

Validation Group Work

A complete guide to teaching Level 2, Validation Group Practitioner courses

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Introduction

This booklet is written for Validation Teachers. It is meant to be a resource to help you teach courses in group Validation. Group Validation is discussed in Naomi Feil's literature and that material forms the base for this booklet. However, many of the special group techniques that are used in practice have never been written down. They have been passed down verbally, from one Validation Teacher to the next, and, ideally, taught to new Teachers in their teacher training. I have drawn from my 20 years of experience leading Validation groups and teaching courses. Colleagues have added their ideas. It is my hope to put all the current information on Validation group work in one place, include material that has never been written and offer Validation Teachers all the resources they need in order to teach a Level 2, Validation Group Practitioner course.

In sections 1 and 2, I offer basic information on groups in general and Validation groups specifically. Some of this material may be useful to participants in Level 2 courses. The most important elements in these sections are included in the Power Point Presentation. These pages can be turned into a work book or handouts for students.

Section 3 is totally new, in that this information has not been included in any previous literature on Validation. I have tried to describe all the techniques that are used in leading Validation groups. It is my hope that this section will be expanded in the future as new techniques are developed. Should you have additional ideas for group techniques, please send them to me. I would be so grateful.

Section 4 describes how Validation Teachers should approach teaching a Level 2 course. It offers ideas to make teaching this course easier and more successful. Most of this information has never been written down and it comes from the experiences of Naomi Feil and other successful group leaders.

The rest of this book is material I have developed for my own use which you are welcome to use in whole or in part. It includes my curriculum for the course, the accompanying Power Point Presentation and all the exercises that I use. I have also included the testing criteria (newly updated), a study guide that I created for participants who wish to prepare for the written test in a more formal manner and all the necessary forms and handouts.

Group work brings such joy to the elders with whom we work as well as to ourselves and the caregivers who work with us. It behooves us to teach this course with as much quality as we can muster. By writing this booklet I hope to support Teachers so they feel relaxed and competent when they teach, as well as improve consistency and quality in the teaching of Validation.

All the best,

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Basic Group Theory + Validation Principles

What is a group?

One definition of a group:

“A group is a dynamic social entity composed of two or more individuals. These individuals interact interdependently to achieve one or more common goals for the group, or similar individual goals... each member influences and is influenced by every other member to some degree.”

Bertcher¹

This definition by Harvey Bertcher applies to groups in general. There are many different types of groups, for instance groups created around a specific activity, belief or interest: sports clubs, professional associations, and religious gatherings. Then there are therapeutic groups. Therapeutic groups have the common characteristic that there is some sort of healing process taking place during group sessions. There are several different types of therapeutic groups: therapy groups, training groups, guidance groups, counseling groups, encounter or sensitivity groups.

Therapeutic groups can vary in terms of setting, size, membership selection, group content, goals, duration, norms, dynamics, leadership styles and cohesion (the forces that keep the group together).

A therapeutic group process involves sharing, trust building, decision making and feelings of intimacy. Through this process, group members are offered:²

- a place in which psychosocial difficulties can be resolved
- a place where their need for acceptance are met
- a place where they have membership, a sense of belonging
- a place where they can fulfill a role (role replacement)
- emotional support
- role model possibilities
- new ideas for dealing with problems or situations.

These points are taken into account in Validation group work.

In many groups, typical roles develop such as: the organizational leader, the emotional leader, the black sheep, the mediator, etc. These indigenous roles arise through the life of a group. Values and norms that develop in a group make for a feeling of cohesion. These group “rules” provide a sense of belonging.

A therapeutic group atmosphere is one in which respect for one another is encouraged and where members support one another. Generally, membership is closed - selection of group members is done carefully based on certain criteria.

Group work with older people has some differences from group work with younger people. In general, when working with elders, a group leader must take a more active or directive role; physical problems of the group members, such as hearing loss, must be taken into consideration, and group dynamics will be

¹ *Group participation: techniques for leaders and members*, H. J. Bertcher, SAGE publications, California, 1994

² *Working with Older Adults: Group process and Techniques*, I. Burnside, M G. Schmidt, 3rd Edition, Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Boston, 1994

different due to possible memory loss, reduced ability to concentrate and lower energy levels. It is also interesting to note that when working with disoriented elderly, many of the usual barriers, rules and prejudices concerning cultural differences and social hierarchies are often gone. Differences in race and class become less important. Perhaps it is the wisdom of the elderly that focuses attention on universal issues.

A Validation group is considered a therapeutic group because its goals include some sort of healing process, in the sense that group members (GM) often feel better after a Validation group session, they can express painful emotions (which are then relieved), feel useful when performing their role in the group and hopefully experience feelings of self-worth when they can discuss important issues and are heard. These goals relate closely to the Validation principles.

Validation Principles and Group Work

The following eleven axioms are the Validation Principles as revised in 2007. I have tried to find various ways of incorporating the principles into teaching Group Validation and by doing so, anchoring group work to theory.

1. All very old people are unique and worthwhile.

In a group setting, each person brings energy, skills, ideas and problems to be solved. Each individual is listened to and encouraged to express what ever he or she wants to express at that moment and is valued. Roles are given that match the unique blend of needs and experience of each person.

2. Maloriented and disoriented old people should be accepted as they are; we should not try to change them.

An agenda is necessary to give the Validation group structure. That structure helps a group function and reach its goals. However, should there be a need to change the structure to meet the group goals, the group goals are more important and the structure should be adapted in order to reach them. For instance, in one particular meeting, the discussion topic is 'What is important for young people to learn from older people?' The topic can easily change to losing ones father and husband, then to remembering when the soldiers came home from war and then finally to supporting each other in the group. The Group Leader (GL) accepts the topics presented by the group members (GMs) and goes with them.

3. Listening with empathy builds trust, reduces anxiety and restores dignity.

This is one of the main goals of Validation group work. Not only does the GL listen, but also the other GMs, following the example of the GL and CL, also listen to each other. The speaker feels supported by all members of the group. In addition, the group rituals become familiar after a short time (usually after 4-8 weekly group sessions) and this builds trust and reduces anxiety. Two important group techniques flow out of this principle: The GL encourages GMs to speak to and listen to each other. Rituals are built by ensuring that a group takes place every week at the same time, in the same place an on the same day, and within the group meeting itself, the agenda becomes ritualized by repetition each week.

4. Painful feelings that are expressed, acknowledged and validated by a trusted listener will diminish.

In a Validation group all topics of discussion must have an emotional base. By offering the opportunity to talk about emotional topics, it is hoped that GMs can express painful feelings and feel relieved. A GL uses the basic attitude of respect and empathy in order to make this possible. When another GM does not respect the emotions of a GM, the GL has a responsibility to protect the person who is expressing feelings.

5. There is a reason behind the behavior of very old maloriented and disoriented people.

This critical Validation principle has more to do with the basic validating attitude than any specific group action or structure. A GL knows that everything GMs do (in or out of a group situation) has meaning and importance.

6. The reasons that underlie the behavior of maloriented or disoriented very old people can be one or more of the basic human needs.

The expression of basic human needs is encouraged through many elements of a Validation group. Clearly, the choice of a discussion topic is connected with basic human needs. The giving of appropriate roles to GM is also an expression of that person's needs. Through the performance of that role, it is hoped that the individual's basic need can be fulfilled.

7. Early learned behaviors return when verbal ability and recent memory fails.

This principle primarily explains the behavior of individuals in Phase 3, repetitive motion. And so it has no direct relevance to group work. However, when a person in Phase 3 is included in a Validation group, the GL can understand the repetitive behaviors and if necessary, explain them to GMs who are concerned or make comments. The choice of songs, activities and use of touch can also be directly related to the repetitive behaviors. For instance, if a GM in Phase 3 usually is pounding, this can be used as part of the activity – pounding a ball. If the person often makes sounds, those sounds can be turned into a song that is sung by the whole group. And of course, the use of anchored touch should be used, in the same way that it is used in individual Validation.

8. Personal symbols used by maloriented or disoriented elderly are people or things in present time, that represent people, things or concepts from the past that are laden with emotion.

The use of symbols of each GM is understood by the GL. It is a prerequisite that a GL does a thorough history of each GM and has enough individual Validation sessions to form an intimate relationship. When a symbol becomes an issue within a group session, it can be explained in a validating way by the GL to other GMs.

9. Maloriented and disoriented old people live on several levels of awareness, often at the same time.

GLs never lie to GMs. This is a part of the basic validating attitude.

10. When the five senses fail, Maloriented and disoriented elderly stimulate and use their 'inner senses'. They see with the 'mind's eye' and hear sounds from the past.

This principle has to do with acceptance of the GMs as they are and the understanding that when a GM sees something that we do not see, there is a very good reason for that.

11. Events, emotions, colors, sounds, smells, tastes and images create emotions, which in turn trigger similar emotions experienced in the past. Old people react in present time, the same way they did in the past.

This again offers GLs insight into the behavior of disoriented and maloriented people. It also ties into the principle of accepting all behavior that is expressed within a group setting. Additionally, the group agenda includes 'refreshments' where food and drinks are served. One goal of this section of the agenda is to trigger old patterns of social behavior. For some GMs, the simple act of being within a group of people is a trigger for memories and social behavior.

Goals of a Validation Group

Naomi Feil includes basic information about Validation group work in both of her books, *Validation: the Feil Method* and *The Validation Breakthrough*. In these, she states that the goals of a Validation Group are the stimulation of:

- energy
- social roles
- identity
- interaction
- verbal behaviors
- social controls
- feelings of well being and happiness.

A group should also:

- reduce fear
- prevent vegetation
- reduce the need for tranquilizers and other restraints
- prevent staff burnout.

These Validation group goals parallel and complement the goals of other types of therapeutic groups (as listed in the section 'What is a Group'). A short discussion on these more general, therapeutic group goals offers us some insight into the limitations of Validation groups as well as the advantages.

- A group is a place in which psychosocial difficulties can be resolved.

In Validation groups, more emphasis is placed on the individuals' process than on the actual outcome or decisions made by the group. Psychosocial difficulties are often discussed in a Validation group however there may never be a resolution of the issue. The process of interaction, talking and listening to each other is the goal rather than coming up with an answer to a specific problem. Like in individual Validation, the worker can not 'fix' the problem or make things better.

- A group is a place where the needs for acceptance are met.

The need for acceptance is integrated in the validating attitude (see the discussion of the 2nd Validation Principle) as well as addressed by giving each GM a role that fits his or her unique set of needs and experiences. The person is not only accepted but honored for who he or she is. Finally, so long as a GM does not hurt another GM, all behaviors are accepted within the context of the group process.

- A group is a place where people have membership, a sense of belonging. Building a sense of belonging is one of the important aspects of leading a Validation Group and there are many ways of accomplishing this that will be discussed later on. It is not included in Validation Group goals but it does occur as a goal of many sections of the agenda.

- A group is a place where people can fulfill a role (role replacement). Validation GMs are given roles that offer them opportunities to enhance feelings of well-being, satisfy the need to be useful and give a strong sense of identity. This goal is repeatedly reinforced throughout the group agenda.

- A group offers emotional support. Emotional support is offered in group work as well as individual Validation. This is integrated into Validation Principle #4. The expression of emotion, the GL's acceptance of all emotion and the relief experienced through the expression of painful emotion is at the heart of the Validation method.

- A group offers role model possibilities. Role modeling infers that some change in the GMs is expected or wished for and this does not apply to Validation. However, even though it is not a goal, we often see that GMs model the behavior of the GL. When a GL exquisitely listens, often GMs will also listen and react to other GMs. One could also say that role modeling takes place between the GL, CL and other staff who take an interest in the group.

- A group offers new ideas for dealing with problems or situations. Discovering new ideas or solving problems is not a Validation group goal because of two main factors. Disoriented individuals usually have significant short-term memory loss and are unable to maintain new information. The validating attitude is one that accepts that very old people either can not or do not want to learn new things. The process of interaction and communication is what GLs strive for.

The Validation group goals are met through the actions and attitude of the GL, the Co-leader (CL), as well as the various elements of a standard Validation group.

- Energy is stimulated in GMs through eye contact, physical contact and the energy of the GL. The singing that takes place at the beginning and end of a group session builds energy, as does physical contact between GMs. People who are disoriented often have short attention spans; physical activity builds energy especially when concentration on verbal interaction is lost.
- Social roles are encouraged through the use of individual, personalized roles for each GM. This will be described in greater detail later on.
- Feelings of identity are stimulated through the continual encouragement or support of these roles as well as the personal attention and honor each person is given in a group session.
- Interaction between GMs and between the GM and the GL is stimulated during every moment of a Validation Group.
- Increased verbal expression is stimulated by the GL using Validation techniques especially during the discussion part of the agenda, although verbal interaction is encouraged throughout the group process.
- Social controls are often seen as a result of the group process. This can be related to the Validation Principle: events, emotions, colors, sounds, smells, tastes and images create emotions, which in turn trigger similar emotions experienced in the past. Old people react in present time, the same way they did in the past. For example, when disoriented elderly are placed in a 'cocktail party' situation, they react as they did in the past. Hands that were once shaky hold a glass steady; people who usually sit in silence around a dining table now chat with each other. Group can stimulate memories of family, family relationships and the social behavior of being

within a family setting. This has so much to do with tapping into the members' implicit memory. Many refer to this as the memory that remains in our fingers or in our actions. Implicit or procedural memory is stimulated in the social aspect of the group process. This sort of memory remains when higher cognitive memory is no longer there. Group work reinforces this.

- Feelings of well being and happiness are often the result of a successful group session. Even if sad or depressing subjects were discussed, closing a group session on a positive note is the task of a GL.

What do Validation Groups offer that Individual Validation does not?

GLs use the same validating attitude and techniques that are used in individual Validation, however the use of special group techniques as well as the simple fact that there are more individuals to relate to, offers extra benefits to members of a Validation group.

Constructive interaction with other disoriented people: verbal interaction between GMs is actively encouraged by GLs. GMs offer each other comments, criticism and ideas to react to; because the GL is always protective of each person and has built a trusting atmosphere, GMs feel safe to express themselves in the group situation. GLs also actively encourage GMs to listen to each other and interact.

A feeling of community: each section of the group agenda offers opportunities to build a 'we' feeling, or better said, a feeling of community. This is one of the basic human needs: to feel a part of a larger whole and this need is strongly addressed in Validation groups. Sitting in a circle, holding hands while singing together, listening and interacting with each other, tossing a ball around the circle, eating and drinking together are all ways of building a group spirit.

An opportunity to perform old familiar social roles: roles are assigned to each GM according to his or her history and present set of needs. For example, a former bank manager might gain feelings of self worth by taking on the group role of Chairman. This old, familiar role can be exercised in the group context and this man's need for recognition or status can be fulfilled. The group offers many such opportunities through its standard roles as well as the different parts of the agenda which depend upon the roles and specific social behaviors, i.e. refreshments.

Stimulation to engage in social behaviors: social behaviors have to do with the ways we interact with each other in social situations. Certain behaviors are considered acceptable in society while others are not. In Validation groups social behaviors are: looking at one another, talking with one another, touching one another in socially acceptable ways, drinking and eating while talking, making jokes, arguing, and expressing feelings.

Conversation with others about important topics: the discussion section of a Validation group is centered on one or more topics that have to do with emotions or needs that are important to one or more GMs at that moment. The topic can change throughout the discussion as the needs of the GMs change. Topics are phrased as a problem for the group to solve. This engages each GM in the discussion in some way. The discussion of issues that are important to GMs in that moment also gives the GM a feeling of importance, acceptance and worth.

Opportunities to listen to others and offer ideas and feelings: most of a Validation group is spent listening and talking with each other. It could be said that the main task of the GL is to ensure that GMs

have ample opportunity to interact in any way that they are able to interact given their capabilities and mood at that moment.

When we look at the goals of group work in comparison to individual Validation we can see that the some of them overlap while others are unique to either group or individual work.

Validation Group Goals:

The stimulation of:

- energy
- social roles
- identity
- interaction
- verbal behaviors
- social controls
- feelings of well being and happiness.

A group should also:

- reduce fear
- prevent vegetation
- reduce the need for antipsychotic medications or chemical/physical restraints
- prevent staff burnout.

Individual Validation Goals:

Short-term:

- increase verbal and non-verbal communication
- improve ability to move and physical well-being
- give joy and energy to caregivers
- reduce stress to caregivers and disoriented elderly.

Long-term:

- increase a sense of self-worth
- support the process of resolving unfinished conflicts from the past
- prevent withdrawal to vegetation
- eventually, decrease anxiety, anger
- increase social controls
- decrease the use of chemical and physical restraints
- increase feelings of well-being
- maintain older people in their own homes
- help families communicate with disoriented and maloriented relatives.

Elements of a Validation Group

Group Members

A Validation group is comprised of four to eight people who are all what Naomi Feil calls disoriented old-old. They must be in the Validation population. Feil says that you can have up to 10 people if all 10 are time confused and enjoy talking. But this is only recommended when the GL is very skilled and has years of experience.

Maloriented people are not usually appropriate for Validation groups because they typically feel uncomfortable being around disoriented people. A group member who is constantly critical of other group members blocks the building of trust and safety. Without trust and safety, GMs will not interact or express their feelings. Feil says that occasionally there will be a maloriented person who benefits from being in a group as an assistant to the GL, such as a musician who plays an instrument or a 'secretary' who takes attendance. Other group leaders have found that maloriented people can take part in Validation groups when they do not respond negatively to the actions or expressions of disoriented GMs and enjoy being in the group. In other words, the maloriented person must gain something from the group and give something to the group, just like everybody else.

Most group members are in Phase 2, time confusion. A group should have a majority of GMs who are verbal and enjoy talking with other people. This makes verbal interaction (an important goal of group work) easier.

It is also possible to include one or two persons in Phase 3, repetitive motion. People in repetitive motion must gain something from the group process and be able to give something to the group as well. However, it is important that these individuals do not disturb the group with repetitive behaviors that disrupt the other GMs or the process. If a GL feels that a particular person would benefit from group, it is important to ensure that repetitive behaviors that could be disruptive can be stopped by using 'anchors', touch, eye contact or by sitting next to a particular person. Often people in repetitive motion, who usually do not speak, begin to speak in Validation groups. Inclusion in the group process can make significant changes in how a disoriented person relates to others and that person's need to withdraw from reality.

The number of group members is of great importance and is based on the skills of the GL as well as the number of CLs in the group. A group with less than four members puts enormous pressure of each of the GMs to carry on conversation and often this is too much of a demand on their concentration and verbal abilities. A group becomes very hard work for the GL with too few GMs. When there are eight GMs, a GL must be very skilled in order to ensure that everyone gains from and gives to the group process, plus there must be at least one, very skilled CL to assist. Beginning GLs are encouraged to start with four or five GMs in order to build their group skills and integrate the basic Validation techniques to the point where they are automatic behaviors. Most beginners find that they are thinking about the specific group elements and can not also focus on Validation techniques as well. By starting with a small group, it makes the learning process easier and more effective. Additional group members can be added as the GL becomes more comfortable with the group techniques and the group process.

