

Changes: Peer-Counseling Supportive Communities as a Model for Community Mental Health



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The Changes program, presented by Boukydis, is the vehicle for giving the skills of focusing and listening away to members of a supportive peer-counseling community. Boukydis shows how mutual-support groups can be developed and sustained with little financing and administration and how specific psychological skills can help such a group develop into a supportive and healing milieu. Most important, the peer-counseling, mutual-help model breaks down the distinction between helpers and helpes and gives individuals the responsibility and skills not only for coping with their own lives but for helping others as well.

The Changes South community in Chicago has been in existence since 1970. At its peak, between 1971 and 1974, it had a standing membership of between 30 and 60 people. Through the years, hundreds of persons have been helped in a short-term, crisis-intervention way. Perhaps another hundred have had the experience of supportive community for one to six years. Since 1974, when some Changes Chicago people began moving to other parts of the country, Changes-like communities have been started in a number of other places. This chapter presents Changes as a model that can be looked at as one approach to community mental health, either as an adjunct to existing programs or as a program standing on its own.

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The Changes model is different from most programs for "giving therapy away" in that it is based on the concept of peer counseling. I listen to you for an hour on some concern of yours; then you listen to me for an hour on some concern of mine. Rather than creating another level of paraprofessionals in the therapy hierarchy, the Changes model allows participants to practice self-help skills in a nonhierarchical structure. Each person is equal in help given and received.

One root of the idea of a peer-counseling supportive community is Gendlin's (1962) theory of "experiencing." Gendlin, Beebe, Cassens, Klein, and Oberlander (1967) found that it was the client's manner of relating words to inner experiencing that determined whether psychotherapy would be successful. Experiential psychotherapy (Gendlin, 1973) was then developed as a method for raising the experiencing level of individuals so that they might engage in therapy in a meaningful way and for doing a kind of therapy that is change-producing because of its direct relation to the client's ongoing experiencing. When translated from the therapist's office into the community, experiential psychotherapy becomes the concrete skills of listening and focusing (Gendlin, 1974), which can be taught to anybody (see Chapter 14 in the present volume for a description of listening and focusing skills).

Most basically, a Changes is a group of people who exchange listening turns—a peer-counseling community. Everyone learns how to listen and how to be listened to, and community members meet in pairs, triads, and small groups for the exchange of listening turns. "Listening" is a way of being with another person that can help that person to go more deeply into exploring a feeling. It involves setting aside assumptions and attending to the fresh personal feeling matter in what a person is sharing. "Focusing" is a way of going inside, either alone or while being listened to, which makes it more likely that a person will be able to get in touch with his or her own feelings. The minimum structure of a Changes is a two- or three-hour meeting once a week where people learn listening and focusing skills and, as they become able, pair off for the exchange of listening turns. As a next step, some people may decide to meet at other times during the week for the exchange of additional listening turns.

For some people, the deep level of personal sharing that occurs during listening turns leads to the development of caring friendships, and for these people the Changes, or some subgroup within it, begins to function as a supportive community. People feel free to call on Changes friends not only for structured listening turns but at any time during the week that they need to be listened to and for as many hours of listening as they need to make it through a crisis time. They also look to Changes friends for other kinds of support—help in finding a job or moving into a new apartment, a ride to the hospital, a babysitter, people to go to the movies with or have a party with, a group to study family therapy with, and so on.

The Changes model has grown up as an attempt to respond to mental health problems as seen from an interactional theory. The human person is seen as, by his or her nature, a "being-in-the-world," in a mutually influencing relationship with an environment. Mental illness is then a problem of relatedness, not a solely intrapsychic phenomenon (Gendlin, 1970). It is a natural next step for therapists with this orientation to move toward an interactional, interrelational supportive community as a way both of preventing and of responding to individual crisis.

The first Changes actually began as a hotline, and phone volunteers were taught

empathic listening as an aid in crisis intervention. In addition, people who called on the hotline were invited to become part of the Changes weekly meeting. As people trained in listening began to interact with one another around hotline and community issues, they began to demand that listening be carried over into these interactions. So, at a decision-making meeting, if someone felt unheard, she might proclaim "Wait. I need to be listened to" or "I need someone to say that back so I'm sure I was understood." Listening developed into a way of relating, not just a way of being during structured peer-counseling hours. Changes communities came to be distinguished from other gatherings of people by the fact that they have as their basis "listening norms." Everyone in the community learns how to listen (how to make space for another person's experiencing) and how to focus (how to attend to one's own inner experience in a change-producing way). These skills are then carried over into all forms of interaction—not just counseling hours but interpersonal relationships, group decision making, and the sharing of ideas.

