

WORKING TOGETHER

THE MEETING OF TWO PERSONALITIES IS
LIKE THE CONTACT OF TWO CHEMICAL
SUBSTANCES...IF THERE IS ANY REACTION
BOTH WILL BE TRANSFORMED

C.G. Jung

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH ARTS

These notes outline a way of working together in groups, using cooperative enquiry and other principles to Build Community through Arts.

They are intended to be used in tandem with the “Exploring” workshop notes and the Facilitators Guides, and are for anyone who wants to build and strengthen their building community through arts practices.

We believe that people can be helped to realise their own creative potential to the benefit of themselves, others and the communities within which they work and live together.

Whatever the group and whatever the objectives, the tools here are all designed to help you build your community through arts.

CO-OPERATIVE ENQUIRY

The group process used in Building Community through Arts is that of **Co-operative Enquiry**: a repeatable cycle of **Idea - Action - Review**

A BCA co-operative enquiry involves:

- the formation of a group
- the agreement of an objective or objectives
- participants engaged in activities and enquiry - to meet this objective
- a review of the process and new ideas to consider for the next cycle of action...

A group might start small and grow over time as it builds on the learning and success of its first enquiries. These can become an ongoing concern, in which the group continues its enquiry and work indefinitely, or it might be a specific project that comes to a definite end. This could be alongside a goal such as a new working practice, or an exhibition or publication. or could close with an informal review discussion for participants.

“WHERE TWO PEOPLE ARE AGREED ON ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING, ONLY ONE OF THEM IS NECESSARY”

Wayne Dyer



THE GROUP PROCESS

A key focus for Building Community through Arts is the emphasis on the equality of all participants in the project. In practice, this entails:

- working in small groups of three, in which we interchange the roles of **Facilitator, Artist and Observer**.
- ensuring all participants have an opportunity to make suggestions and express their thoughts.



Three Standing Figures, Stefano da Verona 1435–38. Ink. Metropolitan Museum New York

GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

These six practices are very basic in establishing successful relationships and their strength comes from using them with increasing awareness. It is helpful to have a **personal journal** to record our use of these skills. This will help us to understand 'successes' and 'mistakes' in our practice. Both are important and can be built on in strengthening our community-building skills.

1 CO-OPERATIVE ENQUIRY

A repeatable cycle of IDEA, ACTION and REVIEW. The method gives an equal opportunity to all participants to make suggestions and to learn from their experiences together. Believing in the equal value of every person's contribution to the group, each in turn is encouraged to take the roles of **Artist**, **Facilitator**, and **Observer**. This approach has several possible outcomes. It heightens our awareness of our own attitudes and behaviour towards others. It challenges our stereotypes. It also, by encouraging each in turn to be Artist, gives us precious time in which to explore our own creativity with the support of others.

2 WHEN YOU ARE FACILITATING

The role of Facilitator is that of one who supports the Artist's process. Body language, including eye contact, open posture, breathing and a sense of 'being with' the other person is an eminently important way of silent communication that demonstrates the quality of our listening and our empathy. It shows that we are listening without interrupting the person whose turn it is to speak. Touch may also be important and when appropriate may help to promote relaxation or increase attention.

3 LISTENING

with strong attention to the other person and, if necessary, encouraging them to continue by reflecting their last phrase or choosing a previous phrase to focus on, supports them to explore and express their stories, feelings and thoughts. It is important to give the Artist space in which to develop their own creativity. By rotating the roles, the ethos of equality is carried into practice with the benefits of mutual exchange and support.

4 BE AWARE OF YOUR "VOICE"

Our history affects our language. When we communicate with each other in the present, we are unconsciously reminded of, and may be re-experiencing, former incidents or relationships in our lives. This leads us to use language that expresses, for example, the Nurturing or Critical Parent, or a Rebellious or Free Child. (These are the names Eric Berne gave to ego-states in *Games People Play*). Alternatively we may speak from a logical, reasonable and Adult state which Berne sees as the ideal attainment for us all in our dealings with each other.

The more awareness we have the more we can use these states to give our lives richness and variety. Being able to realise more of our own potential helps others too, as we live, work and create our communities.

