



Personal Growth Group

Participant Manual

By the Victories Personal Growth Group Committee

Copyright 2019, by Victories of the Heart, NFP, all rights reserved.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
I. A Victories Personal Growth Group.....	4
II. Considerations and Concerns	4
III. Basic Group Rules and Boundaries	6
IV. Basic Principles and Group Safety.....	6
V. Victories Meeting Agenda Format	11
VI. Personal Work.....	15
VII. Productive Work Time Interactions.....	17
VIII. Group Killers.....	20
IX. The Meeting Place.....	23
X. The Victories Representative	23
XI. Departing from the Group	24
XII. Taking a Break from the Group.....	25
XIII. Merging Groups / Individuals.....	26
Appendices	28
A. Example of Men’s Work - Key Skills in Action.....	28
B. The Impact Exchange	35
<i>It’s About Me, Not You!</i>	39
C. Conflict Resolution.....	40
D. Potential PGG Meeting Places	46
E. Suggested Processes and Work Themes.....	49
F. Miscellaneous Wisdom	58
G. Bibliography	59
H. About Victories; Programs & Trainings.....	61
I. Victories Meeting Agenda Outline.....	64

Introduction

“Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen.”

“Courage originally meant, *‘To speak one’s mind by telling all one’s heart.’*”

“You either walk inside your story and own it, or you stand outside your story & hustle for your worthiness.”

Brené Brown

You recently attended a very intensive weekend for men sponsored by Victories. Hopefully your experience has made you more aware that men can interact and connect with each other in a way that is caring and, too often, unusual for men. We hope it was a good beginning. If you choose to deepen your personal work, the journey has just begun.

A Personal Growth Group (PGG) is your opportunity to learn and experience how men can support each other in becoming more self-aware and thereby more skilled in the art of close personal relationships. If you are currently involved in a committed relationship, you already know how important this can be. Being able to identify your feelings and then express them in a way that is compassionate and honest will be a central focus of your work within a PGG.

Over the next 6 months, one or more Personal Growth Group leaders will guide you as you create a group container together. You will learn to share authentically, and behave with integrity. You will deepen trust for each other as you interact with caring and truthfulness. You will endeavor to listen and understand what "the other" is really saying. You will learn how to be helpful without "fixing" another man or telling him how to live his life. You will come to know that often being a friend does not require finding solutions. Sometimes, just listening and caring are all a friend really needs to find within himself the "right" answers for his own life’s journey. On the following pages you will find information and guidelines for how a PGG accomplishes these goals. You will be led through the finer details of “getting there” by the PGG Leaders who have volunteered to work with your group. You will be taught a kind of interaction that is different from what you are used to. We encourage you to be patient with yourselves and with the process.

This manual is intended for use by the members of Victories Personal Growth Groups in an effort to help them form stronger bonds, to help them open their hearts to deeper sharing, and to help them develop the skills that promote compassionate listening, mutual understanding and support. This manual is the product of the collective experiences of many PGG facilitators who have led and supported on Victories weekends and who have participated in their own PGGs. Professional guidance and input from individual and group psychotherapists has also been a very valuable contribution.

It is our belief and intention that the ideas, methods, and resources presented in this manual will help your group to function effectively to every man’s benefit. Although Victories PGGs have evolved over the years and taken on different forms, we believe that the following characteristics, ideals, rules and boundaries expands positively on what has been so beneficial to men in the past.

I. A Victories Personal Growth Group

- A. Offers weekend participants a place to continue their growth.
- B. Offers connection and a community of genuine support by peers and the larger Victories community.
- C. Promotes new learning, self-awareness and emotional attunement.
- D. Helps men develop skills they can take out of the group and into their most important relationships.
- E. Is a safe place where -
 - 1. Men can share their story, their vulnerabilities, and their process of self-discovery.
 - 2. Men can work and share at their own pace and can also ask to be held accountable.
 - 3. Confidentiality is always respected and observed.
 - 4. Men can be fully authentic.
 - 5. Men become committed and responsible for ensuring that their own needs are being met within the group.
 - 6. Group members in conflict will work towards a satisfactory resolution.
 - 7. Group members will meet each man *“where he currently is in his life”*.
 - 8. Mutual respect and care for each other becomes every man’s goal.
- F. Is a leaderless group where leadership is shared by all the members.
- G. Has an engaged Victories representative to the organization who functions as a communication link to the wider community.

II. Considerations and Concerns

Our personal growth groups are peer support groups. They are not therapy groups. Since our groups are not facilitated by professional therapists, certain issues cannot be appropriately handled in our PGGs. The fact that a group of men experienced the same Victories weekend together does not guarantee that they will work well together in their PGG. There are some personality styles that do not benefit from the PGG experience. There times and certain circumstances when a group may have to decide to ask a man to leave the group. The group members, with the possible help of Victories PGG leaders, will carefully and respectfully discuss with such a man his exit from the group. Victories leadership can help locate outside resources and the the possibility of referral to an outside source that can better attend to that man’s needs.

- A. If a man in the group talks of serious and persistent depression, he should be urged to seek professional help. In situations where the depression is being medically managed, the PGG experience may be beneficial.
- B. If a man speaks of committing suicide, or wanting to die, or he makes any statement that indicates there is a risk he would/could respond to his pain or predicament by harming himself or anyone else, it is imperative that one or more representatives of the group inform Victories executive and professional staff immediately and without hesitation that this situation exists. It is not within the purview of a PGG to determine what imminent or potential danger might exist to such a man’s life.

- C. Sometimes a man will reveal serious anger issues towards group members and people in his life. There can be no tolerance for aggression or dissonance, including aggressive language, dismissive judgements, etc. Consideration should be given to counseling him in the direction of professional help, instead of participation in the PGG.
- D. Active addiction such as drug usage or alcoholism cannot adequately be managed in a PGG. Members should encourage the man to get help, such as entering a treatment program like AA. It is not advisable to have the man in the group if he is not dealing with this issue in a responsible manner. To do so would most likely drain the energy of the group without benefit. Group members or the Victories Rep should seek guidance from the Victories clinical leadership on how best to deal with these issues.
- E. There are other times when a member is deeply caught up in a prolonged, unresolvable conflict, or obsessive or paranoid behaviors, causing an unhealthy drag on the group. It may be best for the man to exit the group to seek professional help.

The personal growth groups that develop following a weekend experience are autonomous, democratic and voluntary associations of men who choose to convene with each other for the purpose of deepening their own growth. This means that what happens in your group is up to the group, not the organization. While Victories will be responsible for providing a trained group facilitator for the first six months of the group's operation, it is important to note that by doing so, Victories assumes no legal responsibility or liability for the group or its decisions. That said, Victories will remain available to provide support and facilitation for a group in need, and it will work to serve as a robust resource for groups.

If there is any question or concern that a man's safety or the group's safety is at risk, it is recommended the group members, such as the Victories Representative, contact the PGG Lead facilitator or the groups' weekend leaders to get advice & counsel. If members suspect there is a threat of harm to self or another, Victories has available on the "Groups" section of the website, a list of resources such as crisis management, hotlines, etc. Ultimately it is on the groups to take action and care for themselves and their members. If the group requests help, and Victories deems it appropriate, further support to the group in the form of conflict resolution or other facilitation may be provided.

Here is the basic contact information to use for any questions or requests for assistance:

PGG Leadership Email

pgg_leaders@victoriesoftheheart.org

PGG Lead Clinicians

Biff Bannon (847) 951-9732

Victories Office (312) 604-5013

Crisis Management Resources - Hotline and Emergency Help information link:

http://www.victoriesformen.org/assets/Uploads/Crisis_Management_Resources_for_PGG_Participants.pdf

III. Basic Group Rules and Boundaries

1. Meetings generally last two and a half to three hours. They should begin and end on time.
2. Meetings should occur every two weeks.
3. Each meeting should have an *acting* leader. The leader is responsible for -
 - a. Managing the time and observing the Victories Meeting Agenda (see below).
 - b. Ensuring that the most number of men get a chance to work & share.
 - c. Discouraging interruptions during a man's work.
4. The leader should be informed in a timely manner if a man is unable to attend or will be late. The leader should inform the group accordingly.
5. Emotional Safety requires confidentiality - there must be no sharing of any man's work, except one's own, outside of the group.
6. We treat each other with respect. No verbal disrespect, name calling, etc. can be tolerated.
7. No physical violence between group members in or out of group meetings.
8. No alcohol or drugs are to be used the day of a meeting.
9. Food and beverages should not be consumed during a meeting's work time.
10. A financial commitment should be agreed upon by the group regarding the sharing of costs for food, beverages and meeting space fees, and dealt with before meetings.
11. Meetings should not be stopped or interrupted to accommodate the arrival of a latecomer.
12. Conversations about the group should always and only occur within the group.
13. Conversations about a member of the group should always occur in the presence of that man. A man who missed a meeting should only be told of another man's work by the man who did the work himself.

IV. Basic Principles and Group Safety

A. The Victories PGG Golden Rule

Speak your truth. Don't withhold your feelings, whether they are about people in your life, and especially about other members of your group. Groups thrive, and men thrive, when its members do not sit on their feelings. It's a safe place to share and be honest with yourself and others. If the group doesn't feel safe enough to you then you and the group have some work to do.

At the same time, we strive to speak our truth while remaining compassionate and respectful of group members. This may seem paradoxical at times. We strive to hold our relationships tenderly while sharing ourselves honestly.

B. Commitment

1. Regular attendance and regularly scheduled meetings are essential to establish group cohesion and trust. Each man should agree to develop his schedule as much as possible around the PGG regular meeting times.
2. Each man is responsible for his own experience in the group, for ensuring that the group "works" for him. This means a man is responsible for letting the group know when the

group process is somehow disturbing or unfulfilling. This commitment should include a willingness to resolve issues that interfere with having a fulfilling experience. It may be helpful to revisit the *Commitment Ceremony* you participated in during the 3rd meeting. See Appendix F.

3. Each man is responsible for attempting a resolution process whenever he is in conflict with any other member or members of the group.
4. Each man is responsible for the dynamics of the group. Thus, the man who thinks that the group is not going deep enough should lead by example by doing his own deep personal work. He, thus, gains the credibility to gently encourage others to do likewise.
5. When a man for any reason decides that he wants to leave the group, it is expected that he will attend at least one full meeting after he indicates his desire or intention. Sufficient time must be scheduled for everyone to process the impact. We are committed to each other and to helping the group continue to function even when leaving. See Section X on **Departing from the Group** for more on the protocol of departure.

C. Confidentiality

No group will survive for long if confidentiality and group safety is violated. It is essential that every man agree to honor every other man's right to confidentiality. Essentially, this means that no other man's work will be shared in any way with anyone else outside of the group (this includes spouses or significant others). It is always acceptable for a man in the group to share his own work and anything that he learned or gained from that work for himself. Confidentiality must be reaffirmed in the first meeting. The third meeting is, in part, devoted to a ritual of commitment and confidentiality. Confidentiality should be reaffirmed from time to time. And it is very important to explicitly affirm it when new members join.

D. Storytelling

It is a common belief that others cannot be helpful unless they know all the nuanced details around the issue being brought to the group. Giving lots of detail, too much information, and rambling is known as *Storytelling*. For men who have difficulty letting go of this tendency, it is usually an indication of their urgent need to be heard and listened to. It can also be a strategy to avoid sharing vulnerable feelings. A certain amount of *telling the story*, context and background is actually necessary to being understood. Getting the right amount is a skill we learn. Storytelling can be interrupted in a way that is not critical or shaming. The following are a few examples of questions or statements that can be used for the purpose of cutting into a man's story:

1. "I think we get the idea of what's going on. Could you now let us know what it is that is concerning you the most and how we might be helpful?"

2. "I am aware that this story is generating a lot of feelings for you, and I am being touched by the way you are saying what you are saying. I would really like to know more about your feelings and what this situation is meaning to you."
3. "You have told us about the situation several times in previous sessions. I am wondering if you're trying to get us to understand something, and we are not getting it accurately so far. I think I'm hearing you say _____, is that right? Please help us to understand it better so that we can be with you and maybe be more helpful."

It is often beneficial to notice what you are feeling in yourself when a man is sharing his story. If you are feeling disconnected, bored or impatient for the man to get to the *heart of it*, then he is likely storytelling. It may be helpful for you to say to him that you *feel disconnected* when he goes into a lot of detail.

1. Resist the temptation to launch into your own "story" when another man's work reminds you of what's going on in your life. Doing so "hijacks" that other man's focus and places the attention on you. Asking the man's permission before rippling or asking clarifying questions will help to avoid interrupting his work. It is best to ask if a man feels he is in a good place in his work so that he can take in questions or hear men's ripples.
2. Carefully monitor your own inclination to "tell stories" when you are doing your work. Are you feeling uncomfortable simply asking to be heard or asking for help? Sharing the feelings beneath your needs can feel vulnerable, but it is the very heart of our transformative work.

E. Giving Advice

Victories Personal Growth Groups support a man's process of self-discovery. Each man's work is ultimately about defining solutions, values and actions that best fit him. That is not to say the wise men in the group might not at times have very valuable input based on their life experience. It comes down to asking for what you want & need. Sometimes you will want simply to be heard, and sometimes you will want to hear other men's input.

We tend to believe that we know how another person should be living his life and solving his problems. Often we are very tempted to go that way in our response to what a man shares about his personal life. We need to be very clear from the beginning that it's usually not very helpful to give advice. (If a man directly asks for advice, however, it should be considered. In that case, advice may be helpful.) We usually have the very best intentions when laying out our "creative" solution for another man who is struggling with an issue. But unless it was requested, it is often experienced as distracting or demeaning and resented as such. At very least unsolicited advice often takes a man *out of his work*. It can move him out of his feelings & vulnerability as he suddenly has to consider or defend against the uninvited solution. It can push the man into feelings of shame and failure, "*why couldn't I have thought of this solution myself?*" Or, "*what is wrong with me that I can't solve these problems others see as having a straightforward solution.*" And, men usually want to appear

open to input and willing to change. As a result, it may be difficult to refuse a proposed solution. Finally, most advice is never really *taken in*, let alone acted upon.

