

THE POWER OF THE DOUBLE CIRCLE



A Guide to the Supportive
Person Group Process

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Preface

“All relationships change the brain - but most important are the intimate bonds that foster or fail us, altering the delicate circuits that shape memories, emotions and that ultimate souvenir, the self.”

- Diane Ackerman (American poet)

“Your brain sends out vibrations all the time, and your thoughts affect your life and other people's. They pick up these thoughts and get changed by them. That's why, say, a pacifist gets caught up in a riot situation. It's a field of vibrations - you can 'feel' someone else's thoughts when close to them.”

- Bruce Lipton (American biologist)

Phil's Story

Throughout most of my adult life, I have been in professions that were centered on helping others. Early in my career, I was a

family physician with a practice based in southern Mississippi. For ten years I worked with Head Start children as part of my regular medical practice. Head Start is a program that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parental involvement services to low-income children and their families. The program's services and resources are designed to foster stable family relationships, enhance children's physical and emotional wellbeing, and establish an environment in which strong cognitive skills can be developed.

In retrospect, I recall how many politically astute people bitterly fought the Head Start program. Subsequently, I believe that programs such as Head Start could have helped to prevent many of the incarcerations of inmates I treated in the Florida state prison system. In 1960, I left my family practice and enrolled in the residency program in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Florida. Following the completion of my residency requirements, I became an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry. In this position, I was heavily involved in the

training of medical students, psychiatric residents, nurses, and a broad cross-section of other mental health professionals as well.

During the last ten years of my professional life, I served as a staff psychiatrist in the state of Florida prison system.

I absorbed a great amount of information and gained extensive valuable experience from service in each of these venues. That knowledge and experience served as the primary objective in writing this book. I am especially interested in describing the development of a group process that my colleagues and I designed for use in stressful human relations environments. It is known as The Supportive Person Group Process (SPGP). My interest in the process can be traced back to my days at the University of Florida.

While performing my training and administrative duties in the Department of Psychiatry, I became very interested in group dynamics and began to develop a program that we identified as Supportive Person Group Process (SPGP). The book you are reading was inspired by a desire to write about what is and has been happening in my life from a personal and professional

perspective. I am a recovering alcoholic, a father, a widower, a retired psychiatrist, and former country doctor. When I look for answers to important questions about life's meaning, I am looking for something from the heart. When I say, "written from the heart" it is with humility and compassion, as well as a strong sense of urgency inasmuch as I have reached an 80-year-old mindset. This does not imply any form of frenzy, but rather a firm sense of urgency about what I need to do to make it on this planet for a few more years. As for now, it is with considerable excitement that I bring to light the SPGP as a method of therapy that I had let lie fallow for many years.

Shelby's Story

As long as I can remember, I have been a spiritual seeker. I was strongly influenced by my paternal grandparents back home in Kentucky. My grandmother was my childhood source of inspiration and unconditional love. My grandfather was a Disciples of Christ minister. He and my grandmother studied together at the Lexington Theological Seminary. Although women couldn't be

ordained at the time, my grandmother had an important ministry of her own. She held Wednesday night prayer group meetings in the basement of my grandfather's church, and even had her own Christian radio show on a local station at one time.

I saw my grandparents as being vitally important to their small rural community in the Appalachian hills. There were few psychologists, counselors, or social workers in eastern Kentucky in those days. Whenever members of their church became ill or needed money, my grandparents were always available to help provide pastoral counseling, hospital visits, or other support. From my point of view, my grandparents exemplified how a beloved community should be.

When I was growing up, I always knew that I wanted to be in the helping professions. I went to nursing school and also earned a degree in Psychology. I worked as a charge nurse in the crisis stabilization and detox units at a community mental health center, and later as a counselor in a substance abuse treatment program at a women's prison. I led a weekly therapy group at the prison.

Sometimes my groups were effective, and my patients were actively engaged in the discussion and seemed to feel better afterwards. But at other times, the conversation fell flat. People shifted in their seats and a few even nodded off to sleep.

I wanted to learn more about group therapy, in order to make a bigger impact and be more effective as a group leader. I enrolled in a graduate level program in psychiatric nursing at the University of Florida. I learned a lot about the theories and principles of individual and group psychotherapy. I also became a member of a Unitarian Universalist church, and through this organization I learned how important lay led support groups can be in significantly improving people's lives.

