

## Chapter Five - Understanding Group Process

### Box 5.1 Ethical Guidelines for Group Facilitators

#### Awareness of Ethical Choice?

If your beliefs and values run counter to those of the group that has invited you to present, you must make a choice: to refuse the offer or to hold your own views in abeyance, which is actually impossible to do. Just as judges disqualify themselves from certain cases, facilitators should be aware that working with certain systems that are contrary to their beliefs can cause ethical problems.

#### Awareness of One's Own Power?

The facilitator is often viewed as the expert on everything. You must resist the temptation to dominate or manipulate. Playing favorites is also unwise and tends to cause jealousy and antagonism among other group members. Ask for feedback (anonymous and written) from the group regarding how they see your role in order to provide a safeguard against falling into the "power trip trap."

#### Truth in Packaging?

Avoid false advertising about what this group experience will accomplish or what the possible risks are. Accept and acknowledge your limitations and those of the group.

#### Voluntary Participation?

When a group member is forced to do anything, it can build resistance to future involvement. Ground rules that stress this point can emphasize the importance of this concept for you and them.

#### Privacy and Confidentiality?

This is expected of leaders and group members. You should not obligate yourself to any sort of written report that reveals personal confidences. If group participation is required by court, you may have to write a general statement about a person's involvement in the group. This should be noted at the outset.

#### Competence?

The leader is expected to have the training and certification he or she claims to have. It is one thing to feel new and apprehensive, to know the material but be fearful about having the ability to work with the population. It is quite another thing to be so overwhelmed with an assignment that prayer and the fact that you are a good person are all that sustain you. Going beyond your level of competence is dangerous. It is not taking a risk; it is inviting disaster.

#### Value and Behavior Congruence?

The leader who advocates a certain value but whose behavior contradicts that value is acting incongruently. Examples include incongruent values/behavior in managing conflict, self-disclosure, or confidentiality.

#### Avoidance of Harm?

The member's right to pass on any exercise should be stressed. Goading, sarcasm, or scapegoating can cause psychological harm to a person and to program effectiveness.

**Source:** Learning to Work with Groups, by M. B. Miles, 1981, New York: Columbia University, Teacher's College Press.