



Emotions, Group Dynamics, and Systemic Change

Why should I take this training?

We all learn in groups, succeed in groups, and fail in groups. Any potent force for change lies in the group whether on an individual level - e.g. for learning new behaviors - or on a societal level such as sharing convictions about what should be done with our environment.

So if we would like to get anything meaningful done, we need groups. There is big potential for individual and collective change in them but they are also complex and often obscure. In order to harness the potential of groups, we have to understand how they work.



In reality we often do not even understand ourselves and our own actions on an individual level. Why this fear, how can it be overcome, why this anger, and so on. A lot, though not all, of this confusion comes from our misunderstanding of our own sensations and emotions, and how they interact with our perceptions, thoughts and intentions.

Just like us groups are dynamic systems. The system elements experience certain needs. When these needs are not met, there is trouble. "Systemic change" can happen when the needs of the different elements are met. This is not so easy to come by, however, because this may require to verbalize needs – no easy task when the issues are for example about inclusion in a subgroup, recognition for work done, or respect of seniority.

Instead of being addressed these and other "difficult issues" are often left in the shadow and from there influence what happens in the group.

So as a group member or leader, if we want to overcome resistance, soften hardened stances, or make the way free for collective creativity we have to discover how we can work with these often hidden forces, these "dynamics" that act without being visible.

Some groups successfully send missions into space and some never make it beyond their first meeting. Some groups and organizations exist for centuries. Some die a premature cold death, some explode. The successful groups, quite obviously, manage to adapt to their changing environment but they also succeed to deal with internal change issues. This course will clarify in detail, what these various issues are and how they can be dealt with.



Objectives

This course would like to give you the opportunity to

- Advance on **any individual learning issues of your choice** that might exist for you in a group context,
- Advance as well on **complex current group situations you might be facing** and where you are looking for the next step to take,
- **Better understand the requirements for individual and collective change**
- Better understand the **typical dynamics of groups**.

A special focus is placed on the role of emotions and their interaction with perceptions and intentions.

By the end of this training you should have deepened your understanding about the following:

- What is a **group** (and what is not a group), what are **group dynamics**, how do they affect you and how can you influence them.
- What is your **role in all of this as an individual**, what specific role play your sensations, emotions, perceptions, and intentions? How do these elements interact, form your personality, and impact on the outside world?
- What kind of **mental habit patterns** do you bring to the table when you arrive at a group and when you act in a group? What of this is useful and what you might want to change?
- What do we mean when we talk about groups and individuals as “systems” and what are the “**systemic principles**” that we should follow in order to ensure that the system can adapt to internal and external changes?
- What do we mean by “**change**”? Why do change efforts fail so often? What **requirements** need to be met so that change can happen?
- What is the “**facilitative stance**” that we can take as a group member or group leader in order to ensure that systemic change becomes more likely? How can we practice **Nonviolent Communication** in order to implement this stance?
- What are good ways to deal with **conflict and opposition** in group situations?

Methods

We try to see you and your needs. We will involve you from the beginning by making an effort to integrate your expectations into the course as well as any other needs you may have. We aspire to a creativity inducing atmosphere.

As a consequence, the training uses a wide range of pedagogical methods that have proven effective with a penchant to experiential learning: Group work on the participants’ own cases, situational simulations and role plays, peer feedback on these experiences, modeling of handling certain situations by the trainers, plenary dialogue, as well as additional theoretical and experience-based



input from the trainers. There will also be a moment at the end of the course to reflect on how you can make new use of the knowledge in your own context.



Participants of a facilitation training in Switzerland enacting a difficult situation

In order to benefit from the course we are expecting from the participants:

- To share their questions, ideas, opinions and experiences
- To be open to look at their own emotions and underlying assumptions
- To be ready to question the stance they take in a group situation
- To check the qualities that they bring with them when they work with a group
- To be ready to give and to receive personal feedback.

The evenings will be included in the training.

For whom?

For all those working in or with groups: directors and managers, project managers, facilitators of participatory approaches and groups, team or network coordinators.

Duration

This is a five-day training starting on Monday morning or Sunday evening and going to Friday midday



Trainer



Yorck von Korff, PhD in political science. Trainer, facilitator, mediator and consultant for participatory processes. For 18 years Yorck has designed and facilitated multi stakeholder workshops in international cooperation, ecosystem and water management, scientific cooperation, intra-organizational change as well as urban and land planning. He has published various articles in scientific journals on participatory processes. Yorck is based in Montpellier France and works locally as well as internationally

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Promoting dialogue

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