Small group ministries are a vital part of many Unitarian Universalist congregations. In these groups, ten or twelve people meet regularly, usually biweekly or monthly, to reflect on and discuss significant life topics. I found that small groups are great places to get to know other people, and to get to know myself

better as well. Over time, participants in these groups often develop deep connections with one another.

In the small groups, conversations are respectful and caring, and can lead to a greater understanding of life. In each session, facilitated by a member, all participants have an opportunity to share their perspectives, tell their stories, and listen deeply.

Anyone who is sad, lonely, fearful, or dismayed can feel sustained by fellow group members, regardless of their religious affiliation or beliefs.

Through small group ministry, I heard my commission to care, to build community, and to heal. I believe that groups of ten or twelve people at a time engaging in powerful relationship-building practices can create healthier individuals, families and friendships, and bring communities together to ultimately transform the world. The double circle adds a special dimension to the self-help and support group experience. We are excited about sharing this process with you in this book.

The SPGP

We are now ready to bring this group process forward. This is partly because we recognize that there are stimulating new developments in understanding how the brain works but also because we are being pressured from corporations and government agencies to be more productive without increased compensation. As psychiatry appears to be falling apart before our eyes, a broader and deeper effort to nurture our mental health is finding its way through a bottom-up process in a multitude of self-help groups. With the SPGP, we hope to shed some light on how people communicate their feelings through conversational sharing. It is acknowledged that many people today are feeling overwhelmed and are in search of new methods for dealing with mental health problems. There are several books just out looking at dyadic relationships, or the power of two, as a method for dealing with the problem of being overwhelmed. Dyadic relationships are simply an attempt to work effectively as a pair rather than as a single individual.

The supportive person group process is just that kind of effort. With one person supporting another in a group session, they find that they need to develop techniques for being supportive rather than simply meddling in one another's affairs. What began in the 1970s as an effort to deal with mental health workers and others in a busy psychiatric service has become available to us to use as a learning tool for becoming more effective in dyadic relationships.

There are many ways to explain bottom-up processing, but for the purpose of understanding how the process works in group situations, the evidence is clear that emotions are activated more strongly in bottom-up processing than top-down processing. Lofty and often incomprehensible statements come from top-down processing, such as psychological theories from single theorists, like Freud. But bottom-up processing come from a deeper emotional level and is strongly felt rather than simply thought about and easily discarded. Bottom-up processing is also more democratic than top-down processing. It is like a grassroots effort and in many ways similar to Alcoholics Anonymous.

At present, science is expanding our knowledge about how the brain functions through neuroimaging. We are also becoming more aware of simple techniques in human interaction, which can improve our lives by being involved in quiet conversation or in groups such as AA. We now have the tools to watch the human brain in action through the miracle of functional magnetic imaging (fMRI). Science and technology have made it possible for us to follow emotions and thoughts as they travel through the brain; however, the real test is how we sense what is going on in each other through the magic of just being close and socially intimate. We can get 20 hugs and know how it feels. Now we can also find, through an fMRI, which parts of the brain light up in response to these feelings of appreciation and affection. One of the most startling recent findings is that the aging brain can set up new areas to store memory in the right brain even while the memory area in the left-brain has gone into decay and disuse. Many mysteries lie ahead of us that may someday be solved by the fMRI; however,

this brief discussion is not focused on technology, but rather on human interaction at a very elemental level.

It is also important to note that the discussion presented in this chapter is focused on group processes and not necessarily on group psychotherapy only. There is an intelligence in groups that is at first difficult to see, and that can never be seen unless you actually participate in a group. Our thoughts are communicated not simply by words, but we are finding that through the medium of the fMRI these thoughts can be transmitted from person to person without so much as a word being uttered. Others can understand our thoughts without words, just as we can somehow be aware of someone standing silently behind us. With this Supportive Person Group Process, we hope to shed some light on how people communicate with their feelings and body language, as well as with what they say, and perhaps become as astute as some of our dogs.

Anyone who spends a lot of time with a cat or a dog will know that they are capable of reading our moods extremely well, and this is because they are always feeling and reacting to our

emotions, as well as observing our behaviors. This is one of the reasons that many people feel so close to their pets. They feel like their cat or dog just “gets them.” There is also a popular notion that a dog is a good judge of character and will not befriend someone he doesn’t trust. This is an excellent example of the way animals are easily attuned to people.