1. Resist the tendency to make judgments of another man's issues or circumstances by looking at them through your own filters.
2. You can never be an "expert" in another man's life experience no matter how well you know the man. A man's situation is often more complicated than we can know.
3. Instead of offering a "fix" to another man's "problems," listen attentively, mirror what he is saying, and allow him to find his own answers and solutions. Employing the core skills is the best way that we can help a man.
4. When a man begins to share it is recommended that he set his own boundary regarding advice and feedback from the group.
5. Short of this, it may be helpful if the meeting's leader prompts a man what he wants from the group before he starts his work.
6. Even if a man has told the group that he is open to input, ask his permission again before laying it on him. Check to see if it fits for him. Let it go if it doesn't
7. Consider that sometimes men get into a pattern of craving rescue. For some it is easier to ask for advice than to take responsibility and figure things out on our own. You may be doing a man a greater service by not providing him with *your* solution.

F. Other Sharing Principles

1. Use "I" statements. When speaking of personal issues, thoughts, feelings etc., it is beneficial to speaker and listener if the speaker uses "I" statements. For example, "*I feel hurt when my wife is critical of me for being late*". This is very different from, "*You know how it is when your wife gets on your case for being late.*" In the former statement, the speaker explicitly owns his vulnerability and hurt feelings. In the latter the man creates a protective distance from his feelings and seeks implicit rescue from the group.
2. Going deeper. What are the feelings underneath my feelings? For instance I may be very aware of my anger at someone, but there are often other feelings within the energy we call anger, such as hurt, fear, hopelessness, helplessness, or need.

Please note that though we are encouraging avoidance of "You" language, fixing, advice-giving, and storytelling, we don't want to become *I-language* or *Story cops* with each other. It is better to gently and respectfully reinforce the learning. We all get better with practice.

G. Out-of-Group Member Interactions

As the group forms and bonds it is natural for friendships to develop and for members to interact outside of the group container. These friendships and connections are wonderful and an ideal aspect of the Victories experience. They are certainly encouraged. In our experience however, there are certain interactions between members that are can become messy and may bring conflict back into the group. Two common areas that can stir up big issues and difficulties are:

1. Engaging in sexual and romantic relationships between group members.
2. Engaging in business relationships and financial transactions between group members.

Victories strongly recommends that members avoid engaging in sexual / romantic, and business / financial relationships. If members otherwise choose to engage in such, it is highly beneficial for the rest of the group to be aware of the relationship. When in doubt always *bring it to group* to process openly.

It is also common that as certain group members grow close they may feel tempted to privately discuss the PGG meetings or secretly talk about others members. Talking about other members out of group is a violation of the confidentiality agreement. Victories strongly recommends that private conversations concerning the group or its members be minimized or avoided. On the contrary, handling interpersonal issues within the group container provides a clear opportunity for personal growth and supports group safety.

H. Accountability

Accountability and integrity, openness and vulnerability form the foundation of true personal growth. Expressing feelings of fear, sadness, joy, anger, and shame is the heart of the work and sharing we do in a PGG. It is the first, essential step of our journey. The next step is change – committed, responsible action towards change. Repeatedly “expressing feelings” without acting becomes complaining and victimization. Accountability means we ultimately accept personal responsibility for everything we say, do, think or feel including:

- Our choices
- Our direction in life
- Our attitudes, states, moods, behavior patterns
- The consequences of our actions or inactions
- Our own self-esteem and well-being
- Our fears and our triggers
- Our coping mechanisms, defense mechanisms and their consequences
- Our anger, resentments, cynicism, pessimism, pains
- Our happiness, contentment, satisfaction and fulfillment

When we choose to hold ourselves accountable, face our fears and fulfill our commitments to change, we are likely to find ourselves in charge of our lives. We feel less stuck and less at the mercy of life’s vicissitudes.

The group’s role in accountability is key. We are drawn together in the PGG to support each other and to hold ourselves accountable for carrying out our commitments. Within the container of support and safety, a man can experiment with change through responsible, committed action. The group’s responsibility here is to encourage the man who is trying, and to respectfully challenge the man who holds back. Groups often find it difficult to strike the right balance between loving acceptance and fierce encouragement. It is easy to stumble into rescue and avoidance on the one hand, or judgment and impatience on the other. Getting the right mix of compassion and challenge is the key group learning process.

To be clear, a man is solely responsible for his own personal growth. He is only accountable to the group to uphold the group rules and boundaries. He is accountable to himself alone for his growth.

Victories Meeting Agenda Format

A. Business Meeting **

1. Choose location (if location is rotating) and host for next meeting.
2. Choose leader (most often the host) of next meeting.
3. Money is collected for food/facility for this night's meeting.
4. Victories Representative delivers announcements (Victories events, upcoming trainings, events, fund raising and recruiting calls).

B. Circle Up / Crossing the Threshold / Blessing

Purpose: Allow men to reconnect with each other – be present. Create and enter sacred space, open the heart, and leave the concerns of the day behind.

1. Men form a circle, arm in arm, eye to eye.
 - a. Practice deep breathing or a centering exercise (optional).
2. Leader or volunteer may choose a ritual
 - a. Mention those who aren't in attendance but who are at the meeting in spirit.
 - b. Reading a poem, blessing or inspirational material, drumming or music.
 - c. Smudging with sage or other scents.
See Bullet H *Developing a Sacred or "Special" Space* below.

C. Check-in

Purpose: Help us to be in touch with ourselves and with each other by briefly sharing our current, *here-and-now* feeling state.

1. Examples of Check-in:
 - a. Share a few feeling words: *This is what I am feeling now and this is where I experience it in my body.*
 - b. Possible **second round**:
 - c. How *I am feeling* about the primary events / biggest issues I am currently facing. (This is brief, a few sentences – not in depth worktime.)
 - d. *High / Low – my highest high & lowest low since we met last... or If I were to work tonight, I'd work on... or What I am withholding - not wanting to share about me... or What is keeping me from being fully present tonight is ...*
2. Optional Check-in Pieces
 - Accountability Report** - A man gives an accounting to the group of progress (positive or negative) for a commitment he made in an earlier meeting. See bullet G below.
 - "Coming Clean", Clearing / Impact Exchange** - A man lets the group know he is having a conflict or needs to "clear" feelings with another group member or the

group. Sometimes all that is needed is that he “come clean” by revealing what is troubling or triggering him. The man must not be interrupted or rebutted while coming clean. The goal is for a man to reveal what is bothering him, and the core feelings behind the slight. The process is not license to blame or shame another man.

It may be useful to do a formal process we call the Impact Exchange. A man requests time for an Impact Exchange. See bullet **G** below. It is important to provide a space for *coming clean* or I.E. requests in each meeting. Get in the habit of doing this, even if only a few men do this process in any given meeting.

Reactions to Last Time - A man shares his reactions to his work or events that occurred in the last meeting. See bullet **G** *Optional Check-in Pieces* below.

3. The leader discourages crosstalk, interruptions, questions or rippling during a man's check-in. Leader takes note of who wants to "work" and plans the remaining time accordingly. He may want to survey the men's urgency to work by a 1 to 5 scale, with the 5's getting the floor first, etc.

D. Process / Theme (optional)

From time to time it may help to take the men deeper by introducing a theme for discussion or reflection. Examples: Father's role in raising children, Man without a job. See **Appendix F** for other ideas.

E. Personal Work Time

Purpose: "Work" time is to give a man an opportunity to share his deepest feelings, issues, and concerns. The man communicates at Level III or IV. The rest listen deeply; ask questions in a way that helps the man discover himself; they mirror and support.

1. Before a man begins to “do work,” he should declare how he wants the group to respond.
2. The man sharing identifies and expresses core feelings (anger, sadness, fear, joy, shame and guilt) in the event / issue presented.
3. The work may be about moving towards change, or acceptance, or deeper understanding, or it may be just to feel heard and validated.
4. When a man feels ready he may wish to hear other men's resonance or clarifying questions and mirroring. He may ask openly for advice.
5. Work may end with an affirmation such as “*I am a deserving man.*”
6. Work may end with a commitment to action or change. The man may ask for other men to help him be accountable.
7. Most often a man addresses and interacts with the whole group, but a man may request to work one-on-one with another (willing) partner.
8. He may stand while speaking rather than sit if it helps to get him into his body.
9. The leader enforces basic rules of conduct, interaction, and boundaries, discourages crosstalk, interruptions, or expressions of rippling until the man working indicates he is open to questions, mirroring and other interactions with the group.
10. The leader manages the time, giving as many men as possible a slice. If a man's work is taking a lot of time, the leader may have to ask him to summarize and arrive at a point of completion for the time being so that others can have time to work.

F. Circle up / Check out

Purpose: Bring closure to a meeting, final connection, and opportunity for the expression of heartfelt gratitude.

1. Men may form a circle, arm in arm, eye to eye.
2. A man shares a few words of where he is in the moment of closing.
3. A man may express gratitude for anything that he received that was beneficial.
4. Sometimes words are not necessary as they look into each other's eyes. Some groups enjoy the recitation of a poem or a blessing, or music, drumming, etc.
5. The leader will discourage crosstalk, interruptions, or rippling while men check out.

Meeting Ends

- G. Optional, But Important Check-in Pieces.** The *Accountability Report*, the *Impact Exchange Request*, and *Reactions to Last Time* are regular parts of each meeting's agenda. They are optional in the sense that the men may not have any of these to bring to that particular meeting, but the meeting leader should always make space for these.

It is generally up to a man to offer his *Accountability Report*, or come clean with an issue and request an *Impact Exchange Request*, or talk about his reaction to the last meeting. But the leader can also ask whether anyone needs time for these pieces. Other men in the group can also inquire about a commitment a man made in the last meeting.

The actual *Impact Exchange* or other conflict resolution piece should occur after all men have checked in and before work time begins. See the Appendix B for the Impact Exchange format. Appendix C details a Conflict Resolution process. Time should be requested for "clearing" of feelings or differences of opinion. The actual IE usually occurs after all men have had a chance to *check-in*.

A man shares his *Reactions to Last Meeting*, to his work or events that occurred in the last meeting. Sometimes our reactions come up for us, or become clear, only between the meetings, and he may want to share them now. "*What came up for me as I thought about my last work is ...*" or "*I found myself thinking a lot about Tim's work on his mother, and I remembered that I also ...*" This piece helps create continuity between meetings by tying our experience of our work and other men's work together.

- H. Developing a Sacred or "Special" Space.** You will remember from your weekend(s) that Victories uses special rituals. Some of what Victories does might have seemed a little different or strange when you first did a weekend. For example, as you enter the lodge on the BreakThrough Weekend you were smudged with the smoke of burning sage. This practice is borrowed from a Native American tradition of cleansing. Similarly, at the beginning of the BTW evening you heard the sound of a Chakra bowl. The playing of a Chakra bowl is a Buddhist tradition and the tone of this particular bowl is said to resonate deeply within our hearts. We borrow from these traditions in order to create a space that is

separate from your everyday world. We do not ask you to believe in these rituals in the same way as a Native American or Buddhist. We only ask that you be open to doing something different and creative - something that might help you look at your world in a different way, and something that marks the space where you will work as a special space, where you can go to places perhaps for the first time, or in a more meaningful way than before. We encourage you to mark your PGG meetings with such practices and rituals. Give yourself permission to be creative and bring new rituals, as different leaders lead each meeting. Remember, too, that music is a powerful tool for reflection and stirring emotions and should be incorporated into your meetings.

**** Note:** Refer to **Appendix I** for a skeleton version of the Victories Meeting Agenda Format. It is handy for the meeting's leader to print out for reference.

V. Personal Work

A man has indicated during his check-in that he would like to more deeply share a personal issue, concern, or problem with the group. After prioritizing the work in the room, and determining how much time each man will generally have to work, the leader will invite the man to step into the circle. Before a man begins to “do work,” he should declare how he wants the group to respond.

"I really just need to have a place where it is safe to say what I want to say and to hear myself saying it. I really would appreciate it if the group simply listened quietly without any response or inquiry."

Or

"I would really like the group to ask me questions to help me clarify what it is I'm really saying to give me the feeling that I am really being listened to because that's not something I get a lot of. I would like to have you mirror me so that I can hear what you are hearing me say and allow me to correct it or change it if I want to. I don't want any opinions or feedback. I simply want you to help me get clear."

Or

"If what I'm saying triggers anything in you that reminds you or stirs up something you have experienced, I would like you to share that with me. I would like to hear your ripples."

Or

"I am really having a hard time finding an answer to this issue and I am inviting you to give me advice or tell me what you would do in my situation. I am aware that I don't have to take any advice or do what you would do, but it would help me to examine or look at alternatives that I may not have considered."

The man will often address the whole group but may wish to work one-on-one with a specific man acting as his guide. This is always an optional interaction for both men. Standing while working adds intensity to the sharing process and helps a man access the feeling in his body.

As the man works, he tries to distill the event / issue into one or several underlying feelings. The movement should progress from the basic facts and background of the event / issue (*the story*); to the underlying judgments and beliefs the man holds about his actions or someone else in the event; then to how he feels about it all (fear, sadness, joy, anger, guilt or shame). After this identification, the man may work with these questions:

- Where do I want to go with this?
- What is this really about for me?

Possible directions for him may be to **investigate** what he needs to recognize in himself and what underlies his behavior; or what he wants to **change**; or what he needs to **accept**. The group may help this investigation with the process of Questioning (to be described in greater detail later in the manual).

Here are some examples of self and group Questioning:

Investigation: a man might explore (with the group's help if requested)

- What experiences in my past remind me of this situation?
- When in my life have I felt like this before? When did I first feel like this?
- How and when did these beliefs I hold about myself/others get formed?

