



# AGENDA

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1. Group Cohesion
2. Trust
3. Practical factors
4. Threats to group cohesion

# BACK TO BASICS

“The Facilitator is called by Christ to help a small group of mature priests or clergy wives to get closer to Christ by getting closer to one another.”



WHAT MAKES  
FOR A GREAT  
PEER  
LEARNING  
GROUP  
EXPERIENCE?

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**Group Cohesion**

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Warmth

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Empathic Understanding

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Acceptance

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Non judgement

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**Trust**

# WHAT IS GROUP COHESION?

“It refers to the condition of members feeling warmth and comfort in the group, feeling that they belong, valuing and feeling in turn that they are valued and unconditionally accepted and supported by other members.”

Irvin Yalom



Solidarity

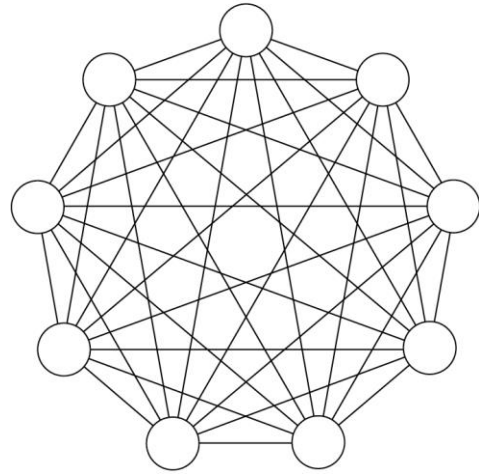
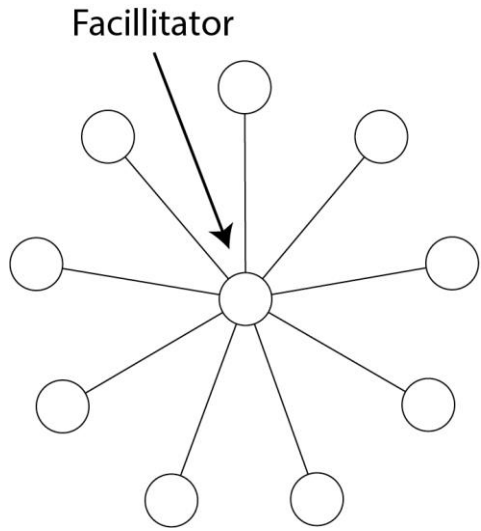


“We-ness,”

Esprit de Corps

Groups with this sense of oneness have greater attendance, participation, mutual support than groups with less.

# WHAT IS GROUP COHESION?



# GROUP COHESION

# BENEFITS OF A COHESIVE GROUP:

## **Members of cohesive groups are more likely to:**

- i. Try hard to influence other group members (positively)
- ii. Be more open to influence by other members
- iii. Be more willing to listen to others and more accepting of others
- iv. Participate more readily in meetings
- v. Self disclose more
- vi. Protect the group norms and exert more pressure on individuals deviating from the norms
- vii. Be less susceptible to disruption as a group when a member leaves the group.

By building TRUST

HOW DO WE  
BUILD A  
COHESIVE  
GROUP?





# BRAVING

Boundaries

Reliability

Accountability

Vault.

Integrity

Non-judgment

Generosity

BOUNDARIES  
RELIABILITY  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
VAULT  
INTEGRITY  
NON-JUDGMENT  
GENEROSITY

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Which aspect (s) of trust is challenging for you to offer others? Share.

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Which aspect (s) of trust that you struggle with in OTHER people? One that is your pet peeve? Talk about it.

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Which aspects of trust do you think are easiest to cultivate in a peer learning group and why?

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Which aspects of trust do you think are especially difficult to cultivate in a peer learning group and why?