5 DEALING WITH FEELINGS

Noticing our own feelings and realising they are separate and often different from others' is another important facet of developing our awareness. We can attempt to set aside or 'bracket' our own feelings so as not to affect our interaction with others inappropriately. It is important to speak about our feelings, and often, simply stating them relieves us of the intensity that may be too difficult to hold and might hinder our exchanges with each other. For instance, if another person is angry, while we could know and understand logically that this was not necessarily caused by us, a feeling of guilt or anger might be provoked and this would need to be bracketed for us to continue effectively. Becoming aware of and being able to handle our own emotions is part of developing what is often called 'emotional intelligence'.

6 REVIEW AND FEEDBACK

involves looking at what we have done or said, assessing its impact and expressing this to each other. This is sometimes known as self- and peer- assessment. Self-assessment is when each person, who knows themselves best and can assess most accurately when given the chance, shares their self-evaluation with another. Peer assessment is when people exchange comments and understandings of a shared experience with each other. This is a very effective way of achieving a joint evaluation of our relationships and the outcomes. This is a vital part of the process of building our communities together creatively.

MUTUAL RESPECT

We can show our respect for each other by:

- **Listening to each other carefully**
- **Speaking one at a time**
- **Keeping confidentiality** (what is said inside the group is not repeated outside the group without agreement)
- **Speaking from our own experience** (stick to using “I” and avoiding speaking for others, or generalising as when using “you,” “they,” “we,” “one”, or “ people”)
- **Joining in** (participation can be verbal or non-verbal. In a discussion we *can always* choose to pass, however, we all need to be aware of how we may be excluding ourselves or others)



Andy Warhol, "n.t. (Portraits of Andries Zwart and Jan van den Heuvel)", 1954. ink and graphite on paper. © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS)

"WE ARE SUN AND MOON, DEAR FRIEND; WE ARE SEA AND LAND. IT IS NOT OUR PURPOSE TO BECOME EACH OTHER; IT IS TO RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER, TO LEARN TO SEE THE OTHER AND HONOR HIM FOR WHAT HE IS: EACH THE OTHER'S OPPOSITE AND COMPLEMENT."

Hermann Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*

Other ways to keep the balance within the group include:

- **deciding together at the outset the membership of the group** and whether this is an open group, or closed to new members
- **starting each group session with a round** to hear from every member of the group what concerns them today. All listen but do not reply. It is important to hear from everybody. Members may always say 'pass' if they wish.
- **encouraging a balance of contributions.** It is useful if each member of the group becomes aware of how much they contribute, and support others to contribute too. If this becomes difficult to achieve, a round of feelings or thoughts on the subject in hand may help more people to participate.
- **valuing all contributions**, positive and negative, and supporting each other's authentic learning.

SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

A peer group is a group of equals and the facilitating or leader role can either be agreed at the beginning of a meeting or move around the group as people choose at the time. The facilitator can choose to ask for any help needed from the group, eg writing the agenda or timing the meeting or a specific item.

If your project involves holding meetings, these guidelines can help to ensure they remain constructive and productive:

- know the **planned length** of any meeting
- agree the **agenda** of a meeting, including timings for each item and helping each other to keep these. The agenda is best agreed at the beginning of a meeting or after the opening round of sharing. It is best well displayed, eg on the wall or a flip chart.
- endeavour to **stay the length of every meeting** and if that is not possible, to advise the group at the beginning of the meeting of reasons and time of leaving
- decide on **how to chart the meetings**, e.g. whether to work entirely on a flip chart and/or to have minutes written

