsibility. This is a good sign! (not one of redundancy for the leader!)</p>
<p>4. PERFORMING Group settles in and gets to work.</p>	<p>Group members able to focus on task because they have settled issues of leadership, structure, other group members etc. Members are supporting and caring toward each other.</p>	<p>This is when the major tangible output of the group is produced (i.e. is more measurable - not that previous stages were not productive).</p>	<p>Help maintain focus by monitoring progress and giving feedback when required. Continue to ensure group uses effective methods of communication and problem solving, if needed.</p>
<p>5. ADJOURNING Group begins to look to</p>	<p>As the task nears completion the group starts to recognise that the closure of the group is near and the present relationship between group members will be changing.</p>	<p>May be a sad stage for some or all of group members. Some difficulty may arise for those having trouble with this closure.</p>	<p>Prepare the group for departure. Help the members recognise the degree of independence they have reached and their ability to seek other avenues for their own needs in the future.</p>

APPENDIX 5 – ACTIVE LISTENING EXERCISES

Activity Instructions.

An Activity in 3's or a group of 4.

SPEAKER

Think about what you will say.

Talk to the listener for no more than one minute, giving your ideas as clearly as possible.

Try to keep the conversation on track; use examples and illustrations; ask the listener if he/she understands.

LISTENER

Listen actively.

Look interested (depending on which round you are doing).

Try to help the speaker clarify and expand his/her ideas.

Do not introduce ideas of your own.

Try to concentrate; paraphrase (restate what you have heard);

check with the speaker to see if you have understood what he/she is saying.

OBSERVER

Listen carefully to all that is said.

Watch both people for non-verbal communication.

WHAT TO DO – There are four rounds. Each time the Listener does something different-

Round:

1. Acknowledging you are listening without speaking
2. Asking “what” questions eg. What does that say about...?
3. Asking “why” questions eg. Why did you feel that way?
4. Being distracted (ie. don't listen and make sure the Speaker knows it!)

Take 1 minute to do each round. After each round discuss the evaluation questions below.

Active Listening Evaluation

OBSERVER

Did the listener appear to be listening?

Was eye contact sufficient to give the impression of being interested?

Was the listener's body posture open and receptive?

How accurate was the listener's reflection in terms of content and feeling?

Did the listener interrupt?

SPEAKER

How well did you feel you were concentrating?

Did you feel the listener was really interested in what you were saying? How did you know?

What else could the listener have done to help?

LISTENER

How well did the speaker communicate to you?

What made it difficult to listen?

Did you ever daydream? When?

Did you ever want to jump into the conversation yourself, rather than listen? When?

(Adapted from the Youth Leader Certificate © 1992 JBCE)

APPENDIX 6 – FACES OF ME