Change: a man might explore (with the group's help if requested)

- What does this change look like?
- What is blocking me? What shift can I make?
- What do I risk losing if I do or don't change?
- What do I hope will be the outcome?
- What will I have to do – commit to – so that I succeed?
- What holds me back?

Acceptance: a man might explore (with the group's help if requested)

- What will acceptance of this look and feel like?
- What might I have to acknowledge and allow, shed and let go of?
- What do I risk losing if I do / don't accept this?

At the end of his work, a man may be encouraged to state an Affirmation as he did at the end of his work on the weekend. Examples: *"I am a good and competent man..."* or *"I accept who I am ..."*

If the man has been doing work on change, he may declare what he is committed to specifically accomplishing by a targeted time. Examples: *"I will get 3 resumes out by the next time we meet."* or *"I request a talk with my wife by the weekend and..."*

When a man declares his commitment, he may find it helpful to ask, "Is there a man here who would call or meet with me to help me stay accountable to my commitment/offer support or advice/simply talk to?" The helper who steps up might request clarity, "What will my help look like to you", or "How will we all know you achieved your commitment?" The working man may now commit to reporting on his effort at the next meeting.

Suffice it to say, a man's personal work may take a limitless variety of directions. It must always be allowed to unfold organically. We have found that these directions above can be quite productive. At any point, a man may ask for questions or feedback or allow rippling. The working man is in the driver's seat here. It is up to him to say when and what he is ready to hear from the other men.

VI. Productive Work Time Interactions

The Core Skill – Being present / listening

There is a “skill” which must be made an essential element of all the skills used in a PGG. The main objective of a PGG is to create a space in which men can safely look within themselves for honest, real answers to their life challenges. Unless this core skill pervades the interactive processes within the PGG, that objective will not likely be achieved.

The skill we speak of here is presence. When we are authentically present, listening is done with an open and compassionate heart. Listening is done without an agenda. Mirroring or questioning or rippling expresses caring and a genuine desire to understand a man’s feelings, needs, beliefs, and fears. More importantly, by being present to a man who is searching for self-understanding and answers to issues in his life, we facilitate and enable his accomplishing such insights on his own.

The skills we list here in this manual going forward must become more than techniques or “canned” word processes. With our presence we bring “magic” to an interaction. When a man looks into another man’s eyes and listens with his heart, he contributes to the overall objective of creating a group wherein it is safe to explore any personal and/or relational dilemma.

Based on this attitude of open hearted presence, the following interactive tools are the best way to help a man.

- A. Mirroring It is essential for us to learn this tool that can be very helpful in all relationships of our lives. By compassionately mirroring another, we express true interest in the other’s being and life. When one man mirrors or paraphrases what he hears the other man saying and then asks if this is accurate, he communicates genuine curiosity and interest. This experience is healing in and of itself. When it is done regularly in the group, the group progressively feels safer. It then coalesces into a place where each individual man wants to share his heart and his soul.

“I want to be sure I am getting you accurately. I hear you saying that your boss has been treating you differently over the past couple months and you’re worried your job might be in jeopardy. Right so far? Would you be more specific about how his behavior is different? I hear you say he’s been more critical and distant, right? Is it only with you that this change has occurred? Have you heard anyone else say anything similar? Etc.” (This is a combination of mirroring and questioning – it must be done with a tone of curiosity to have a helpful effect.)

“Okay, what I’m hearing you say is that you’re angry at me for not coming to our last meeting. We made an agreement when we joined this group to make group night a priority, and my choosing to go instead to my daughter’s piano recital was a breach of that agreement. You understand that I would want to go to the recital, but it still has you feeling angry – I think I heard you say you were hurt as well – am I getting it right? Etc.”

- B. Validation This action is very often misinterpreted as agreement. In truth it is an expression of understanding that the person expressing himself has a world of reasoning within himself that makes sense and feels right to him. Therefore, one man might say to another man something like:

"It makes sense to me that you would feel like quitting your job when your boss treats you like that!" This doesn't mean that the man who is validating agrees that this would be a good idea or an action that should be taken. It simply means that the feeling and the fantasy of quitting makes sense given the circumstances. Validation requires the ability to get inside of another person's world and see how it makes sense in that world. It requires resistance to the temptation to judge that other world by applying values that exist in the world of the one who is validating. This action, when pure, is very powerful in that it encourages and supports deep connection and respect.

- C. Empathy Few interactions feel more soothing and comforting than when one person really "gets" another person's feelings and then expresses it accurately. Examples of empathic statements are: "I can see and I can understand how angry that made you feel." Or "That must've been very frightening for you. I can only imagine what it must have been like to live through that experience." Empathy can feel like "the cream on the cake!" Please note, however, being too quick to claim that you know how another man feels can be counter-productive and can sometimes come off as insincere or inauthentic.
- D. Rippling When one man in the group describes a situation, especially when it is accompanied by feelings, it very often triggers a memory of a similar kind of situation in another man's life. It can be very reassuring for the first man to hear that another man in the group shares his experience. Perhaps the adage "misery loves company" applies here, but it can also apply to positive experiences because it just feels good to know that what you are experiencing or dealing with in your life is not unlike what others experience in theirs.
- E. Questioning Asking good open-ended questions has the potential of leading a man in the direction of finding his own answers and solutions. A good question derives out of good listening. When the questioner senses what the speaker is trying to say or figure out, the question becomes clear. However, even a question that is "off the mark" is helpful because, 1) it expresses a genuine desire to understand and care, and 2) it still provokes self-exploration because the speaker has to look inward to know that the question is "off the mark." This is a skill we encourage men to trust and use frequently with an attitude of genuine interest in understanding and caring.

"When your wife uses a tone of voice you feel criticized by, what do you feel? How do you share that feeling with her? What happens then between you? Have you tried other ways to express your feelings? How can we be most helpful to you right now? Would you like us to do some rippling or do you only want to be heard for now?"

"I can understand that when your son stays out after curfew you're angry and concerned; what is it like for you when he doesn't seem to care about how you feel? What kind of relationship have you had with him before this? Did you ever do this kind of thing when you were a kid? How did your dad deal with you when you pushed the boundaries? How do you feel about the way you've dealt with your son on this issue so far?"

- F. Touch/Holding Human beings come into the world needing to be held and touched with love and tenderness. For some, this was given as needed and the need was adequately satisfied in childhood years, but this need continues throughout a human lifetime. For others, there was no touch or far too little of it. Adulthood is then entered with an insatiable need that shows up in different forms,

e.g. excessive need for attention, denial of a need for touch altogether, sexual addiction, etc. Then there are those who were touched with violence or sexual abuse or excessive neediness on the part of a caretaker. Responses to touch by the latter might be repulsiveness, violence, extreme anxiety, and/or suspiciousness about the motives of anyone who touches them.

The point here is that while being touched or held can be assumed to be a natural, human need, we cannot assume that touch or holding will always be a healing or a pleasant / welcomed experience. This skill must be used or offered only after mirroring and questioning has allowed for an understanding between a man and the group as to how touch or holding has been experienced by the man in the past. If touch or holding is entered into, it should only be done with the man's full consent. It is mentioned in this manual because it can be a powerfully healing experience for some men and needn't be summarily avoided because of the dangers. It is simply important to use it with consciousness.

- G. Feedback This skill is executed when the group offers a man who has shared a personal issue, honest opinion or concern, or advice about the issue or the man's handling of it. Obviously, this means that the men in the group will share what they think or "see" through their own filters. It is a skill that is only used at the invitation of the man in the center. If requested, the facilitator should clarify and be sure that this is what the man wants and that he believes it would be helpful to him. He should be reminded that feedback is not necessarily good advice and that it is only offered as a way for a man to experience variant possibilities for consideration.

VII. Group Killers

The Victories PGG Golden Rule:

Speak your truth. Do not withhold your feelings, whether they are about people in your life, and especially about other members of your group. Groups thrive and men thrive, when its members do not sit on their feelings. It must be a safe place to share and be honest with yourself and others. There can be no tolerance for aggression or dissonance, including aggressive language, dismissive judgements, etc. If the group doesn't feel safe enough to you then you and the group have some work to do.

It may seem paradoxical at times but we strive to *speak our truth* while remaining compassionate and respectful of group members. We strive to hold our relationships tenderly while sharing ourselves honestly.

Here are some common group experiences that are apt to drain the energy out of a group and thereby contribute to members leaving and a group's eventual demise. It is important to address these *anti-group* habits. The three principles and abiding commitments we make to each other are:

1. Every man is responsible for his own experience in the group and for ensuring that the group "works" for him. This means he is responsible for letting the group know when the group process is somehow disturbing or unfulfilling. This commitment includes a willingness to resolve issues that interfere with his having a fulfilling experience.
2. Every man is responsible for coming clean and asking for a resolution process whenever he is in conflict with another member or members of the group.
3. Every man is co-responsible for the dynamics of the group. Thus, when he thinks that the group is not going deep enough he should lead by example by doing his own deep personal work. This is a way that he earns the credibility to gently encourage others to do likewise.

Here is a list of potential group killers; we have divided it into two categories –

Personal "killer" actions

1. Withholding feelings This can take all kinds of forms, but watch out for the desire to "be nice" or "look good" in the eyes of the other men in your group. Remember that *vulnerability is the glue which holds a group together*. Hence, a man can express any feeling or idea he likes as long as he behaves responsibly and respectfully. *All of our thoughts and feelings – however, we may judge them – are what makes us human*. If you feel tense, afraid or ashamed for expressing a thought or feeling, it's a clue that points you to where you should go – *let fear and shame be your compass*. If you felt a "high" coming off a weekend, it was probably from taking risks – going towards your fear, being vulnerable, and seeing other men doing the same.
2. Sitting on Resentments and Hurt Feelings This is really the same as the item above, but it is so important it deserves its own bullet. If we don't risk expressing our resentments and hurts, they will come out sideways and chip away at the group bond.
3. Acting out in reactive anger Reactive anger, aggression, hostility, abusive language directed at group members is usually experienced as injurious by the targeted men and the group as

a whole. Voices raised in anger can be experienced as voices ready to attack, crush or humiliate. For many of us, our core wounding is rooted in these experiences. Anger is the emotion we often are most comfortable expressing, but it is the emotion that we most need to learn to express skillfully, in our groups and relationships. Anger is not in itself the problem, but what we *do* with it, as when we let it come out as aggression (in its many forms). Well-handled anger does not feel threatening or dangerous but builds more trust and safety. Our groups can be a laboratory where we develop the skill of communicating our anger.

4. Staying in your comfort zone. *Playing it safe* and always sharing at the same level will get boring for the group and probably for you. Recycling the same issues over and over, always coming in just to vent, playing the victim, blaming the other (wife, boss, friends, society) are all ways of playing it safe. But it also has the effect of discouraging others from going deeper or taking risks in what they are sharing. Owning your role, going deeper yourself, coming clean, sharing what you have never shared before will electrify other men.
5. Storytelling. When it starts to sound like it's too much information, it probably is. Focus on what you're feeling in the *here and now*, NOT the *there and then*. This is the one exception where someone may have to interrupt the man who is rambling to bring him back to what he is feeling and wanting *now*. Sometimes a man will constantly tell stories about what's going on in his life without really asking for what it is he wants. He may resist taking responsibility for pursuing personal growth or being accountable for his commitments for change. As a result, it is difficult for the man or the group to benefit from his work. In these cases, the Impact Exchange can be a very effective tool.
6. Failing to be accountable. If a man fails to keep his commitments to the group, then we respectfully ask him what he needs to work on, what is blocking him from keeping his commitments. We can respectfully challenge him to honor his commitment to change.
7. Judging another man. Expressing judgments of each other's sharing and work often makes the men feel unsafe. This often takes the form of telling another man what he needs to work on. Judgments can take a subtle form. For example, it may be tempting to say to a man, "Wow, that was really great work!", but behind that comment is our evaluation of *how* he shared. It is usually better to say how you connected to another man's work – how it resonated with you.
8. Not showing up for meetings. It's okay to miss a meeting, but it's not okay to fail to communicate to your fellow group members that you won't be attending a meeting. It is also unacceptable for members to develop a pattern of arriving late. We can call each other on this, sharing with the man how it feels to us when he shows up late and misses our work.

Group "killer" actions

1. Inconsistent meeting times, dates, and places, or poor communication about the time and place of meetings. Also, a meeting space that isn't private and distraction-free or in some other way not conducive to the meeting.

2. Dominance of the group by one or two individuals All of the men should have the responsibility to lead and host a meeting. It is important to democratically rotate the role of facilitator. Allowing a man to dominate the group in any way is not conducive. We can challenge each other on this.
3. Allowing other men to hang back. All men need to take a risk and step into their vulnerability and do work. Failing to do so work for weeks or months at a time can make other men feel less safe. Identify the men who are fearful or holding back. Gently engage them by asking open-ended questions, like “How are you doing with this evening’s work?” “How were you affected by the work or statements of another man?”
4. Poor departures. When a man *just drifts away* or *blows it off*, other men in the group may feel that the trust and vulnerability they extended to him is of little worth. This is the too familiar message of *you do not matter*. For some men, old feelings of abandonment are triggered. Men who depart a group must do it cleanly and with integrity. Review the Section on **Departing from the Group**.

VIII. The Meeting Place

PGGs often meet on a rotation basis in the homes or offices of group members who have space, location, and availability for such meetings. Some groups seek out a convenient, central location such as a church, a room in a YMCA, or a facility that offers a good space, sometimes for a fee. There are some potential meeting places listed in **Appendix D**. The choice of the meeting place is important. It has to be in a location that encourages maximum attendance. It must feel safe enough to foster an atmosphere of sharing while supporting confidentiality. Places that do not provide adequate privacy or are noisy or uncomfortable are not conducive to a good meeting.

Some groups enjoy a brief period of socialization with either a meal or snacks before the meeting starts. It is recommended that snacking not be allowed during the meeting proper.