## PART 2

### Purpose of a Clergy/Clergy Wives Peer Learning Group (from Fr. Nick Solak, Thriving in Ministries):

- Offering care, support, accountability
- Nurturing practices of spiritual discipline
- Developing the “craft” of parish ministry & strengthening practices of pastoral leadership
- Engaging in theological reflection on pastoral identity and parish ministry
- Fostering a sense of shared parish ministry as a shared endeavor
- Form life sustaining friendships

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## Peer Learning Group

Gather around a common task

Sparks curiosity and new learning

Growth comes through group sharing & activities

Run by a Facilitator

## Support Group

Gather around a common problem

Shares perspectives on problems

Healing comes through group support

Run by a therapist and/or an individual recovered from the problem of focus

PEER LEARNING GROUP VS  
SUPPORT/THERAPY GROUP |

# HOW WILL THE MAKE UP OF THE GROUP AFFECT THE DYNAMICS?

- ↪ Same age or diverse ages?
- ↪ Know each other or don't know each other?
- ↪ Pan Orthodox or only OCA?
- ↪ Small parish/large parish?
- ↪ Married or not? (priests)

For clergy wives—

- ↪ Working outside the home or not?
- ↪ With children or not?

# BRAVING

Boundaries

Reliability

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Vault.

Integrity

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Generosity

# ELEMENTS OF TRUST FOR BUILDING GREAT GROUPS

## Reliability

- Scheduling
- Prioritizing the group
- Tardiness/leaving early



# ELEMENTS OF TRUST FOR BUILDING GREAT GROUPS

## Vault

- Location, location, location
- Privacy for individual AND the group
- What gets shared?





# CLERGY WIVES PEER LEARNING GROUP CHARTER

## ● **Goals and Hopes for the Group:**

- Fellowship
- Pan Orthodox
- Support
- Spiritual Growth
- Share joys and frustrations in a safe setting
- Strengthen faith--take it off the back burner
- Develop connections that have depth, go beyond the surface
- Learn from more experienced clergy wives
- Inspiration

## ● **Ground Rules**

- Confidentiality
- No swearing
- No judgement
- Keep the group a safe space--be able to say anything without fear of repercussions
- Be honest
- Ok to pass if don't feel ready to share
- Prioritize the group and group meetings
- Respect other jurisdictions whose practices or traditions are different than your own.

●  
***Be Open. Be Confidential. Be Vulnerable.***



## THREATS TO GROUP COHESION AND TRUST

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Continued tardiness  
Absences  
Scapegoating

WHEN A PERSON PAUSES IN MID-SENTENCE TO CHOOSE A WORD, THAT'S THE BEST TIME TO JUMP IN AND CHANGE THE SUBJECT!



IT'S LIKE AN INTERCEPTION IN FOOTBALL! YOU GRAB THE OTHER GUY'S IDEA AND RUN THE OPPOSITE WAY WITH IT!



THE MORE SENTENCES YOU COMPLETE, THE HIGHER YOUR SCORE! THE IDEA IS TO BLOCK THE OTHER GUY'S THOUGHTS AND EXPRESS YOUR OWN! THAT'S HOW YOU WIN!



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CONVERSATIONS AREN'T CONTESTS!



OK, A POINT FOR YOU, BUT I'M STILL AHEAD.



WETA 8-8

# THREATS TO GROUP COHESION/TRUST

## The “Difficult” Group Member

- The Monopolist
- The Silent or Disengaged
- The Complainer
- The Teacher

## Breakout:

- What other types of challenging group members are there?
- What type is/would be most difficult for you?
- If you have encountered a difficult group member, how did you deal with it? Or how do you anticipate you'd deal with it?



## CONFLICT IN GROUP MEETINGS

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Have you had the experience of group members openly arguing or having a conflict about a topic in the group? If so, please share how you handled it.

# ADDING PEOPLE TO THE GROUP

Ask privately each group member to share with you their opinion

Discuss as a group pros and cons

Help group understand how the group dynamic could change (for better or worse)

“Interview” potential new group members before adding, share charter and be sure they can prioritize meetings.



# DEVELOPING GROUP SESSION ACTIVITIES

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Reflect

Research

Create



## WRAPPING IT ALL UP

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[HTTPS://WWW.ASSEMBLYOFBISHOPS.ORG/MINISTRIES/MENTALHEALTH/](https://www.assemblyofbishops.org/ministries/mentalhealth/)

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