During my stint as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Florida (1976 - 1983), I had to provide inpatient clinical experiences for the medical students and residents. The question that kept nagging me and the other staff members was how can we educate and/or treat this menagerie of groups we had on our Service. This was a considerable challenge to the staff, because there were so many students and residents, and the patients, who needed to learn as much as possible about psychotherapy. In addition to patients, on any given day our unit often included faculty members, psychiatric residents, nurses, and medical students, and a host of other mental health professionals. Working with this diverse collection of people was indeed

challenging. We had to find ways to communicate what we knew about both individual and group therapies.

During my psychiatric residency, one of my colleagues kept urging me to attend the summer sessions of the National Training Labs (NTL) located in Bethel, Maine. I eventually went to the Lab meetings, and the result was a total conviction that group processes and group therapies will be our ultimate pathway to mental and spiritual health. Spiritual health will be discussed in Chapter IX. Many of the ideas presented in this guide have evolved through my experience at the National Training Labs. In 1947, psychologist Kurt Lewin developed the T-group or sensitivity training group. He believed that increased awareness of oneself and others could be accomplished through facilitated group discussions, especially when individual differences are accepted and group members practice appreciation of one another. The development of the Supportive Person Group Process (SPGP) was influenced by the T-groups.

In the 1960s, a considerable amount of psychiatric training was committed to educating future psychiatrists so that they could become psychoanalysts in the tradition of Freud. We are now in a different era that is devoted to promulgating new diagnoses and new medications to combat the assumed new diagnoses. Since the 1960s we have moved abruptly from discovering and nurturing the patient's individual positive personality features to stamping out, in cookie-cutter fashion, a diagnosis based on a checklist and yielding a convenient (to the drug companies) medication treatment.

The word 'supportive' requires some clarification. Generally, the failure in this process is seen as one person meddling in another person's business; however, I found while working with the staff of the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind that a staff member who knew the student well could be very supportive. Being supportive is very delicate process, and the teachers and counselors at the school were amazingly adept at it. But they became supportive through an understanding of the sensitivity of the

disabled children, as well as the understanding that the students were willing to be supported if the counselors knew them as they understood themselves.

In this short book, we will bring to your attention both the mystery of the interaction between people at a very fundamental level and a method of exploring human interaction with a simple technique within a particular style of group process. This is done through use of the group configuration by moving the circles inward and outward and also by moving the individual members of the group inward and outward to provide perspective to each participant. The mystery of the double circle happens by the manner in which the flow of energy among participants creates a balance for the group and smoothes the jagged egos of each individual. It is akin to a dance, and can be seen as overcoming the awkwardness that one experiences when learning to dance.

Many people today are feeling overwhelmed. It is obvious that many divorces stem from expectations of each other in the marriage that are simply beyond one's reach. We are also seeing

our young people back away from society because they feel overwhelmed. We now look with confidence toward new methods for dealing with these problems.

One of the paradoxes of serving others is that the serving person loses energy and the person being served gains energy. The better the process of serving, the more tired at the end of the day the serving person feels. This is why many people hold back in giving their full attention and energy in the serving role. Intuitively they know what can happen at the end of the day. They feel extraordinarily drained when they have done a good job. This is why we may avoid serving others at times and just go through the motions. This can be a real problem for some people who are trying to do their best to serve others.

One way that one can counteract this problem is to provide methods for energizing those serving. A frequent group process involving the serving ones can be a remarkable rejuvenating force. There are many companies and other organizations that practice this method of rejuvenation using a variety of group methods. In

1947, the T-group was developed for this very purpose. T-group founder Kurt Lewin believed that increased awareness of oneself and others could be accomplished through facilitated group discussions, especially when individual differences are accepted and group members practice appreciation of one another. The Supportive Person Group Process (SPGP) has its roots in the T group model. In this guide, we will be discussing the SPGP in detail.

Before getting too deeply into the issue of supportive person group, it is very important that we at least try to grasp the difference between content of the group and process of the group. Specifically, content would be that the group would contain 12 or 16 members, with their chairs arranged in a circular fashion. The group would be made up of people discussing a particular topic. The process is more difficult to understand. What occurs is essentially an unseen moving and often complex interaction between members. For instance, in baseball there is a very complex interaction process that goes on between the area of

second base and first base. The content can be the first baseman, the second baseman, or the shortstop most commonly, but what they go through in order to complete the double play is a process. Some of this can be so rapid that it is difficult to see how it actually happened. When a mother is attempting to make contact with a new infant she is participating in a process that cannot be readily seen; however, it is easy enough to see that there is a mother and a baby in the same place doing something, but we do not always know exactly what they are doing.