When choosing people to become members of your Validation Group it is useful to keep several things in mind:

Look for your Chairperson, Hostess and Song Leader. These are crucial roles that give the group structure and make your group easier to lead. Good choices for these important roles can make or break your group.

Look for people who really enjoy being with others and communicating in some way. A non-verbal person who gains pleasure from being with others and relates well with others is as positive for the group as a time confused person who talks with others all the time.

The Group Leader

A group leader has many responsibilities and must prepare in advance in order to ensure success. The following are critical steps to ensure a successful Validation group.

- Before the Group Meeting

In the initial stages of starting a Validation group in a facility where there has never been a Validation group before, it is imperative to spend some time talking with staff members in the facility. You will need their support, and working openly will enhance the success of your group. It is very important to have the approval of the administration. Lack of support 'from the top' can lead to serious consequences. Staff will want to know what you do in a Validation group, which residents can become members, what resources will be needed for the group and what results can be expected.

It is the GL's job to keep communication open with other people on the staff. It is highly recommended that the GL give periodic reports at staff meetings and make sure that group records (what happened at each group meeting) are available for staff members to review. This should be set up in advance if possible. The more others know about the group, the more likely they will be supportive. Be sure to talk to staff members who work with residents every day before each group meeting to find out what happened since the last group session; were there any repercussions or issues that were expressed by GMs or if there are health issues going on.

Naomi Feil talked to me about her first experiences developing Validation groups at the Montefiore Home in Cleveland. At a big team meeting, her administrator said, "She's as crazy as the people she works with." This statement trickled down to a total lack of support from all the people she worked with. Nurses interrupted her group to take GMs elsewhere; GMs were given sedatives and other medications just before group meetings that made them non-responsive; kitchen staff never provided refreshments and other staff would regularly walk through the meeting room during group sessions.

You will need to find a space that is appropriate for your group and make sure that it is reserved each week, on the same day, at the same time. This will be gone into in more detail in the section: Starting a Validation Group. For now it is important to note that part of what makes a group successful is the development of rituals. Even time confused people with severe short-term memory loss will build rituals and remember elements of the group. Even if the GL is unable to be present, the group should meet. The development of rituals is only accomplished by ensuring consistency.

You will need to choose group members. If this is your first group, start with four people, at least three of whom can and enjoy speaking with others. Make sure you know these people very well; through individual Validation sessions you should create a rather detailed history so that you can choose roles and make decisions about seating order in the group. Roles and seating order are discussed in detail a bit

later on in this chapter. These roles can be discussed with potential group members in individual conversations and they are determined by the GL before the first group meeting.

You will need to choose and perhaps train a CL. This person can be anyone who is willing and able to be present at each group meeting. It is wonderful when two Group Leaders can be the CL in each other's groups, or as an additional support and learning experience for a Validation Worker. However, people who have not learned Validation can make excellent CLs. The qualities of good CLs and what they need to know or learn will be discussed in the following section.

Before each group meeting, the GL, perhaps with the assistance of the CL, must prepare certain parts of the group agenda in advance. The discussion topic(s) and the activity can change with every meeting and these should be planned in advance.

- During the Group Meeting

GLs use their personal energy to energize GMs. This is done by being centered, making eye contact with each individual, using touch and anchored touch. GMs are encouraged to give energy to each other by making eye contact, shaking hands, and talking with each other. Arguments between GMs stimulate energy and should not be discouraged unless they make GMs feel scared or not safe.

Maintaining a safe environment is very important because if GMs do not feel safe, they will not express emotions or needs. GMs may not physically threaten or harm one another. If a GM gets angry at another GM, it is important for the GL to make sure that both feel safe within the context of the argument. The physical space must also feel safe – interruptions by other people should be eliminated.

Verbal interactions between GMs are facilitated by the GL by using group techniques that are described later in this book. Interaction takes place during every section of a group. However, during the discussion part of a group, there should be much more.

During a group meeting, the GL supports the individual roles of GMs three distinct times: 1) in the opening greeting, 2) during the performance of the role and 3) at the end in the closing words. It is through the successful performance of the role that GMs experience feelings of usefulness and self-worth. The roles are far more important than simply being elements of group work. Support of the roles must become intuitive for the GL. There are often many small moments in a group session where there an individual's role can be mentioned, called upon and integrated into the proceedings. These moments are not scripted, nor do they reoccur in the same way every week. This is a creative part of group work, an aspect that grows deeper with the experience, creativity and skill of the GL.

Monitoring and increasing energy in GMs is done in many ways. A GL understands and accepts that disoriented elderly have limited concentration and can handle verbal conversation on a topic for approximately 15-20 minutes. Physical activity and singing are ways of increasing group energy in a non-verbal way. Touch increases energy as well, especially with people in repetitive motion. A typical energy flow of a Validation group will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter.

A GL must always be aware of the emotions of individual GMs. Exactly like individual Validation, a GL is constantly observing and calibrating each GM throughout the group meeting. The expression of emotion is what Validation is all about; it takes precedent over all other issues. It is what we are working towards.

The GL must have at least two prepared discussion topics. These will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

During a group, the CL must be actively supportive of GMs and assist the GL. The tasks and role of a CL are discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to stimulating verbal interaction, a GL also stimulates nonverbal interaction between GMs. This takes the form of shaking hands, touching each other to give emotional support, handing out food and drink, doing an activity and looking at each other.

- After the Meeting

After each group meeting, the GL and CL sit together to evaluate what happened in that session. Evaluation forms are filled in; plans are made for the next meeting. Additionally, it is a time when both persons can get feedback on their work.

Passing on significant information to other staff people is quite important. When a GM has had a particularly emotional moment, emotions can spill out after the group meeting is over. If staff is prepared for this, they will not be surprised; hopefully they will be prepared and know how to handle the emotions when they are expressed. Often GMs behave quite differently in group than they do outside of group. For instance, it is useful for staff to know that someone who usually does not speak at all, actually speaks fluently in a group. Sharing information about GMs helps everyone and builds a positive relationship with staff members. Working without sharing information can create mistrust and fear.

It is recommended that all group documentation be made available to all staff members who work with GMs on a daily basis.

- As time goes on

Engaging staff members on a weekly basis helps a GL in so many ways. Other people who have regular contact with your GMs can give input on how the group is influencing, or not, each person. It is important for a GL to know if a person has particularly strong reactions to a group meeting, Group work often makes demands on other staff members: they must have your GMs ready on time for the weekly meeting; they must plan other activities (hairdresser, pedicure, family visits, therapies, doctor visits, etc) around the group meeting; often the kitchen staff are involved in preparing the food and drink that is served during a group and their expertise is useful when it comes to knowing what dietary restrictions your GMs may have; activity directors can be helpful in developing good activities for the group. Plus the entire staff may become interested in learning more about Validation and how it works.

One very good way of sharing the group experience with other staff members is to invite them to be a guest at a group session. This should only happen after the GL is comfortable with the Validation group process and feels that a guest would not make him or her self-conscious. The handling of guests at a Validation Group session will be discussed at a later point.

Another way of sharing information about group meetings is to make sure that group documentation is available for staff to read each week. Depending on the type of documentation that is done in the facility, Validation Group evaluations can be included in each GMs file or there can be a separate folder with all group evaluations. Be sure to include an area where staff members can write down their thoughts and comments on how GMs behave after group, once they re-integrate into their normal daily patterns.

It is also useful to involve family members in an on-going manner. This offers them an opportunity to hear or see how their relative is doing in the group and perhaps pick up some helpful tips on communicating that will make their visits more fulfilling.

After running my group for many months, building the Validation team and seeing positive results in all our GMs, I started a family meeting. We got together in the early evening (6pm was most convenient for them) for one hour, every 4 months or so. Several team members were also present. We started by telling each family member the positive results we had seen in their relative over the last months. They were able to ask any questions they had and then we watched about 10 minutes of the video. Family members said they appreciated these meetings.

See the **Tasks of a Group Leader** check off list included in the section ‘Useful Forms and Handouts’.

- If a GL can not be present for a group meeting

Naturally, there will be times when GLs must miss a group session such as during vacations, illness or personal time off. While consistency is of great importance when leading a group, realities of life must also be taken into consideration. In the first three months after beginning a new group, all efforts should be made to ensure that the GL be present at every weekly meeting. In the first 3 months, rituals are set, choices are made and routines become comfortable. GMs ‘learn’ that those group-meeting days are special. They begin to ‘remember’ what comes next in the group agenda and often look forward to their role. Once these rituals are set, then it is easier for GMs to accommodate for a missing GL. After months of being in a group, it often does not matter to GMs who is doing the leading, so long as the person uses the same agenda, knows the techniques and works with the validating attitude.

There are several ways of handling the situation when a GL can not be present for a meeting.

1. The CL can take over the GL role. If the CL works with a validating attitude and knows the agenda, the GMs often have a good experience and the rituals will be reinforced – even when the CL does not consistently use Validation group techniques. While you run the risk of the Validation group temporarily turning into a singing group or even into a coffee klatch, it is not the worst thing that could happen. At least the GMs are still getting together and having a good time. And by following the agenda, the rituals and possibly even some of the roles are being reinforced.
2. If the CL is a GL, then the situation is easy. She simply takes over the GL role and hopefully can find another person to be the CL in the group. This leads to the discussion of working as a team.
3. Working as a team allows for more flexibility and sharing of the GL’s responsibilities. If there is a pool of individuals trained and ready to step into the GL and CL roles, then vacations, illness, and scheduling issues all become easier to work around. GMs have no trouble adapting to different GLs so long as each individual uses the basic attitude and Validation techniques.

My first group experience was in Holland and it was also my most successful group experience. I believe one significant factor was that I worked with a team of people who could work as CLs and GLs. When we first introduced a Validation group in this nursing home, I was the GL and we had a team of six to eight people, all very motivated and interested in learning Validation. Over the course of one year, I trained this team in individual and group Validation. At every weekly meeting, at least two members of the team were present in the group. If more people were available, two worked with me in the group as CLs and the rest sat outside our group circle and took notes. During the reflection after each session, these extra team members provided excellent insight, perspective and feedback. After this initial year, many of the team members were

perfectly capable of leading a Validation group. I often acted as CL when another team member took on the GL role. In this way we could support each other and grow comfortable in the different roles. The GMs accepted and responded to each GL similarly. They did not always remember the individuals; they remembered and responded to the attitude.

Co-Workers/Co-Leaders

Co-workers or co-leaders (CL) of a group have many different tasks, depending on their relationship with the GL. Some GLs like to work with someone who is more verbal while others prefer working with someone who is less verbal and more focused on logistics. There are no rules about how much or how little a CL can speak or what she does. What is of crucial importance is that the GMs are not confused by who is in charge of the group. Disoriented people can not easily handle a dual focus so the GL must always be clear to them.

Here are some of the many tasks that can be performed by a CL:

- assist in bringing people to and from the meeting
- help with the movement/activity section of the program
- prepare the refreshments before the group starts
- sit next to the person who needs extra assistance
- take people out of the group if they become disruptive or need to go to the bathroom
- help evaluate progress after the meeting
- help plan the next meeting
- take over the leadership of the group when needed or planned.

Another crucial factor for a successful group is that the CL uses the validating attitude and some of the Validation techniques. Sometimes it is possible for two GLs to work together and support each other in that they take turns leading and co-leading Validation groups. Some GLs have difficulty adjusting to the role of CL, but this is a very useful experience and it is recommended that every GL have at least one experience co-leading a group. It provides a great deal of insight.

Sometimes it is possible to have a Validation Worker as a CL in a group. This is not only fantastic from the GL's perspective, but it opens up a wide range of learning possibilities for the Worker.

Most GLs find their CLs among their co-workers. In this case it is necessary to train interested co-workers in becoming CLs in a group.

When looking for people to become CLs, look for people who are interested in Validation and what you are/have been doing. Look for people who already demonstrate respect for the elderly and have empathy. In some cases, family members have acted as CLs.

Qualities that are necessary in a CL are:

- commitment and dependability – the person needs to show up on time and the GL needs to be able to depend on him or her to do the things agreed upon
- openness to learning – the person needs to learn the group agenda, learn all the songs that are used in a group and learn some Validation techniques
- a non-judgmental attitude – the person must be able to work with residents using the Validating attitude
- the ability to have empathy – as stated above
- respect of residents – as stated above

- genuine interest in Validation group work – if your CL is not interested, this will show up in everything he or she does and will directly impact the members of the group.

People who become CLs in a group gain a great deal. They will experience enjoyment in the group meetings. These groups are often fun and certainly something quite different from the ordinary, daily routine. Often CLs consider group to be the highlight of their week.

CLs learn new skills that they can use every day in their other activities. Validation skills help to build better relationships with residents and make assisting them with bathing, dressing, and other everyday activities a lot easier. As relationships build between the CL and the GMs, there is more satisfaction in work. This has been proven in several studies.³

A lot of this is due to the fact that there is more communication between CLs and residents. Once a CL learns to communicate well with GMs, he or she can use these skills with all residents.

It is important to make sure that the CL knows exactly what is required, both in terms of time, energy and input. To communicate this clearly, it's best to put this in writing. In terms of time, a CL needs to plan at least 2 hours for each weekly meeting. Here is an example of such a time plan:

- from 9.30-10.00 to set up the room and help bring residents to the group meeting
- from 10.00 - 11.00 for the meeting itself
- from 11.00 - 11.30 for reflection and feedback after the meeting.

A GL needs to train CLs before the first group session. One training session of 2 hours should be enough to cover the skills and themes listed below.

Skills that a CL should have:

- centering
- calibration
- focusing of energy
- Validation techniques, particularly ‘anchored touch’ and ‘mirroring’
- know the group songs by heart (explain why we do not use song sheets, although you can give your CL a song sheet to bring home and study).

Each of these should be practiced using exercises.

A CL should understand the following themes:

- the Validation Group agenda: the different parts of a group and their purposes
- the goals of a Validation group – what we are trying to accomplish
- roles within a group – why each role is given to each GM and its purpose
- the difference between a Reality Orientation, Reminiscence and Validation group.

These topics can be explained and handouts can be given to each CL.

Other issues to discuss:

- Privacy: what information is appropriate to pass on outside of the group?
- What information is important to report within the team?
- How to handle personal feelings and responses to the group meetings?
- Contingencies: how to handle ‘difficult situations’; what to do if....?

³ Gunther (2004) Evaluation of the effects of a Worker course on practice.

Evaluationsstudie über die Praxiserfolge von Validation nach Feil am Beispiel eines TERTIANUM ZiP Validation-Anwenderseminars

- Explain the role of a CL so that they know what is expected (can include all or some of the following):
 - assist in bringing people to and from the meeting
 - help with the movement/activity section of the program
 - prepare the refreshments before the group starts
 - sit next to the person who needs extra assistance
 - take people out of the group if they become disruptive
 - help evaluate progress after the meeting
 - help plan the next meeting
 - take over the leadership of the group when needed or planned
 - check on the GMs after the group session to make sure they are all right.

Seating Order

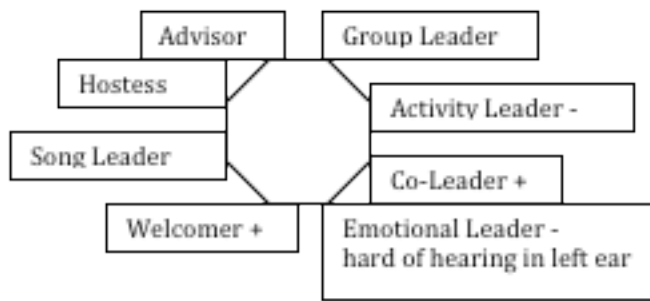
In a Validation group, everyone sits in a circle, close enough so that everyone can touch the person next to him or her. There should be no table or other piece of furniture in the middle of the circle because this will interrupt the flow of energy and takes away from the visual focus of GMs which should be on one another. The type of chairs that one uses in a group is also of some importance. If possible, use chairs with no arms because this makes it easier for GMs to reach out to each other and take hands or touch their neighbor. On the other hand, arms on chairs make it easier for elderly persons to stand from sitting or sit from standing and help them remain more independent, not to mention save the backs of the staff. Remember that important goals of group work are building energy and non-verbal communication, both of which are strongly influenced by GMs touching each other and having good eye contact. It is easy to feel when the chairs are too far apart – the energy level of the group is lower and the GL has to work harder to make connections between GMs. If possible, try to get GMs who sit in wheelchairs into a regular chair. If this is not possible, then take any leg supports away so that the wheelchair can be pushed as far into the circle as possible.

When planning the first group meeting, it is important to create a seating order that takes the following elements into consideration. Keep in mind that for the first few group sessions, you can change the seating order. So feel free to try out different seating orders until you find one that seems to satisfy the group goals the best.

Criteria for creating a successful seating order for a Validation group:

- A circle should be created with no spaces and no extra furniture. Eye contact and physical contact should be easy for everyone.
- Friends/antagonists – putting friends next to each other can be a good thing or a bad thing. If the two people spend the entire group talking with each other, then it takes away from the group feeling. Putting enemies next to each other can be a stimulating factor in the group or it can take away from the group feeling.
- Energy – some people have low energy and some have a lot of energy; try to make a balanced circle of energy. Do not put energetic people all on one side of the circle, or low energy people next to each other. Place a high energy person next to a low energy person. Don't forget that the GL and CL should be high energy. Energy can be diminished by the following problems in the seating order:
 - low energy people seated next to each other in one part of the circle
 - chairs that are too far apart or too big
 - chairs of varying sizes, depths, styles
 - a table in the middle of the circle.

Example: (the + and – signs indicate normal energy level of the individuals)



- Physical challenges: people who are hard of hearing, visually impaired or blind need the support of the CL or GL. The CL can repeat what has been said into the ‘good’ ear of a deaf person or can give visual clues of what is going on to a blind person. It is best if the CL can do this because a GL needs to be focused on leading the group. Focusing on the needs of a GM who needs assistance will take away from the GLs ability to see what is going on in the group process.
- Emotional challenges (crying, whining, etc.): Some GMs cry often and need emotional support. While the expression of emotion is indeed a group goal, sometimes it becomes disruptive if a GM does this at every group meeting and the entire meeting becomes centered on this one person’s crying. Remember – the group needs take precedence over the needs of one person (most of the time.) This will be discussed in more detail in the section, Validation Group Techniques. It is important to keep the group process going and not be interrupted or weighed down in every meeting by one GM. There are several ways of handling people who express the same emotion in every group meeting, in connection to the seating order.
 - If the GM needs a loving mother type of person to remain focused on group matters, then make sure he or she is sitting next to a ‘mother’ type of person.
 - If the GM needs a physical anchor to keep focused on the group, then make sure that this person is sitting next to the CL or GL and that you have set an anchor in individual Validation sessions.