A basic premise of any Changes community is the idea of "peerness" or egalitarianism. No distinction is made between "helpers" and "helpes," people who come to help and people who come for help. Traditional therapist/client roles are seen as reinforcing the "client's" already strong feelings of inadequacy and "sick" role and leading "therapists" to lose touch with their own needs to be listened to or attracting to the therapist role persons who feed on the position of superiority rather than human relatedness. Hinterkopf and Brunswick (1975), two Changes persons who have taught listening and focusing skills to chronic schizophrenics in a peer-counseling situation, found that the patients gained as much from the helper role as from being the helpee, especially if they exchanged listening turns with the group trainer as well as with the other patients. Treating everyone as an equal at Changes is also not simply a strategy used by the "real" helpers to make the defined "helpes" feel that they are equal. Experience at Changes has shown that there is no such thing as a helper/helpee distinction when that set of roles has not been structured in, that everybody is in each role at some time or the other (Glaser & Gendlin, 1973), that "helpers" may suddenly be in the role of "helpee" (needing a team for support, confronting psychothic experiences, facing a life crisis) and "helpes" in the role of "helpers" (knowing better how to relate to people going through psychothic experiences, moving through their own crises and becoming excellent listeners, and so on).

The lack of a distinction between "helpers" and "helpes" at community meetings is not meant to imply that, in a Changes community, there is never a point at which "expert" mental health advice or collaboration is sought. Changes groups are often started with the active participation of a mental health professional, and where this is not the case, in any group larger than three or four friends, linkage with mental health professionals and agencies in the surrounding area is sought. The salient point is that when a mental health professional *participates* in a Changes meeting, he or she enters into listening turns, expecting to receive as well as to give help.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL

Changes communities cannot be described as a given structure with particular contents. What a particular group becomes, the kind of programs it will have, grows out of the needs of the particular persons who are involved in it. Changes communi-

ties are better described as a set of norms for being with other people. The following are some of the basic attitudes that make up the listening philosophy and are reflected in the behavioral norms of a Changes community:

1. Inner experiences are to be treasured. Hearing how something is for somebody else inside is the most profound kind of sharing that one person can have with another. Experiencing one's own inner meanings is profoundly healthy—the things inside are not "bad" or "crazy." "Craziness" is more the result of a loss of relationship to one's own inner meanings—people get "crazy" because they are not in interaction with the world (Gendlin, 1970; Prouty, 1977). Putting someone in a mental hospital when she is being crazy can often put her even further into isolation and away from the people who are most likely to keep trying to establish a relationship with her. An alternative is a supportive community—a group of people who can take turns staying with the person through the craziness and constantly insisting on relationship with her.
2. Feelings and perceptions change. If a person gets listened to on some way that he is feeling, his experience will be carried forward, and his feeling and interaction with the world will be changed. If he gets listened to on some way that another person bothers him, he may get in touch with something new in him that will change what he feels about the other or how he perceives her. These changes in behavior can lead to changes in experiencing. The person is process, not content, in ever-changing relationship with the world.
3. Everybody is right or rational in what he is doing, on some level. If a person gets listened to long enough on why he is the way he is, something will be heard that suddenly makes sense out of the way he is being and helps others to understand the meaning of his behavior for him and to empathize with him. This doesn't mean that they still may not wish he would change or that it might not be the best thing for him, in the long run, to change—it simply means that they can come to see him and to care about him in the middle of the way he is right now. It's also possible that as he gets in touch with the meanings involved in being the way he is, this may already bring about some change in that way that he is, as in item number 2 above.
4. Interpersonal conflicts are an interaction (Glaser & Gendlin, 1973). The reason a person becomes so emotionally upset because of what someone else is doing has to do with the way he is as much as it has to do with the way the other person is being. So, in any confrontation, a person stands to learn something new about himself as well as to communicate to the other something he feels about her.
5. Verbal expressions are considered symbolizations of inner experiencing and cannot be assessed solely in terms of objective right- and wrongness. If a person disagrees with what another is saying, he needs to ask to hear more about why she sees the world that way, until he can understand her statement as a meaningful verbalization in terms of her own inner meanings. He can still have a difference of opinion and state his reasons, from his particular set of inner meanings, and she may in fact decide to change her opinion, having got a new perspective on the matter from what he has shared, but that does not make her initial position objectively wrong; her position merely comes out of a different set of subjective inner meanings.
6. Conflict resolution and problem solving are also not purely objective weighings of possible solutions but involve understanding of emotional investment. Resolution comes from dealing with the subjective feelings or needs conveyed in the verbal expressions (K. M. Boukkydis, 1975, 1977; Henderson, 1974).

