

IN ENGLISH · INFORMAL GROUPS FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Free adaptation by Carolina Corada for the studying/learning of A Course in Miracles, for the Ibiza Enlight Festival 2019 (Translation by Jose L. Rodriguez)

Taken from Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom, Johnson, Johnson, & Smith [9]

KEY ASPECTS FOR THE COMMISSIONING OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

One of the forms of COLLABORATIVE learning is to organize participants in Base Groups. These are groups that are formed at the beginning of the session, with the main objective that each student has, in the first instance, some colleagues to share and resolve doubts about the Course. This is very important, especially in the first days, when newcomers can feel a little alone, in an environment unknown to them. These groups can also be used for specific tasks. Below, you will find some tips that will help you organize and use Base Groups.

1.- The creation of groups

From the standing group, in a circle, calculate the number of Base Groups you want to have.

FOR EXAMPLE: If there are 35 people, you can create 5 groups of 7 people in each group. The way to do this is as follows; In a circle people call a number in order: one, two, three ... until they reach number "seven" and start again. Once each person has their number, the facilitator/teacher calls those who are number "one" to meet with the other "number ones" by bringing their chairs together; the number "twos" to meet and so on until the seven Base Groups are formed.

In terms of group size, ideal groups go from five to eight.
The class / session is then started with a meeting of the Base Group.

2.- Using the puzzle technique

Base Groups can be used to execute some specific learning activities. One of the most effective one is the puzzle technique, which, in broad terms, consists of the following:

-Select a section of The Course that can be reasonably divided in seven independent parts. Have each one of the group members be responsible for one on those parts.

For Example: Imagine that you decide to work or go deeper into the "Clarification of Terms" section of ACIM. Since there are 7 people per each Base Group, you can decide its contents in the following way:

(I SUGGEST the Festival Organizers to come up with the array of topics that we are going to work with and to communicate them to the teachers for their input, because we need to prepare the teaching materials in advance, for those who have not brought their books to the festival)

CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

- Person #1 gets 1. Mind-Spirit
- Person #2 gets 2. Ego-Miracle
- Person #3 gets 3. Forgiveness-The Face of Christ
- Person #4 gets 4. True Perception – Knowledge
- Person #5 gets 5. Jesus-Christ
- Person #6 gets 6. The Holy Spirit
- Person #7 gets 7. Epilogue (Clarification of terms)

-Individual work. Have each student do the individual work according to their assigned part of text. We give them some minutes to study the material, take notes, write questions down and highlight the ideas that are more interesting to them. (Circa. 20 minutes)

-Experts Meeting. If you have 7 Base Groups, each with 5 persons in them, then you also have 7 people who have read and studied the same section. Now it is time to organize the Experts Meeting: each of the participants who got the **1.Mind-Spirit** section, will get together in a new group. We call this group the "Experts Group". Everyone in this group will have studied the same material previously. We repeat the same process for each of the remaining sections. In this meeting, participants must share and help each other with their questions, and notes that they had taken from the previous phase. They will be able to consult the teachers, who will be available to answer them and help create collaboration links with the other "experts" in the group. The aim is to leave no question unanswered and that they can rely on their own "Experts Group" for a deep understanding of the material.

Presentation planning. Each participant needs now to prepare themselves to explain their assigned section to the others in their Base Group. The Teacher of God will visit each of the Experts Groups to help clarify any questions and to help with the presentation planning. (30-40 minutes). During this time together, the "experts" will choose a "representative" who will represent them at the end of the day in front of everyone.

-Back to the Base Group. Once the Experts Meeting is over, they happily say goodbye to each other and they go back to their Base Group, with the certainty that they will be able to teach the others in their Base Group the material they have thoroughly studied during the Experts Meeting.

-Base Group meeting. In this meeting, each participant takes the lead to explain/teach their part to the others in the group. (5-10 minutes per person)

ONCE THIS PART IS OVER, TAKE A 15 MINUTES COFFEE BREAK.

Final Presentation. Once each of the members of the Base Group have gotten the chance to teach their section to their group, all groups reunite in one big group, so that they can all hear the "presenters" from the Experts Groups. This will be the final presentation of the 7 Expert Groups delegates, one for each group. They present in front of the whole reunited group, in their own language, with simultaneous translation. (5 minutes per person).

With this technique you will note:

- Participants will get inspired and meet each other. They will also let go of the need to be in control to learn how to collaborate. They will also have a good time while doing it!
- The Experts Meetings will actively inspire conversations, collaborative learning in humbleness and sharing. You will specially note that the relinquishment of judgment can be attained faster and that salvation is a collaborative enterprise.
- Participants in their Base Groups feel empowered, as they become teachers for the other members of their same group. They grow in trust, by experiencing that the student is also the teacher.
- Shy students will feel supported and encouraged to find their own inner voice.
- Teachers of God succeed at having all participants experience their own progress with The Course.

3. Assign Roles

When participants face for the first time the challenge of working in a group, assigning specific roles beforehand can be found helpful. Here are a few roles that may come in handy:

Time controller: The person who will make sure that the group will not beat around the bush and finish the task on time.

Understanding Verifier: The person who will, every now and then, check that each of the members in the group are understanding everything and who will call the teacher when required.

Caller of Truth: Whenever a conflict arises between two or more participants because of the "need to be right", The Caller of Truth will stop the discussion and make an invitation to prayer in order to abandon any conflicts and the need to win an argument. This person will never lose sight of the importance of letting go of any conflict.

2. Final suggestions

The systematic use of collaborative learning techniques (and the Base Group technique in particular) will sensibly improve harmony, interaction and the need to be listen and be heard.

This technique is not without its difficulties, though. The more individualistic participants can offer resistance. It is important to explain to them all the details at the start of the session and what the goals are. It will not be difficult to come up with a reminder that says "Salvation is a collaboration enterprise", and we better get started, sooner rather than later.

Whenever the first misunderstandings in the group arise, think that those are the same problems we face in life itself. Instead of questioning whether or not these techniques should be used, observe how they bring about the perfect opportunity for your participants to develop the ability to rectify a group malfunctioning situation. Also consider that you are not alone in this problem.

Your brother goes with you.