In one unique case, a GM was sitting opposite me in the group circle. Every time she made eye contact with me she began to cry. She knew that I would listen to her, ‘validate’ her and she had a lot of sadness to express. I was also working with her in individual sessions so this need to express was being fulfilled outside of the group. When I placed this person so that it was less easy to make eye contact with me, the constant crying stopped.

- People in repetitive motion generally have less energy and so should sit next to someone with a lot of energy. Also, some people in repetitive motion need an anchor to keep their repetitive movements from disturbing the group process. See the section on Validation Group Techniques for more information.
- Logistics or positioning group members to prevent distractions (snacks, the door, windows): some GMs are distracted by looking out of windows so these people should sit with their back to the window. Some GMs are triggered to want to leave the group if they are facing the door – these people should sit with their backs to the door. Some GMs want to eat the minute they see the snacks and drinks, so these people should not sit in a place where they can see the prepared refreshments.

- Connections between people should be made according to the needs of each GM. A man who misses his wife should sit next to a woman who misses her husband. A woman who misses her mother should sit next to a woman who is very motherly.

Roles

In a Validation group, we try to give each GM a role based on that person's personal history and present day needs for identity, usefulness, status and self-worth. Certain roles drive the group agenda forward and are what Naomi Feil says, essential for every Validation group. These roles are: the Welcomer or Chairman/woman/Chairperson, the Song Leader and the Hostess. You need these people in order to start your group. As time goes on, roles can be found for other GMs based on the GL's experiences of them in the group and the needs that GMs express.

All roles should fulfill at least one of the following points:

- The person should get respect and honor for performing the role.
- The person should feel increased feelings of self-worth.
- The person should be able to re-live old activities (life skills) or behaviors that feel comfortable. For example, a former bank president might re-live memories of chairing a board meeting by become the group Chairman.
- The person might be able to resolve old issues. For example, a man who had always wanted to be the president of his union but never was, finally found resolution after being group Chairman.

A GL can be very creative in developing roles that suit GMs. Feil writes about a man who was the youngest of 14 children and in late life began shouting, "Shut up" at other residents. Feil gave him the role of 'the shut'er up'er'; he began each group meeting by pounding a gavel and yelling, 'Shut up!' The other GMs got quiet and listened. This fulfilled this man's need to be heard; his need for identity.

Pick a name for the role that the individual GM finds most respectful and interesting. If you ask, "Would you like to be our Chairwoman?" and the GM says, "no", then you might ask if being the group 'Welcomer' seems better. The name of the role in itself is not important – it's finding a way of fulfilling the needs of the GM that is important. Sometimes a person is reluctant to take on a role or says no. The GL should try a variety of invitations before giving up. Often GMs respond to invitations such as: 'It would really be helpful (or) our group would really benefit if you would consider being the in our group.' Often, people will be less reluctant to join in if they know they are needed and are helping others. It speaks to their basic human need.

If you have two people who would be good for one role, it is possible to split the role into two parts and each can perform one part. For instance, one person can open the meeting and one person can close the meeting; one person can hand out cookies and one person can hand out the drinks; one person can lead the opening song and one person can lead the closing song.

Once a role is given and the GM is performing that role well, then you should not change that role. Taking away a role that gives feelings of self-worth would be detrimental to the GM. However, it is possible for a GM to get tired of performing the role after some time and then will need a new role. An example: a man in my group had the role of Chairman for 2 years and after that time did not want to be chairman anymore. His need for status, to be listened to and honored was satisfied. His needs changed. He then wanted to have lots of contact with ladies, so he was given the role of host and he passed out the

cookies. He took great pleasure in handing the best cookies to his lady friends and having physical contact with each one.

You will know when a role does not fit, or no longer fits when the GM:

- does not respond positively when you invite him to the meeting for more than 3 weeks in a row
- does not respond positively when he is asked to perform the role in the meeting for more than 3 weeks in a row
- does not perform the role at all for more than three weeks in a row
- says he does not want to do that job anymore – for more than (more or less) three weeks in a row; (three weeks is an arbitrary number, it depends on the person and how adamant she is)
- does not seem happy or does not show increased energy from the group process.

Possible roles for group members:

- **Chairman or Welcomer:** look for someone who likes to lead, be listened to, has past experience leading different types of groups (women's groups, PTA, clubs) or someone who always wanted to.
- **Hostess:** look for someone who gets pleasure nurturing other people, someone who identifies with being a mothering type of person, or someone who served other people professionally.
- **Song Leader:** look for someone who expresses himself easily through song or gets pleasure being able to sing or knowing many songs (perhaps was in a choir or vocal group).
- **Emotional Leader or Comforter:** look for someone who comforts other people or who feels comfortable when others are expressing painful emotions and wants to help them.
- **Poetry reader:** look for someone who has a broad knowledge of poetry and enjoys reciting poetry for other people. (This holds true for story tellers and prayer leaders).
- **Secretary:** look for someone who was a former secretary and gets pleasure writing things down (even if what is written does not make sense or is illegible). Keeping notes is not the goal or expectation as much as it is for the person to feel important in her role.
I had one former secretary who got pleasure from counting the number of people in the group for the 'minutes of the meeting'.
- **Dance leader/ Activity leader:** look for someone who expresses himself through movement. Often this role is taken by a GM who is in Repetitive Motion, but this is not always the case. A former gymnast, an athlete, someone who takes pride in their physicality would benefit from this role.
- **Advisor:** look for someone who a) likes to tell other people what they should do, b) a caring/nurturing person, c) someone who wants the status or acknowledgement for their wisdom. Many different basic human needs can be fulfilled by this role.
- **Joke maker:** look for someone who makes jokes all the time and in fact may identify with being a 'jokster'. This sort of person takes pride in always having a good joke for many occasions.
- **Story teller:** look for someone who tells the same stories over and over and who needs to be listened to because there is an unmet need or trauma behind the story. By giving this person an opportunity to be listened to each week, the need to tell the story and express can be fulfilled.

Some roles have specific, prescribed places in the order of group events. These will be described below in the section on Meeting Agenda. Some roles are not prescribed and have no specific order; these can be used at the GL's discretion. A prayer leader, poetry reciter, story teller or joke maker can perform his or her role at many different points in the agenda. Look for a time when the group energy is increased by the performance of the role. This can be in the beginning of the group, at the end of the discussion, after the activity (while the hostess is preparing the refreshments), during the refreshments, or as part of the closing ritual. This will be discussed more in the following section.

Meeting Agenda

A Validation Group has a very distinct and prescribed order of events. There is a reason for the agenda to follow a particular order and it is important for a GL to trust in that. The energy and concentration of the GMs are generally the guiding factors. There are some occasions when the order of events can be changed and that is discussed at the end of this section.

- Before each group session

Before each group session it is very important for the GL to visit each GM for a few minutes. In this brief individual Validation moment, the GL does a number of things. The GL reconnects with the GM, reminds the GM that the group is meeting and that he or she has an important role. The GL takes ‘an emotional temperature’, meaning that he or she finds out what emotions or issues seem to be important in the moment. Often these short sessions provide the topic of discussion that can be used in the group session.

The GL needs to do a final check of the room where the group will take place to be sure that all things are set up and prepared. The music, the refreshments and the materials necessary for the activity should all be set up and ready to go beforehand. If a GL needs to interrupt the flow of the group in order to find the right music or get the refreshments, it will disturb the flow of the group. Preparation is important for the success of a group meeting. Good coordination and teamwork between a GL and CL makes this easier.

- Getting GMs to the Group Meeting Place

There are many ways to accomplish this in a smooth way, depending on the amount of help you have from other people and how able the GMs are to walk or wheel themselves to the meeting space. It is best when the GMs arrive around the same time so that they can greet each other and feel a sense of camaraderie. It is not good if one or two people are left sitting alone for five minutes while the GL and CL go get the others. It is possible that the GL brings two or more people to the group area and stays there while the CL (and others, if necessary) brings in the rest of the GMs. Many times, GMs can help each other so that you form a parade, singing and marching to the group area. This raises energy and starts the group on a high note. Playing up-tempo music in the meeting room as people enter can also raise energy and provide GMs with acoustic stimulation and a feeling of positive expectation.

- The Group Session – the opening or birth of the group

Once everyone is sitting in their assigned seat, the GL greets each group member individually, getting up, moving in front of each person at eye level, shaking his or her hand and welcoming them to the group.⁴ At this time the GL once again reminds each person of his or her role. Make sure that you touch each person either by shaking hands, touching them on the shoulder or use an anchored touch to awaken more energy and concentration. One image that might be useful is to think of the GL as a flashlight, shining his or her energy beam at each person for just a short time. This should not take a lot of time, maybe 30 seconds for each person. If the GM begins expressing feelings or needs, it is important to not go into it at this time. Instead, promise to discuss this later on and make sure to remember the issue later

⁴ You can name your group or not. Some GLs find it easier to invite GMs to the ‘Wednesday group’, the ‘Sunshine group’ or any other name that seems appropriate. In the beginning you can discuss this in group, ask your Advisor or Chairperson and decide on a group name.

on (perhaps asking the CL to remind you). This is not a time for individual Validation because it leaves the other GMs isolated and uninvolved. This is a time to build group energy.

The GL now invites the Chairperson or Welcomer to ‘open the meeting’. If at all possible, try to get the person to stand up and take charge in order to gain the most honor and attention. It is not really important what is said. It is important that there is an ‘official’ opening of the group. It is important that the Chairperson feels some status, is listened to and feels more self-worth. The greeting can happen in a number of ways. The Chair can stand up and make a speech; the Chair can remain seated (if he or she can not stand up) and the GL can kneel in front of the Chair giving the person more status and hold his or her hands to give energy, physical support and encouragement; the Chair can shake hands with each individual GM personally welcoming the GMs to the group meeting. The GL may be needed to assist the Chair in going to each GM; you can introduce each GM to the Chair and suggest that they shake hands. If the Chair has difficulty finding the right words to say, it is supportive if the GL gives suggestions to stimulate the thought process. For instance: “Just welcome everybody to the ‘Friends group’”, or “Let’s get started.” You don’t want to take over the role, just stimulate thought processes that may not be functioning well at the beginning. Remember that during this opening your goals include increasing group energy and developing a *Awe*⁵ feeling.

Once everyone is seated, the GL invites everyone to hold hands and asks the Song Leader to start ‘the opening song’. The Song Leader should begin the opening song, which is always the same song. This becomes part of the opening ritual. If some GMs do not want to hold hands, do not force it. Encourage them to touch each other because it makes everyone feel closer and builds group energy but some people have difficulty with this. If this becomes disturbing or creates a loss of energy, it may be better to place the GM who does not want to touch other people next to the GL or CL. The GL or CL can then touch the person’s shoulder or knee to complete the closed circle during the song. The choice of an opening song will be discussed in detail later on. The main goals of the opening song are to increase energy and build a “we” feeling. If the Song Leader needs help remembering the opening song, the GL should help out with the first words and then allow the Song Leader to take the lead. Be careful not to take over the role. Often a GL can simply say: ‘Mrs. Jones, you are our Song Leader. Would you start our opening song, *The More We Get Together?*’ (This is the first line of the song and cues Mrs. Jones how to begin.)

At this point it *may* be appropriate to have a Poem or Prayer. The following goals need to be kept in mind. A poem or prayer should do all of the following:

- increase GM energy
- increase feelings of self-worth, honor, recognition and self-worth for the person who has the role
- can trigger memories of being in church or synagogue and feeling safe
- increase group energy
- develop a “we” feeling.

If the poem or prayer does not satisfy these goals, then they can be done at a later time in the agenda. Right now the focus must be on increasing energy and the group feeling. If this does not happen now, then the following agenda section will not function well.

Again, the GL needs to assist each GM in performing his or her role and be careful not to take it over.

- The Life of the Group

Discussion

Verbal interaction is the key to this section of the agenda. The GL presents the discussion topic as a

⁵ At several times I use the phrase: “we” feeling. By this I mean to convey the sense of being together in a social gathering, of being supported and not alone. It is a feeling of strength, of camaraderie, of friendship and being connected to one another.

common problem that the group may solve. The goals of the discussion are:

- increase verbal communication
- solve a problem together
- exchange of feelings
- offer the possibility to express feelings.

This is the heart of a Validation group. The choice of topics will be discussed later on. However, what is important to note at this point is that the GL must come prepared with at least two possible topics that will engage the GMs. If one does not stimulate discussion among the group members, then perhaps the second topic will be more stimulating. Often a GM will supply a good topic when the GL visits before the group session.

Emotionally laden issues that are important in the moment make the best topics because they will stimulate verbal interaction. There are many different ways to begin the discussion. Here is one suggestion: ‘Mr. Walker was telling me this morning about a problem he is having. May I say it to the group Mr. Walker? (pause for answer) Mr. Walker is missing his wife very much today. What is the best way to deal with missing someone? Mrs. Jones, you’re our Advisor. Would you tell Mr. Walker what you think?’

A logical progression in the discussion is not necessary. If a GM changes the topic of discussion, the GL adjusts and goes with the new topic. Finding the ‘answer’ or actually solving the problem is not important; the process of talking with each other is most important. Often GLs fall into the trap of trying to get every GM to say something and go from one GM to the next around the circle asking the same question. This can easily become a series of dialogs instead of a group discussion. One very important task of the GL is to encourage interaction among GMs. There are a number of group techniques that can be used to accomplish this. Often the role of the GL is simply to motivate GMs to talk with each other and then sit back and wait until they need another stimulus. It could be said that the less the GL speaks, the better.

There are often many moments during the discussion when the Advisor, Comforter and/or Emotional Leader can be called upon to perform his or her role. The Advisor should be asked to help when there is a decision to be made (‘Should we stop our discussion and start our activity?’). The Comforter/Emotional Leader should be called upon when a GM is expressing emotions and needs emotional support. (‘Mrs. Smith is feeling very sad. Can you comfort her?’) The GL must remain aware of all opportunities to call upon these GMs so that each one can perform the role he or she has been assigned.

The GL can feel when the GMs have talked enough. They speak less; the sentences are more broken or make less sense. There are greater pauses between sentences and the energy of the GMs is much lower. Concentration has been lost and the conversation can become less logical. At this point the GL summarizes what was said in order to finish the discussion and move on. The summary should acknowledge what was said and help each GM to feel recognized for his or her participation. Increasing each person’s feelings of self-worth is a goal of the summary. In addition, it is possible to help build a group feeling by finding a common thread between what everyone has said. I call this ‘zooming out’. It means finding an overall theme that encompasses everything. Here’s an example:

‘Mrs. Smith said that she misses her daughter. Mr. Weil talked about his experiences in the war with his buddies. Mrs. Walker said that her son comes to pick her up every Saturday and then dumps her back here. And Miss Young wants to know where she should go next. It seems that we are all missing something or feeling a little lost. Do you think we can help each other by being in this group?’

The goal of this last question is not to stimulate a whole discussion but rather to help everyone feel supported and connected to one another. The GL would then quickly lead the group to the next event in the agenda.

Activity/Movement/Music

The GL now asks the Chair or Advisor if it's time for the group activity. Disoriented elderly have limited concentration and the ability to carry on a verbal conversation is rather short, even within a group context. They need to stimulate more energy through non-verbal actions and that is why a physical activity that encourages interaction works so well at this moment. The goals of the Activity section of the agenda are:

- increase energy through physical movement
- create a “we” feeling through non-verbal communication.

If you have an Activity Leader, this person should be asked to start off the group activity. There are many different sorts of physical activities that can be done and these will be discussed later. However, the important factor now is to note that the GL must focus on encouraging interaction: looking at one another, touching, moving together and if the activity is not increasing each GMs' energy, it should be switched to something else. If the energy is not raised at this point, the rest of the agenda will not work well. The materials that are necessary for the activity must be prepared in advance. If the GL or CL must run out to get a ball or cloth, this will break the flow and energy will be lost. Music helps a lot. Choose up-tempo music that the GMs enjoy. Songs can be sung or a tape can be played. Often, GMs like to sing along with a tape.

Once the energy level has been raised, the GL closes the activity section by asking the Activity Leader, “Is it enough?” With a positive answer, the GL can then say, “It's now time for refreshments.”

Refreshments

This is a time of eating and drinking together in a social way. A cocktail party or coffee morning type of feels works well. In this way the GL can achieve the goals of this section of the agenda:

- increase familiar social behavior
- create interaction in a relaxed way
- ‘small talk’ or ‘cocktail party’ talk.

The hostess should be invited to serve. What is crucial here is to allow the hostess to actually perform the role and not jump in to help too much. The GL gives just enough support to allow the hostess to hand the food or drink (or both) to each GM so that there is eye contact and some physical contact as well. In this way the hostess can feel useful, gain self-worth, a sense of identity and community. There are a number of ways that the GL and CL can make this easier for the hostess. Have the food and drink all prepared before the start of the group. Cups or glasses should be relatively light and only filled half way so that the hostess does not get scared of spilling the liquid or feel unsuccessful. Food should be placed on a stable tray that the hostess can easily carry to each GM. Choose food that everyone likes to eat, is easy for the GMs to pick up and is allowed to eat from a dietary perspective. You may need to discuss individual situations (diabetic or low-fat diets) with other staff members to make sure that everything is all right.

It is possible to have more than one Hostess, should you have two or more GMs who would benefit from that role. One person can hand out the drinks, one can hand out the food and one can hand out napkins.

It is also possible to have the Prayer Leader lead a short prayer before eating – if this is appropriate for the GMs. Another possibility is to have the Song Leader lead a ‘drinking song’ before drinking. Everyone can sing along and at the end ‘clink’ glasses. This is a great way to create a stronger ‘we’ feeling.

Background music helps increase the ‘cocktail party’ feeling. Encourage small talk but watch out for entering into another deep, emotional discussion. This would exhaust the GMs at a time when the goal is to keep the energy level stable. If the GMs on their own enter into a deep discussion at this point, the GL does not actively stop it, but instead follows the needs of the GMs. It might then become necessary to sing some songs to increase energy once again before the end of the group.

When very old, disoriented people are placed in a familiar social setting, old patterns of behavior emerge. These people have been to coffees and parties many times in their lives so when they recognize the social patterns, memories of how to behave are woken up. Specifically, you will see people who normally have very shaky hands be able to handle a tea cup with no shaking; people who normally don’t talk with others often begin speaking to the others in the group. It is the job of the GL to create the old social setting so that the GMs are reminded of social behaviors that match.

