

A summary of opening remarks to persons attending a sociometry training workshop
by Ann E. Hale, M.A.TEP

You have enrolled in a sociometry workshop which I'd like to take some moments to describe, because it is different in some ways from other experiential training, including psychodrama training workshops. For one thing our in-session time will be group-centered, and I mean this in the broadest definition of that. Each of us will stretch our awareness from an inner dialogue to include all of those present, holding in our consciousness what we hear, understand, know and intuit about each person and their: (1) need to be safe; (2) need for authentic connection; (3) learning goals; and, (4) need for a nourishing experience while attending the workshop

Sociometry is about the quality of interpersonal relationships and the number of connections we are able to sustain. J. L. Moreno, the originator of the field of sociometry (and Psychodrama) wrote about sociostasis, a precise number and a particular quality of relations we need in order to feel sufficient support for creative spontaneous living, essentially to thrive. So we are necessary to one another, our being is vitally important to others. We need access to one another. This is what we will be studying during this workshop. Moreno referred to the dynamic as the "nearness- distance factor".

Your trainers know that we can't stay fully engaged and open to a whole group of people all day long without being able to be in our comfort level. You will likely gravitate to persons for a variety of reasons, The choices we will be making and for what roles becomes the subject matter of the workshop. To attend such a workshop requires courage, skill and access to both compassion and rigor, being able to set boundaries, limits, to hold the whole of the group in all its complexity. Each group member also shares a similar responsibility for one another, to co-create an atmosphere whereby we can reveal ourselves in an authentic way and as often as possible, with compassion.

The learning format will involve a combination of group process, check-in, report out and discussion, perhaps even keeping a journal. There may be structured sociometric exercises designed to match issues which arise, for instance, an action or pen and paper sociometric device. We will also engage in action sociometry which will feature short enactments which provide grounding in personal story or social/cultural norms.

The challenge for each of you will be to manage the personal content. Every critical, momentous and traumatic event in our lives is a sociometric one. You can't help but to stumble across emotionally charged events. It is important that the group knows when this is occurring and help to sort out ways to facilitate you: sometimes the choice will be to bracket, to anchor the feeling and remembrance in the body, to make journal notes for you to expand on later, to enact a story, to have a short intervention in the moment. If this is your first sociometry workshop you may even find it confusing to figure out if you are "permitted" to warm up to an issue and how deeply. The job of the leaders will be to help facilitate a balance of the training purposes for the entire group and the need for emotional relief and clearing.

Each day there will be times largely devoted to sociometric devices and

processes. We will also have time set aside to be in peer groups to further your learning goals and discuss ways you might adapt what you are learning for groups you work with in other settings. Supervision and processing is offered to advanced students who take leadership roles (directing). We will also have sessions for the whole group to engage in action-oriented events utilizing vignettes, playback stories, personal psychodrama and sociodrama. During the workshop there may be one whole group sociometric exploration. We will set aside time to complete critical segments of data generation, report out and study the results. Our work and the data we generate is confidential. Each person agrees to respect the content of our personal stories and interactions and not to ever divulge any person's disclosures to persons outside of this group composition.

Ann E. Hale, M.A., TEP

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An example of a follow-up inquiry to a workshop participant

Dear Participants,

I have been reflecting on the workshop which you attended which was a sociometry training event, titled _____. I am writing to ask you to further reflect on your experience so that I may have your perspective on matters related to the content.

1) We charted major roles of high value to the group and we explored criteria related to those roles within the group. We also processed some of the large group action sociometric choices, like forming peer groups and being helped to understand the sociometric tools. Upon reflection, did you understand the purpose of these activities and did they connect you to what you already know about sociometry, about group dynamics and about ways people impact one another when choosing?

2) Were there enough opportunities for you to connect the feelings you had about what you were experiencing in the group in a way which benefitted your learning and your personal growth?

3) Were you satisfied or not with the balance between training activity and time given to deeper exploration of the emotions underlying the choice process. Are you okay with ways the group was involved with decisions about how we spent our time.

4) What are some questions your are left with?

5) Are you interested in participation through occasional dialogue on line, via e-mails to socionoetic@yahoo.groups . If yes, email the address and type "subscribe" in the body of the email.

Thank you for responding. Ann

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