

The Group as Laboratory

In trying these new ways of interacting with others, the important thing is to do something that feels difficult. Old, familiar ways of behaving will probably not result in productive experiments. Moreover, a new behavior may seem difficult at first, but with practice, it gets easier. Then the new behavior may be added to your repertoire-your range options-and it's available whenever you need it.

If You Relate To People By:	You Might Experiment With:
Complying, giving in	Saying no; Asking for what you want; Sharing your honest feelings
Holding back; staying quiet or safe	Taking a risk; Saying something spontaneously without rehearsing it; Speaking within the first few minutes of the group
Always smiling, even when angry or sad	Matching your facial expressions to your emotion; Discussing your true feelings out loud; Asking for feedback about your body language and facial expressions
Trying to get people to stop feeling a certain way (e.g. sad)	Acknowledging or empathizing with the way they feel; Exploring your impulses and feelings of wanting them to feel something different; Identifying what their emotions bring up for you.
Trying only to be polite or nice	Showing and sharing your genuine emotions, thoughts and reactions. Asking how this current behavior impacts the members. Practice not being "polite" and ask for feedback of how people responded to this new behavior.
Deflecting praise; Being overly modest	Accepting praise and thanking the person. Agreeing enthusiastically with the praise. Asking for positive feedback or strengths people notice in you.
Trying to get everybody to like of you	Showing and acting like the 'real' you and seeing how others react. Get feedback about when others feel like and dislike towards you. Practicing acceptance towards yourself. Recognizing when you dislike someone and why.
Always helping other people.	Asking for help, especially at the beginning of a session. Letting yourself be helped by talking time to talk about you.
Controlling your feelings and suppressing them.	Acknowledging and experiencing your feelings in that moment. Exploring them out loud. Saying what is really on your mind.
Keeping things secret or not trusting others.	Each session disclosing something about yourself that is hard to say. With each session, progressing in the level of depth or vulnerability of what you share.

(The University of Florida adapted this information from Lehigh University and DePaul University Counseling Services)