These basic attitudes find expression in the following specific behavioral norms or structures for relating at a Changes:

1. No one is excluded from a Changes. Every person has an equal right to be

there. If there are tensions, conflict resolution begins from the assumption that all belong (Gendlin & Beebe, 1968).

2. When someone is having trouble with the way someone else is being, he goes to that person directly, and they arrange to work on the interaction in a listening way, often with the help of a third person, who serves as a listening facilitator. Each person says back what the other has said until the speaker feels understood before saying his or her own side. Each person focuses inward, looking for the "meaning" of this trouble for her and trying to get in touch with her feelings in a way that may mean finding out something new about the way she is in this interaction and thereby changing the way she is in it.

3. There is little making of rules excluding all sorts of behavior and participation. Anybody can do almost anything she wants to do. If another Changes person doesn't like what someone is doing and thinks it is hurting someone, she goes to the other, and they work the trouble through in a listening way. If she doesn't like the activity but sees no harm in it, she can just decide not to participate.

4. Decision making is open to anyone who is interested and proceeds in a listening way until a solution arises that meets everyone's needs. Listening norms are carried over: people try not to interrupt, ask to hear more about feelings expressed, and say back what the other is trying to say before saying their own opinion.

5. If someone is having a lot of feelings, a way is found to deal with those feelings directly. Feelings are a priority, not to be shoved aside to get other things done. Working through the feelings may involve listening to the person right in the situation or arranging to have someone go with the person to a separate room. For example, if a very "crazy-acting" person starts interrupting at a group meeting, the chairperson will respond to that person in a listening way or will stop the meeting long enough to arrange that someone else listen to him.

6. Nobody does anything she doesn't want to do. People learn to say no in a nonblaming way and often work to provide teams for very needy people, so that someone else can be found to take over when a particular team member is exhausted.

7. Whatever else a Changes becomes develops out of the needs of the particular group. There are no rules like "There must be a hotline," "Ideas must be cleared with the parent organization," or "You must (or must not) involve any money."

The attitudes and norms of a Changes are learned in part by reading the writings of Gendlin and others, in part through the experience of exchanging listening and focusing turns in a peer-counseling situation, in part by being around a Changes community where the norms are in force. However, they seem to be teachable as four specific skills, which are presently being formulated in writings as well as in specific workshop techniques:

1. *Focusing*: how to get in touch with, and to move through steps in, one's inner experience. The ability to focus is needed, not only as a way of maximizing personal growth during listening hours but also in working through interpersonal conflicts and in participating in group decision making (see Gendlin, 1969, 1981; Gendlin & Olsen, 1970; Brunswick, Hinterkopf, & Burbridge, 1975; C. F. Z. Boukydis, 1979; K. M. Boukydis, 1981; Hendricks, 1978).

2. *Listening*: how to set aside one's own assumptions and to hear and reflect another person's experiencing in a way that helps her to go through steps of change in it (Gendlin, 1974, 1981; Gendlin & Hendricks, 1972; Prouty, 1977; C. F. Z. Boukydis, 1977; K. M. Boukydis, 1981).

3. *Interpersonal processing*: how to use a third person as a listening facilitator in an interpersonal-conflict situation so that each person has a turn to get listened to and heard on his or her side of a conflict and to go through steps of change in these feelings (van der Veen, 1977; K. M. Boukydis, 1981).

4. *Listening in groups*: how to structure a group situation so that listening norms can be maintained (Gendlin & Beebe, 1968; Barrett-Lennard, 1974; Massad, 1973; Henderson, 1974; K. M. Boukydis, 1975, 1977, 1981).

The structure of Changes South in Chicago follows as an example of one way in which these basic attitudes and norms took form for a particular group of people. However, as Changes communities are started in other places, each structures itself to meet the needs of that group of people. It is too early to say that the following will arise as some kind of prototypical structure for the Changes model.

Changes South consists of two basic parts. First, there is a weekly gathering open to anyone on Sunday evenings. Second, throughout the week, various subgroups of Changes people meet for specific activities, ranging from the exchange of listening turns to going to the movies.

