

## **Leadership Development and Role Success (LDRS) Program**

### **Who is this learning for?**

This learning is for people who have some experience with group relations in group relations conferences, and who want to deepen their learning about their authority, roles, and leadership in groups. Authority is permission to work on behalf of others. Roles are behavioral commitments persons enact so a group can achieve its purpose. This learning opportunity offers participants an in-depth experience of the effects of authority and roles upon their leadership in groups.

Professionals from many career fields use group relations to enhance their ability to effectively enact their roles. Teachers, clergy, military officers, therapists, chaplains, first-responders, consultants, professors, attorneys, corporate executives, physicians, students, politicians, community activists, change agents, social psychologists, and health-care providers have used group relations. Participants may explore how dynamics of culture, family of origin, class, ethnicity, region, gender, race, ability, religion, sexual orientation, and world events influence their roles in groups.

Taking up our roles is often met with positive and negative responses, and we can experience feelings like acceptance, loneliness, respect, derision, love, and envy. These feelings impact our sense of agency, belonging, and competence. Group Relations provides a laboratory in which we can use these feelings to facilitate new ways to take up and hold roles that accompany leading and following in groups.

### **What is the learning method?**

Twelve participants, a convenor, four mentors, and an administrator will learn about group relations by doing group relations. This follows a transformative learning pedagogy, an experiential process that invites participants to examine their roles in emerging group dynamics and consider whether one role or another supports the group's goal. Clarifying or shifting one's role — versus changing one's identity — serves as evidence of learning. The practice of consciously choosing one's role becomes a competence in group relations.

As participants progress through successive sessions, their experiences of role holding, boundary keeping, working, and the group's own dynamics will be like those in outside life with an exception: the opportunity to collaborate with others to examine what is happening as it happens. To be and to think. As groups begin to be more aware of the dynamics they're experiencing, mentors will provide theoretical structure by suggesting videos, readings, and other resources.

In addition to the dynamics of role taking, other common group patterns can emerge. Examples include splitting of one part of a group from others, scapegoating, groupthink, the unseeable,

thing(s) that cannot be spoken to, and counter-task behavior. Everything that happens is open to inquiry.

At the end of each learning session a reflection period supports sensemaking. Participants will be encouraged to keep a journal. The learning is experiential and reflective. Staff and participants will work together to make sense of the group's efforts and explore theories that describe observable and often repeating ways that groups do work and avoid it. There are no right answers. There is no grading. There is discourse, sharing, and reflection. The task is learning.

### **How might I be changed?**

Group Relations pays attention to factors like time and space boundaries, and the effects of rigid versus permeable boundaries. It attends to how authority works--who in a group is authorized to speak, and who is silent, for example. If someone is always the first to talk, participants notice that and query how or why the group put that participant in that role.

Group Relations attends to what is present, and what is missing; to what is on task, and what is avoided. It recognizes that each participant affects the group as a whole. Participants notice feelings and experiences in themselves that they assume are unique, and when they report them to the group can be surprised to find that others are having the same experience. Similarly, small groups find that their own experience parallel

The value of this learning opportunity shows most evidently in how a participant takes up a consultant stance. This looks like a person who is able to use experiences of their inner world to evaluate group dynamics, use their emotions to facilitate the creation of a hypothesis about group dynamics, offer a hypothesis with supporting data that invites others to explore what a group is working on, and to create an intervention to help the group move towards task completion. The focus on the consultant stance presents participants with a realistic experience of leading change efforts.

### **Disclaimer:**

This module is intended to be useful for those who have already experienced group relations events and are in leader or follower roles in groups. This learning module is not intended to be a complete preparation for role-taking as a group relations consultant. Its completion is not a guarantee of future employment as a Group Relations consultant.

The process of certification or obtaining continuing education credits (CEUs) is under development.

This is not a substitute for any professional mental health courses of action.



This learning opportunity adheres to respect for human dignity no matter gender, class, race, region, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, language, education, or creed. Our belief is we can discuss sensitive and uncomfortable cultural and historical experiences without denigrating others. If such an offense occurs, we support the active pursuit of restorative processes as soon as possible.