

# Foreword

My education was painful. It was competitive. It was based on grades, rather than the process of learning. Most teachers asked for regurgitation, not creativity. So, I found my haven in theater. It was fun. I was able to express all of the parts of me.

I'll never forget my first drama class in eighth grade with Mr. Strater. He is a large man and on the first day of class, he walks into the room and falls down as if he had died. I am shocked. Then he stands up and says, "Today we are going to learn how to fall on stage." It is now fifty years later and I have never forgotten that incredible moment. He created magic and surprise and I loved it.

Theater allows me to explore, risk and create. I went to college and majored in theater. It is my love. I trained as an actress. Although some of the acting classes are competitive, cutthroat and destructive, others are warm and supportive. I feel like I am part of a family. Acting in productions is wonderful. We are all working and creating together because we have a common goal. I find that the group process is just as important as the production itself. I enjoy the rehearsals more than the actual performance because in rehearsals we can risk, experiment and try anything.

Through my training as an actress and director, I learned to be vulnerable, to share and, most importantly for the purposes of this book, to create an ensemble. An ensemble is a group whose members have a deep connection to one another and to the work at hand. That's what is important to me in the work I do now, with actors, therapists, clergy, teachers, professional helpers and group leaders. That's why I form a circle at the first group meeting. The circle is a symbol of connection, unity and wholeness. These are the qualities I want to encourage and create in my groups.

My groups reflect how I believe life should be. The environment I try to create in the groups is the same kind of environment I want in my own life: creative, supportive and caring. I have found that in this kind of environment, attention is paid to the process and not to the results. The most important part about being an artist is becoming comfortable with the process of **creating** and **becoming**.

Besides my theater training, I have taken many kinds of workshops in psychology-psychodrama, transactional analysis, psychosynthesis, Gestalt and more. After each workshop, I took the *crème de la crème* of what I had learned in the group and applied it to my own teaching. The group leaders I have worked with were role models. They made each group experience a double learning experience. I learned about my own process and also how to be a group leader. I watched many leaders handle difficult and stressful situations.

As a group leader/teacher/acting coach, I help people bring out their ‘sub-personalities’ or different parts of themselves. To do this successfully, I must trust, risk and be comfortable with the unknown. The purpose of this book is to help others who work with groups gain confidence in these areas.

Several people have warned me that these exercises could be threatening to some group leaders. At first, this surprised me. But then I realized that people come from different training arenas. Many people are taught NOT to risk or express themselves freely. We are not taught to be vulnerable with other people. Instead, we are taught to be controlled, safe and predictable.

Working with a group, be it at a workshop, in a classroom or on a retreat, should be one of the most exciting learning experiences in the world, for the group leader as well as for the participants. But our educational system can be full of judgments. Many teachers tell us there is a right way to do something and a wrong way. Many students as well as their teachers are frozen. They are unable to be creative or inventive. We carry this experience with us into group situations and this blocks our spontaneity and creativity. I hope this book will help you remove the blocks to spontaneity and creativity for yourself and for the people who are in your groups.

Many colleges and universities have artist-in-residence programs. The point of these programs is to allow students and teachers to see professional artists at work. This can be exciting, but I believe it’s far more exciting—and more important—for people to learn that ***we are all artists***. For those of you who feel timid about trying out these techniques and exercises, I want to say to you, “Go slowly. Be gentle with yourself and your groups.” *Trusting the Moment* means trusting the process, and most importantly, trusting yourself. You will be amazed at the excitement and joy you and your groups will experience—together. I love something a student of mine wrote in his journal when I asked him to explain what he thought teaching was all about: “My philosophy of teaching is simple. I don’t just want to teach that two plus two is four, but I want to teach that if one person has two and another person has two, ***together*** they have four.” We all work together to create an ensemble.

People often write me and say, “I loved your group and the exercises, but the most wonderful thing about the group was that I learned so much about myself.” In a journal I wrote in 1971, I said that one of my goals was to help change the educational system in this country. I haven’t done that, and maybe I won’t see any significant change during my lifetime. But, then again, maybe I will. If people come to understand themselves better, who knows what could happen? At least this is a beginning.

With love,  
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