This is also a time when the GL can relax for a few minutes and observe the GMs. There can be silence as people eat and drink. Make sure to keep centered.

It is possible to have a Prayer Leader or Story Teller perform his or her role at this point. If there is one person who is always finished with refreshments quickly and the others take more time, perhaps the quick person can be invited to tell a story. Story telling should come naturally to this person and not be a burden.

In my case, one of my GMs repeatedly told two stories of traumatic events in her life. She did this in individual sessions and also in the group. I did not have a role for this person and so invited her to tell one of her stories to the group each week when she was finished eating and drinking. She got a lot of satisfaction from being our ‘Story teller’ and it was a chance for her to express what she needed.

Napkins, glasses or cups are collected at the end of the refreshments by the hostess, the CL or the GL. Whatever works best for the group. Keep in mind that group energy should not be lost and if the Hostess can get feelings of self-worth and identity from clearing the dishes, she or he should be allowed to do this. The GL should ask (the Chairman) if it is time to close the meeting; if music was playing during the social time, it is now turned off and the group now enters into the ‘closing ritual.’

- The closing

The GL invites the song leader to begin the closing song. This song should be fun for everyone to sing and should accomplish the following goals:

- increase energy
- create a “we” feeling
- strengthen and anchor a positive mood.

Again, it is important to allow the song leader to have the honor of leading the song and feel useful – so do not take over his or her role. If the song leader needs some help, the GL can say, “Mrs. Walker, would you please begin our closing song, Hail, Hail, the Gang’s All Here?” (This is the first line of the song.) Try to get the GMs to hold hands around the circle before beginning the song. This will increase energy and create more of a ‘we’ feeling. The song should be up-beat to build energy. If the energy is not raised by the end of the song, try singing it once again.

The GL now invites the Chairman to close the meeting. Just like the opening of the group, the Chairman can stand and speak to the group; the Chairman can sit; the GL can kneel in front of the Chairman to give him or her more energy, support and importance. Keep the goals of the role in mind. If the Chairman can't find the words he or she wants to use, the GL should offer assistance without taking over the role.

Once everyone is seated the GL says goodbye to each Group member. This should be a short 'blast' of energy and give each GM a feeling that he or she contributed to the group. Each person should be recognized for his or her role. The goals of this ending round are:

- give a feeling of closure
- maintain a strong, positive energy
- continue the feeling of community
- build a bridge to the next meeting

The GL kneels in front of each GM, making eye contact and touching the person. "Mrs. X, thanks for being our Chairwoman today. You really helped start us off in a positive way and ended the meeting so beautifully, like always. I hope you'll be our Chairwoman next week. Mrs. Y, you were the perfect Hostess today. Thank you so much for helping us with such graciousness. Next week, we'll have everything ready for you once again. Mr. W, thank you for being our activity leader. You always do such a good job. And Mrs. A, you were a wonderful Song Leader. You kept us right in tune. Thanks and I hope you'll lead us again next week. "

The GL should state clearly that the group is now finished and it is time to leave.

At this point, the group members are brought to a social situation. It is very important that the GMs not be alone after such a social situation in order to continue the benefits of the group. Planning a group to end in time for a meal is perfect. Everyone can go immediately to the dining room. Otherwise, GMs should be brought to a place where they can interact with other people and continue the social behavior that was stimulated by group.

After each group meeting, the GL and CL should sit in a quiet place together for approximately 15 minutes to a half hour for feedback and evaluation. This is the time to fill in the documentation forms. It is a chance to discuss what happened and for the CL to give feedback to the GL about how he or she handled the group. This should be a supportive process. Plans are made for the following week and agreements are made on any changes.

All in all, a Validation group should take ½ hour before the group starts, 40-60 minutes for the group itself and 15-30 minutes for evaluation. Beginning GLs should allow for more time before and after the group. Groups with few verbal GMs will generally be shorter in time.

Reasons to change the order of events:

Naomi Feil created the group agenda so that group goals can be met. However, there are special circumstances when rigidly following the specific order of events becomes detrimental to the group. These sorts of situations require a change in the agenda.

One GM demands that refreshments be served right away. She does not stop bringing this up no matter what the GL does. She interrupts the opening song and the Chairwoman's opening words. This is disturbing for all the other GMs and they stop talking. When the GL tries to introduce the topic, none of the GMs respond.

In this instance, it would be more disturbing to the group process to make the one GM wait for refreshments. The goals of creating interaction, communication and increasing energy will be better met by doing the refreshments in the beginning.

The GL forgets to invite the Chairwoman to open the meeting. Just before introducing the discussion topic she realizes her mistake.

Should the GL not acknowledge this mistake, the Chairwoman might feel left out and would certainly miss the feelings of self-worth, usefulness and identity that she gets by fulfilling this role. It is important for the GL to stop and say, "Oh, wait a minute. I made a mistake. I forgot to ask our Chairwoman to open this meeting. We can't go on until our Chairwoman starts us off in a good way. Please Mrs. Taylor, would you stand now and formally open the meeting."

The Hostess needs to go to the bathroom towards the end of the discussion. The CL takes her to the bathroom but is not yet back by the time the discussion ends.

There are several choices that a GL can make: the group can wait until the Hostess has returned. This is acceptable so long as the group energy does not fall too much or the GMs get too bored and want to leave. Another choice is to move directly to the Activity section and wait for the Hostess to serve refreshments. One could also give the role of Hostess to another person, but that would be detrimental to the Hostess. She might feel bad to have her role taken away.

Topics for discussion

Criteria for a good Validation Group topic:

- must have an emotional core
- should not be time or seasonally oriented
- should be phrased as a problem to solve
- should be tied to universal needs, feelings or unfinished issues.

Any topic can be used in a Validation group. However, the phrasing of the theme is critical. Usually a good topic is phrased as an open question because this makes it easier for GMs to respond. Sometimes starting with a statement or closed question is possible. It is best then to follow that with an open question. Example: Is it all right to cry when you're sad? (closed question) What do you think Mrs. Smith? (open question)

Creating situations where GMs can make decisions makes a group strong and gives a feeling of unity. Offering choices to be discussed is way of creating such situations. For instance: 'What is most important as you get older, good health or having good friends?' They can also make decisions regarding the group itself. For instance in the first weeks the discussion topic might be, 'What should we call our group?' The GMs should be involved with choosing the opening and closing song, the activities that they want to do and in fact, should always be engaged in making decisions about the group.

If the GL simply states the topic and waits for someone to answer, it is very difficult for disoriented people to respond. It's best to ask one specific person at a time. The GL should use eye contact and physical touch, if necessary, to stimulate GMs to respond.

Here are some suggestions for appropriate ways of phrasing different topics.

FRIENDS:

- What makes a good friend?
- What are friends for?

- What do you want or look for in a friend?

MOTHER:

- What do you enjoy/love about mothers?
- Does mothering never end?
- What makes a good mother?
- What did you learn from your mother?
- What does it mean to be a good mother?

HOME:

- What makes a good home?
- What do you love about home?
- What helps when you miss home?

CHILDREN

- What do you do when you miss your children?
- What makes a good daughter or son?
- When you don't get along with your brothers and sisters what do you do?

GETTING OLDER

- What's the hardest thing about getting older?
- What's the best part of getting older?
- What do you miss the most about being young?

FEELING SAD (or HAPPY)

- What do you do when you are sad (happy)?
- Is it good to cry when you are sad?
- What makes you the saddest?
- What makes you happy?
- What was the happiest moment of your life?

WORK

- What is life without work?
- Is work the most important thing for you?
- When you stop working, what should you do?

MEN/WOMEN/BEING MARRIED

- Should everyone get married?
- What makes a good husband/wife?
- How do you know when you are in love?

Be careful about sliding into reminiscence. Sometimes it's easy to allow the conversation to focus on memories of the past. While there are moments where this can happen, if the conversation remains focused on memories, the group will not give GMs the opportunity to explore current needs and emotions. This is especially important when one GM tells a story from her past. While this may be a good opportunity for the individual to express an unresolved issue, it could also become boring for other GMs. In this case, it is important for the GL to give the individual a moment to express and then engage the other GMs in the discussion.

It is equally important not to allow the group discussion to focus on current events or reality. This will not give GMs the chance to express themselves. Should a GM bring up a current event or moment of reality, it is up to the GL to give the person a moment to express what he or she wants to express and then ‘zoom out’ to find a more emotional or need-based perspective on the subject so that everyone can join in the discussion. Here’s an example: Mrs. Smith starts complaining that her son didn’t come to visit her yesterday. She’s clearly angry. The GL should wait until Mrs. Smith has finished expressing her anger, without asking her questions or only asking a couple of questions to help her express. Then turning to another person in the group and ask, “What should you do when someone you love disappoints you?”

A reminder: during the first contact with GMs before the group, always be on the look out for a good discussion topic. The topic that you planned in advance can be a backup topic. Always choose a topic that has an immediate emotional resonance with GMs. That’s what a Validation group is for. So if one GM say that he feels unwell and doesn’t want to disappoint everyone in the group. The GL can take that as a topic and suggest that, ‘we talk about disappointment’ in the group. Then the topic could easily become: What do you do when you are disappointed in yourself?

During the discussion, GMs will often shift topics. It is important for the GL to respect the needs of the each person and allow the topic to shift while still maintaining some flow so every person in the group can connect, contribute and interact with others. Specific techniques for this are discussed in the section on Validation group techniques. For now it is important to know that it is OK to go ‘off topic’ and a GL should not keep forcing the prepared topic when it becomes clear that GMs want to talk about something else.

Songs/Music

Music and singing are important elements of a Validation group. Singing builds energy. People who have stopped talking will often sing songs they learned early in life. Singing can be a way to express emotion and it can also be a way to build a feeling of community and cohesion.

The songs that are used in a Validation group are similar to songs used in Individual Validation in that they are songs from the GMs history. They must be old songs that were learned by heart earlier in life. Modern songs will not be effective. Songs also need to be geographically correct – meaning they must fit with where the individual GMs grew up. Sometimes this means that there are regional specialties that must be learned by the GL and CL.

Songs are used at several moments in group:

Music can be playing as GMs enter the meeting room.

The opening and closing songs must be well known and enjoyed by every GM.

Songs used during the life of the group can be slightly less well known, so long as the Song Leader knows them and the others enjoy them. During the discussion part of the group a song can be used to support the emotions that are expressed. During the activity, songs can be used as an accompaniment or sometimes, singing becomes the activity. During the refreshments, singing can be used as a fun addition to the party atmosphere. It is all right if your song leader sings a favorite song alone at some point in the group (during the activity or refreshments section for instance.) Music will generally be a positive element.

On the other hand, a Validation group is not a singing group. The goals of a Validation group are met the most during the discussion part of the group and this must never be forgotten.

Song sheets are never used in a Validation group because by definition, the songs used should be well known to all the GMs. If the GL and/or CL don't know the songs, looking at song sheets will take them away from their jobs, which are to observe, to support, to validate and to motivate. You can't validate a piece of paper.

Topic and Need Related Songs (American, from the 30's)

FRIENDS:

- Friendship – Cole Porter
- What a Friend you have in Jesus – Christian song
- The More We Get Together
- Hail, Hail, The Gangs All Here

MOTHER:

- Silent Night
- There was an old woman

HOME:

- Home, Home on the Range
- Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, coming for to carry me home
- Show me the way to go home.

CHILDREN

- Hush little baby
- Itsy bitsy spider
- Rock-a-bye Baby

GETTING OLDER

- Old Man River
- As Time Goes By

FEELING SAD

- I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now
- The Ash Grove
- April Showers
- Melancholy Baby
- Old Man River
- As Time Goes By
- Falling In Love Again
- Stormy Weather
- My Funny Valentine

WORK

- I've Been Workin' on the Railroad

MEN/WOMEN/BEING MARRIED/LOVE

- Our Love Is Here To Stay
- Always
- It Had To Be You
- S'Wonderful, S'Marvelous
- As Time Goes By
- Put Your Arms Around Me Honey
- Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree
- Moonlight Bay
- Paper Moon
- Let Me Call You Sweet Heart
- Can't Help Lovin' That Men of Mine
- Hello My Baby
- Cuddle Up a Little Closer
- Saving My Love For You
- Daisy
- Heart of My Heart
- Vive L'Amour
- I've Got a Crush on You
- My Funny Valentine
- You Are My Sunshine
- Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree With Anyone Else But Me
- I've got a crush on you

HAPPY

- Happy Days Are Here Again
- Sidewalks of New York
- Ain't We Got Fun?
- Red, Red, Robin
- You're My Sunshine
- In The Good Old Summertime
- Take Me Out To The Ball Game
- Blue Skies

MISSING SOMEONE OR SOMETHING

- Sentimental Journey
- My Buddy
- Home On The Range
- Smile
- My Wild Irish Rose
- My Bonnie
- I'll Be With You Apple Blossom Time

- Danny Boy
- There's a Long Long Trail
- I Left My Heart in San Francisco

LONELINESS

- Somewhere Over The Rainbow
- The Band Played On
- Moonlight Bay
- Blue Moon

PAIN

- Amazing Grace
- You Made Me Love You
- Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen
- 16 Tons

ANGER

- Marching To Pretoria
- Onward Christian Soldiers
- Over There
- When Johnny Comes Marching Home

DRINKING SONGS

- 99 bottles of beer on the wall
- Roll out the barrel
- Hail Hail the gang's all here

Songs and their associated basic human needs

The following are examples of needs that can be expressed or fulfilled when singing old songs. This will of course depend on the personal history of the client.

As an exercise in a Validation Group course, participants should try to find these associations, think of examples of client's personal history where these songs could stimulate or fulfil the needs.

In small groups, participants can fill out a handout sheet; write on flip chart paper or some method of sharing information.

This can also be done in plenum, as a discussion with notes taken on a flip chart, board or other method of sharing information.

General points about singing old songs	Increases feelings of self-worth. The brain and ability to speak are stimulated.
Lullaby Song associated with a mother	To be nurtured Safety, security To be loved and belong To express feelings (sadness, love, peace) Recognition Resolution of unfinished issues
March, army song	To belong to a group To be respected To have meaning and purpose Recognition To express emotions (anger, pride) Resolution of unfinished issues
Love song	Sexual expression To be nurtured, safe and secure To express feelings (love, sadness) to have a role in life resolution of unfinished issues
Children's song	To give love and nurturing To express feelings (love, sadness) To be useful Identity, self-worth Resolution of unfinished issues
Religious song	To be nurtured, safe and secure To be loved, to belong
Celebration songs Ex. birthday or Christmas	Trust To be part of a whole To be loved (Also, to stimulate old rituals and social behavior.)

Activities

The activity fulfills the goal of stimulating interaction among the GMs and rebuilding energy without taxing their mental/verbal abilities. Disoriented very old people have reduced concentration. By the time the discussion part of the agenda is finished, most of the GMs will have lost concentration. In fact, this is often how a GL knows that it is time to close the discussion – people talk less and energy is quite low. Physical activity allows GMs to interact and communicate on a non-verbal level. Keeping this in mind, almost any activity is possible and many ought to be tried out.

The key elements of a good Validation Group activity are:

- there is interaction between GMs
- there is no need to talk
- GMs are familiar with the activity and enjoy it
- it builds energy and a ‘we’ feeling.

Some examples of activities that tend to work well:

- Tossing a large ball while listening to high energy music
(The ball should be easy for the GMs to hold and throw: a ‘beach ball’ works well. Some people have used balloons with great success. However, for some GMs, they are too light and difficult to control.)
- Moving scarves to high energy music
(For GMs who have very low energy, this works well but it does not serve the goal of interacting with each other.)
- Holding a large piece of fabric and using it to bounce a ball in the air while listening to high energy music.
(The ball should be light enough to not hurt anyone if it bounces in their face and not too light, otherwise it will fly away and be more of a distraction.)
- Playing old fashioned games like horseshoe toss or other regional favorites from the 20s, 30s and 40s.
(It is important not to use plastic, children’s versions of these games because the GMs will feel patronized.)
- Playing musical instruments together – this can also be done while listening to music.
(It is important not to use children’s version of instruments. Get real bongos, triangles, maracas and other percussion instruments that are easy for the GMs to handle and use. If one person does not want to play an instrument, that person can be the conductor.)
- Conducting with batons (or using hands and arms) to up-beat music.
- Dance to favorite dance songs from their youth.
(Even people in wheelchairs can be moved in rhythm to the music. This is especially effective if several GMs miss their spouses.)

Any activity can be tried out. The GL can be creative. But be sure that the activity satisfies the goals of this section of the agenda.

It is not important to do the same activity each week. A GL can keep experimenting and trying new ideas each week. Over the course of a year, one often finds that there are 2 or 3 favorite activities that seem to always work well. It is perfectly fine to rotate among these activities.

The choice of music is quite important. The rhythm of the music should be up-tempo. If the GMs sing along with the music, that adds a wonderful element to this section.

Refreshments

This section of the agenda is meant to:

- Increase familiar social behavior and roles
- Create interaction in a relaxed way
- Increase eye contact
- Stimulate ‘small talk’ or ‘cocktail party’ talk.

Familiar social behavior is triggered by doing activities that GMs have done all their lives. When our elders were young, it was more usual to have coffee mornings for ladies, cocktail parties in the evenings and other social gatherings as a form of entertainment. The refreshment section of a Validation group is meant to trigger these deeply imbedded memories or behaviors. Even if a person does not actively remember parties in the past, the behaviors are held as a sort of ‘muscle memory’. People, who normally can not hold a cup without shaking, often will hold a glass steady in a group. People who normally do not chat with other residents will often begin ‘chit chatting’ with neighbors. This is what is meant by ‘increase familiar social behavior’.

Often, GMs will be silent during this section and that’s all right too. They may feel tired and need to gather energy. A GL should try to stimulate small talk by initiating conversation with one or more GMs. But if it does not work, don’t worry, relax, and enjoy this break. This is also a good moment for the GL to sit back and re-center.

Using music that is up-beat and easy for GMs to sing along with will help increase the positive energy. Often GMs will start singing along with the background music. Again, it is important to choose music that stimulates this sort of reactions from GMs.