We live in a system that is based on economics and extremely short-term thinking and planning. If we were to stop and think for a moment, our world system could be based on raising healthy human beings. We fail over and over again to spend money on the very young as in Head Start programs and jump headlong into spending it on fantastic wars and dreadful prison costs. If one thinks of costs in four-year segments, it remains seemingly intelligent to stick with the economics but if one thinks in terms of the lifespan of a human being then we are clearly on the wrong

track. But that is the way of the world. It is sometimes not the one we often desire.

Yet another story leads me to bring up the matter of personality. My wife and I brought seven children into the world with such strikingly diverse personalities that I believe current personality theories must be reviewed in detail. I ask a very simple question concerning personality, but the answer requires a detailed explanation. The question is: Would it not be preferable that we approach mental illness treatment from a strengthening of personality approach rather than from a diagnosis of pathology approach? The personality is part of the human immune system, and as time ravages on within chronic mental illness, the personality is gradually eroded and misshapen. The patient's pathology is not the pivotal issue. The discovery of balance and inner strength within an individual demands our reverent attention. I say reverent because we as humans through centuries of trial and error have gradually developed a soul. We find that this soul development is somehow crucial to the survival of our planet, as

we know it. Perhaps the soul is the seat of what we are all about and once we have been damaged, we become tools of the state.

Our high priorities in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Florida included a desire to provide an inpatient clinical experience to those who functioned on our unit; however, this was challenging because there were so many different professional groups. The ideas presented in this guide have evolved through my experience in National Training Labs (NTL) and, as such, emphasize the enhancement and enrichment of the personality, in contrast to waging war on mental illness.

Dyadic relationships are simply an attempt to work effectively as a pair rather than as a single individual. The supportive person group process is just that kind of effort. With the person supporting another in the group session they find they need to develop techniques for being supportive rather than simply meddling in the partner's affairs. What began in the 1970s as an effort to deal with medical students and a busy psychiatric service has now become

available to us to use as a learning tool for becoming more effective in the dyadic relationship.

This book has been in the works for a long period of time. Group therapy has weathered a period of virtually being stamped out by health insurance company regulations and denials; however, the success of Alcoholics Anonymous, which is essentially a form of group therapy, continues to be outstanding. A recent AA meeting in Atlanta drew 60,000 participants. So we have written this book to help those working with a rather complex form of group process to better understand why and how they can proceed. It will be an evolving process and hopefully for the better. Hopefully, on close inspection the users of this group will find that it is helpful in stressful situations that involve co-workers, caregivers, parents, and spouses.

Reference

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Introduction

“Bottom up processing assumes that there is essential intelligence in our genes that is to be mined and distilled, and hopefully never ignored.”

- Phil Springer

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.”

- St. Francis of Assisi

As previously stated in the preface, this book is about an instrument, in that this instrument is a form of group process. Although it is complex, in some ways it is also amazingly simple.

We have been thinking a great deal about what an instrument really is. Is it a knife or a fork, or can it be simply an idea? A gun can be an instrument and can be used for either aggression or defense. An instrument can be many things. In a well-known Christian prayer, St. Francis beseeches God to make him become an instrument of God’s peace. So an instrument could be a person.

This book is about an instrument that we call the Supportive Person Group Process.

In 1978, when we were just beginning to use this method, I had no idea what the eventual ramifications would be. A bottom-up approach is the piecing together of ideas to give rise to more complex systems, thus turning the original concepts into subsets of the emerging system. Bottom-up processing is a type of information processing based on incoming data from the environment to form a perception.

From a cognitive psychology perspective, information enters the eyes in one direction (sensory input, or the "bottom") and is then turned upside down into an image by our brain that we can recognize and interpret. One might imagine a bottom-up type of phenomenon happening in 1905 as people suffering from tuberculosis gathered for support.

They came into the room one by one, slowly and haltingly, as though at first they did not see each another or at least acknowledge one another's presence. But as providence would

have it, a conversation ensued amongst the several tuberculosis patients in Dr. Pratt's waiting room. In 1905 there was no doubt about the ominous nature of tuberculosis; a scourge at the beginning of an otherwise hopeful century, tuberculosis was a killer unmerciful in its pace. This was a waiting room at Massachusetts General Hospital where Dr. Pratt saw his tuberculosis patients one at a time as was customary. Who would have thought that this moment in time was the beginning of group therapy? Dr. Pratt was not a psychologist or a psychiatrist but an internist, so the scene was at least improbable.

