



Tool: Group mentoring: The Fish Bowl.

Goals

Method for problem solving: group mentoring.

Structured method for enhancing reflection.

Conditions

It is important to emphasize that the procedure first and for all is meant to make the owner of the problem reflect on her/his problem in a new way. Giving advice is the second option.

Group members have the skill of asking open end questions.

Group members know the difference between closed, suggestive and advisory questioning and open questioning. Some training is necessary before engaging in the Fish Bowl.

The group may not be bigger than 12.

Process

5 minutes. Explain the working method of the Fish Bowl.

In the middle of the group 5/6 chairs are set in a circle.

One chair is for the owner of the problem, 3/4 chairs are for the helpers, one chair remains empty.

- Introduction phase.

2 minutes. The problem owner tells in some sentences about the problem she/he wants to share.

- Reflective phase.

20 minutes. The problem owner chooses 3 group members to sit in the circle to reflect on this problem.

The first helper asks an open question. The longer the problem owner has to think before answering the better. A direct answer can be a sign of lack of reflection perhaps due to the nature of the question.

The second helper asks an open question. Then the third helper does the same. From the outer circle of the group one person at the time can come and sit on the empty chair. She/he participates by asking also an open question and then leaves again letting the empty space to another participant from the outer circle.

Several rounds are made in questioning making the problem owner more and more reflective.

- Advisory phase.

20 minutes.

In silence each group member writes a short letter to the problem owner, starting with "If I were you, I would..." Advices are read out loud one by one by the adviser. No reactions from the problem owner are allowed.

- Reaction phase.

5 minutes. The problem owner reacts on the advices of the group, but only emphasizes the elements that have appealed to him or her.

The letters with the written advices are received by the problem owner.

Material

A room to sit in two circles of chairs. Individual writing paper and pencil.