

The Dyad

The dyad is the exchange of supportive listening between two people (a triad is sometimes formed in the case of an odd number of participants).

Dyads are used to examine experiences in depth and to work through feelings that confuse us, foster passivity, undermine confidence, or interfere with relations with students, parents, or colleagues. Although a topic for a dyad might be suggested, the talker is always in charge and he or she takes responsibility for deciding what to talk about, at what rate to proceed and what conclusions to draw. The listener reassures the talker that the expression of feelings is beneficial.

The talker might talk about problems or successes, situations that he or she would like to handle better, thoughts about an educational issue, feelings about his or her job or prior experiences that may be affecting present functioning.

The guidelines are followed which allow one member of the dyad to talk for a given amount of time while his or her partner listens attentively. Everything said in a dyad maintains confidentiality.

The Support Group

The support group is the exchange of supportive listening within a group of three to eight people. It convenes for a fixed amount of time that is divided equally among its members.

Support groups can help individuals as they. They provide a supportive environment for people to explore sensitive equity issues, so that authentic discussion can begin to take place. They help us to remain positive and healthy as we work to improve schools.

A support group leader will suggest a topic to explore, but the choice of what to talk about is up to the talker. The support group leader is responsible for seeing that the guidelines are followed and for asking questions when necessary for the benefit of the talker. The leader may end the meeting by asking a question that will focus the people's attention in a positive and optimistic direction.

GUIDELINES

The guidelines used for dyads and support groups are based on beliefs about people and evolved from considerable experience:

- Each person is given equal time to talk. *Everyone deserves attention.*
- The listener does not interpret, paraphrase, analyze, give advice, or break in with a personal story. *People are capable of solving their own problems.*
- Confidentiality is maintained. (The listener doesn't talk about what the talker has said to anyone else or even bring it up to the talker afterwards.) *A person needs to be assured of confidentiality in order to be authentic. Also one's feelings at any moment are not representative of one's rational thinking (or perhaps even of one's feelings) five minutes later.*
- The talker is not to criticize or complain about the listener or mutual acquaintances in his turn. *A person cannot listen well when he/she is feeling attacked or defensive. Problems or disputes between partners are to be addressed in a different structure based on dialogue.*