Two things happened on that day in 1905 in Dr. Pratt's waiting room. The most important thing was that the people with the problem (reaction to tuberculosis) were unconsciously developing a solution and a new technique while an observer (in this case, Dr. Pratt) saw the results of the conversation among these gravely ill tuberculosis patients and offered to bring them into his office as a group. Thus began group therapy, but only later did it become a part of the fields of psychiatry and psychology.

Happenstance is sometimes the wheelhouse of reality. The origin of group for self-help and healing began much earlier, however. We will explore that phenomenon as a central theme in this guide. There is a mystery in how right-mindedness arises out of a two-person encounter, which we seek to explore in the Supportive Person Group Process or SPGP.

Some years have passed since I first found that Pratt had a personal history. I should say I found that Pratt had a history that I was willing to spend the time and effort to look into. He was certainly not a novice in the psychological arena as I had supposed. He had spent the summers of several years with a close friend and colleague, Joseph Dejerine, who was a neurologist in Paris. They spent vacation time in Switzerland and Pratt learned a great deal from Dejerine during those summers. Am I too presumptive to surmise that Pratt took some of the substance of Dejerine's remarkable efforts into that first meeting with tuberculosis patients? Dejerine believed that human emotion was far more important in healing than thinking. Pratt carried this into his early

groups with extraordinary effect. But there would be a fox in the henhouse when Freud came to the United States, and with a few negative remarks he placed a damaging blow to the emerging concept of group therapy. Much of this guide is about the secular versus spiritual debate that has continued to plague psychological healing to this day. As Pratt was establishing community, Freud was basking in his theory of the psychology of the individual. We are now reaping the harvest of an egoist society with hero worship and frequent wars promulgated by leaders who must defend their ego or promote it to win the favor of the people.

My friend and colleague, Meyer Maskin, told me that it is easy to be original if you do not read much. He read a great deal and claimed no originality in his writing. I do not pretend to bring originality in this guide but I do hope to bring some things together that seem to be dangling in the year 2016. What is worth considering is that you may get more help from someone sitting next to you on a bus than from a professional. At least you are assured that it is likely that you are next to a peer on the bus and

someone who has some of the same experiences. The professional, on the other hand, may only have faint recollections of a bus ride. This is in part because of the dropping of the shield on the bus, while holding tightly to your secrets in the professional office.

One purpose of this guide is to bring those of us who suffer addiction and mental infirmity closer together with those who have not been bestowed with a mental illness diagnosis. More often than not, people who have not been diagnosed with a mental disorder claim fundamental differences in their own nature compared to those with mental illness. I hesitate because of the gulf of misunderstanding that has brought strife to the mind-body-spirit healers for the 20th century. I do not wish to sully that battlefield; however, should I remain silent, then I would have been cowardly and avoidant. This effort is an attempt to clarify the field in which we live. I suspect that it will take many voices from many clinicians in the healing arts to counter what is happening in psychology and psychiatry today. Psychiatry and psychology have entered a dreadful place in history. They are busy sealing off the

semipermeable membrane of our consciousness, which in a more natural world could allow feelings and hesitant thoughts to emerge from the designated patient. Whatever is haltingly uttered is too often received and sullied beyond recognition. I would call this era the one of confrontation, which drives the most tender of egos into the back room, the back porch, and too often into clouds of harmful substances such as alcohol and poorly designed drugs. Those who are the most semipermeable, as the cell membrane is, are the most vulnerable.

After the initial gains made by William James, Joseph Pratt, Carl Jung, and many others, a secular professional group, headed up by Freud, became quite vocal and obvious in the early 1900s. They attempted with considerable success to disenfranchise the spiritual element, which I contend is necessary for human health and healing. The spiritual element could be described as the semipermeable membrane that guards the entrance of every living cell. Many mental health professionals disguise and present themselves under the rubric of professionalism with considerable

anti-spiritual bias. They ask for entrance into your thoughts and feelings. But we as frightened individuals frequently close the membrane down and shut out the professional doctor only to turn and open up to the trusted friend. Why not turn the matter over to the expert? Why turn this matter over to the wisdom of the single-cell organism that developed over millions of years on this planet? And how does this simple membrane let some things in and keep other things out?