Refreshments should be easy for the GMs to handle and enjoyable for them to drink and eat. Drinks should be culturally appropriate. A glass of wine in France, a cup of coffee in Holland, a glass of juice in the United States – all of these are fine. The container should be easy for people to handle as well as filled half full so GMs are not embarrassed by spills. This is not to say that GLs can not use lovely dishware. A delicate teacup will remind some GMs of elegant teas they have attended when they were young. A beer glass will bring up memories of sitting with friends in a pub. If the facility and dietary restrictions of GMs allow it, alcohol can certainly be served during refreshments. As for food, anything goes. In Japan, GMs prefer salty snacks; in Germany, dark bread with schmaltz is thoroughly enjoyed; in Holland it would be unthinkable to serve anything other than cookies with the coffee; slices of fruit, bonbons, crackers, cheese – it does not matter so long as the GMs enjoy it and it is easy for them to eat. It is the task of the GL or CL to have the refreshments prepared before the group begins to make it easier for the Hostess to perform her role. Food should be ready to be passed and drinks can be pre-poured, or at least ready to be poured, if the Hostess gets pleasure from doing the pouring.

Many different elements can be added to this section of the agenda depending on the wishes of GMs and the roles that suit each one. One person can hand out napkins to each GM. One person can pass the drinks; one person can pass out the snacks. Additionally, this can be an appropriate moment to have someone say a prayer or sing a 'drinking song'.

In one of my groups, one lady was always finished with her refreshments quite quickly and sat doing nothing for 10 minutes. I gave her the role of story teller and invited her to tell a story to the group at this time. She looked forward to her moment each week.

Starting a Validation Group

A Validation group is held every week on the same day, in the same place at the same time of day. This should be organized in coordination with all departments of the facility where you are working.

It is important for a Validation group not to be interrupted. Making agreements in advance will help make this more possible. Each facility is different so these are just a few of the typical logistics issues a GL should take into consideration when setting a day and time for group:

- hairdresser/barber appointments
- family visits
- pedicure appointments
- regular blood testing/medical testing appointments
- other activities that GMs attend
- meal schedules
- nursing schedules for medicine, treatments, etc.
- morning routines: washing, bathing, dressing, etc.
- physical therapy.

All in all, it is best if the group can meet in the mornings because most GMs will be more alert, verbal and able to concentrate better. I have found that 10.30 am works very well. After an hour of group, GMs can then segue way into lunch and sitting in a communal dining room.

Communication with all other departments and people in the facility is very important to continue. Staff in a nursing facility can not always remember when group meets, so make it easier for everyone. I found that putting up a poster in the common areas (nursing station, coffee break room, the bulletin boards, etc.) can be effective. The poster should list the time, day, place and names of GMs.

Communication should also include regular reporting on what happens in each group session. If possible, the GL should be included in inter-departmental staff meetings and be able to present a short report. This report could include changes in GMs, particularly interesting things that were said in group, and particularly engaging topics that were discussed that might prove important to other staff members. For instance, if a GM talks about her war experiences that were traumatizing, it could be useful for other staff members to know.

Regular dialog with staff members who work with the residents every day is very important for a number of reasons. If a particular group session was difficult for a GM and it there is a good chance that the individual will express a lot of emotion after group is finished, staff should know about it in order to be prepared. If it comes as a surprise, staff may feel that group is not a positive thing. But if the GL explains what happened in group each week and also conveys how important it is for all people to express painful feelings, then staff will be more able to take the expression of feelings in stride. If some

staff members are interested, the GL may want to explain the basic principles of Validation and offer a few tips and suggestions for how to deal with people who express painful emotions. Staff members know their residents. Should a GL need some advice on which people would benefit from being in group, or need feedback on how GMs behaved in the days following the group session, staff members will be your resource.

This is a good moment to mention the importance of building a relationship with family members. Daughters, sons, in-laws and partners can have significant input in a Validation group. These relatives are a fantastic source of information about GMs, which will help you in determining roles and discussion topics. The more you know about the GMs, the better you will be able to validate. Family members may need to give approval in writing for their relative to take part in group Validation. In this case, you will need to explain the benefits of participating in group and reassuring family members should there be concerns or questions. Family members can be invited to be a guest at a future group session so they can see and hear what happens. Once family members know that their relative is taking part in this weekly activity, there is less of a chance that they will interrupt your group or come to visit at the group meeting time. As an added benefit, family members can get tips on how they can improve their communication with their relative.

One Wednesday I arrived at the nursing home where I did my weekly group. As usual, I visited all my GMs to remind them of the group meeting and see how they were doing. When I went back to gather them for the start of the meeting, my Hostess was missing. "Where is Mrs. Smith?" I asked one of my colleagues. "Her daughter came to visit" she answered. I ran to find Mrs. Smith and her daughter who were heading to the café for a coffee. I told the daughter that we were about to start our Validation group and we really needed Mrs. Smith because she was our Hostess. The daughter was apologetic about forgetting that it was group day and said she couldn't visit any other day. I spontaneously invited her to watch the group session saying, "You might find it very interesting to see what we do." I sat the daughter in a chair outside of the group circle, directly behind her mother. During the group, Mrs. Smith was not particularly active until at one point during the discussion, she said, "I have a wonderful daughter. She does so much for me." I was seated opposite from Mrs. Smith and could see both the GM and her daughter sitting behind her with her eyes filled with tears. After the group session, during the feedback session, the daughter was invited to give feedback and ask questions. She expressed how grateful she was to have seen this group; she never knew that her mother felt that way about her.

Requirements for a Validation Group

- A closed, private room

I've held groups in resident bedrooms, a corner of the 'day room', the occupational therapy room, the board room and a meeting room. While it is more pleasant to be in a physically attractive place with lots of light and lovely colors, it's not that important. What is important is, a minimum of distraction and a feeling of safety. A room with many windows can be a distraction for some GMs. If the room is too cold or hot all the time, then it will be uncomfortable for the GMs and a distraction. Another issue to think about is that the space must be big enough to fit enough chairs and or wheelchairs for the GMs.

- Enough chairs for all Group members

It may go without saying, but it's important to make sure that the simple logistics are taken care of before the group meeting. It is difficult for the GL to remain centered if she's running around looking for a proper chair at the last minute. It is preferable for GMs to sit in chairs, rather than wheelchairs if at all possible. It gives a feeling of normality and triggers familiar social behaviors. Chairs should make it easy for GMs to touch each other, get up, sit down and also feel secure. Naomi Feil has always said that chairs should not have arms – and that is best when the GM feels secure sitting in a chair. However, if the GM is scared of sitting in a chair with no arms, then the need of the GM is more important and this person should sit in a chair with arms. The same can be said for moving people out of their wheelchairs. If they move easily into a regular chair – great. If it makes them feel insecure- don't. Never use big upholstered chairs or deep chairs that are difficult to manage. They may be pretty, but they will get in the way of reaching group goals.

- Refreshments

Refreshments should be prepared beforehand. Drinks may be poured in advance as well if they are cold. Remember to only fill half the glass or cup. Snacks should be on a tray that is easy for the hostess to carry. A beautiful silver tray that is too heavy will not help the Hostess feel self worth. Napkins should be ready as well, if those are used in your group.

- Tape or CD player and music

Have your music ready to go. Don't get in the situation where you need to find the right place on the tape or CD and the GMs are starting to lose energy and focus while you set up the music. Test the equipment before group begins. Make sure it works.

- Equipment for the activity

Have everything you need for your activity ready before the group starts. If you or your CL needs to leave the group to gather materials, the GMs might lose energy and focus. At the least, it will put strain on the GL to maintain the already low energy until the activity begins.

- Validation Group folder

All documentation forms should be kept in a folder of some kind so that it is easy to keep written records of the group. There should be a supply of blank evaluation forms. After each group session it is important for the GL and CLs to sit down and evaluate what happened and make plans for the next group. In the context of a GL course, these documentation forms need to be submitted to the course teacher. Outside of a course, these documentation forms are important for several reasons:

- It helps the GL track the progress of the group and each GM; it is useful for reporting purposes (staff meetings, etc.);
- Should the GL wish to write an article on the Group, the information is invaluable;
- It helps the GL gain insight into his or her own development as a GL.

It is also possible to keep this folder in a place where staff can read about what happened in the group. Some GLs make notations in residents' daily charts. It is important to find some way to inform staff of what happened at each group meeting.

Documentation can also be used in research studies or back up articles on group Validation. The documentation forms that evaluate each group member's behavior using key criteria are good ways of seeing the individual progress (or decline) in a quantifiable way. While this is not the purpose of documenting group work, it is an important factor to mention. More research and publishing is needed. One never knows which group course participant will be able to carry on research in the future, so it is worth mentioning this point when teaching a class.

- Preparation of the Group members before the meeting

All GMs must be dressed, have eaten breakfast (if they want breakfast), have gone to the toilet and be ready to come to the meeting at the appointed time. Nursing staff need to know who needs to be ready at what time. It may be necessary for the GL and or CL to help if this adds stress to the morning schedule. This is one of the issues to discuss when first introducing a Validation Group at the facility.

- Help in bringing the Group members to and from the meeting

If most of your GMs can walk on their own, then you will need very little help. However, if most of your group uses wheelchairs, then you might need the assistance of someone on the staff. Plan this in advance so that the transport to the meeting room goes smoothly and does not create stress for the GMs or the GL.

- Time after the meeting to evaluate

It is important to plan at least ½ hour after all the GMs have been brought to their next activity for an evaluation of what happened during the group. When you begin a group, you might need more time for evaluation than later on. Even after years of running a Validation group, the GL and CL still need to evaluate what happened, fill in evaluation forms and plan for the next meeting. It might take only 15 minutes with practice and experience.

- Agreements with personnel about not interrupting the meeting

This issue should be dealt with when the GL introduces the concept of running a Validation group in the facility. Should interruptions happen despite having made these agreements, then this needs to be dealt with in a respectful way. If lines of communication have been open from the beginning, then there are opportunities to work out the underlying problems. Keep in mind – there is a reason behind every behavior – even the behavior of oriented people.

- Agreements about reporting on the progress of your group to other staff members

This topic has been discussed previously but it is so important that it is repeated once again here. Communication is a crucial element for the success of Validation groups. GLs must not only be skilled at communicating with disoriented elderly, but also with colleagues.

- Agreements with family members or those legally responsible for the GMs to take part in the group and particularly because you will be videotaping group sessions, permission to tape must be given in advance.

The following page can be given to course participants as a reminder when planning a group. Each Validation Teacher should feel free to add items to this list of ‘Tips for successful Validation Groups’.

Tips to avoid pitfalls

- Always allow yourself enough time to set up. This way you can solve potential problems before they occur.
- Work with other departments to prevent scheduling conflicts before they occur. (Therapy, Dietary, Activities)
- Know your residents. Do they have glasses, hearing aids, or dietary restrictions? Plan for these things.
- Leave written weekly reminders for the unit staff. Be specific about residents, times and places. The staff get busy, don't assume they will remember
- Plan what you will need for the next week after the current meeting; decide who will be responsible for what.
- Arrange for your follow-up activity if it is not a meal. Be sure they are expecting your members.
- Work with families to avoid visits during group time when you can.
- If side effects from medications are a problem, take time to review the facility's policies and procedure with the nursing staff. Most likely, there are ways to fix this problem.

Validation Group Techniques

Important Prerequisites

All the techniques used in individual Validation can also be used in Group Validation. When first beginning a group, many potential GLs focus on what is new, the agenda, the roles, etc and forget to also use the communication techniques learned as a Validation Worker. Once the logistics of running a group have been integrated and become a bit more comfortable, then it is time to reintegrate the Validation techniques. Especially useful techniques are: rephrasing, polarity and ask the opposite. These stimulate interaction.

Centering and observing each GM is a prerequisite for all Validation work. A GL can center using deep breaths or an anchor during the group itself. There are many moments when a GL can re-center, for instance during refreshments or while listening to discussion.

While a GL cannot see everything, it is important to be constantly aware of the GMs energy, reactions, boredom, emotional signs and so forth. It is the task of the CL to also be centered and observe. If necessary, the CL should inform the GL of an important reaction during the group.

Don't forget the wisdom of the elderly. While a GL is responsible for the group, he or she should always turn to the wisdom of the GMs for support and ideas. When you do not know what to do, ask the Advisor or Chairperson. If a challenging situation occurs, ask for advice on how to handle it. I've always loved Feil's story about a group session when a man unzipped his pants. Naomi turned to the wise woman sitting next to the gentleman and asked, "Mrs. Smith, Mr. Jones has unzipped his pants. What should we do?" Mrs. Smith smiled, looked down at Mr. Jones's unzipped pants and said directly to him, "You must have made your wife a very happy woman." Mr. Jones zipped his pants.

When a group member dominates the conversation

The GL gives 1 or 2 minutes of intense individual attention, using individual techniques, then encourages the person to speak to another group member "Mrs. Smith, can you tell that to Mrs. Jones here?"

The GL uses eye contact and touch (if appropriate), rephrases what the person has said with emotion so that the GM knows that he has been heard, then promises to discuss this issue after the group is over, or at a time that seems appropriate.

To deepen the conversation

The GL uses individual techniques to explore the underlying need or feeling, then rephrases the need or feeling and connect to another group member: "Mrs. Smith, those people made you angry. (Turning to another GM) Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Smith was woken up too early by these people and she got really angry. What makes you really angry?"

Relate one person's feelings to the whole group - "Mr. Trossler is afraid of dying. Are you afraid of dying?"

Find a coping mechanism and use it in the present situation. For instance: Mrs. Schwartz has been complaining that she doesn't feel well. The GL asks, "Mrs. Schwartz, did you ever have to deal with feeling so sick earlier in your life? What helped you then?" Once Mrs. Schwartz answers, then you can ask the same questions to other GMs. Ask them to give advice to Mrs. Schwartz.

To encourage dialog between GMs

Connect 2 or more statements made by GMs. Example: the group is discussing getting older.

Mrs. Tassler says: I'm not ready to die.

Mrs. Winkler says: There's a lot more of those coming.

GL: Mrs. Tassler is not ready to die and Mrs. Winkler sees a lot more coming – Mr. Frank, what do you look forward to as you get older?

Rephrase what has been said to another GM. Example: the group is discussing getting older.

Mrs. Tassler says: I'm not ready to die.

GL: Mrs. Winkler, Mrs. Tassler said she wants to keep living. What do you think?

Find a solution to a common problem. Example: the group is discussing getting older.

Mrs. Tassler says: I'm not ready to die.

GL: Mrs. Tassler says she is not ready to die. Mr. Frank, when do you know that it's time?

or

GL: Mr. Frank, Mrs. Tassler says she's not ready to die. Can you tell her what you think?

or

GL: Mrs. Tassler, can you please say that again to our advisor, Mr. Frank. He might have some good advice for all of us.

Have 2 GMs look at each other and perhaps hold hands. When people have eye contact and physical contact, they will be more likely to talk to each other. Example: the group is discussing getting older.

Mrs. Tassler says: I'm not ready to die.

GL: Mrs. Tassler, can you look at Mr. Frank who is just next to you? Tell him what you just said; it is so very important.

When a member leaves the group permanently, or when a member dies

During the initial greeting of GMs, the GL says simply that the GM has died (or left the group) and waits for any response.

The GL can direct a question to the emotional leader: "Should we do something special?"

The GL can announce the death or departure at the beginning of the discussion part of the group and use it as a topic: "I have some sad news. Mrs. Smith, our hostess, has died. (pause for response) What do you do when someone dies? How do you go on?"

Note for the GL and CL: do not expect any specific reaction from the GMs. Sometimes they will react with emotion and sometimes they will not. Simply stay open to what happens in the moment.

This subject can also be used as a discussion topic in the group meeting. “What did you do when a person close to you died?” “What happens when you die?” “Are you ready for death?”

When no one wants to speak or sing (stimulating verbal communication)

There are several possible causes for this:

- The opening of the group did not build energy

Solution: start again and be sure to energize each GM when you greet everyone in the circle; make sure that the opening song is one that everyone knows and enjoys singing; make sure that the Chairperson who opens the meeting does so without draining too much energy from the group. If the Chair takes too long, then energy will drop. In this case, the GL might want to first sing the opening song and then have the Chair open the group.

- The topic is not interesting for the GMs

Solution: first, the GL should simply state what is going on: No one wants to say anything. (To the Chairperson or Advisor) Is this a bad topic to discuss? What would be a better topic? (Have your backup topic ready.)

Another way of handling this situation is to simply say what is going on: Hey, no one is talking today. What is going on Mrs. Smith? (Always direct your questions to one specific person.) You usually have a lot to say in group.

Sometimes the Advisor can be turned to for advice.

Creating a smooth transition to the next section of the agenda

While there is no specific script to follow, smooth transitions are made by acknowledging what has just happened and then announcing the next part of the agenda.

Examples:

GL: Now that our energy is high after singing and having our Chair open the meeting, I thought we could discuss something that Mr. Fowler mentioned earlier today. Mr. Fowler, you said that you miss your son. Can you tell Mrs. Winkler, who is sitting next to you, what happened?

or

GL: Well, that was a great discussion. Mrs. Winkler you said that it's good to talk to other people when you miss someone. Mr. Fowler, you told us about missing your son. Mrs. Smith, you think it's best to forget everyone when you get old because they forget you. Mrs. Jones, you talked about your mother today. Everyone misses someone and can talk about it here in group. Thank you. I think it's time to stop talking and start our activity. What do you think Mrs. Jones? You're our Activity Leader; are you ready to lead the ball toss?

or

GL: Mrs. Jones, you are our activity leader. Is it time to stop the ball toss? Is that right Mrs. Jones? Have we worked up an appetite? Mrs. Smith, you are our Hostess; do you think it's time for refreshments now? Would you help pass the cookies?

Another way to make transitions, that also involves GMs in decision making, is to ask the appropriate GM if it is time to move on to the next agenda item.

Examples:

GL: Mr. Chairman, is it now time to begin our discussion?

or

GL: Mr. Chairman, have we had enough talking? Should we stop now? (If your Advisor is generally the person who makes decisions during your discussion, then address these questions to the Advisor.)

or

GL: Mrs. Jones, you are our Activity Leader, shall we begin our ball toss? Are you ready?

or

GL: Mrs. Smith, our lovely Hostess, is it time to eat?

When a group member wants to leave in the middle of the group

If a GM has a tendency to want to leave group, a GL and/or CL should try to set an 'anchor' as follows. Outside of group, in individual sessions, the GL should set an anchor at moments when the GM feels good and is engaged in conversation. An anchor is set by placing your hand on the upper arm, knee or other neutral area in a relaxed way; when the positive feelings are strongest, you apply a bit of pressure (enough so that the GM feels the pressure but not too strongly as to cause an unpleasant feeling); hold the pressure for a 10-count, then release the pressure but keep your hand where it was. If this is repeated regularly over the course of a few weeks, the anchor is set. An anchor is used in the group setting by the GL or CL when you sense that the urge to leave is building, not when it is strongest.

The GL can also ask the advice of the Advisor and try to get the Advisor to speak directly to the person who wants to leave. Example: Mrs. Lauder, you are our Advisor. Mrs. Jones wants to leave right now, what should we do? Can you please say something to her?