The Sunday night meetings have something like the following structure:

Whenever called for by someone, there is a planning meeting for an hour before the general meeting, in which people can bring up their concerns about how things are being done, their ideas for new things to do, and so on. Separate planning meetings arose as a way of ensuring that the time for the general meeting was not usurped by decision making. Planning is left to those persons who are interested in participating in it, and the emphasis on growth-related activities at the general meeting is protected (Glaser & Gendlin, 1973).

The general meeting starts with a short introduction of what Changes is, followed by an hour for presentations. Traditionally, presentations at Changes have provided a place for Changes people and invited others to present new ideas, different kinds of therapies—really, anything that anybody wants to talk about. Because almost everybody in the "audience" knows listening and focusing, the presentations time provides a place for people to try out their ideas in a supportive atmosphere—with no punishment and with a respect for the tentativeness that accompanies new thinking. Presentations are arranged by those at the planning meetings. The philosophy is generally that anyone can make a presentation on anything he wants, or invite someone to do so, and individual Changes members can decide whether they want to attend. Examples of past presentations include Gestalt therapy, African art, square dancing, meditation, and food co-ops.

After the presentation there is a short period for announcements. The announcements time is one of the ways that the Changes can be a supportive network for all aspects of people's living. A person can announce anything—that she is looking for a job or an apartment, that she is happy because she has found a job, that she is inviting everybody to a party, that she has kittens to give away, that she needs to borrow a car or find a ride somewhere. After announcements, there is a short period for socializing—mainly, connecting up with people who have made announcements.

After socializing people break up into small groups for about two hours. There are a new people's group and several types of listening and focusing training groups. The new people's group gives people there for the first time a chance to ask questions and to hear more about what Changes is and to try out listening to see

what it's like. The training groups provide ways for people to practice listening and focusing in an ongoing way and to set up listening hours at other times during the week.

Some examples of the during-the-week activities that have been part of Changes South are a phone hotline, potluck dinners, teams for people in crisis, women's groups, men's groups, a Ph.D. candidates' support group, discussion groups on a variety of issues, skills- and resource-sharing groups, an art class, food co-ops, photography workshops, going-to-the-movies groups, dream workshops, volleyball teams, and communal-living groups.

VIABILITY OF THE MODEL

In considering whether the Changes model has something to add to traditional approaches to community mental health, it is necessary to come to some assessment of the kinds of people in a given larger community that a Changes serves. It is difficult, however, to come up with lists of clients served versus staff utilized, because this distinction does not exist at Changes. However, a listing of 60 persons who were involved in Changes South in Chicago for one year or more within the author's own experience (1970-1974) indicates that about one half of these persons were otherwise engaged in the helping professions (including graduate students as well as professionals). The other half were involved in every kind of occupation or were jobless. Of these 60 long-term members (many of whom have actually been involved continuously for four to six years), a large majority are now skilled enough in listening and focusing that they can go and teach these skills to other groups and could start a Changes on their own if they wanted to—so, Changes not only serves people in crisis but at the same time produces large numbers of highly trained “helping” persons. At least 10 of these long-term people had come to Changes just after being in a mental hospital or acting or feeling in a way that would ordinarily lead into one. At any point in its history, the Changes has had about 30 people involved in this “long-term” way in supportive community. There have also been hundreds of other people who have found the Changes a place to go for at least one Sunday night or who have received some kind of crisis intervention (a place to sleep overnight, a drug talk-down, help getting on welfare, referral to another agency, emergency childcare, a session of listening, and so on).

More qualitatively, a Changes seems to provide a place for persons in the following sorts of situations. It is not possible to label any person as being in any category—the same person may be in any number of these situations at one time or another or even simultaneously:

1. Some people come to Changes needing short-term crisis intervention. Such persons are always invited to join the community at its general meetings. Some become long-term members; some leave after their crisis need is met.
2. Some people come looking for friends or for support for their own personal growth or for “community.” These people, though not acutely headed for crisis, are suffering just the same from the chronic loneliness, alienation, and lack of intimacy of much of our culture.
3. Some people come wanting to learn more about helping other people.

Although these people may initially present themselves as more interested in helping others than in getting help themselves, many take part in all of the possibilities of supportive community.

4. Some persons come to Changes in a highly anxious, “crazy-feeling” state which traditionally might lead to hospitalization but which seems to dissolve relatively quickly (after several listening hours), leaving a healthy-looking, creative, self-actualizing, and productive person. For these persons, “craziness” seems to have come from being in touch with inner experiencing but constantly having this experiencing disconfirmed, rather than validated, in a nonlistening work or family situation. For example, although what a person is doing at work may be highly creative, the person may be being scapegoated by other workers who are threatened by innovation. For persons in this situation, just getting listened to and validated for one's inner experiencing seems to relieve the crushing anxiety and to bring forward a huge potential for growth. For example, persons who have come to Changes in this way have gone on to complete Ph.D.-level work in a variety of fields.