To this day, psychiatry is fostered by the pharmaceutical industry, a variety of governmental agencies, and medical and psychological societies. This is a difficult problem to tackle, but many at the grassroots level must accept the challenge. I accept this challenge and I am too old to be shamed into quiet submissiveness. This effort is neither scientific nor unscientific. I believe what my father told me to be true: *Science is a method of discovery, nothing more and nothing less.* Some of the arguments mounted in this guide use the scientific method, but I do not consider them to be science. Through all the years that I knew my

father, he never mentioned God but never disparaged religion. I will continue to seek God but have found only indirect evidence of the reality of God. Much of this guide is about such indirect evidence.

Another purpose of this project is to encourage the discovery process and, at the very least, attenuate the territorial process. Joseph Campbell delighted in the discovery of cultures and religions but took neither ownership nor badge of religious preference. Our healing establishment has allowed greed to run the show. I intend to illustrate some of that process and suggest how it can be countered. I also believe that personal responsibility has been foreshadowed by an avaricious legal system, which is heavily participating in killing our spiritual field of play. I propose to offer some targets to the folks who are suffering the politics of commercialism, the religiosity within some churches, the presumptiveness of government, and the impersonal way we are unfortunately treating each other. It is time for a change. It is time

for a great healing potential to be unleashed without malice and without the notion of winning.

But how will this happen? As people across the country meet in small groups, whether for knitting, canning vegetables, or deep psychological exchange, they bring spirit with them. They bring their local knowledge, what happened to their child at school and what happened to them at the tax collector's office, and too often what did not happen at the doctor's office. They speak of hours spent in the ER of the local hospital only to find little that is of comfort. The people who meet and share their common plights bring what is needed for this and the next generation. But they are not buying into what is being sold in the secular and medical marketplace.

What we can do is to set the record straight as to how we have come to trust knowledge from the experts too much and trust knowledge and experience from each other too little. We can learn to use our unlimited resources to express heartfelt concerns and receive heartfelt answers. We hope to show that in the small group,

imagery is laid bare and idolatry is thrown out the side door. But seeking the nurturance and the opportunity to compassionately share our experiences within the small group is worth the price of regular attendance. We can trust each other's experience more readily than we can trust the theory of an expert because we have knowledge of each other's experience.

I have put off until the last paragraph with humble hesitancy a bomb rolling into the center of the "field of play". This is the notion that I have carried for at least 30 years: *Successful therapy emerges as a change in the personality rather than in the correction of an element of a defined illness such as schizophrenia, major depression, or the newly-hatched attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD)*. This is not a new idea but an ancient one. The concept of personality change was introduced by the apostle Paul more than 2000 years ago in the New Testament in Romans 5:3 with the following: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope". My recollection of

the therapeutic miracles I have witnessed is in the process of the agony of tribulation followed by agony of patience and of prolonged experience, which inevitably leads to hope. This change in personality arrives as the appointed patients begin to work from within their souls. Centuries later, Viktor Frankl would write in a very similar vein in his guide *Man's Search for Meaning*: "Thus suffering completely fills the human soul and conscious mind, no matter whether the suffering is great or little. Therefore the 'size' of human suffering is absolutely relative".

I will attempt to bring the Alcoholics Anonymous message as a continuing baton, sharing about the struggle between our divided selves and between each other. It is a constantly evolving process; however, much of the success of Alcoholics Anonymous could be attributed to its steadfast application of the Twelve Steps in the original form over at least eight decades.

I wish to begin this guide with an apology for my failing to have dug deeply enough into the body of literature concerning group therapy to come forth with any truly new ideas; however,

this work is not only intended for a regular audience of readers but also a series of notes to my former patients, students, colleagues, family and friends and enemies (by chance alone). Many conversations have been broken off when I chased after another windmill without completing conversations with many of you. The target audience for this book also includes those who find themselves in a trap made by the pressure of supervisors and corporate moguls and by politicians who have been elevated in the scheme of things to a position where they no longer see the big picture but claim to know the big picture nevertheless.

The advent of self-publishing offers all a chance at writing a guide that will find its way into someone's lap. I hope to draw you in with a warm tone and a sharing presumption. God may know how desperately I have wanted to do this. There have been many times that I have held back and not said something that I knew at the time should have been uttered.

In Chapter I, we will undertake the task of what group process is about and how group therapy has evolved. I hope to guide you

along a path of evolutionary psychology demonstrating the development of the family and tribal relationships into the 21st century morass of countless individuals seeking home.