If a GM still wants to leave the group after you have tried using an anchor and asking the advisor, then you should let her leave. It is far more validating to respect the choices of the GMs and respect their freedom to leave a group. Be sure to say that she will be missed and hope that she will return next week.

Building energy in the group

During the 'birth' of a group the GL briefly greets each GM, touches him or her (arm, shoulder or knee) and welcomes him/her. Use your energy like a flashlight, brightening each person in the circle.

Holding hands during the opening song.

Sitting close together (using chairs without arms that are not too large) so that GMs can easily touch each other.

Movement and activity builds energy.

Rituals that are well known use less energy than introducing new things. Once the GMs know the rituals (such as the opening and closing sections), they will flow with the group process more easily.

Music and singing always build energy. It is important to choose songs that most GMs know well. Never use sheet music. The goal is to stimulate energy, not learn new things.

Role Stimulation

The objectives for giving roles include building self-worth and feelings of usefulness. These goals can only be reached if the roles fit the individual and the GMs are given many opportunities to fulfill the roles. There are four important times when roles are supported in the group process:

- during the invitation to the group, done before the group begins
- during the GL's welcome at the beginning of the group session
- at the moment the GM is asked to perform the role
- at the end of the group when the GL thanks everyone for a job well done.

In addition to those four specific moments, there are other opportunities for a GL to support the roles. Many of these are discussed in the previous section describing the roles. Advisors should be asked to give advice at key moments during the discussion. The Hostess should be allowed to do her job without the GL or CL taking over parts of it (unless she absolutely is unable to do the job). The Chair should be asked to make decisions during the group process or help lead the group at moments when there is a lack of direction. The song leader can be called upon to lead a song at moments when a song is needed to raise energy.

Using Touch and Anchored Touch in a Validation Group

Touch and anchored touch should be used throughout a Validation group.

At the beginning of the group, the GL should make sure to touch each GM (if appropriate) during the opening greeting. Kneel in front of each person, shake their hand, welcome them to the group and support the role.

Anchored touch can be used at moments where emotions are being expressed or to stimulate emotions during discussions.

All the GMs can hold hands during the opening and closing songs, as well as while singing other songs during the group. This touching will stimulate a 'we' feeling and build energy.

At the end of a group, a GL can go around the circle and shake hands with each GM while acknowledging their contributions to the meeting.

During the discussion, if a GM loses focus, the GL can reach across the circle and put a hand on that person's knee while making eye contact and re-engage the person in the discussion.

Communicating with your Co-leader

Before the group: be clear about who will do what to prepare for the meeting; you should also exchange information on each GM and coordinate the topic, activity, and refreshment for the meeting.

During the group: eye contact is a good way to communicate while the group is going on. It is also acceptable to speak directly with each other. If the GL has not noticed that a GM has something to say or is expressing some emotions, it is necessary for the CL to say something. If the GL needs the CL to do something, it is perfectly all right to say this during the group.

Training a CL: please see the section ‘Elements of a Validation Group, Co-Workers/Co-Leaders’. A good CL can make a group successful. A bad or untrained CL can make a group difficult and unsuccessful. It is to the benefit of the GL to make sure that the CL is well trained and motivated.

When a CL is not present, the GL will recognize how much the CL actually does in the group. A GL is responsible for making sure that the CL knows what is expected and when the group meetings are scheduled.

Having Guests in the Group

Once a GL feels comfortable leading a Validation Group it is a good idea to allow people to visit and see what goes on. This makes for more transparency. It builds trust with co-workers, family members and other people who may not be familiar with Validation. This often leads to a more supportive atmosphere. Often, family members become interested in visiting more often and learning simple communication skills once they see how effective Validation is in the group setting.

Guests are also a wonderful source of feedback. Fresh eyes often see things that experienced eyes miss. Comments and questions at the end of the group should be encouraged.

Guidelines for having guests: (Please see the document with guidelines in the Forms section of this booklet.)

- Guests should arrive a few minutes before the group begins and plan to stay approximately ½ hour after the group ends for evaluation and feedback.
- Guests should sit outside of the group circle with enough distance so that they do not intrude on the group activities.
- Guests should be invited to take notes and write down their questions to be answered during the evaluation and feedback session after the group.
- Guests should not interrupt the group, but if a GM says something to them, they should acknowledge what is said but not engage in conversation. If the Hostess offers them something to eat, they can take what is offered or not, as they wish.
- Pagers, telephones and other noise-makers should be silenced.
- The GL should always acknowledge when there are guests. One easy way of explaining the presence of guests to group members is, “They are here to learn from us.”

If a guest is a family member, it is wise to place the guest in a position where the GM can not see him or her directly.

If during the course of the meeting, the GMs comment that there are guests, be sure to acknowledge them. One can say something like: We have guests today. What do you think is important for them to know about our group? Or, if one GM seems to be disturbed by the guests, you might say: What is the worst thing about having guests at our group? What could go wrong? What should we do? Sometimes it is enough to simply ask, “Is it all right that they watch?” The answer up until now has always been, ‘yes’.

Sometimes the Hostess will want to serve food or drinks to the guests, or one of the GMs includes guests in the discussion. The GL should acknowledge the presence of the guests, but not actively encourage this. Sometimes just remaining silent and letting the GMs work it out is enough.

When the Hostess has asked me, "Should I serve them?" meaning the guests, I answered, "It's not necessary." And that was the end of it.

In my experience, if the GL remains focused and centered on the GMs, the GMs will pay little attention to the guests. What happens in the circle is more real than what happens outside of the circle.

I have held a group where there were up to 40 people observing. The GMs took no notice of the observers.

When everyone is in a wheelchair/not healthy/low energy

Keep the group short – 20-30 minutes in total length.

Spend more time on the activity and singing.

Sometimes it takes activity and singing to raise enough energy for the GMs to express themselves verbally. If this is the case, you will notice GMs talking more during the refreshments. Instead of guiding this into cocktail party chatting, you can allow it to take more depth and in fact become the discussion part of the group. Afterwards, it is important to once again raise the energy level so that the GMs leave the group with more energy than they started. One very good way to do this is by singing songs.

If this is an on-going problem, it would be best to invite GMs who are more energetic and more verbal into the group. A group that has too many low energy people is very difficult for the GL. It requires much more energy, work and it is difficult to reach group goals.

When someone can't or does not want to come to group.

If someone does not want to come to group, that wish must be respected. However, it is worth giving the person some time and a few encouragements to see if she will change her mind. Encouragements can be: remind the person of the role they are fulfilling and how important that is to the good working of the group. On the other hand, if the GM explicitly says that she does not want the role, then perhaps this is a signal that she has the wrong role or is not in the mood to fulfill the role at that moment. This should be taken seriously. Invite the GM to come to group but not do the role. This is an issue to discuss in individual sessions.

Sometimes GMs can be reminded of the friendships and closeness between GMs and that can be a motivating factor. On the other hand, sometimes it is the need to be alone that the GM is trying to express by not coming to group. This can be determined in a short individual session in the moment. Explore the need to be alone for a couple of minutes. Then you can once again, and for the final time, invite the person to group.

When someone is ill and can not attend group, it is important for the GL to visit that person and say how much he or she will be missed. At the beginning of group, the GL should mention that the person is ill and can not come to group. The role that the person held can be a) performed by another GM if possible, or b) performed by the GL or CL.

Dealing with interruptions

By interruptions, I am referring to situations when someone from outside the group enters the space where the group is meeting and disturbs the group. This can happen when co-workers or staff people from the institution do not know about or do not respect the need for privacy and security that a Validation group requires. Family members may also interrupt the group for similar reasons. The best way to prevent this from happening is to make sure that everyone knows about the group meeting each week. Simple reminders also help, such as a ‘Do Not Disturb-Group in Progress’ sign on the door. It might also be helpful to let people know when the group will be finished in case the space where the group is held is also needed for other purposes. Sometimes it is necessary to personally remind all the staff people each week. In the course of greeting each GM before the group meeting takes place, it is also possible to briefly speak with each caregiver and staff person to remind them as well. Prevention is the best cure.

However, there are times when clear communication is not enough. When someone interrupts the group, there are several possible ways of responding.

- The Advisor can be asked for recommendations.
- The GL can simply say: ‘We are having our group now and can’t be disturbed.’ Then center and continue the group.
- Interruptions can become the topic of discussion if the group was in the discussion part of the agenda.

After the group is finished, it is important to talk with the person who interrupted the group. Try to use respect and other aspects of the Validating attitude to explore the need behind their behavior.

Changing topics during the discussion part of the group

It is normal for GMs to change the topic of discussion and this can be expected. The challenge for the GL is to flow with the change and still maintain coherency. Logic is not important. What is important is that the GMs express themselves and communicate with each other. It is often possible for the GL to ‘zoom out’ and find a basic human need that encompasses most of the issues that were discussed.

Once again, it is important for the GL to have at least two possible topics at the beginning of every group meeting. One topic should come from one of the individual Validation moments before group and the other should be prepared by the GL and CL. If you find that one topic is not stimulating conversation or interest, then switch to the second topic. Be clear and honest: ‘This topic does not seem to interest anyone. Shall we talk about something else? Mr. Chairman, what about discussing what makes us happy?’

Teaching a Level 2, Validation Group Practitioner Course

So far I have covered basic group information and discussed the elements of a Validation group in detail. This information is what must be taught to participants in a Group Leader/Practitioner course. In the following section I will discuss important issues of teaching a course. This information is specific to Validation Teachers and is not useful to participants of a course.

Beginning letters and set up

Course participants have a greater chance of success if they know what is expected of them. An introductory letter should be sent to each participant. (See the sample letter which follows).

Block 1 of the Validation Group Practitioner course usually includes a live demonstration of a Validation Group. Some people find this difficult and risky to do because they might feel that it has to be a perfect group session. Even if the group does not go well, it is still a rich learning experience. For participants, it is exciting to be in the same room and see what happens live; they can also get more information, on more levels than what one can garner from watching a video of a group. They can feel the energy (or lack of energy) kinesthetically. While a video of a complete group session is an acceptable alternative in a Level 2 curriculum, it is much less of an effective teaching tool. All Validation Teachers are strongly encouraged to do live demonstrations.

Live demonstrations need to be organized carefully. The best situation is where the Validation Teacher simply invites the course participants to observe a group that she has been leading for some time. Another possibility is for the Validation Teacher to lead an already existing group. And the third option is for the Validation Teacher to set up a group and lead the first session. Most of my experience is which this last option. Before the demonstration it is important to follow all the steps one would normally do to set up a Validation group, just more quickly. It is important to let the course participants know that this is an experiment and a good example of what could happen when they first begin their groups.

All of this preparation should be worked out with the Authorized Validation Organization (AVO) that is organizing the course. The Teacher will need their support in finding a group and organizing travel to and from the group location if necessary.

Be sure that the AVO has arranged for each course participant to have at least 2 copies of each of the summary forms, as well as a biography form, final evaluation of the practical demonstration, and a course outline (if it was not sent out with the invitation letter.) Participants can practice using the biography and evaluation forms to write comments and evaluate the group demonstration. Practicing using these forms gives course participants a feeling of security when filling out these forms for their own groups.

(Sample letter that can be sent to Level 2 – Group Leader course participants)

To all participants of the Level 2 - Validation Group Leader course

I am delighted to be starting the Validation Group Leader course with you on 16/17 October. I wanted to write you in advance to explain some of the preparations you can make so that our work together will go more smoothly.

For a start, it would be good to review all the basic Validation information. Make sure you are comfortable with all the techniques and can easily identify individuals in all 4 stages of disorientation. It is important that you can center yourself easily and remain centered for a period of time. Review your work on symbols and identifying the meaning behind the behavior of disoriented individuals. When these skills are in place, group work becomes far easier.

Know that during the Group Leader course you will need to identify 4-6 disoriented old-old people who are appropriate for a Validation group. You should start looking around the place where you work now. Read chapter 4 of *Validation the Feil Method*, by Naomi Feil to get a feel for what to look for, people in stage 2, Time Confusion, who enjoy talking with others as well as 1 or 2 people in Repetitive Motion. Develop a good relationship with these people. Learn what issues are important to them. Recognize their symbols. In other words, validate these individuals.

Prepare the nursing home where you will do your group work in the following ways.

Get permission from the necessary people so that you and a co-worker can run your group each week from January to September. It should always be the same day, the same time period and the same room. For instance, the sun room on Wednesday mornings from 10 - 12. You will not need that long each week, but it is a good idea to give yourself some extra time especially in the beginning.

It would also be a good idea to think about video taping your group meetings. Plan what equipment you will use. Get permission from the department to video tape your group. This will be primarily for your own learning, but at the end of the course you will need to bring a video tape of your group for testing. You will need to get permission to video tape the residents you choose to become group members, but you need to do this after the first learning block.

You will need to choose one or two people to become co-workers in your group. Think about those colleagues who are interested in Validation and would like to learn more.

Think about your time management. Each week you will need: ½ - 1 hour preparation, 1 hour for the group meeting, and ½ - 1 hour evaluation and feedback after the group with your co-worker.

In between each course block, we will arrange for supervision sessions. These small group meetings are important because this is where you get feedback on your work and solve problem situations. We will set dates for these meetings at our first block.

I am sure you have many questions and I promise to answer every question when we see each other. Should you have problems beforehand, please feel free to contact me.

With much joy and anticipation,

Homework issues

The requirement for certification as a Validation Group Practitioner is:

- Practice and document group Validation for at least 6 months; 6 months of practice is equal to 26 consecutive weeks.
 - If a week of documentation is missed, it can be added later. If a student hands in 2 documentations in a week, it counts as 1 week. A student should not miss more than 2 consecutive weeks of group.

These requirements are important for participants in order to gain the experience necessary with running a group and integrate the skills into their behavior. These requirements are also important for the GMs. If they can not trust that group will be held each week, they will not develop trust, nor will the group activities become ritualized. Group goals will be much more difficult to meet if the group is not held each week.

Documentation forms are included in the section “Forms and Handouts”. While these are particularly useful forms, they are not mandatory. The goals of written documentation are: self-reflection and for the teacher to check for regularity of practice. Some feedback can be given and questions answered. In some cases, I have accepted a list of group meeting dates, written on a sheet of paper plus the biographies of the GMs. In this case, the participant was not able to reflect on her work in writing, but it was clear from class discussion that she did indeed reflect on her work in other ways. She also brought into class progressively improving videos of her group work. The goals were met in this individual way.

Some participants express difficulty with video taping their sessions. Some of these difficulties are real issues that need to be solved and some are an expression of the participant’s fear of being taped, fear of making mistakes and/or fear of being negatively judged. Since Validation Teachers are not therapists, it is not appropriate for us to confront the participants or try to change them. But we can reflect what we see and use the intervision principles to offer our perspective and experience.

Logistical issues of taping sessions:

- Discuss the placement of the camera and microphone in detail in Block 1, Day 2. You might even try to tape the demonstration group in the morning session and take a quick look at it in the afternoon when you discuss this point.
- Ask the AVO to provide Permission forms for video taping of the group sessions. In most cases, participants will need to get a permission form signed by the legally responsible party for every GM. If participants express concerns about this, you can role play how to ask the relatives for permission.

Intervision/supervision

The only accurate way to see if a participant is learning to lead a validation group is to watch the participant run the group. This can be a live or taped session. The VTI Quality Manual does not state that supervision videos are mandatory; they are not a course requirement for certification. However, students who bring in videos for supervision are much more likely to pass the final practical test. Additionally, students who have at least one supervision of their practical work will be less surprised by critical comments during the final testing.

Many students find it difficult or embarrassing to see themselves on video tape. They feel shy or scared to make mistakes. This is normal in the beginning and will pass as the person gains more experience with being filmed. It is a good suggestion to tape every group session, from the first one onwards. In this way, the student can watch her progress over time and gain experience with being filmed.

The setting of the camera position is important. We should be able to see the GL's face and all of the GMs, at least partially. It is fine if we only see the back of the head of some of the GMs. We should also be able to hear what is said. Setting the camera on a tripod on a table (up high) gives good results. Some beginners feel concerned that the camera will be a distraction for the GMs. This is generally not an issue. If the GL and CL are focused on the group, the circle is tight and the energy maintained, what happens outside of the group circle fades away very quickly.

Block 2 of this course is primarily used for supervision of videos, problem solving and ensuring that the participants are actually running Validation groups. It is very easy to not realize when one goes off course and uses elements of Reminiscence or Reality Orientation. This is another reason why supervision is so critical. If a participant does not bring in a video for supervision in Block 2, these issues should be discussed. It should also be possible to send a video for supervision in between lesson blocks.

Intervision or supervision (depending on whether the Validation Teacher or another skilled person is available to give feedback) is a very important element of this course and the meetings should be planned as soon as possible. There are several models of working. It is possible to meet at the facility where one intervision group member is running a group. The rest of the intervision/supervision team watches the group session and then takes part in the evaluation afterwards. This can be combined with exchanging ideas and experiences. It is also possible to meet in a class room setting where one or two people bring videos to show and there is exchange of ideas and experiences.

The goals of these meetings for Validation Teachers are: to make sure that the students are actually doing Validation groups and building their skills, and to become familiar and comfortable with the evaluation criteria. It is wise to use the final evaluation forms for practical demonstrations for every supervision session. If one begins using these forms, they are familiar and less frightening at the final testing. In fact, one could even use it at the Block 1, day 2 live demonstration by having the students evaluate the demonstration. It is usually fun for students to evaluate the teacher. The evaluation form should be included in the packet of materials that is given to students at the beginning of the course.

Teaching how to give Presentations

Certified Validation Group Practitioners are authorized to give short presentations to small groups of people in their own facilities. This is meant to take place within the students' place of work. Small groups are up to 10-15 individuals. Short presentations last no longer than 2 hours.

It is the Validation Teacher's responsibility to teach a few basic presentation skills so that the GL feels supported and capable of presenting Validation accurately. It is also important that the GL understands and respects his or her limitations.

A few key points should be covered and skills should be practiced using exercises.

1. Always base the presentation on personal experience.

One might begin with: "I first learned about Validation....."

Use many examples from personal practice.

2. Keep the presentation simple. Less is more.

Lots of theory is easy to present but it is usually not so important in an introduction to Validation.

The goals of the presentation should be made clear at the beginning. Stick to those few, simple points.

Be clear about what you will not cover. It is not possible to teach people how to use Validation in a 2 hour presentation.

3. Be honest and integral. Try to model the validating attitude in your presentation. Try not to 'sell' Validation; be clear about what Validation can do and what it can not do – in your experience.

4. Every audience requires a slightly different approach to a presentation. A group of caregivers will be different than a group of family members, which is totally different from speaking to a group of doctors or nursing home directors. Each audience wants to hear, learn, feel, and see different things. Be aware of those differences and plan for them. In preparing the presentation, write out the following:

- What does the audience want to get from the presentation?