5. Some people have come to Changes being highly symptomatic in traditional ways and perhaps caught in a psychotic process at times. Some of these people have remained highly symptomatic throughout their stay at Changes or have changed radically only through a long-term listening relationship with a highly skilled listener or therapist. A major difficulty for Changes with persons in this situation has been an inability to provide them with a long-term living situation, so that some people have drifted away or have been hospitalized. However, in many other situations, Changes has been able to work as an adjunct to other therapeutic relationships in at least four ways:

- The acceptance by Changes participants of the reality of inner troubles has made it possible for people whose own relationship with reality is very different to be fully accepted into the Changes community—to be invited along to the movies or an apartment-painting party, to be related to and cared about over long periods of time. For example, a person may come to a Changes meeting and sit in total silence or whispering to herself and be accepted (she may even be joined gently by another person who feels sort of the same way, wanting to be around other people but not able, or wanting, right then, to interact). If the person returns again, she will be remembered and given recognition for her past being-there and related to in a caring way. One person has related to the larger group in this way for the past four or five years, sometimes disappearing for several months, then reappearing.

- Changes members can form a 24-hour-a-day team for a person going through a crisis that demands constant attention. Traditionally, because a therapist cannot provide this kind of intensive relationship, a person in this kind of crisis has had to be hospitalized. Instead, Changes members are able to work with the primary therapist, helping to keep the person out of the hospital.

- Changes has offered support to the family or roommates of persons going through crisis, helping these related others to work through their own feelings about the way the person is acting so that the person can continue to stay in a context of meaningful relationships, rather than being hospitalized. For example, listening to family members on their fear of violence and loss of control may enable them to get “unhooked” and to realize that the crazy-acting person probably will not do the terrible things that they fear.

- When a person has been hospitalized for a period of time, Changes friends have been able to maintain relationship by visiting the person in the hospital and keeping avenues open for return to the community.

A plus of the Changes model is that it need not involve the expenditure of any money. Although it might be helpful to have money to pay some initial trainers or to mimeograph materials or to set up a phone line, a Changes in its essence is a peer-based community where people get help as well as give help and where the people are there because they are getting their own needs for supportive community met. It is perhaps only this turning toward "peer self-help" that can break the pattern of having to pay some people for helping others. The importation of money, especially if it leads to some persons' being paid while others are not, can invite the kind of breakup into hierarchies that a Changes seeks to avoid (although a particular Changes group might decide to have money and then process whatever issues come up). Changes South has operated for 13 years with one small grant covering a hotline phone bill, one small grant to pay some coordinators (rapidly phased out because of the problems of "hierarchy" that arose) and occasional passings of the hat to cover emergency expenses (mimeographing, mailings, parties, and the like). Space has been provided for minimal rent by a neighborhood church. During this time, Changes has had the free services of highly skilled people from every kind of occupation who came there to learn listening and focusing, to get help, and to share their skills with a community of friends.

DISSEMINATION OF THE MODEL

Changes-like groups have been started in a variety of settings. Hinterkopf and Brunswick (1975) established a listening community among chronic schizophrenics. Egendorf (1978) received an NIMH grant to research the use of listening communities as a treatment modality for Vietnam veterans. Changes-like groups have been started in small towns, metropolitan areas, student mental health centers, continuing education classes, senior citizen centers, parent support groups. The author has used a listening community as an adjunct to a private practice in individual and couples therapy. The peer-counseling model has also been used among the staff of several service-oriented agencies. In such a setting, the listening exchange among staff minimizes burnout and facilitates a supportive, nonhierarchical work environment. Changes groups have been as small as three friends who exchange listening turns and as large as the open community in Chicago, with 30 to 60 members. They have been started by ministers, teachers, psychologists, nurses, and persons outside the helping professions. They usually last at least three years and have been able to continue operating after the departure of the initial teachers. Most groups tend to be smaller than the original Changes and seem to grow as one member brings a friend rather than by advertising and hotline referral. In other respects, they seem to reflect the basic elements of a Changes in that anyone in the community is welcome, listening and focusing training are provided to everyone who comes, listening norms seem to carry over from peer-counseling hours into the processing of interpersonal tensions and group decision making, and Changes members see themselves as offering support to friends in crisis as much as possible.