VALIDITY CHECKS



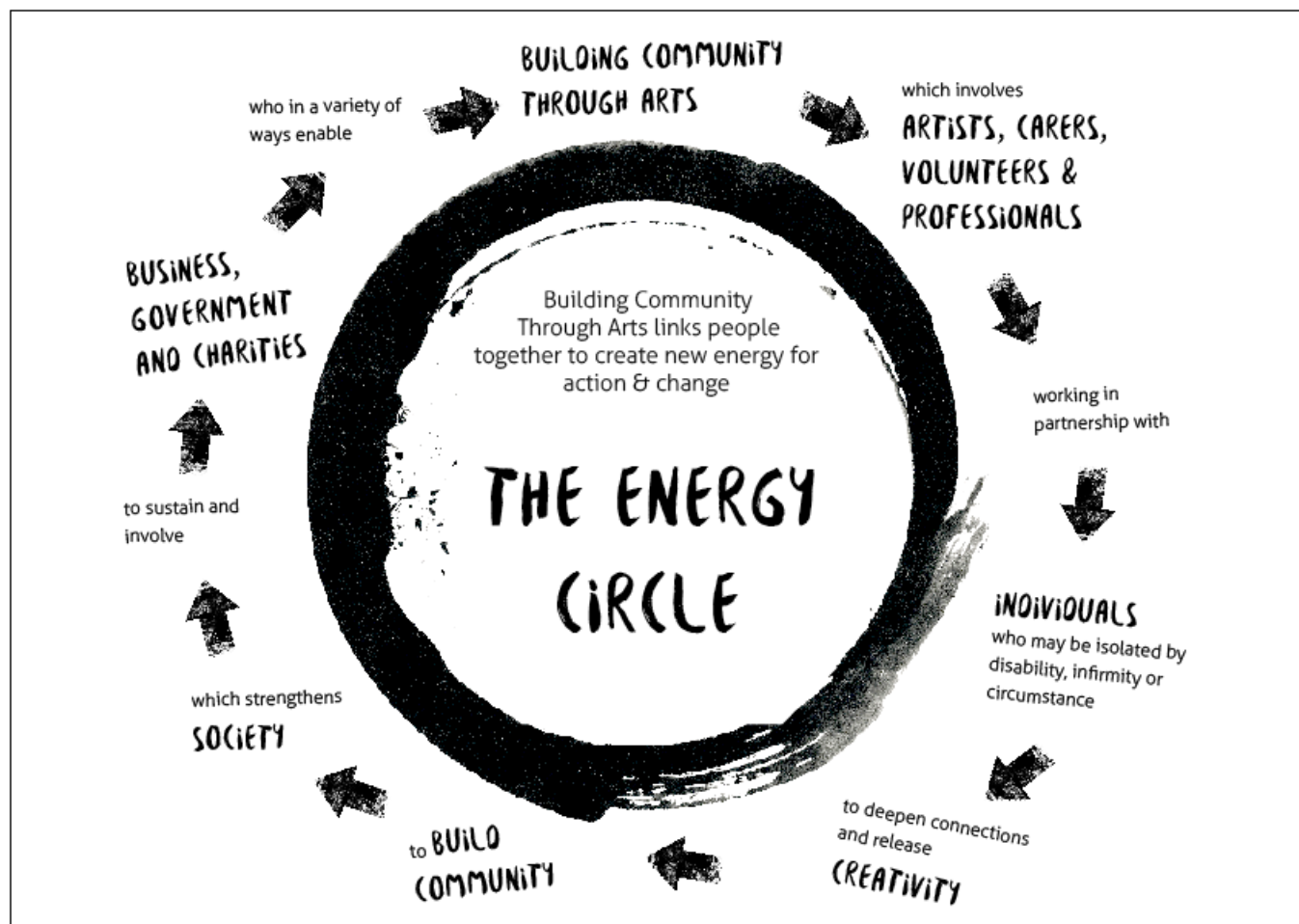
Three self-portraits, Zinaida Serebriakova 1914. Pencil

These are questions to keep in mind when working together. The basic question for each group member is “Am I seeing all the places where the enquiry, or my part in it, could go off course?”

- What is the balance between action and review?
- In what way and I colluding with myself or others during this enquiry?
Am I saying everything I want to, or am I keeping things to myself?
- Is the process of enquiry being distorted by distress? If so, is it arising from the topic or the process itself?
- Is there enough difference within the group? Enough divergence or convergence? Is the topic too narrow, or too wide?
- Is the discussion of a problem moving towards premature closure, just finishing too quickly? Do we need to set another time to work on it?

ABOUT BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH ARTS

Building Community Through Arts (BCA) was developed as part of Kew Studio's outreach work in a series of projects from 1993 – 2002. Toolkits and programmes have been recently updated and are presented as a set of free tools for use by anyone wanting to develop a community using arts workshops and encounters. Visit kewstudio.org/explore-creativity for more.



FURTHER READING

- *Co-operative Enquiry: research into the human condition* John Heron/Sage Publications Ltd. 1996
- *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships Paperback* Eric Berne/Penguin 2010
- *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* Julia Cameron/Pan Books 1995
- *The Vein of Gold: A Journey to Your Creative Heart* Julia Cameron/Souvenir Press 2013