IX. The Victories Representative

The group will appoint a Victories Representative who will liaise with the organization. Our experience demonstrates that groups with a well-established communication line with Victories, whether it be the central organization or the group of PGG Leaders, tend to be more successful. As they get engaged in the trainings, they are more likely to reach out for support and feel as though they are part of a larger community of men engaged in this important work. The Victories Rep will be responsible for bringing topical information about Victories, like upcoming events and trainings, to the group. He will contact the leadership when the group is having difficulty or has questions about how the group should function, or if the group is looking to merge with another group or is looking for new additional members.

It is requested that the Victories Rep notify the organization when there are changes in the group, such as members leaving or when members' have personal information changes. The Rep should keep in contact with the PGG facilitators and (with the group's consent) possibly invite them and/or the weekend leaders into the meeting at appropriate times. PGG Leaders, Weekend Leaders, and Weekend staff are open and available to coming into the groups to do special exercises, or to just sit in the group and provide feedback and support.

Continue on the Victories Path

Please remember that you can continue to learn and grow through other Victories weekends and training programs. If you had a good experience with Victories on your first weekend, why not do another? It is our hope that through our support to your PGG, as well as our trainings and additional weekends, that you see Victories as a lifelong source of support for learning, growth, change and community. Please see **Appendix H** for a summary about Victories, its programs, and trainings.

Sponsor A Man – PGG Scholarship Program

Victories never turns a man away due to financial constraints. In 2012, Victories established the Kurt Schultz Memorial Scholarship Fund to help Victories ensure that all men, regardless of their means, will be able to participate in our programs. Kurt led the BreakThrough Weekend for many years and served

as President of the Board for nearly 10 years. Each year we give more than \$20,000 in scholarship assistance for men to attend weekend programs, personal growth groups, trainings, and events.

Victories invites Personal Growth Groups to step up and make an annual pledge to the Kurt Schultz Memorial Scholarship Fund to help support Victories and the men we serve. There is no minimum contribution expected, but we ask individual groups to consider an annual pledge of a full weekend fee of \$790, or a half fee of \$395. In most groups this will mean an individual contribution of \$25-\$75 per year. The Kurt Schultz Memorial Scholarship Fund is a restricted fund, and donations to this fund only go towards providing scholarships for men.

With these growing contributions from Personal Growth Groups, our Fund will be assured the ability to make our programs available to any man who requests assistance.

If your group would like to pledge an annual donation to the Kurt Schultz Memorial Scholarship Fund, please contact the Victories Office at admin@victoriesformen.org or 312.604.5013.

If you have any questions about Victories finances, other giving avenues, or anything about Victories fundraising activities, please do not hesitate to contact the **Victories Office** (312) 604-5013 or Maureen Ewing, maureen.ewing@victoriesformen.org. About half of Victories' annual budget is covered by donations from alumni, friends, and family. Victories thrives primarily due to the generosity of its alumni.

X. Departing from the Group

When a man for any reason decides that he wants to or feels ready to leave the group, it is expected that he will attend at least one meeting where he declares his intention to depart. It can be very helpful and therapeutic for everyone if this man can be open and honest about his reasons for leaving. It is essential that the group never shame or disapprove of a man who is making this decision. But it is also important for the group to be able to share their feelings about the man's departure as long as what is expressed is not judgmental about the man himself. If the driving issue stems from an unresolved conflict within the group, it would be helpful if this man and the group would consider a resolution. Victories and the PGG Leadership are available to help resolve conflicts within the groups. The departing man may also choose to process his departure over several meetings for the sake of complete closure. However, the man should be allowed to decide what he wants to do and when he is ready to go.

1. It is out of integrity for a group member to simply *drift* out of contact with the group.
2. It is out of integrity for a man to announce his departure in email, or ask another member to *let the group know I am not coming back*.
3. It is out of integrity for a man to *storm off in anger*.
4. It is inappropriate for others to tell a man that he is not ready or that he is making a mistake.
5. It is always expected that the man leaving and the rest of the group be mutually respectful of each other's decisions and feelings.

We are committed to each other and the group even when a man is leaving. An open and respectful departure will help the group heal the loss and continue to function. Hopefully, the group can remain generous towards the departing man and make it clear to him that the door is open to his return.

Victories may wish to interview the man when he departs from a group, not with the intention of changing his mind, but to better understand the man's reasons and group experience. As stated, the Victories Rep should contact the PGG Leadership to let them know that a man is processing out. In time, the group may wish to ask the PGG Leadership for help with finding a new man to complete the circle.

This is the general recommended structure for a departure:

1. Everyone circle up, arm in arm, eye to eye.
2. Crossing the threshold.
3. *Here and Now* Check-in.
4. Departing man is given the floor, full freedom to speak his piece, his feelings - a last chance to *show up* in the circle how he wishes to be seen.
5. Then each man in the circle may elect to respond with words of *farewell*, share his feelings and what meaning the departure holds for him personally. He may choose to say nothing at all, but witness silently.
6. A final circle-up if the departing man requests it - maybe farewell hugs, maybe not.
7. The departing man leaves ... well before the end of the meeting.
8. The remaining men re-group and process their feelings about the departure.

It is expected that steps 4 and 5 are guided by everyone's mutual respect and compassion. The actual departure should take about an hour or less. The rest of the meeting would be devoted to processing feelings in the *new* group

XI. Taking a Break from the Group

A man may decide that he needs a break from the group. Or, his employment situation may dictate that he take a leave of absence for a specific period of time. In either case, the protocol is identical to the decision to leave the group. It is appropriate, and supportive of the group, that the man informs the group, in person, and allows the group time to process the change. It is expected the man be as specific as possible about how long he expects to be out, and when he anticipates returning. The members are expected to honor and accept the man's choice of what is right for him at that moment. Please note this should not be used as a passive way of stepping out of the group. Again, if the driving issue stems from some unresolved conflict, or if the man feels the group is failing his needs, it would be helpful if this man and the group would consider a resolution process. It is far more likely that the man will return to the group if he and all of the members get to air their feelings regarding his choice. This process, like all moments in the PGG, will succeed if it is guided by a sense of mutual respect. It should be clear that the door is open for his return. When the man does return, it will be helpful to process him back in.

XII. Merging Groups / Individuals

Victories encourages an attitude of openness to welcoming new men into a PGG and to forming entirely new groups from remnants of older groups. We were strangers to each other at the beginning of our weekend, but quickly developed a deep bond. Based on our initial experience, we can have faith that bringing in new men can work out very well. For various reasons, it is natural for groups to dwindle over time. In our experience, PGGs function best when there are 7-10 members. Over the years, a number of groups have chosen to merge, or have invited new men in to beef up the ranks. Bringing in new men and changing the dynamic can really revitalize the personal growth work in a PGG. New men bring in new personal work, stories, perspectives and issues. New relationships form. There are likely to be fresh opportunities to work through new differences.

Merging groups and bringing in new men should be done with care and intentionality. It is beneficial for groups considering it to talk it through before taking the first steps. It helps to air feeling of apprehension. How will it feel to risk vulnerability with new men? One key to successful merging is embracing the concept that the merged group will be an entirely new entity with a new interpersonal dynamic. This is true even when only one or two members are coming in. It is very important to let go of attachments to the old group(s) and to open up to the formation of new relationships.

The following is a recommended protocol. It has proven to be effective in successful mergers. Victories PGG Leaders are also available to provide assistance and consultation on merging. We maintain a list of men who are looking for a new group to join, typically because their prior group disbanded. We keep track of groups that are looking for new members. Your Victories Rep should reach out to request our assistance by contacting:

PGG Leadership Email

pgg_leaders@victoriesoftheheart.org

We recommend ...

1. Members of the PGG should first meet the new man or other group outside of the normal meeting session, perhaps in a social venue, for coffee or a meal. The purpose is for each group to get a sense what these new men are like and that the merger has potential. It will be beneficial to gather from each other, the values each hold for a PGG, their background and experience, etc. After this gathering, the groups should meet separately to decide whether they wish to move forward. The goal is not to determine whether there will be a perfect fit or complete harmony. There can be a lot of value in working through the triggers that arise when men differ or stir things in each other.
2. Meeting #1. Having decided to move forward, the merging groups or individuals should hold the first meeting of the new group. The primary focus of this meeting will be to process the formation of the new group.
 - a. Reaffirm commitment to Confidentiality, Basic Group Rules and Boundaries.
 - b. Men should introduce themselves by talking about their weekend experience and work, their commitment and stretch, and the evolution of their personal growth work since their weekend(s).

- c. There is value in recognizing that all the men in the new group are likely to feel their sense of trust and safety being challenged. Consider employing the Trust Circle process – see Appendix E.
 - d. There is value in conducting rounds of, “My hopes and aspirations for this new group,” and “This is what I want to bring to this new group.”
3. Getting to know each other is of primary importance. After the first meeting, men may find it valuable to meet one-on-one for coffee or a meal between groups.
4. Meeting #2, and beyond. The new group should commit to explicitly dedicating a portion of each meeting to a sharing of how the merger is working and impacting each man. This scheduled time for processing the merger / group formation should continue as long as men have issues or find benefit in working on their adjustment to new group.
5. Meeting #3. After three meetings, the members of the new group should consider formalizing their commitment to the new group and each other by conducting the Commitment Ceremony – see Appendix E.
6. Talk about it a lot!

Victories’ PGGs are autonomous, democratic and voluntary associations of men who choose to convene with each other for the purpose of deepening their own growth. Groups are free to decide who to bring into their groups. It is a fact that not all mergers or new members will work effectively together. Groups may have to decide that for various reasons new configurations of men are not working. Groups may have to make difficult choices about how the group functions and the constituent membership. Whatever discussions and actions are taken; great mutual respect should always be the guiding principle. Even if a merger was facilitated by PGG leaders, what happens later in the new group is up to the group, not the organization. Victories has no responsibility—legal or otherwise—for the oversight, functionality or operation of any of the PGGs. That said, Victories will always remain available to provide support, facilitation and consultation for a group in need, and it will always work to serve as a robust resource for groups. If members choose to leave or groups decide to disband, Victories will help men who are interested in finding other groups.

When groups seek to bring in individual men there should be sensitivity awareness around the dynamic of group versus individual man. It is easy for an individual to experience outsider vs. in-group triggers. For this reason, we strongly recommend that groups never impose a vetting or a trial period, where at the end there may be a group decision whether the man is “*in or out*”. It is reasonable for members of a group to meet with a prospective man interested joining outside of the circle before bringing him in. It is reasonable for both sides to meet upfront to get a sense of shared views of a PGG, commitment, and check for a mutual “good fit.” But once a man is invited into the circle, once he opens himself up to the circle and shares his vulnerability, then he is in, and should be regarded as a permanent member. Conflicts, differences, issues that arise for anyone should be viewed as “*grist for the mill*”, and dealt with as we do any issues we encounter in group.

Appendices

A. Example of Men's Work - Key Skills in Action



Note: this color key is used in the example to highlight the skills being employed during the work.

A personal growth group consisting of seven men has just begun to center their attention on Jim who has asked for work time. Bill is the facilitator for the evening's meeting. David, the eighth member of the group, arrives late just after Jim has begun to share. The group did not know whether David was going to attend, as he had not called ahead of time to indicate his intentions.

In accord with the group's policy, the group did not turn its attention away from Jim, and David simply and quietly blended into the circle.

Bill had asked Jim how he would like the group to respond to what he was going to share. He said that he would like the group to use any and all of the skills available to them except for "Feedback". He said he might possibly ask for feedback or advice later.

Jim: I am feeling very concerned about an argument I had with my wife, Judy, last night. I had had a very difficult day at work where it seemed like everything I did turned out wrong. I was feeling discouraged and angry and very frustrated. I felt like I had ultimately overreacted and simply made things worse. Everyone was mad at me including myself!

Questioning

George: **When you say you were feeling frustrated, do you mean you were feeling frustrated with yourself or with others?**

Jim: Actually, I was feeling frustrated with several people at work who just didn't seem to be able to get what I wanted from them; but I was also frustrated with myself.

Bill: Tell us about what happened when you got home.

Jim: I was really churning inside when I walked in the door, and all I wanted was some peace and quiet so that I could relax and sort things out. Turns out that my wife had also been struggling with the kids, was frustrated and worn out herself, and wanted me to take over with the kids while she took a break!

She was really unhappy with my telling her that I was too wiped out to take on the kids right then. She said she was fed up with my always being unavailable when she needed me. I really got angry about that because I think I help out a lot and that I'm a good father in general. She said that she needed me to help out a lot more than I did, and that for the most part, she felt she was raising the kids alone! I told her I really resented that she could even say such a thing, and that I wished she could just appreciate the life I was providing for her by working so hard every day!

Mirroring

Peter: Jim, I think I'm hearing that yesterday was mostly difficult because both at work and at home nothing you did turned out right. In both places you couldn't get others to understand what you needed and then being told that you weren't doing enough pushed you over the edge. Am I getting that right?

Jim: Yeah, you're right, I really lost it when she accused me of being a negligent husband and father! Why does she sometimes have to go there?

Questioning

George: Do you think that Judy really believes you are a negligent husband and father?

Jim: I hope not! Usually I don't believe that because in general we work pretty well together as a team. But she actually did say those words, and well, I'm wondering if maybe that's how she sees me? That would really suck! I think that is where I go when we have arguments like this – I hear her saying I am a bad father and a bad husband.

George: Well that has me feeling pissed off at Judy. How can she possibly say that you are a bad father or husband or anything? I think when you get home tonight you should insist that she take that back and apologize. Maybe you should threaten to cancel that weekend getaway she's been planning and you are – of course – paying for. That should get her attention.

Jim: What? What are you suggesting I do? I don't know ... I am afraid threatening her would really make things worse, George.

Bill: C'mon George, remember Jim set the boundary – *no advice!* – at least until he feels ready for it. Plus, I believe we want to keep this about Jim's experience.

Validation

Bill: I can really see why this argument would be hurtful to you. It would make sense to me if you were questioning how Judy sees you as a parent and husband. That's got to feel pretty scary! Am I right about that? I can also see why you might feel resentful.