- What do you, the presenter, want to give in the presentation?

- What information does the audience need in order to understand the material you want to give?

For example, if you want to describe the population that best responds to Validation, then you need to explain what Naomi Feil means when she says, 'disoriented old-old'.

5. Every presentation should include the following topics:

What is Validation?

For whom is validation most appropriate?

Other topics that can also be covered are:

How does Validation compare and contrast with other methods?

What are the goals of Validation?

How does Validation work?

Simple techniques that everyone can do: center, observe, calibrate, have empathy, find the right distance, get on eye level, ask open questions, don't argue or try to correct, don't lie or pretend.

6. Practice exercises that can be done within the context of a presentation. Practice explaining Validation and the population (these can be difficult concepts to get across). Practice standing up in front of a small group and talking. Practice how to deal with nervousness. Practice making outlines for presentations in preparation for giving short outlines of presentations in Block 3.

Closing words

This booklet is written to further the literature on Validation and be of service to the many teachers in the world who work so hard to spread the use of this method and thereby, make the lives of disoriented very old people happier and more fulfilling. It is fitting to come back to the most important reason why we work with this method, and that is – the people with whom we work.

May your groups be filled with laughter and tears.

May the wise words said by your group members offer you new ideas for your own development.

May your group courses be inspiring for both the participants and you, as teachers.

May you have joy and feelings of accomplishment.

(Excerpt from the VTI Quality Manual pertaining to Level 2 courses and certification)

Level 2: Group Validation Practitioner

Requirements for certification:

- show Level 1 certification in order to begin this course
- take part in a training course⁶
- practice and document group Validation for at least 6 months⁷
- pass written and practical examination⁸

Authorizations

- can practice group Validation
- can give support to people with Level 1 and interested people
- can give short presentations of Validation for small groups⁹

A Group Validation Practitioner is able to:

- perform all the skills required of a Validation Worker
- easily recognize the stages of disorientation even when there is blurring of the stages
- form a trusting relationship with a disoriented elderly person and with each disoriented elderly member of the Validation group
- form a Validation group, select group members, assign roles, plan agendas
- work with a Validation team
- share his or her knowledge with others
- give family members tips on how to improve communication with their maloriented and disoriented relatives (simple Validation techniques)
- explain simple Validation concepts that will improve the family relationships and give both the disoriented person and the family member more joy
- explain, demonstrate and give tips to colleagues
- select Validation Team members
- evaluate the progress of the client.

The Group Validation Practitioner knows:

- all the information required as a Validation Worker
- basic group work theory
- the goals of a Validation group

⁶ Should a student miss one day or part of one day, this work can be made up by a) attending the same day of another course, b) do extra homework that is appropriate for the missed day. Teachers should prepare assignments that include: 'Meet with a fellow student to discuss what happened in class and exchange experiences that you had in your practice. A written report of this meeting should be brought to the next training day and given to the teacher.' Students must not miss any day in Block 1. Students may not miss more than one teaching day.

⁷ 6 months of practice is equal to 26 consecutive weeks. If a week of documentation is missed, it can be added later. If a student hands in 2 documentations in a week, it counts as 1 week.

⁸ Level 2 written test, one needs a minimum of 75 out of 100 possible points; practical test, one needs a minimum of 75 out of 100 possible points.

⁹ This is meant to take place within the students' place of work. Small groups are up to 10-15 individuals. Short presentations last no longer than 2 hours.

- the role of a Validation group leader and that of the co-worker
- how to involve other staff members within an institution
- the elements of a Validation group.

The Group Validation Practitioner can demonstrate:

- a successful and correct Validation group
- that he or she has satisfied all of the above.

Maintaining Quality at this Level

Without consistent input, feedback and opportunities to share experiences, it is easy to lose the ability to validate. In order to maintain validation group skills, practice and input from others is necessary. Additionally, Validation Group Leaders represent the Validation method to other people and their Validation work should represent the method accurately using a standard for quality.

There are no requirements for maintaining certification. However, to maintain quality, the following recommendations are offered.

Validation Group Leaders should:

Maintain consistent practice of Validation with disoriented elderly on a weekly basis

Attend a supervision, workshop or continuing education session once a year

Meet with other Validation Workers and Group Leaders regularly to exchange experiences and support each other (Intervision).

Only certified Validation Teachers may offer supervision sessions.

The word ‘supervision’ has different meanings or connotations in different countries. In this context, supervision is the process where a person demonstrates his or her work and a more experienced person watches, listens and feels, gives feedback/evaluation in a constructive, validating way. Additionally, the person has an opportunity to ask questions and pose problems. The more experienced person answers questions and helps solve problems.

Intervision sessions are when groups of Group Leaders get together to help each other. They should follow the guidelines for intervission.

The goals for supervision and intervission are to motivate the participants to continue validating and solve their problems. Exercises and videos of participants work are recommended learning methods.

Criteria for evaluation: each participant should get feedback from the teacher and also should give feedback to the teacher. An evaluation form should be used when evaluating video or live demonstrations in supervision sessions. A copy of this form should be sent to the AVO and one given to the Group Leader. Participants of supervision sessions should offer feedback to the Teacher using an Evaluation form.

Curriculum for a Level 2, Validation Practitioner Course

Validation Training Institute, Inc.

by Vicki de Klerk-Rubin

Certification Level 2 - Validation Group Leader Course description

Goals of the course and authorizations once certified:

The participant can:

- begin and run a Validation group
- give short presentations (not courses) for small groups
- give support and feedback to people working with Individual Validation.

Prerequisites for taking this course:

- level 1 certification (Validation Worker)
- the ability, logistics and intentions to start and run a weekly Validation group for at least six months
- the intention and openness to give and receive feedback from the course leader and other participants.

Suggested Course outline:

- 3 blocks of 2 days.
- Day 1- Basic group information
- Day 2-Group demonstration, role-plays, how to handle difficult situations, description of homework assignment.
Course participants begin and run a Validation group for 3 months (minimum 13 weeks). During this period we will try to arrange intervision sessions for each participant. Reports (1 page forms) are to be kept for each group meeting.
- Day 3- Supervision of participants' group work by video or role play, problem solving and questions
- Day 4- Group demonstration, role play, discussion and practice of how to give a short presentation.
- Course participants continue to run their groups for 3 months (13 weeks minimum), keeping records of each weekly group session. Participants prepare a 10 minute introduction to a short presentation.
- Day 5 and Day 6- Demonstrations of short presentations, Testing, questions and difficulties.

Certification Requirements:

- written test – 75 points out of 100 points minimum
- practical test, demonstration of a Validation group either live or video - 75 points out of 100
- summary reports of each weekly Validation group meeting for 6 months (26 reports).

Block 1

Day 1:

Review goals of the course, prerequisites, the outline of the course and what is expected of each participant

- What are the goals of a Validation group?
- Who is appropriate for a Group, who benefits?
- What do you need for a Validation group: equipment, time, setup, privacy, support?
- Roles
- Role of the group leader and co-worker/co-leader
- The Agenda
- Seating order
- Topics
- Activities/Music
- What does a group look like - video demonstration of what has been covered
- Identify the “birth”, “life” and “closing of a group
- What happens when a group members dies or leaves.

Day 2:

- Group demonstration - live if possible
- Discussion of difficult situations:
 - when group members dominate, walk away, cry continually, blame others
 - how to stimulate conversation
 - how, when or should you change group members roles in the group or the seating order
 - how not to fall into Reminiscence.
- Discussion of problems/difficulties within the nursing home:
 - the implementation of an innovation
 - regularly planned reports of progress
 - include staff in the planning process
 - preparing staff for what they can expect
 - having guests in the group.
- Review the assignment for the coming months:
 - starting and running a weekly Validation group
 - keeping records of each group meeting - go through the forms included in the book.

Block 2

Day 3:

- Inventory participants' problems and questions
- Solve all problems, answer all questions
- Video, live or role-played demonstrations of the participants' groups. Supervision on an individual level. Each participant shows a part of their group and gets feedback.
- Discuss how to give feedback in a constructive manner
 - “I saw....” “I felt.....”

- What is important in giving feedback and what is not important
- It is possible to offer additional readings on this subject as an assignment
- Discuss the following topics:
 - connecting the group members, help them talk to each other
 - how logistical problems get in the way of the group process
 - how to choose a good discussion topic (how not to fall into reminiscence or reality orientation)
 - trusting the group members, relax
 - get out of the middle of the circle
 - creating an energy circle
 - peepers and other interruptions
 - things/ tips that help: reminding staff of the group meetings, written reports to staff, posters announcing the group and who is in the Validation group, keeping staff informed
- Role play of a group, splitting it into its' parts. Several participants have an opportunity to lead the group and/or co-lead.

Day 4:

- Continue from Day 3 plus:
- Discuss giving short presentations about Validation
 - what is important to say under different circumstances
 - how to describe Validation
 - the difference between Validation and other methods
 - how to describe the population for whom Validation is appropriate
 - what are the goals of Validation
- Break into smaller groups. Each group will be given an assignment to prepare an outline for a presentation on Validation.
- Example: a 1 hour introduction to Validation for your own facility

Block 3

Day 5:

- Inventory participants' problems and questions
- Solve all problems and answer all questions
- Administer written test. 1 ½ hours.
- Watch video demonstrations, approximately 20 minutes per person; give feedback.
 - Each participant gives 10 minutes of their prepared presentation.
 - Constructive feedback is given
 - Alternate between presentations and video evaluation.
- Discuss what a Certified Validation Group leader can do and what he or she can not do. Try not to get caught up in the demands of others. Recognize one's own boundaries.

Day 6:

- Testing continues
- Certification celebration.

(This and the previous two pages can be copied and given to course participants before the course begins to give them an idea of what will happen and set up realistic expectations, or they can be given in the beginning of the first block.)

Block 1: Day 1

Materials Needed

Handouts of course description today's agenda – either handout or written on white board

Goals for this block:

Each participant :

- understands and agrees with the structure and requirements of this course
- knows the goals of a Validation group
- knows who is appropriate for a Validation group
- can select Validation group members, assign roles and a seating order
- can set a Validation group agenda
- knows the step by step procedures for starting a Validation group

1. Introductions:

Ask each participant to introduce themselves

Review the goals of the course and this block

2. Why do a Validation Group?

What are the goals of a Validation Group?

PPP 5, 6: Goals

3. How do these differ from the goals of Individual Validation?

Basic Group Theory that applies to a Validation Group

(Look at ourselves as a group. Who seems to be fitting into what roles? How did we all choose where to sit?)

PPP 1, 2, 3: Basic Group Theory Concepts

4. Who benefits from a Validation Group?

How do you choose Group Members (GM)?

Early onset Alzheimer patients?

Maloriented people?

What is important? Giving to and getting from the group experience

PPP 4: group members

5. Roles: of the group members

of the group leader

of the co-worker/co-leader

PPP 7-14: roles

6. Seating order - why is it important?

The energy circle -

exercise: everyone sit in a circle and hold hands, close your eyes.

One person starts by squeezing the hand on their right. Each person squeezes the hand on their right until the person who started receives the squeeze back. Try it again the other way - squeezing on the left. Open your eyes. What happened?

PPP 15,16: seating order

7. The Agenda

Go through each agenda point in order. Why this order? Why not have coffee first?

How do you move from one agenda point to the next? Summarize.

PPP 17-19:
Group Agenda

PPP 25: topics
create a list on a
flip chart or board

create a list on a
flip chart or board

PPP 20-24: agenda items and
their purposes

video tape

Materials Needed

name tags
refreshments
local songs
ball/activity
Session Summary sheets

Handouts on co-leaders

(role play)

PPP 26-27: requirements

8. Topics of discussion

What is important to a disoriented very old person?

9. Activities and Music

What sort of activities work? What doesn't work? What is the point of an activity?

10. Discuss the purpose of each agenda item. These are our goals.

Group exercise: sing a song that everyone knows. What happens to the group energy?

Small group exercise: trust circle

11. Video demonstration of a Validation group.

Notice the "birth", "life" and "closing" of the group

Closing exercise

Block 1: Day 2

1. Live Group Demonstration

2. Discussion following demonstration

Feedback to teacher – what happened
Practice filling in the session summaries

3. Training a co-leader

What does a co-leader need to do and need to know or demonstrate?

3. How do you handle difficult situations?

- when group members dominate
- when someone walks out
- someone cries continually
- someone blames other group members
- stimulating conversation
- how, when or should you make changes in your group
changing roles or seating order
- creating conversation between group members

4. How not to fall into Reminiscence or Reality Orientation

*exercise: take a topic and present it in 3 different ways
ex. Mother, Father, being sick and old*

5. Organizational requirements for a Validation Group

What do you need? - physically, financially, socially,
psychologically

(this topic can also be handled before the live demonstration)

PPP 28, 29: tips

6. Typical pit falls and how to deal with them.
 - the implementation of an innovation
 - regularly planned reports of progress
 - include staff in the planning process
 - preparing staff for what they can expect - be honest
 - having guests in the group

copies of documentation forms
criteria for evaluation

7. Review the assignment for the coming 3 months.
 - starting and running of a weekly Validation group
 - keeping records of each group meeting - review the forms that can be used
 - bring a video of one group session for the next meeting

8. Set up Intervision Groups. Make meeting dates.

Closing exercise

Block 2: Day 1

Materials Needed

flip chart or board

1. Welcome round
 - *opening exercise*:
 - inventory questions and difficulties

DVD/video player/tv

2. Watch videos and give supervision
 - solve the problems, answer all questions

Handout sheet:
intervision principles

3. Discuss how to give feedback in a constructive manner
 - “I saw....” “I felt....”
 - What is important in giving feedback and what is not important?
 - exercise: in pairs: A tells of an experience in the group; B gives criticism,*
 - first - B wants to show that (s)he knows better*
 - second - B want A to find her/his own answers*

Discuss intervision principles

Reading list

4. Discuss the following topics:

ball

- a) connecting the group members, help them talk to each other
 - exercise: toss a ball back and forth connecting bits of conversation relating to feelings or needs.*

PPP 26, 27: requirements

- b) logistical problems that get in the way of the group process
 - review the requirements
 - brain storm on how to build support for your group

PPP 28, 29: tips

- tips on how to make the group go smoother
- c) choosing a good discussion topic

- what worked for you? What did not work?

d) trusting the group members - allowing yourself to relax
letting go of the agenda

exercise: trust circle

role play of group: 1 person role plays a GM who has a strong human need; they keep interrupting and changing the topic.

e) get out of the middle of the circle

exercise:

f) creating an energy circle

exercise: hand squeeze exercise, described in Block 1

g) peepers and other interruptions

exercise:

h) going deeper into needs and feelings

exercise: small group, throwing a bean bag

A-says how she feels

B- asks open questions that explore the emotion or need.

6. Closing exercise

Block 2: Day 2

Materials Needed

flip chart or board

1. Greeting and opening round

- exercise:

- inventory questions and problems

- answer the questions and solve the problems

Continue with agenda from Day 1 plus:

2. How do you give a short presentation about Validation?

- what is important to say in different circumstances

- how do you describe Validation

- how do you compare and contrast Validation with other methods

- how do you describe the population for whom Validation is most appropriate

- how do you describe the goals of Validation

flip chart paper
pens

exercise: break into smaller groups. Each group will prepare an outline for a presentation on Validation for a particular group. Each group will present their outline to the whole group. Ex. A 1 hour introduction to Validation for your own nursing home department.

Important to note:

What do I want to teach?

What does the public want to hear?
What does understanding of the material require that the listener already knows?

Example Test
Level 2~ex
Test preparation material

3. Test Preparation

Review the theory as needed.

Take the example test and discuss the correct answers

Written test has 2 Parts. Part 1 has 5 case studies, each case has 6 questions, each question has 2 points. Part 2 has 40 questions, each worth 1 point.

3. Role Play of a group

choose your most “difficult group member” to role play. Each person gets a chance to be group leader or co-leader for 1/3 of the group: birth, life, closing

4. Closing

assignment: run your group weekly for the next 3 months and keep records of each group meeting. Prepare a 10 minute presentation based on the exercise we did earlier.

Bring a video of your Validation group for the practical test.

Closing exercise

Materials Needed

flip chart or board

Written test &
Answer sheet
DVD/VCR player & tv

Flip chart or white board

Handout sheet:
authorizations
levels of certification

Block 3: Day 1

1. Greeting and opening round

exercise:

Inventory questions and problems

Answer questions and solve problems

2. Administer Written test - See the VTI testing procedures. 1 ½ hours.

3. Practical testing: each participant brings a video of their group. Approximately 20 minutes will be viewed by the entire group. Feedback is given immediately.

4. Each participant gives 10 minutes of their prepared presentation
Constructive feedback is given by participants and the teacher.

Alternate between presentations and practical testing.

. Discuss what a Certified Validation Group Leader can do and what he or she can not do.

- How do you not get caught up in the demands of others?

- How do you recognize your own boundaries?

Exercise: role play in pairs: A wants you to demonstrate your group to a nursing school class. B is the group leader

A wants you to train the rest of the department in Validation

Discuss how to maintain quality.

5. Closing exercise.

Block 3: Day 2

Opening exercise

video player + tv

Continuation of testing and presentations.

certificates

Closing - presentation of certificates
- explanation of how to re-test if necessary
Celebration

Power Point for Level 2, Validation Practitioner Course

Basic Group Work Theory

One definition of a Group:

“A Group is a dynamic social entity composed of two or more individuals. These individuals interact interdependently to achieve one or more common goals for the group, or similar individual goals... each member influences and is influenced by every other member to some degree.”

Bertcher

The Group process involves sharing and trust building, decision making issues and feelings of intimacy.

A Group offers members:

- a place in which psychosocial difficulties can be resolved.
- a place where their need for acceptance are met.
- a place where they have membership, a sense of belonging.
- a place where they can fulfill a role (role replacement)
- emotional support
- role model possibilities
- new ideas for dealing with problems or situations.

Basic Group Theory

In many groups typical roles develop such as: the organizational leader, the emotional leader, the black sheep, the mediator, etc.

Values and norms that develop in a Group make for a feeling of cohesion. These group “rules” provide the sense of belonging.

A Group should be a safe environment where the common needs are met.

Indigenous Leadership develops within a group.

A group atmosphere is one in which respect for one another is encouraged and where members support one another.

Membership is closed - selection of group members is done carefully based on certain criteria. One has a homogeneous population.

SELECTION OF GROUP MEMBERS

Primarily use Time Confused individuals

4-6 People (begin with fewer)

1 or 2 Individuals who are in Repetitive Motion

1 Validation Group leader

1 or 2 Co-Workers

Members must:

feel comfortable in an intimate atmosphere where many feelings are being expressed;
enjoy being with other people.