“If small groups are included in the decision-making process, then they should be allowed to make decisions. If an organization sets up teams and then uses them for purely advisory purposes, it loses the true advantage that a team has: namely, collective wisdom.”

— James Surowiecki

In Chapter II, we will discuss how psychiatry and psychology have failed us. I will give a picture of confusion in psychiatry in particular through its attempt to accommodate to the insurance industry so as to achieve higher income.

“Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world...would do this, it would change the earth.”

— William Faulkner

In Chapter III, we will bring forth the issue of personality as we awkwardly conceive of it in our current psychology and psychiatry literature, and we will recommend some fresh looks at personality. Is it just something in your high school yearbook or something much more? In this chapter, we will discuss personality as the eventual moderator of our life path.

“The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.”

— Carl Jung

In Chapter IV, we will discuss how Alcoholics Anonymous has become a worldwide stable institution and present some suggestions on why this has come about. Again, the issue of personality will be raised and how the principles of AA have a bearing on the long-term results because of the changes in personality seen in members of AA.

In Chapter V, we will discuss some of the features of AA sponsorship and the similarity to the supportive person (dyad) relationship.

“The world is not comprehensible, but it is embraceable: through the embracing of one of its beings” - Martin Buber

In Chapter VI, we will explore the basis for the double circle and how it functions. A variety of issues are discussed, including the relationship within the supportive person dyad and its effect on the ego function of each individual in the dyad.

“The individuals in great dyads will be very different from each other and very much alike. These simultaneous extremes generate the deep rapport and energizing friction that define a creative pair.”

— Joshua Wolf Shenk

Chapter VII explores the rationale for support groups, with or without a problem focus such as alcoholism or drug addiction. In the words of the comic strip character Pogo, *“We have met the enemy and it is us!”* But on a more serious level, we are faced with

alienation from each other via historical acceleration via rampant commercialism.

Chapter VIII presents the notion that through an understanding of our evolutionary past we can find ways to evolve without so much guilt over character defects and the compulsion to throw ourselves away because of presumed worthlessness.

“It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change.”

— Charles Darwin

Chapter IX is an attempt to shed light on the raging conflict between secular and spiritual roots in psychology and psychiatry. This polarization is not necessarily a bad thing, but is a part of our world of debate about major issues throughout the history of civilization. We have seen many religions come and go as well as forms of psychology that have not stood the test of time. Although the secularization of psychology and psychiatry has been considered useful for clarity of purpose and scientific rigor, many clinicians (such as the authors of this text) consider spiritual issues

vital to the therapeutic process. There has been a recent resurgence of cognitive behavioral therapy within psychology; however, there has been a continuing spiritual focus within self-help groups. Had it not been for Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve-step groups, spiritual treatments might have been snuffed out.

In Chapter X we outline the group configuration that is unique in Supportive Person Group Process. SPGP seeks to help the participants overcome shyness and underdeveloped ego as well as attenuate the effect of those whose ego is so strong that it is taking over the group. The SPGP has features that are at first difficult to see but ultimately serve to bring group process to a higher level than conventional group. This is accomplished through positioning or configuration. In Chapter X we also develop the idea that a pair of participants can bring each of the individuals in the pair to a greater strength of interaction as well as discovering the altruism of being supportive of another person.

Chapter XI discusses the potential benefits of using the SPGP with special populations such as people who work in high-stress

occupations. We also discuss the possibility of future research that will validate the benefits and outcomes of the Double Circle SPGP model.

Last but not least, Chapter XII will provide a conclusion and recap of the rationale for the Double Circle group process and how it can be used in a wide variety of settings. We will briefly summarize the benefits of this model and our vision for transforming groups and communities through the use of this very special process.

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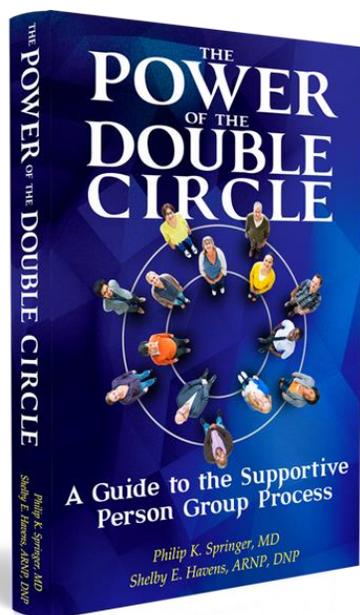
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