Empathy

Jim: I'm scared, yes, hurt and confused, too. I really don't know what to do. We didn't talk about it at all last night, so I don't know what she's feeling today. I only know I don't like it the way it is!

Questioning

David: How do you feel about your part in the argument last night? If you could go back and do it over, would you do something differently?

Jim: Thanks for that question, David. I really am not happy with the way I overreacted last night. In retrospect, I did the same thing with my wife that I did with people at work. When I experience failure after failure and frustration after frustration, I get confused and overwhelmed and tend to lash out at people. Then, I feel guilty and actually worse than I did before.

Yes, I would do it differently if I could go back to the beginning of last night. I would acknowledge the fact that she also had a rough day and give her a hug – which I needed as well. I would try to discuss with her how we could support each other in handling the evening with the kids so that both of us could get some of what we needed. Trouble is – it's too late for that now. I blew that possibility!

Mirroring

Bill: I think I hear you saying that it's too late to repair the damage that was done by the argument last night. Is that right?

Jim: Well, it seems that way, but I don't know for sure. I suppose I could go home tonight and ask her to talk about this. I know that I should apologize for overreacting ... it's just that ... I don't know ...

Questioning

Dwayne: I am hearing your reluctance to ask her to talk and to apologize. Is that true, are you feeling reluctant? What do you think is going on for you?

Jim: Yeah, you definitely got that right. I think I am afraid to ask her to talk, and there is something about the idea of apologizing that has me feeling pretty unsettled.

Questioning

David: What are you afraid of?

Jim: Well, rejection I guess. I am afraid she will still be angry and say, no, she doesn't want to talk to me, and shut me out. It's hard to admit, but I feel really hurt when she shuts me out.

Mirroring
Questioning

Peter: I hear you saying you are afraid she will hurt you more. We don't know if she would in fact do that, but if she did, why do you imagine she would?

Jim: Hmm ... that is a good question. I imagine that if she really said 'no' it would be because she's thinking I am a bad husband and father. And, if I am a bad husband she'd be thinking, "*It's pointless, he's not worth dealing with, I want nothing to do with him*".

Rippling

Craig: I want you to know, Jim, that when I am hit by many frustrations in the course of a day, I have experienced myself as being reactive to any further demands. I too have experienced guilt and shame when I have overreacted to someone that I did not want to hurt, but I did it anyway. I feel guilty because I believe it is wrong to hurt someone, but I feel shame because deep down I think there is something wrong with me not being able to cope, getting too angry, and lashing out. Like, *what is wrong with me that I yell at people the way I do?*

Jim: Yeah, that makes sense – now that you say it – I am feeling shame. I do feel guilty about my behavior, but underneath it I think there is a part of me that believes that I am a bad husband

and father. This is my old 'not good enough' shame I have talked about here before. Crap! Here it is again!

Validation

Dwayne: I know that you haven't really requested feedback, but I have to say that my image of you is that you are a very caring husband and a very dedicated father. We are all imperfect parents and husbands. I see you as always trying.

Jim: Oh man, I really appreciate hearing that right now! I get caught up in thinking I suck. It is good to hear the opposite view from you. You know that most of the time this is what I think too, but then I plunge right into thinking I am bad.

Validation

Craig: This is my view of you too, Jim. You are a good man.

Jim: Thanks Craig!

Questioning

David: Do you think your reluctance to apologize is tied to your feeling of shame too?

Jim: I do see a connection. I think when I am in this shame place, believing I am a *not-good-enough* husband, any thought of apologizing for what I did wrong seems like admitting that it's true – that I do suck. I think I see how feeling shame and having this old belief triggered is what is holding me back. Maybe if I can put this old belief in check, I can take a chance, approach Judy and tell her I am sorry, and ask her to talk this through.

Validation
Rippling

Dwayne: I get what you are saying about apologizing. I think that is what makes it difficult for me too. I think for me it often feels like I am admitting failure – like I am a failure. But then I try to put this familiar thought back in the box and open myself to making the apology. I know you are very capable of doing this, too. I have seen you do it before in this very room.

Rippling

David: I can't tell you how many times I have held back because I feared that some really negative view of me would be confirmed. I hear you saying that you're afraid that you did damage last night. I hear you saying that you are afraid to approach your wife and try to apologize because you expect her to reject you, and you want to avoid the pain of that. Most of all, I hear you saying that when you and Judy have these blow-ups, old shameful ideas about yourself get re-awakened. The thought of apologizing is unsettling because you are afraid that this belief that '*you are bad*' is being confirmed. Am I right about this?

Mirroring

Jim: On the money! I don't really think there's serious trouble in our marriage. I am afraid, though, that she will continue to be angry and won't want to talk to me. I am afraid of how painful this will feel. But I am also afraid to apologize because in my mind admitting I did wrong by overreacting is admitting I am a bad man. What I think I have come to see again about myself tonight is that I don't have to let this old belief and shame trigger run me.

Bill: I'm wondering if you feel that you have gotten what you need from us for this evening's meeting. Is there more that you need from us, or are you feeling complete enough to move

forward with whatever you're going to do now? I think we'd like to know what you have gotten from this evening's session and what it is you feel prepared to take home.

Jim: It has been very helpful to share with all of you what happened last night and work through your good questions, and ripples. **I really liked hearing you guys say you see me as a good man – father & husband.** I know when I believe the opposite, I avoid Judy and let things slide. **I also heard you say I am capable of checking my shame and can move forward with apology and connection. It was helpful to be reminded you have seen me do it here.**

Mirroring

Jim: You know guys, I want to add that it was also helpful to me that no one jumped in at the beginning of my work and told me I should just go home and apologize. I think I would not have been open to hearing that advice then, and it probably would have added to my shame. I am grateful to you that you helped me get here on my own.

Jim: I feel relief and I feel encouraged to go home and do my part in reconnecting with Judy. Thank you again for walking through this with me, and I'll let you know next time how it goes. In fact, can I ask one of you to check with me later this week? I think if I know one of you is going to call it will be added incentive for me to get things back on track with Judy.

Bill: Thank you for trusting us and letting us walk through this with you. I think I speak for everyone in the group that we wish you well and stand ready to support you anyway that we can. I saw Dwayne raise his hand when you asked for someone to help you follow through. You will do this for Jim, Dwayne?

Dwayne: I'd be glad to.

Bill: David, I'm wondering if you would be open to allowing some interaction with the group around your being late for tonight's meeting.

David: Of course, I would.

Bill: I would like to begin by letting you know that I trust you have some good reason for being late. I probably don't have to remind you that we have previously discussed in our sessions that even when a person's intentions are valid, the action can cause feelings and its best if they can at least be shared.

I have an additional issue with you, which is that, as the host for tonight's meeting, I would've liked for you to call to let me know whether or not you were, in fact, planning to attend. As you know, it's difficult for any host to plan appropriately for food and seating arrangements when the number of men who plan to attend is not known.

David: I have no excuse for not calling, and I apologize for that. It simply slipped through the cracks. I forgot to call.

As for being late, I left home with sufficient time for me to arrive on time. About 2 miles from here a freight train – a very slow moving and long freight train – stopped me cold in a line of traffic that I could not maneuver out of. I reached for my cell phone and discovered that I had put it on the charger at home and forgotten to bring it with me.

I do understand that even though I could not control what detained me and made it impossible for me to be on time, my being late and walking in on a delicate part of the meeting is unpleasant and likely to create feelings that I am willing to hear.

Mirroring

Bill: I get it that you could not control being stopped by a train, and I appreciate the fact that you thought of calling to warn us of your late arrival. I hear you saying that you accept responsibility both for not having called and for your lateness. Have I got that right?

David: Yes, you do.

Bill: Are you willing to hear feedback from the group?

David: Yes I am.

Feedback

Jim: I was just getting into my feelings about what was a very difficult reality for me. Your entry was ill-timed and pulled me off center for a bit. I felt irritated and angry about your coming in when you did. At the same time, I appreciate your accepting responsibility and accept your apology. I also appreciated your participation in my work. Your observations and feedback were helpful, thank you.

I'm thinking that maybe we as a group should discuss whether or not someone who is late should be allowed to enter the group after someone has begun to do their work. I'm inclined to vote in the direction that it should not be allowed.

Bill: I think that before we address that proposal we should keep the door open for any other feelings that need to be shared about David's lateness this evening.

Feedback

Craig: I could see that Jim was distracted by David's entry and I felt concerned for Jim and irritated with David. Now that I hear the apology and the reasons for the lateness, I am at peace with it.

I'm inclined to agree with Jim's suggestion that there be a cutoff point for allowing late entry into a meeting.

Feedback

George: I was also irritated about the timing of David's entry into the group. I think we should remind ourselves that calling ahead with our intentions for attendance and then getting here on time is essential for us to remain cohesive and in a trusting relationship with each other. I also don't think that late entry should be allowed.

Bill: Is there anyone else that would like to share their feelings?

Okay.

Bill: David, is there anything else that you would like to say to the group?

David: I appreciate everyone's honesty. I apologize again; I agree that late entry should not be allowed.

Bill: It seems that there is a consensus about late entry. Let's have some suggestions for how we should state that new agreement/policy.

B. The Impact Exchange

The Impact Exchange (IE) is a relatively easy clearing process to implement in a meeting. The IE process offers to PGG men a meaningful and effective way of converting minor conflict experiences into personal understanding and growth. As human beings, we all carry wounds within us that, when triggered, are likely to generate a reactive response to someone whose behavior, attitude, or tone throws salt into an old, painful injury.

In Victories, we believe it is important for men to share these experiences with each other. The Victories PGG Golden Rule is: Speak your truth. Do not withhold your feelings, whether they are about people in your life, and especially if they are about other members of your group. Such sharing not only clears the air so that negative feelings do not mushroom into much larger issues, but it also offers a man who is reactive an opportunity for self-reflection and insight into what the reactive energy says about himself. No energy is put toward blame or assessing fault in this process. The man whose behavior triggered the reaction (Man-B) allows himself to listen and simply be a container within which the triggered man (Man-A) can assess and explore the personal meaning of his feelings.

The IE process can help men become less reactive. A man who becomes aware of how his prior experience plays out in the present may discover he can choose something new for himself. The process can be equally beneficial to Man-B. Men who have become skilled in this special kind of listening discover a new way to be in relationship. Engaging in an IE is courageous on the part of both men. Both participants must treat each other very respectfully.

Typically, it is after check-ins that a man would request an Impact Exchange with another member of the group. After check-ins, the IE process is set up. It is important that the other man be asked whether he is willing to participate in the exchange. Participation is always optional. A third man is chosen to serve as a facilitator by Man-A.

The two men sit knee-to-knee or stand facing one another. The facilitator guides Man-A, encouraging adherence to the format: the impact it had on me was ... The facilitator helps Man-A keep it about himself and guides his self-exploration. The group holds the space quietly, listening with compassion, not taking sides or interrupting.

Step 1 - Facilitator's instructions

Facilitator to Man-A: "Your job is to present this issue simply and directly while avoiding blaming or criticizing Man-B. Stating the impact in feeling terms is key."

Facilitator to Man-B: "Your job is to listen to Man-A with an open heart. You will be asked to mirror what you have heard. Please do not attempt to rebut or defend against what Man-A expresses."

Step 2 - Stating the Facts, the Impact, and the Feeling

Facilitator to Man-A: "Focus on the facts: what happened, and what your feeling reactions were to it. If judgment statements are made, I will gently nudge you back to facts and feelings."

Man-A states: “When I heard you say X (or, when you did X,) the impact it had on me was Y. I felt _____”

Man-B mirrors: “When I said/did X, the impact it had on you was Y. You felt _____”

Facilitator to Man-A: “Is that right? Did Man B hear you correctly?”

Man-A: “Yes, I feel heard.”

If not heard, Man-A repeats his issue and how it impacted him until Man-B can clearly mirror it, and until Man-A can say he feels heard.

Step 3 - Self-reflection and exploring the trigger (the “spark”)

Facilitator to Man-A: “Now allow yourself to remember an experience in which you had the same or similar feeling. Please tell Man-B about that experience and the feeling.”

Man-A responds. This is his opportunity to explore his personal history and his triggers.

Facilitator may ask Man-A: “What does this issue hold for you, what are you bringing to this?”

Facilitator to Man-B: “Please mirror what you have heard Man-A tell you about what this issue holds for him.”

Man-B mirrors what he has heard.

Facilitator to Man-A: “Do you feel heard / gotten by Man-B?”

If not heard, Man-A repeats what he has shared, and Man-B tries again to clearly mirror it until Man-A can say he feels heard.

Step 4 - Expressing the Request / Wish

Facilitator to Man-A: “Knowing that you may not get what you ask for, is there something you would like to ask for from (name of Man-B)?”

Facilitator to Man-B: “Can you mirror the Man-A’s request, but please do not respond to the request at this time.”

Facilitator to Man-A: “Do you feel heard / gotten by Man-B?”

Facilitator will ask this be repeated until Man-A feels that his request has been heard.

Facilitator to Man-A: “Is there something you wish or would request of yourself?”

Sometimes a thank you or hugs or other gestures of re-connection are offered at the conclusion, but this should not be forced or expected.

A major dynamic of the Impact Exchange is the opportunity it presents for Man-A to own his projections, and discover what is behind his triggers. When Man-A reports how he has been impacted emotionally, he is encouraged by the Facilitator to answer the question, “what does this issue hold for you, what is it that you are bringing to this exchange?” And, “where in your past have you experienced a similar wounding.” The Facilitator helps Man-A to not blame and make it all about Man-B.