It is best when at least half of the Group Members enjoy communicating verbally

GOALS OF A VALIDATION GROUP 1

The stimulation of:

energy
social roles
identity
interaction
verbal behaviors
social controls
feelings of well being and happiness

GOALS OF A VALIDATION GROUP 2

A group should also:

reduce fear
prevent vegetation
reduce the need for tranquilizers and other restraints
prevent staff burnout

ROLES

Possible roles for group members:

Chairman
Hostess
Song Leader
Emotional Leader
Poetry reader
Secretary
Dance leader/ Activity leader
Advisor
Joke maker
Story teller

ROLES AND THEIR PURPOSE

General points for all roles:

Get respect and honor

Increase feelings of self-worth

Relive old behaviors

Resolve old issues

ROLES AND THEIR PURPOSE

Welcomer

need for status, recognition, to be listened to

Song Leader

expresses self through song/singing

Hostess

expresses self through caring for others,
being solicitous - or - feeling useful and
working, fulfilling an old role of being the
hostess

Advisor

expresses self through giving advice to
others, being philosophical, caring or
directive

Activity Leader

gains energy, joy and a sense of community
through movement, activities and other non-
verbal expression

Prayer Leader

gives and gets energy through prayer

THE ROLE AND TASKS OF THE GROUP LEADER 1

- To involve staff.
- To have a group Validation on the same day, the same time, the same place, every time.
- To assign roles to members.
- To assign co-leaders
- To train co-leaders
- To be a stimulation (motivator).
- To facilitate interactions between group members.
- To maintain a safe environment.

THE ROLE AND TASKS OF THE GROUP LEADER 2

- To support roles of group members.
- To increase energy.
- To observe the emotions of group members.
- To prepare a topic.
- To instruct co-workers to support group members.
- To stimulate nonverbal interaction between members using Validation techniques

THE ROLE AND TASKS OF THE GROUP LEADER 3

- To fill in Evaluation forms with co-workers.
- To prepare for the next group validation.
- To report about the group Validation to other staff members.

CO-LEADERS IN A VALIDATION GROUP

- assist in bringing people to and from the meeting
- help with the movement/activity section of the program
- sit next to the person who needs extra assistance
- take people out of the group if they become disruptive
- help evaluate progress after the meeting
- help plan the next meeting
- take over the leadership of the group when needed or planned

CO-LEADERS IN A VALIDATION GROUP

Skills to have or learn:

Centering

Calibration

Focusing of energy

Validation techniques, particularly 'mirroring' and the use of 'anchored touch'

Know the group songs by heart

SEATING ORDER 1

Points to take into consideration:

Friends/antagonists

Energy

A circle

Equilibrium between all group members

Physical difficulties (hard of hearing, blind)

Emotional difficulties (crying, whining)

People in Repetitive Motion

Logistics (snacks, the door, windows)

Connections between people

Chairs should be close together

Eye contact should be easy to make

Physical contact should be easy

SEATING ORDER 2

What diminishes energy in the seating order:

Low energy people seated next to each other in one part of the circle

Chairs that are too far apart or too big

Chairs of varying sizes, depths, styles

A table in the middle of the circle

GROUP AGENDA 1

Before V/W visits each group member

Prepare the room and materials

The V/W greets each group member

remind them of their roles - touch each group member

The Chairman stands and greets the group.

The Song Leader begins the opening song

(always the same)

Poem or Prayer?

GROUP AGENDA 2

Verbal Interaction -

present the discussion topic

solve a common problem

Summarize what was said

Activity/Movement/Music

Refreshments

GROUP AGENDA 3

Song Leader begins the closing song

Chairman closes the meeting

V/W says goodbye to each Group member

The group members are brought to a social situation

After each group meeting – feedback and evaluation

VALIDATION GROUP AGENDA – AND ITS PURPOSE

Birth

Greeting by Group Leader	increase GM energy role recognition
Greeting by Welcomer/President	increase feelings of self-worth increase feelings of honor, recognition and self-worth group energy increases
Opening Song	develop a “we” feeling increase energy and “we” feeling

VALIDATION GROUP AGENDA – AND ITS PURPOSE

Life

Theme/Discussion	increase verbal communication solve a problem together exchange of feelings offer the possibility to express feelings
------------------	--

VALIDATION GROUP AGENDA – AND ITS PURPOSE

Life

Activity	increase energy through physical movement create a “we” feeling through non-verbal communication
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VALIDATION GROUP AGENDA – AND ITS PURPOSE

Life

Refreshments

Increases familiar social behavior
Create interaction in a relaxed way
'small talk' or 'cocktail party' talk.

VALIDATION GROUP AGENDA – AND ITS PURPOSE

Closing

Closing song

increase energy
create a "we" feeling
strengthen and anchor a positive mood

Closing words

give a feeling of closure
maintain a strong, positive energy
continue the feeling of community
build a bridge to the next meeting

CHOOSING TOPICS

Criteria:

Emotional core

Not time or seasonally oriented

Phrased as a problem to solve

Tied to universal needs, feelings or unfinished issues

Always have a backup topic, 'plan B'

Flexibly shift with GM when the topic changes

Try to use a topic that was expressed by a GM that day

REQUIREMENTS FOR A GROUP

a closed, private room
enough chairs for all Group members
refreshments
tape or CD player and music
equipment for the activity
Validation Group folder

REQUIREMENTS FOR A GROUP

preparation of the Group members before the meeting
help in bringing the Group members to and from the meeting
time after the meeting to evaluate
agreements with personnel about not interrupting the meeting
agreements about reporting on the progress of your group to other staff members

TIPS TO AVOID LOGISTICAL PITFALLS 1

Always allow yourself enough time to set up. This way you can solve potential problems before they occur.
Work with other departments to prevent scheduling conflicts before they occur. (Therapy, Dietary, Activities)
Know your residents. Do they have glasses, hearing aids, or dietary restrictions? Plan for these things.
Leave written weekly reminders for the unit staff. Be specific about residents, times and places. The staff get busy, don't assume they will remember

TIPS TO AVOID LOGISTICAL PITFALLS 2

Plan what you will need for the next week after the current meeting; decide who will be responsible for what.

Arrange for your follow-up activity if it is not a meal. Be sure they are expecting your members.

Work with families to avoid visits during group time when you can.

If the side effects from the medication are a problem, take time to review the facility's policies and procedure with the nursing staff. Most likely, there are ways to fix this problem.

Exercises for a group course

Exploring basic group theory:

In small groups or in plenum: look at ourselves as a group. Who seems to be fitting into what roles? How did we all choose where to sit? Discuss and write down various roles that participants usually take in life and factors that go into choosing where to sit.

Learning goals of the exercise:

To recognize roles that people can take in life and how that shows up in small groups

Seating order is important and many factors are involved.

The energy circle

Everyone sit or stand in a circle and hold hands, close your eyes. One person starts by squeezing the hand on their right. Each person squeezes the hand on their right until the person who started receives the squeeze back. Go faster. Try it again the other way - squeezing on the left. Open your eyes. What happened?

Learning goals of the exercise:

To build energy in the group of participants when energy is low

To integrate the feeling of how energy can be passed on or interrupted depending on seating order.

Topics of discussion

When first presenting this learning point:

In plenum: list participants' ideas for good group topics. Next, associate basic human needs with each topic. Next, create 3 different ways of phrasing each topic as it would be presented in a Validation Group. This last part of the exercise can also be done in small groups.

Learning goals of the exercise:

Find good topics for group Validation

Practice formulating topics

Later in the course:

How not to fall into Reminiscence or Reality Orientation

In small groups: take a general topic and formulate it in 3 different ways: as a Validation topic, as a Reminiscence topic and as a Reality Orientation topic.

ex. Mother, Father, being sick and old, home

Each group presents its 3 topics in plenum.

Learning goals of the exercise:

To recognize the difference between Validation discussion topics and others

To develop at least 3 good topics that can be used in the participants' future group meetings

Singing and Energy

In plenum: sing a song that everyone knows. What happens to the group energy? This can be tried using several different kinds of songs: high energy, low energy, sad songs, etc.

Learning goals of the exercise:

To feel how singing affects energy levels

To increase the energy of course participants when energy is low.

Developing trust in a group

Trust Circle

In groups of 6-8: each person stands shoulder to shoulder in a small, tight circle. One person stands in the middle of the circle. The person in the middle closes her eyes, stands firm and allows herself to fall (backward or forward, it does not matter) while the people around her keep their hands up and catch her. She can then be passed around the circle (keeping her body stiff like a board) or when trust is built up, be gently tossed across the circle. Each person has a chance to be in the middle.

Learning goals of the exercise:

To build trust in the group of participants

To recognize how important trust is, in order to let go

How to give feedback in a constructive manner

In pairs: A tells of an experience in the group; B gives criticism,

first - B wants to show that (s)he knows better

second - B wants A to find her/his own answers

Learning goals of the exercise:

What is important in giving feedback and what is not important?

To experience a positive and negative feedback moment

Connecting the group members, help them talk to each other

In small groups: standing in a circle, toss a ball or beanbag back and forth connecting bits of conversation relating to feelings or needs. A tosses the ball to B. B says how he or she is feeling in that moment while tossing the ball back to A. A tosses the ball to C. C says how he or she is feeling in that moment while tossing the ball back to A. A now repeats what B and C have said and then finds a statement that connects the 2 emotions or needs ('zooming out').

Learning goals of the exercise:

Creatively finding points of connection between 2 disparate statements

Going deeper into needs and feelings

In pairs or a small group standing in a circle throwing a bean bag:

A-says how she feels

B- Asks open questions that explore the emotion or need.

If this exercise is done in a small group it can be adapted as follows:

A- Says how she feels

B- Asks an open question to explore the emotion or need.

C- Asks another question that goes deeper

Each person in the circle continues to ask open questions until the basic human need is discovered.

Learning goals of the exercise:

Gaining skill in identifying needs and feelings that underlie statements

Become more creative in asking open questions

Giving Presentations

In small groups: each group will prepare an outline for a presentation on Validation for a particular audience. Each group will present their outline to the whole group. Example: a 1 hour introduction to Validation for your own nursing home department. Each group should have 20-30 minutes to prepare and 10 minutes to present.

Learning goals of the exercise:

Gain experience and new ideas in creating a structure for a presentation

Realize the key differences between presentations for different audiences

Testing criteria for practical test

Validation Training Institute, Inc.

Evaluation of Validation Group tape or live demonstration

Name of Participant: _____

Group Structure: 40 points possible

A. Choice of Group Members:

Early onset Alzheimer?

Maloriented?

If yes, does it work? Is it well motivated?

People who like to talk, be together?

Do they give to, and get from the group members and process?

B. Roles:

Are they supported:

in the beginning

in the performance of the role

at the end of the group

Is the person allowed to fully perform the role?

Does the role fit the person?

What roles are missing?

Are there roles assigned that don't serve the group member?

C. Group Energy:

Are the Group Members more awake and communicative after the group?

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

greeting discussion Activity/Refreshment Closing

D. Seating Arrangement:

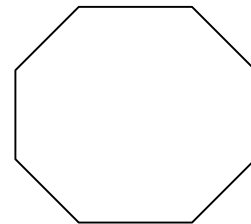
Are there holes in the circle?

Are the chairs OK?

What might be better?

Are they close enough?

Is there a table?



E. Group Ritual:

What agenda was followed?

Did the opening start communication and build energy?

Did the opening song build energy and a 'group' feeling?

Was the discussion theme:

phrased as a problem for the group to solve;

related to emotions, relevant issues (to the group members) or universal needs

Did the Group Leader flow with the needs of the group members?

Did the Group Leader make connections to needs and/or emotions?

Did the discussion build communication between group members?

Activity: did it build energy/ create a group feeling

music used?

Were the materials prepared
 Refreshments: did it stimulate social behaviors and roles?
 Was there music? A cocktail party feeling?
 The Closing ritual: did group members leave on a positive note?

Worker's and Co-worker/leader's role: 10 points possible

Did the worker:
 give energy
 know when to sit back
 lead the group
 allow the group members to communicate with each other
 drive the agenda forward
 use 'validating transitions' between agenda parts

Did the co-worker/co-leader:
 help with logistics
 bring good energy to the circle
 use touch where appropriate
 take over the group leader role

Verbal Validation Techniques: 25 points possible

Closed?	Open?	Statements	Rephrase

open questions
 polarity/extreme
 summarize with key words
 imagine the opposite

picks up clues from the group members
 allows for silence
 uses simple phrasing
 verbally paces the group rhythm
 speaks clearly

Non-Verbal Validation Techniques: 25 points possible

eye contact
 voice tone
 physical position
 matches rhythm of group members
 not too fast or slow
 empathy
 uses touch to stimulate energy and/or emotion
 mirroring
 use of music/song
 When? Did it build energy?

Study Guide for students

Study Guide for Level 2, Group Leader written test
Written by Vicki de Klerk-Rubin June 2006

Part I:

You will be given 3 cases and asked a series of questions:

What is the stage of disorientation/phase of resolution?

What seems to be the unfinished issue or life task?

With what technique would you begin?

What person or object is being used as a symbol?

Would this person fit in a Validation group?

If yes, what role would you give and where would you place this person in the circle?

You can practice answering these questions by using the various cases in Naomi Feil's book: *The Validation Breakthrough*. All page numbers listed below refer to this book.

Concerning Erikson life stages: read the section "a theory of life development and the need for Validation" (Eng. Pg 8-16), also study the handout sheet on Erikson's life stages and tasks and how they apply to very old people. You need to practice identifying the unfulfilled tasks or needs from a case study.

Concerning Symbols:

There are a few references to symbols in the book 'Validation Breakthrough'; more is written about how disoriented elderly use symbols in Feil's book 'Validation: the Feil Method'. Read the extract included with this Study Guide. The handout on universal symbols is also useful.

Concerning Group roles and seating order:

Read chapter 15 in *Breakthrough*. Study the handouts on roles and their purpose, and the Validation Group seating order (included with this sheet).

Part II: 17 questions cover the following issues/themes

Basic human needs and how these are expressed by disoriented elderly. Be prepared to give examples of how verbal and non-verbal disoriented elderly express each of the three basic needs.

Know specifically how you determine the preferred sense of another person and how you use the preferred sense technique in Validation group work.

Know the criteria for including a person in a Validation group.

Know the characteristics needed in a good host or hostess, song leader, chairman and advisor. See the handout on Roles and their Purpose.

Know when a Maloriented person can be used in a Validation group and when a Maloriented person can not be included in a Validation group.

Know the similarities and differences between Individual and Group Validation work.

See the Validation Group Goals and the goals of Individual Validation.

Be able to formulate several good Validation group topics for discussion.

Know the purpose of each section of a Validation group. See the handout on The Validation Group Agenda and its purpose.

Know what singing and music add to a Validation group and how they are used.

Know the role of a co-worker/leader in a Validation group.

Know how to handle difficult behavior from a group member. For instance, what do you do when someone tries to leave or get undressed?

Know the differences between a Reminiscence group and a Validation group.

Know the first steps in beginning a Validation group for the first time. What do you need to do?

Useful forms and handouts

Tasks of a Group Leader

Summary of a Group Meeting

Individual Group Member Evaluation of Progress

Guests: instructions and observation form

Handout about homework: Written Documentation Requirements for certification

Intervision

Tasks of a Group Leader

Before starting a Validation Group in a facility

- spend time talking with staff members
- find a convenient day and time for the group meeting
- find a good meeting location – reserve it for each week
- make agreements with responsible staff members about when and how you will share information on what happens during group
- get permission from whom ever you need to get permission to do the weekly group
- choose your group members
- assign roles to the group members
- decide on your initial seating order
- choose 2 good group discussion topics, appropriately phrased
- decide on an activity and get the necessary materials
- choose music that will activate your group members, get the CD or tape, the CD/tape player
- choose your drinks and snacks: talk to the kitchen staff about timing and preparation – who will do what and when that will happen
- find one or more co-leaders to work with
- train your co-leaders
- make sure that you have memorized possible opening and closing songs. This can be worked out in individual sessions with the Song Leader

Before each group meeting

- check the room to make sure it is set up with the right amount and type of chairs
- check the music, the materials for the activity, the food and drinks
- write down the group agenda with all the names of songs, the 2 discussion topics and the activity
- meet each group member and validate for a couple of minutes – take an emotional temperature (find a good meeting topic)
- get help to bring the group members to the meeting room

During each group meeting

- Use your energy to energize the group members
- stimulate verbal and non-verbal interaction
- ensure safety
- support the roles

After the group meeting

- make sure that group members get to a social environment
- evaluate the group session with the co-leader and guests, get feedback
- fill in documentation forms
- plan for next week's meeting
- pass on important information about individual group members to staff

Summary of a Validation Group Meeting

Date & Time:

Group Name:

Leader:

Co-leader:

Bldg.:

Room/location:

What number weekly session & report is this (out of 26 total due for the course)? _____

All questions are to be answered and this weekly report submitted via e-mail to the instructor.

Invitation to Group Meeting:

What did you do to invite members to this meeting today?

Did you validate them individually, reinforce their roles, and raise their energy in anticipation?

What unusual positive or negative responses did you receive?

How prepared: -- were you as the Leader?

-- was your Co-Leader?

-- were your room, music, refreshment, activity?

Thoughts about invitations and preparations for the next meeting:

Main Issues and Events:

Did you follow the proper agenda for a Validation group? (tell about any variation)

What went well and what didn't (including possible causes)?

What question did you ask to start the discussion?

Was it a situation or issue common to your residents, and posed as a problem to be solved?

What did you do to link members to each other, get them communicating with each other?

If there was there an occurrence or quote that was noteworthy, note it here:

Self-evaluation & Reflection on the Meeting:

How effective was the seating order for balancing energy and supporting needy members?

How well did you choose and support the roles of your members?

How was Validation employed in your group today?

Did your members leave with more energy than when they arrived?

What was hard for you as the Leader, and how can you address it?

Comments and Recommendations for Next Meeting:

What should I improve regarding any elements of the meeting for next week?

What topic should I consider using in our discussion next week?

VALIDATION GROUP

SEATING ORDER AT THIS MEETING

(For e-mailing, you can just list the names and roles of each person going around the circle. Start with yourself.)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Role</u>
1.	Leader
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Individual Group Member Evaluation of Progress

Fill out this form after each group meeting. Rate each person as follows
 0 – never; 1 – rarely; 2 – occasionally; 3 – frequently; 4 – always

Date	Name	Phase	Talks	Makes eye contact	Touches other people	Participates In group activities	Initiates contact with group members	Performs role with pleasure	Energy At end of Group (1-10)	Other, personal behavior comments and notes for next meeting