

Why Group Relations – Personal Reflections

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My first introduction to this field was when I was dealing with a difficult situation with the chairman of a medical school department. Hence the decision to participate in a Tavistock group. I learned a tremendous amount about my difficulties with authority and myself as a member of a group that have helped me a great deal.

In analysis we learn a lot about our internal and dyadic life but very little about who we are in relationship to group, leadership in a group, ourselves as members of small and large groups, and ourselves in a particularly complicated culture of personal analysts, consultants, and peer relationships. We also learn little about our organization and our relationship to the larger society and world, which is increasingly fraught.

In terms of how we learn, at SPSI, although we talk about *experience* as central to change, we, by in large, do not use “experience” more effectively in our group lives or classrooms as a way of learning and changing in the here and now. How many case conferences have you been in where someone (presenter or participant) was asked about the countertransference and you heard a one adjective sentence, “I had a ___ transference” and then spent the rest of the time talking about the patient’s dynamics? How many times has the class process been addressed by instructors or clinical associates? Or in meetings?

Organizationally the history project revealed that we have faced a recurring series of problems over the years. More recently we have been through a crisis which has left a shaken community and, in one person’s words, a debris field. Most recently we have been through a challenging year and again lost members. Thankfully we are coming together with strong leadership keen to listen, terrific chairs of committees, amazing faculty and students, and new communities where we are talking with one another on a different plane – the Town Hall and the Women’s Group, being just two examples.

Personally, I have been worried about all our problems and at the same time excited about new changes, and finally, eager to share wonderful new areas of learning (for me) which can enhance our experience. Closer to home, in groups I tend to worry about such things as what I have said or not said; to take too much responsibility, or not enough; to feel reactive. Being able to look through the lens of the group or field has helped me stand back from my mishigas about such things as,

- Ways I have pathological certainty about myself or another
- Ways I split and project
- Ways I am carrying something for the group
- Ways that an individual I feel annoyed with is carrying something unacknowledged for the group or me

I want to share what I have learned that has been so helpful and learn together with you. Hence, I am offering an introductory seminar which I am entitling “Enhancing our Individual and Group Life.” Please contact me about your interest.