Man-A may wish to frame a request of himself as well. An example might be, “My wish for myself is not take these things so personally.” Only the facilitator should mirror this wish / request for Man-A

It is encouraged that Man-B hear the presented issue with an open heart. It is the Facilitator’s role also to ensure that Man-B does not rebut or defend at any time during Steps 1 and 2. Man-B is not allowed to respond to the request made by Man-A. There is value in him fully hearing the request with an open heart and letting the request sit with him for a while. He may choose to comply with it, but the process protects him from feeling the social pressure to comply. The IE process presents an opportunity for Man-B to understand how his behaviors may impact other men in the group. He may freely choose to own and modify his behaviors – or not to.

Man-B may feel uncomfortable after hearing how he played a role in triggering Man-A. He may wish to have the group hear his side, how it *really* happened, etc. If Man-B feels the need to have his side heard, we recommend he call for a Come Clean or Impact Exchange of his own at another meeting. It would be counterproductive to give Man-B time to do this in the same meeting. It would likely be experienced by Man-A as a rebuttal, and could undo the benefits of his work. But it may be helpful if the facilitator or men in the group acknowledge that Man-B is emotionally impacted by the process. It may be helpful to suggest that there is value in sitting with his feelings for a time, and that he is welcome to share his feelings and experience of this process next meeting if he wishes. Man-B has the opportunity to view what comes up for him as a gift to Man-A’s own work, as well as an opportunity for Man-B to practice listening skills he needs in his relationships with other men in his group and in his life.

A goal of the Impact Exchange is clarity and greater understanding between the men. During the process, other men in the group hold the space for the participants. After the process completes, the participants should be allowed to sit with their experience. The group should not quiz them, evaluate, or interpret the work. Men may wish to offer a few words of empathy and support. But it is best that the meeting continues and the spot light shift from the participants.

Positive emotions and impacts can and should be explored, too. (“When you called me this week, I felt touched that you thought of me.”)

Impact Exchange Basic Steps – to be printed out if needed

Step 1 - Facilitator's (Fac) Instructions

Fac to Man-A: "Your job is to present this issue simply and directly while avoiding blaming or criticizing Man-B. Stating the impact in feeling terms is key."

Fac to Man-B: "Your job is to listen to Man-A with an open heart. You will be asked to mirror what you have heard." Please do not attempt to rebut or defend against what Man-A expresses."

Step 2 - Stating the Facts, the Impact, and the Feeling

Fac to Man-A: "Focus on the facts, what happened, and what your feeling reactions were to it. If judgment statements are made, I will gently nudge you back to facts and feelings."

Man-A states: "When I heard you say X, or, when you did X, the impact it had on me was Y."

Man-B mirrors: "When I said/did X, the impact it had on you was Y."

Fac to Man-A: "Is that right? Did Man-B hear you correctly?"

Man-A: "Yes, I feel heard."

If not heard, Man-A repeats his issue and how it impacted him until Man-B can clearly mirror it, and until Man-A can say he feels heard.

Step 3 - Self-reflection and exploring the trigger (the "spark")

Fac to Man-A: "Now allow yourself to remember an experience in which you had the same or similar feeling. Please tell Man-B about that experience and the feeling."

Fac may ask Man-A: "What does this issue hold for you, what is it that you are bringing to this?"

Fac to Man-B: "Please mirror what you have heard Man-A tell you about what this issue holds for him."

Man-B mirrors what he has heard.

Fac to Man-A: "Do you feel heard / gotten by Man-B?" If not heard, repeat.

Step 4 - Expressing the Request / Wish

Fac to Man-A: "Knowing that you may not get what you ask for, is there something you would like to ask for of (name of Man-B)? "

Fac to Man-B: "Mirror the Man-A's request, but please do not respond to the request at this time."

Fac to Man-A: "Do you feel heard / gotten by Man-B?"

Fac will ask this be repeated until Man-A feels that his request has been heard.

Fac to Man-A: "Is there something you wish or would request of yourself?" The Fac mirrors this back.

The following is a relevant article from the Baldwin Group.

It's About Me, Not You!

A test of character is the nature of our response and reactions when we are under stress. What comes out of us is what is really in us. So when we hurt and hate, the source is internal, not external. True, the trigger is often external to us. But the spark is not the cause of our explosions. The explosive material is already there waiting to happen. Therefore, whatever we are upset about is about us not them, me not you. From this perspective, it is important that we own our own reactions and responses and stop blaming, shaming, criticizing, controlling, coercing and withdrawing. When we take responsibility for our inner world it increases the possibility others will be able to hear us non-defensively.

Here is the message to you my partner, friend, or acquaintance. Whatever I say to you is about me even when I criticize, blame, condemn or withdraw. I want you to hear my experience. What I feel, see, hear, need and sense. What I am telling you is not about you, even though it involves you.

My goal is to express myself, not expose you. I own my reactions to you. You do not make me feel, need or experience anything. Whatever comes out of me is within me. You did not put it there. I sometimes tell you that you make me feel, think or do something. This expresses my helplessness and powerlessness, my denial, rationalization, or projection. I am disowning myself here. There are times that I don't want to believe what is in me. It is easier to blame, shame and accuse you than take responsibility for what I say, see, feel or do.

I apologize to you for criticizing, condemning, expressing contempt or withdrawing from you. At times I believe that I am morally and emotionally superior to you. I recognize that when I yield to this temptation I hurt both of us. I want to tell you my truth, to be real and authentic with you. Yet there are times that I focus on what I see to be your flaws, and this obscures my own failings.

I am beginning to understand that what you say, see, feel and do triggers me. I am learning that our interaction brings to the surface the internal source of my troubled feelings. I invite you to help me look at my mess, my stuff, my wounds. It would help me if you would be willing to acknowledge that you are the spark more than the source of my pain. When I overreact, empathize with me please. At that moment I have not made the connection between the triggering incident and my past losses, hurts, frustrations and disappointments. When I invite you to listen to my pain, the purpose is to understand my own reactions, not to attack or control you. I want to liberate myself from pain, not manipulate you into meeting my needs."

This article came from: The Baldwin Center for Psychological Services, Ltd., 847.295.1600,
www.TheBaldwinCenter.com

Note: This is authored by someone we have not been able to identify. If you know who it is, please let us know so we can give proper credit. Minor editing by Dr. John Baldwin.

C. Conflict Resolution

Whenever men come together for the purpose of sharing feelings and real life issues, it must be expected that there will be conflict. Conflicts are a normal and inevitable part of our lives. But it isn't inevitable that these conflicts have to be unproductive, ruin relationships, and cause men to quit the PGG. Conflict can be opportunity for growth and learning, rather than something that fuels anger and frustration. By stepping into a conflict resolution or mediation process, men can develop a deeper understanding of vulnerability, confidentiality, effective communication, and intentional listening. Learning to resolve conflicts in a way that leads to reconnection can be one of the most important skills that men gain from their participation in a PGG.

There are times when a man experiences small hurts and resentments related to something said or done by another man in group. Very often the other man is unaware of the triggering his words and deeds have stirred. We term these *one-way* conflicts. Clearing these minor conflicts is best done by employing a process such as the Impact Exchange. This is why at every meeting it is recommended that the leader invite each man to do a Clearing Process and address any conflict they have with another member.

There are also times when men lock horns in serious *two-way* disputes. Big anger, judgment and mutual blame erupt. The entire group is usually impacted. Safe and productive meetings become harder to manage. These *two-way* conflicts can be best addressed through a conflict resolution (CR) process.

A primary goal of the conflict resolution process is to re-establish the sense of safety in the group for the two men, and all the other members. It is designed to foster an environment in which men are willing to take the risks involved in honestly communicating their differences, concerns and potential similarities to one another. Mutually sharing vulnerability is risky and uncomfortable but it is what moves us forward toward resolution and paves the way to rapprochement.

To initiate a CR process, the men (disputants) should agree to and ask for a time for the CR process. They should ask the group for help in identify a willing and trusted facilitator. The group should plan for sufficient time for a formal facilitation process. Parts of several meetings may be required to prepare for the facilitation - for instance if each disputant needs time to vent to the group prior to the actual facilitation. However, the group members must manage the amount time that gets dedicated to the conflict. It is important that group members take care of their own needs and continue to ask for the time they need for their own personal work. Conflict resolution between two men must not be allowed to take up all available work time or become a never ending process. In the end, if it seems to be unlikely to achieve some measure of productive reconnection, the disputants and the group must face facts and begin to discuss alternatives.

It is highly recommended that everyone in the group be present at each meeting dealing with facilitation.

A Victories facilitator(s) is available to consult or to come in to help a group with a difficult conflict. It is important that there be a consensus of the group agreeing to bring in outside facilitation. Here is the basic contact information to use for any questions or requests for assistance:

PGG Leadership Email

pgg_leaders@victoriesoftheheart.org

PGG Lead Clinicians

Biff Bannon (847) 951-9732

Basic Principles & Roles of Conflict Resolution in a PGG

Each member of the group should read the following, know their role and be prepared to bring their “*best self*” attitude.

1. The men in conflict —

- a. Bring their mutual issue to the attention of the group
- b. Ask for what they want, and for the group’s support
- c. Ask for facilitation
 1. A conflict resolution piece is always mediated by a facilitator(s), ideally chosen from within the group, but Victories will provide facilitation, when requested.
 2. The men agree to accept guidance from the facilitator.
- d. Take responsibility for the resolution process
 1. Being accountable for their own growth opportunity related to conflict
 2. Knowing it is in the interest of the group to work for resolution
- e. Speak their truth.
 1. May ask to speak or vent to the group without the other man being present – typically prior to the actual formal facilitation. The other disputant is automatically offered the same opportunity
- f. Respectfully allow the other man to have his say.
- g. Look at what they are bringing to the conflict.
- h. Work to *let it go* and *move on*.
- i. Avoid -
 1. Making it all about the other man, and who is right and who is wrong.
 2. Attempting to win members over to their point of view.
 3. Engaging in out-of-group conversations with other members about other members.
 4. Stopping or interfering with the general group process for an extended period of time.

2. The facilitator —

- a. Presents the engagement ground rules and safety.
- b. Takes charge of the process - gently but firmly.
- c. Ensures that both men get to tell their side of the disagreement.
- d. Listens well to understand the issue better.
- e. Clarifies in order to deepen understanding by -
 1. Restating

2. Asking open-ended questions
 3. Encouraging sharing of vulnerable feelings.
 4. Reframing
 5. Being silent
 6. Helping the men separate facts from assumptions.
 7. Looking and listening for cues to return the power to the parties.
- f. Invites each disputant to mirror what the other man has expressed.
 - g. Repeats the mirroring steps as needed
 - h. Moves the process along, working for a conclusion / resolution.
 - i. Steers the men away from unproductive blaming.
 - j. Avoids
 1. Trying to fix, tell, suggest or give advice
 2. Allowing a man to bog down the process
 3. Making it about who's right and who's wrong
3. **The group members —**
- a. Encourage the disputants to engage in the facilitation process.
 - b. Hold space for the process.
 - c. Pay attention to what is going on in the room, and in their hearts.
 - d. Avoid taking sides
 - e. During the actual facilitation, support with their presence only – avoid words or movements that would imply a taking of sides is allowed.

Conflict Resolution Steps

I. Pre-facilitation Steps

- A. Men bring the issue to the group's attention. Come clean.
- B. Each man requests and engages in a clearing process(es) such as the Impact Exchange
- C. Repeat the clearing process
- D. Determine that more work is needed and ask for a conflict resolution process.
- E. Choose an in-group facilitator or ask Victories for facilitation.
- F. A man may ask to speak or vent to the group without the other being present – typically prior to the actual formal facilitation.

II. Facilitation Steps

- A. Facilitator reads the **Engagement Ground Rules and Safety** to the group (see below)
- B. Asks Man-A for a synopsis of the issue from his POV – what happened (facts)
 1. Clarify and distill —
 - a. Mirror and restate - what I hear this is about for you...
 - b. Clarify feelings.
 - c. Identify the judgment(s)
 - i. Prompt Man-A: *My judgment about you (Man-B) is...*
 - ii. *I believe your judgment of me is...*
 2. Asks Man-B to briefly mirror distillation (no rebuttal)
 3. Do you feel heard? (Man-B repeats mirror if needed)
- C. Asks Man-B for a synopsis of the issue from his POV – what happened (facts)
 1. Clarify and distill —
 - a. Mirror and restate - what I hear this is about for you...
 - b. Clarify feelings.
 - c. Identify the judgment(s)
 - i. Prompt Man-B: *My judgment about you (Man-A) is...*
 - ii. *I believe your judgment of me is...*
 2. Asks Man-A to briefly mirror distillation (no rebuttal)
 3. Do you feel heard? (Man-A repeats mirror if needed)
- D. Going deeper, Man-A – *what is this about for you?*
 1. What does this hold for you?
 2. When have you felt similarly?
 3. What are you bringing to this?
 4. What is the part of you being mirrored back to you by Man-B?

- E. Going deeper, Man-B – *what is this about for you?*
 - 1. What does this hold for you?
 - 2. When have you felt similarly?
 - 3. What are you bringing to this?
 - 4. What is the part of you being mirrored back to you by Man-A?

- F. Prompts Man-A for his *wish* (Man-B does not respond but listens)
 - 1. What I wish you would have said or done differently ...
 - 2. What I wish I would have done or responded differently ...
 - 3. What I wish to get from you is ...
 - 4. Man-B mirrors the wishes w/o agreeing or responding.

- G. Prompts Man-B for his *wish* (Man-A does not respond but listens)
 - 1. What I wish you would have said or done differently ...
 - 2. What I wish I would have done or responded differently ...
 - 3. What I wish to get from you is ...
 - 4. Man-A mirrors the wishes w/o agreeing or responding.

- H. Prompts Man-A – *what does resolution look like?*
 - 1. What does resolution, agreement and reconnection look like to you...
note, this is NOT what Man-B must do differently, but how I hope we can move forward (new form of *wish*) – baby steps
 - 2. Man-B mirrors w/o agreeing or responding.

- I. Prompts Man-B – *what does resolution look like?*
 - 1. What does resolution, agreement and reconnection look like to you...
note, this is NOT what Man-A must do differently, but how I hope we can move forward (new form of *wish*) – baby steps.
Man-A mirrors w/o agreeing or responding.

- J. Conclusion –
 - 1. What are you each feeling now?
 - 2. Do you feel finished for now?
 - 3. Is there something we can affirm – (optional , this may not possible)
 - 1. About the process
 - 2. About the intention
 - 3. About the group support

- K. After the men finish it is important for the group to share their reactions to the conflict
 - 1. Men may share how the conflict affected them, what it activates for them.
 - 2. Men may wish to empathize, validate, and be supportive of the work.
 - 3. Men may share what they have learned about conflict and themselves.
 - 4. Men avoid taking sides or interpreting what they have witnessed.
 - 5. Men may express gratitude for the group, and the work in the room.

Engagement Ground Rules and Safety

The following should be read aloud by the facilitator before the resolution process begins:

- There is to be no violence or damage.
- Once we begin, no one should leave the process until it is agreed *we are complete for now*.
- Your (disputants) job is to speak your truth with integrity, and ask for what you wish.
- One person will speak at a time
- We will make every effort to listen to one another with respect
- We will seek to understand one another's point of view, and be flexible about differing perceptions of the issues at hand
- We all will agree to honor the confidentiality of what is shared during this process.
- The group supports with its presence only – avoiding words or movements that would imply a taking of sides is allowed.
- My role (facilitator) will be to facilitate by mirroring or asking open-ended questions only for the sake of clarification or for helping you to go deeper. I will ask you to mirror what the other has said. If I make a suggestion it will be directed at facilitating understanding. If I'm on the wrong track, you will tell me so – the issue is between the two of you and must stay there till you feel resolved or need to take a break for the time being.
- I encourage you to be respectful, to talk about your feelings and how you are impacted emotionally by the other man's behavior.
- I encourage you to be direct, clear and brief.
- You may ask for a structured break (fixed time – no processing during break)

The men (disputants & group members) must agree to the ground rules before proceeding. The safety of the men and everyone in the group is of the utmost importance. If the process gets out of hand, feels unsafe or becomes unproductive the facilitator can choose to bring it to an end. Either of the disputants may also request that the process come to an end – *for now*. It might feel supportive if after check-out each disputant leave the meeting safely accompanied by other members.

Additional Resources

Here are two web links that give more general Conflict Resolution information, support and food for thought:

<http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/stepsoverview.htm>

D. Potential PGG Meeting Places

Buffalo Grove

Buffalo Grove Community Center
50 1/2 Raupp Blvd. (west of the intersection of Raupp Blvd and Church Rd.)
Cost:
Used by: BT Feb 2013 PGG, & BT Apr 2011 PGG

Chicago

Garrett Wellness Center
3020 N Kimball (Logan Square)
www.garrettwellnesscenter.com
Tel: 773-395-6100, lgarrett@garrettwellnesscenter.com
Cost: \$50-\$100, uncertain for new groups

Irish American Heritage Center
4626 N Knox
Tel: 773-282-7035
www.irish-american.org
Deidre McNulty, dmcnulty@irishahc.org
Shelby Baron, sbaron@irishahc.org
Used By: Victories for benefits, they have many smaller rooms that groups could use

Deerfield

North Shore Unitarian Church
2100 Half Day Road
Contact: Kieta Synnove, Administrative assistant, or Rachel Simpson, Business Administrator
Tel: 847-234-2460
Cost: \$30 if church member, \$50 for non member group
Used By: WY May 2014

Des Plaines

First Congregational Church
766 Graceland Ave
Contact: Jim Foster, Property Manager
Tel: 224-361-6735
Cost: \$35/meeting
Used by: BT Feb 2014 PGG, 7p-10p, every other Thursday

Evanston

First Presbyterian Church of Evanston
1427 Chicago Ave
Contact: Janice Dobschuetz, Administrative Associate
Tel: 847-864-1472 x 503, jdobschuetz@firstpresevanston.org
Cost: \$50 for the room and \$22.50 for security from 9 – 10 pm since building closes at 9 pm
Used by: Victories for Open Circle (www.meetup.com/victories)

Heartwood Center
1818 Dempster, 2nd Floor Classroom or conference room
www.heartwoodcenter.com
Contact: Nancy Floy, Director
Tel: 847-491-1122 x 11, nancyfloy@heartwoodcenter.com
Cost: \$35/hour
Used by: Victories in 2013 for PGG 1st meetings

Lake Street Church
607 Lake St
Contact: Emily Hartnell
Tel: 847-864-2181 x 117, emily.hartnell@lakestreet.org

Cost: \$45
Used by: various groups, including Victories for Intro to Victories sessions

Levy Center
300 Dodge Ave
Contact: Karen Hawk, Program Manager
Tel: 847-448-8294, khawk@cityofevanston.org
Cost: \$90, can get lower rate if an Evanston resident
Used by: Victories for general meetings, some PGGs

McGaw YMCA
1000 Grove St
Contact: Vertis Riley
Tel: 847-475-7400 x 236, vertisr@mcgawymca.org
Cost: \$50
Used by: Peter Frankel group, Victories for Intro to Victories sessions

Unitarian Universalist Church
Contact: Sandra Robinson
Tel: 847-864-1330
Cost: \$60 - \$80
Used By: Oct 2006 WY PGG, Dec 2009 WY PGG

Glencoe

Little House of Glencoe
690 Birch Road
www.littlehouseofglencoe.org
Contact: Neal Mehlman
Tel: 312-206-6422, nmehlman@comcast.net
\$75 for evening or day meetings
Used By: Victories for trainings, Dec 2005 BT merged PGG (Ron Rooth's group)

Park Ridge

VFW

10 Higgins Rd

Tel: 847-825-4588

Cost: \$50 for room in back, which is more private

Used By: BT Jun 2014 PGG

E. Suggested Processes and Work Themes

Trust Circle

This is an excellent way to deepen the group experience and access emotions at the beginning of a meeting or right before “work” is done.

The group stands in a tight circle with one man in the middle. The men in the circle adopt a power stance: strongest foot forward, arms bent at the elbow, hands open and ready to catch the man in the center. Keeping his eyes closed and his body rigid, the man in the center allows himself to fall into the hands of the other men, who gently pass him from one man to another – back and forth around the circle. As he moves around the circle, the man is asked to notice his feelings during the physical experience of trusting that the others will not let him fall. The man is encouraged to express any thoughts, feelings, memories or other sensations he is experiencing. It is crucial for the men in the outer circle to provide stable, reliable support in order for the man in the middle to experience trust. Joking, sudden movements, and not being in a power stance can undermine this exercise.

Commitment Ceremony

1. Discuss for a moment what commitment to the group means. Reflect on and briefly share where commitment “shows up” in your life - how you value it and are challenged by it.
2. Basic key elements of commitment to this personal growth group:
 - a. Each man will uphold the **Group Rules and Boundaries**, and **Basic Principles and Group Safety**, and to show up physically and emotionally.
 - b. Each man is committing to *not sit on his feelings* regarding other members.
 - c. Each man is committing to being responsible for attempting a resolution process whenever he is in conflict with any other member or members of the group.
 - d. Each man is committing to being responsible for letting the group know when group dynamics or methods become disturbing or unfulfilling. This commitment should include willingness to engage in a process with the men of the group to resolve this issue.
3. The men stand in a circle. One by one each man will state his commitment to the group. The group will echo back his statements, call and response. Note: This should be printed out in advance so the men don’t have to memorize the statements. Consider providing candles to everyone. From a central candle representing the new group, have each man light his candle before he speaks his commitment. At the end all men will be holding lit candles (symbolizing the light & energy they will bring to this new group).

Man: I commit to sharing my story with a courageous heart.

Group: I commit to hearing your story with a compassionate heart.

- Man: I commit to facing issues I have with other members of this group.
- Group: I will support the resolution of issues within this group.
- Man: I take responsibility for making this group work for me.
- Group: We engage each other and grow our bond.

This continues until all men who wish to have spoken.

It might feel right as the ritual ends the two facilitators extinguish their candles and step back out of the circle, symbolizing that a new group has formed now. It will grow independently, organically by the light, the leadership, dedication of everyone in the circle. Perhaps a final quote read by the facilitators in the shadows,

*Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle,
and the life of the candle will not be shortened.
Happiness never decreases by being shared.
Buddha*

I get emotional when ...

The men count off 1 and 2 consecutively around the circle. #1s and #2s pair up in dyads, facing each other eye-to-eye and knee-to-knee. There might be an odd man out who could time keep.

The #1 men speak first to the #2s, repeatedly completing the sentence stem: *"I feel joy when ..."*, speaking sentence after sentence listing when they experience joy, for a timed period of around 3 minutes. Example: *I feel joy when I play blocks on the floor with my grandson and see the delight in his eyes. I feel joy when my wife unexpectedly calls to me, "Hello handsome!" I feel joy when my favorite team wins.*

The #2 men only listen – no commentary - maintain eye contact, and at the end of the time respond simply with, *"Thank you."* The dyads should be silent for a few moments, taking a few deep breaths.

Then #2s take their turn completing the sentence stem speaking to the #1s. After the timed period #2s wrap up, #1s reply only with, *"Thank you."* A moment of silence is encouraged as the two men retain their connection, and breathe deeply.

#2s then rise and move two seats to their right so they are now addressing a new #1. The process continues with Seats 2 (flipping who goes first) now sharing, *"I get angry when..."*, and so on.

The third round is: *"I feel sad when..."*

The fourth round is: *"I feel fear when..."*

The final round is: *"I feel shame when..."*

Having a Conscious Rant ...

(adapted from *TO BE A MAN* by Robert Augustus Masters, p 287)

The point of a conscious rant is to defuse overloaded or potentially harmful reactivity in a way that hurts no one, including ourselves. In a conscious rant, you totally cut loose emotionally, exaggerating your sounds and movements without any editing, all within the confines of a context that is well *boundaried* – the container of the group. You might ask other group members for physical support such as a standing cradle.

Yell about what or who is really pissing you off. Your task is to do this full-out. Keep your rant full-blooded, dramatic, spontaneous, and deliberately exaggerate what you're feeling. Be as melodramatic as possible, going for sheer vitality. Give yourself at least three or four minutes of full-out expression. When you run out of steam; then lie flat on your back, spread-eagled, and breath slowly for a couple of minutes. Then let your breathing return to normal, and get up when you feel ready.

Note: If you're upset with a group member, do not make him the target of your rant. It is far better to process your issues and feelings with another group member in the safety of Impact Exchange, or other Clearing process.

In summary, the steps for a conscious rant are:

1. Step into the center of the circle and name your prevailing emotion(s).
2. Cut loose, expressing what you're feeling. Exaggerate your speech, your tone, your body movements enough so to lose any self-consciousness.
3. Do this all-out until you naturally start to tire (usually in 3-4 minutes), then lie down or sit comfortably. Breathe deeply and allow your breath to calm.

Who Am I?

Each man is given a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil. The men are asked to tear the paper into eight equally sized pieces and answer in three or fewer words the question, Who Am I? (as in roles such as I am a Lawyer, Father, Neighbor, etc.), writing one distinct role definition on each piece of paper. The men are then asked to prioritize the list from least important to most. After this, they are asked to cover or turn over the least important and consider their lives without that role. This is done again and again right up the list to the most important. Optionally, they can then be asked to reintegrate those roles one-by-one back into themselves.

After this process, and unlike all others, a follow-up discussion *is* encouraged. The men should especially center on two things: 1) the choices each man made in both defining himself and ranking them (were they "doing" things, did they rank according to time given to it or by social expectations, etc. and 2) what did it *feel* like to "lose" specific parts of their identity, perhaps asking, "Who was left after all these were gone?"

I am not Satisfied

Invite each man to write down responses to two statements, "I am not satisfied with the way things are" and "I contribute to this condition by..." Take this through four levels of dissatisfaction: globally, locally, with family and with himself. Invite each man to read silently over his responses and notice any connections and, finally, to choose one of those dissatisfactions most important to him and write down his commitment to changing his actions toward it. Share this commitment with the group and then get each man to make a measurable commitment for which another man may be able to hold him accountable.

My Life's Story

In this process, a man from the PGG is asked to volunteer to share his life story with the other men in the PGG. The primary purpose of this process is to strengthen the bond between the men who are

participating in the PGG.

The process is done after a group exercise, but before “work”, because the group exercises get the men warmed up to go deeper. The process works as follows:

The men are seated in a circle, and the man who volunteers to share his story stands in the center of the circle and is allowed up to 40 minutes to share his life story. Because of time constraints, it is suggested that only one man share his life story per meeting. This allows time for the other exercises described in the PGG Manual to be done during the meetings, as well as allowing time for the men to do work. Consequently, it will often take a few months for all the men in the PGG to share their story (although, as with all the exercises in the PGG, participation is strictly voluntary).

Important: The men in the PGG should be encouraged to *share* their story as opposed to “telling” their story. In other words, they should strive to reach the level 3 or 4 of communication that they were taught over the Breakthrough Weekend, because that is sharing your story. “Telling” your story is staying at level 1 or 2.

Some questions to ask the men to think about before they share their story might be:

If you were an only child, what was that like for you? Did you get lots of attention from your parents, and feel loved, safe and secure, or lonely and sad?

Were you popular in school- whether it be the class clown, the rebel, the star of the football team, or president of the student body? Or conversely, were you one of the last ones to be picked for sides in sports, a loner or a social outsider? In any case, how did you fit in (or not) and *what was that like for you?*

How did you come to be in Victories or in therapy? What event triggered you to seek help and support?

Who inspired you, who disappointed, rejected or hurt you, and how did you cope with those wounds?

In short, *what's it like for you, to be you..?*

When the man is finished sharing his story (or when time runs out), the other men in the group simply say, “Thank you”. I then often encourage the men to stand up, stretch, and shake it out to get the energy moving again, or even take a 5 minute break, depending on what the energy in the room feels like.

Sharing Our Sexual Lives

This process is intended to help men get comfortable talking about their sexual lives with each other. We hope it will crack the door open on this difficult and often taboo subject. We encourage groups to run this process from time to time just to keep the door open.

“For all the overexposure that sex gets in contemporary culture ... there is a deeper disrobing needed, a deeper self-disclosure. As we bring sex authentically out of the dark, in both personal and collective contexts, we are furthered in our humanity, more deeply established in living in ways that serve more than just our own well-being. We don’t lose our sexuality in this process, but are deepened and expanded in it, becoming capable of genuine intimacy, no longer burdening our sexuality with the obligation to make us feel better or more secure or whole, letting it be a wonderfully alive expression and celebration of already-present joy and wholeness”.

To Be A Man, Robert Augustus Masters

1. **Setup:** Men pair into dyads, sitting knee-to-knee.
 - a. The group chooses one man to lead the process. The men close their eyes and meditate on the following questions. The leader reads them slowly allowing these question to sink in and shape what they are about to share:
 1. What was it like for you when you were young and you first began to experience your sexual feelings, excitement, desires? How did you attempt to reconcile these with the messages you got from parents and the culture?
 2. What is you sex life like now? What is sexy & exciting, what brings you joy, what are your likes & dislikes, what makes you feel guilty or shameful, what do you fear about sex, what is difficult for you to talk about with your spouse, partner or in this group.
 3. How would you like your sex life and sexual experience to be different? What would you change about it? What would you like to have it feel better, free and alive? What do you fear in change?
 - b. *Alternatively*, hand out the sheet of word sexy prompts (on the page after this process). Take some time for the men in the group to meditate on the words, noticing with words trigger them.
 - c. Leader reminds the men that sharing can be about both the joyful and more challenging sides of their sexuality story. Leader reminds the men that this is a level 3 & 4 sharing experience, where we listen with an open heart, refrain from judgement, and tell our

story with a courageously. Leader reminds the men of their confidentiality oath to each other – *what is said here, stay here!*

- d. Leader may wish to point out that it is best if sharing of sexual experiences and issues is not too explicit or overly descriptive. Explicit sharing can be distracting or triggering, so interfere with the experience. Also, as always, *storytelling* should be avoided. Share the heart of the matter.
2. **Men share**, taking turns in the dyad responding with open questions and ripples and deep listening. Leader or men individually may wish to dissuade any jokey stuff that comes up, or advice giving, etc. Allow 25-30 minutes for this, more if it is cooking.
3. **Wrap up**: Come together as a group. Leader invites a few reactions and ripples to the experience. Suggest to the men that this sharing is available them anytime they want to “go there” in this circle of men.

Sharing Our Sexual Lives — Word Prompts

Prostitution Sexual Addiction Voyeurism

Puberty Sexual Taboo's Small Penis Size

What Is Normal? Promiscuity Fetishism

Sixty-Nine Pregnancy STD's

Labia Sexual Dysfunction Bisexuality

Shrinkage Secrecy Abortion Visiting Strip Clubs

Fear Homosexuality Penis Envy

Mommy Issues Heterosexuality Birth Control

Daddy Issues Pornography Analingus

 Cunnilingus What Is Dirty?

Fellatio Vasectomy Sexual Compulsivity

Other Process themes to expand on ...

As a little boy how did I feel when my father was about to come home from work? How / where do I still experience these feelings in my present life?

What did I dream of being when I was boy, a teenager, a young man? Where are these dreams now?

Let Your Body Help You Identify your Feelings

<http://vmarano.tumblr.com/post/4024557909/usebodytoidentifyfeelings>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Understand-Your-Emotions>

F. Miscellaneous Wisdom

- “No one is meant to do deep personal work alone”. Todd McCarty, Victories alum
- “We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” *Little Gidding*, T. S. Eliot
- “Empathy involves immersing oneself in another’s psychological state by feeling one’s self into the other’s experience.” Heinz Kohut
- “Our dads weren't there for us, so we were all raised by women, and we can't learn about manhood from women, so we have to learn about manhood from each other.” Robert Bly
- “A group of men who are reasonably compatible and who come together with a mutuality of intention will learn rapidly to trust, love, resolve conflict, and care for each other.” Bill Kauth
- “A man doesn't have to live up to any narrow, societal image of manhood. There are many ancient images of men as healers, protectors, lovers, and partners with women, men, and nature. This is how we are in our depths: celebrators of life, ethical and strong.” Aaron Kipnis
- “We need same-sex friends because there are types of validation and acceptance that we receive only from our gender mates. There is much about our experience as men that can only be shared with, and understood by, other men. There are stories we can tell only to those who have wrestled in the dark with the same daemons and been wounded by the same Angels. Only men understand the secret fears that go with the territory of masculinity.” Sam Keen
- “In order to know greater intimacy we often must take the risk of being hurt, laughed at, or rejected. In the safety of a men's group, committed to emotionally supporting each other and resolving conflict, it is possible to take those risks. A men's group will become a safe place, a refuge of comforting, loving, and caring.” Anonymous
- Three by Carl R. Rogers:
 - “The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.”
 - “People are just as wonderful as sunsets if you let them be. When I look at a sunset, I don't find myself saying, "Soften the orange a bit on the right hand corner." I don't try to control a sunset. I watch with awe as it unfolds.”
 - “What I am is good enough if I would only be it openly. I'm not perfect... But I'm enough”
- “Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.” Polonius

G. Bibliography

Men	
To Be A Man	Robert Augustus Masters
Finding Our Fathers	Samuel Oscherson
Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man	San Keen
Flying Boy, The	John Lee
Iron John, A Book About Men	Robert Bly
King, Warrior, Magician, Lover	Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette
Letters to My Son	Kent Nerburn
Tending the Fire/The Ritual Men's Group	Wayne Liebman
Understanding Masculine Psychology	Robert A. Johnson
Victories of the Heart	Bob Mark and Buddy Portugal
Beyond Anger: A Guide For Men	Thomas J. Harbin, PhD
I Don't Want to Talk about It	Terrance Real
A Path with Heart	Jack Kornfield
Absent Fathers, Lost Sons	Guy Coneau
Breaking the Shackles, Bringing Joy into our Lives	Roy Shenk and John Everingham
Wrestling with Love	Samuel Oscherson
Men and Friendship	Stuart Miller
Relationships	
101 Things I Wish I New When I Got Married	Linda and Charlie Bloom
Couples Comfort Book, The	Jennifer Loudon
Couples Companion, The	Harville Hendrix and Helen Hunt
Getting the Love You Want	Harville Hendrix
How to say it: For Couples	Paul Coleman
Love is a Verb	Bill O'Hanlon and Pat Hudson
Marriage Rules	Harriet Learner
New Rules of Marriage, The	Terrence Real
Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work, The	John M Gottman
Soul Talk	Nina Atwood
Truth About Love, The	Pat Love
Vibrant Relationship, The	Kiersten Seidenfaden & Piet Draiby
Anger Habit in Relationships, The	Carl Semmelroth, PhD
His Needs, Her Needs	Willard F. Harley, Jr
Too Good to Leave, Too Bad to Stay	Myra Kirshenbaum

Crazy Time	Abigail Trafford
Aging	
Creative Age, The	Gene D. Cohen
Mature Mind, The	Gene D. Cohen
Second Half of Life, The	Angeles Arrien
Psychology/Spiritual	
Buddha's Brain	Rick Hanson and Richard Mendius
Interpersonal Neurobiology, Pocket Guide To	Daniel J. Siegel
Tuesdays With Morrie	Mitch Albom
Voice of Knowledge, The	Don Miguel Ruiz
Wherever You Go, There You Are	Jon Kabat-Zinn
Whole- Brain Child, The	Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson
Anger Management for Everyone	Raymond Chip Tafrate, PhD Howard Kassinove, PhD
Dialogue	William Isaacs
Synchronicity	Joseph Jaworski
Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway	Susan Jeffers

H. About Victories; Programs & Trainings

Organizational Name

Although Victories of the Heart is the organization's legal name, the logo and print references will refer to it simply as Victories (NOT Victories for Men).

URL: www.victoriesformen.org

Organizational Branding Statement

Transforming The Lives Of Men

Organizational Mission Statement

Victories transforms the lives of men through weekend and group programs which lead them to deeper self-awareness, greater self-confidence, and stronger relationships. Our weekends are designed by professionals, supervised by licensed practitioners, and based on widely accepted clinical principles.

BreakThrough Weekend

The BreakThrough Weekend is a decisive and vital step towards removing the barriers that stand between the lives we lead and the lives we seek.

Wisdom Years Weekend

The Wisdom Years Weekend helps men over the age of 50 begin to answer a challenging and profound question: How do I want to live the rest of my life?

Shadow Weekend: Discovery Acceptance & Empowerment

The Shadow Weekend helps men achieve greater wholeness, increased power, and improved relationships by guiding them to discover and own unacknowledged parts of themselves.

The Best Self Weekend:

The **Best Self** weekend offers an advanced opportunity for all alumni to continue their personal work, reconnect with their initial weekend, and discover and celebrate their best selves.

Personal Growth Groups

Victories Personal Growth Groups offer weekend participants a place to continue their growth with the support of their peers and the larger Victories community.

Victories Open Circle

This is a weekly, drop-in, support group. While many who will attend are men who have attended a Victories weekend, the Open Circle welcomes any man to attend who is looking for support or wanting to experience a Victories-like group before attending a weekend. The purpose of this meeting is to provide a safe place for men to share, find support, and offer support to other men.

Our hope is that the Open Circle will provide an additional weekly space of support for our weekend

alumni and other interested men. It is an open meeting, so all are welcome, whether you are in your own Personal Growth Group or not. It will be facilitated by a trained member of the Personal Growth Group Leaders Group.

Victories Trainings for Weekend Alumni

(offered 1-2 times per year, check the website for updates)

Introduction to Heartwork

Learn by Doing & Re-experience a Powerful Aspect of the Breakthrough Weekend

This training provides BreakThrough weekends alumni to have another significant personal growth experience, deepen their work, and learn new skills.

Heartwork is a core component of the BreakThrough weekend. Participants will explore the theory behind **Heartwork**, learn how to facilitate by leading others in the process, and cultivate their leadership skills. This training is suitable for prospective BreakThrough leaders, staffers, individuals in Personal Growth Groups, and professionals seeking increased knowledge of psychodrama. It is an excellent opportunity for any BreakThrough graduate to learn more about the weekend process and to re-experience a powerful aspect of the BreakThrough weekend.

Attendance at this workshop is a requirement for anyone wishing to be eligible to staff a BreakThrough Weekend. However, you need not have interest in staffing to benefit from this retreat. It is also an opportunity to bring new skills back to your Personal Growth Groups, have an additional BreakThrough experience, or just simply have an opportunity to connect with other men sharing a desire to improve their lives. Repeat registrations are also encouraged to gain more practice. Wisdom Years graduates are welcome to attend as well.

*Individuals with LCSW, LCPC, LMFT, and licensed Psychologists are eligible to receive 6-8 CEU's for this workshop. Please indicate your interest in receiving CEU's when registering for the workshop.

Facilitating Personal Growth Groups / Enhancing You Own Group

Beginning a few years ago, all Personal Growth Groups (PGG's) are led by trained facilitators. One of the necessary steps to become a lead facilitator is the completion of this training. Anyone who is interested in facilitating PGGs should consider taking this training. While prior facilitation experience is helpful, it is not required to do this training.

It is also an opportunity to any men seeking to re-invigorate and bring new skills back to their own groups, have an additional day-long personal growth experience, or just simply have an opportunity to connect with other men in the Victories community sharing a desire to improve their lives.

Repeat registrations are also encouraged to gain more experience, hear the latest updates from PGG

leadership, and share with fellow PGG facilitators best practices, and challenges faced.

The workshop will cover:

- A continuation of previous PGG workshops; however, there is no prerequisite to do this training;
- What makes for a successful group, including generosity, accountability and leadership;
- Advanced mirroring and how to ask good questions;
- The detailed how-to's of conflict resolution;
- Introduction of additional exercises that will help men create powerful, deep and long-lasting groups; and
- Methods to use when guiding a man's individual work, with a good deal of time set aside for participatory hands-on experience and practice.

*Individuals with LCSW, LCPC, LMFT, and licensed Psychologists are eligible to receive 6-8 CEU's for this workshop. Please indicate your interest in receiving CEU's when registering for the workshop.

Facilitating Small Groups: Wisdom Years Leadership Training

We invite all graduates of the Wisdom Years Weekend who have an interest in staffing the weekend to attend. The training is also encouraged for graduates of the BreakThrough Weekend, particularly those wishing to learn new skills to enhance their own Personal Growth Groups, and develop further skills for staffing weekends.

This training program will provide instruction in leading small groups, including both goals and techniques and will combine large group instruction with extensive experiential learning in small groups. Trainees will lead actual small groups, be observed in action, and benefit both from feedback provided by the trainers and from large group discussion.

Attending this day of training is a prerequisite for all men who wish to staff a Wisdom Years Weekends, beginning in 2012. All men who wish to staff a Wisdom Years weekend - including men who have staffed before - are urged to take advantage of this opportunity for a day of learning and growth.

***Professionals holding Illinois LCSW, LCPC, LMFT, and licensed Psychologists will receive 6 CEU for completion of this program.

I. Victories Meeting Agenda Outline

- Business
 - Location of next meeting
 - Leader & Blessing for next meeting
 - Victories up and coming

- Circle Up / Crossing the Threshold / Blessing

Mention those who aren't in attendance but who are at the meeting in spirit during the Circle-up. Insert All PGG member names below:

- Check-in
 - Short Check-in *(What I am feeling now)*
 - Coming Clean / Impact Exchange
 - Reactions to last meeting
 - Second round – If I were to work tonight?
 - Accountability report

- Personal Work time
 - Sharing what is emotionally important
 - Working through *Investigation / Change / Acceptance*

- Temperature of group *(Reactions/Feelings from this meeting)*
- Circle up / Check out