Many methods of starting a Changes are arising, each meeting the needs of the persons involved in the starting, as in the case when the "listening" method of decision making is used. The following are some general principles about starting a Changes:

1. Once a person has had the experience of participation in a Changes group, it is easy for that person to start a new group by going to various helping agencies and growth or community-oriented groups and presenting a short workshop where people can experience listening and focusing. Interested persons can then be invited to a Changes meeting.
2. Once a core group of six to ten persons has been gathered, it is a good idea to work with this group for several months until the listening/focusing norms and commitment are well established. Then, if the group is opened to the larger community through advertising, new people will be coming into a group with established norms, and endless power struggles and wrangling about what the group is for can be avoided (for example, "We should be leftist radicals and go picketing," "I'd rather do confrontation than listening").
3. A Changes group can remain open by invitation only, with new members brought in as existing members want to share their experience with friends, family, and acquaintances. This is often the form chosen when there is no one in the group who feels capable of or interested in providing the kind of team support that is needed in working with the very "heavy" and needy people who may walk in off the street (Glaser, 1972).
4. Sometimes interest in a Changes group fades after several years of weekly meetings. However, the demise of the formal meeting simply means that the listening functions have been integrated into the daily lives of former participants. A close look at the lives of such people shows that they continue to call selected others for listening turns in crisis, that they are called on by others in their friendship network to function as listening facilitators during interpersonal conflict, that they teach listening and focusing to their friends and family, and that they carry the listening philosophy into their work environments as much as possible. Many people have continued to use the supportive community skills in these ways for ten or more years.
5. A listening group can be offered for a nominal fee, although a special effort must then be made by the paid trainer to teach the participants how to become teachers and to take over the running of the group as soon as possible.
6. The core of any Changes meeting is the exchange of listening turns. As long as participants exchange listening turns, they will become bonded together in empathy and mutual concern, and the other aspects of supportive community will arise naturally.

There has been some hesitancy to crystallize a model for the dissemination of the Changes idea. Dissemination through traditional "service delivery" or "case handling" approaches has been avoided. In the language of Martin Buber (1958), there is the danger that this sort of approach may already define the recipients of services as objects to be manipulated, rather than as equal human beings to be encountered in relationship. Such an orientation can lend itself to the reinforcement of the "helper/helped," "one-up, one-down" system of roles that a Changes seeks to dispel. It seems unlikely that the administration of a mental health clinic can decide to set up a Changes solely for the "good" of its clients or as an economy measure. In such a situation, a facilitator must be found who is willing to participate in the group as an equal member, or volunteer facilitators can be found in the community to be served.

A Changes must have somewhere at its core a group of people who have become deeply convinced that listening norms are what they want as their way of life and who are there so that they can get *their* needs for this kind of relating met. Until recently, Changes groups have been started mainly by someone who has

previously belonged to a Changes. However, with the publication of Gendlin's *Focusing* (1981), there has been a demand for information on how to start a Changes. A manual by Boukydis (1981) provides instruction in the four skills needed for starting a listening community: listening, focusing, the use of listening and focusing to process interpersonal conflicts, and the listening/focusing method of cooperative, consensual decision making. The Center for Supportive Community also offers a facilitators' training program, which includes ten weeks of participation in a Changes group, ten weeks of supervision on teaching listening and focusing and leading a Changes meeting, and an ongoing seminar for support and theoretical reading while pairs of facilitator trainees go out into the larger community and try to start Changes groups in various settings. The center also offers a two-week intensive Changes Institute during the summer, where interested persons can have the experience of participating in a Changes community.

In terms of self-help, egalitarianism, and "giving therapy away," it seems ideal that Changes groups be started when one person reads a listening manual (Boukydis, 1981) and invites one or more close friends to try out the listening/focusing exchange as described. Since there will then be no one who is more skilled, shared leadership should arise naturally. However, as Carl Rogers discovered in his early years of nondirective teaching, it is not always easy to give power away. Many clients in therapy prefer expensive individual sessions even when the option of a self-help group is made readily available. Although a Changes can be started by anyone, those who come forward to learn to be facilitators are often already involved in the helping professions. Publishers approached with a manual for starting supportive communities addressed to laypeople have said "This is not appropriate for the general trade audience. Why don't you address it to those in the helping professions?" Gendlin's *Focusing* book (1981) and those of others that give skills directly to laypeople can begin to change the attitude among professionals and laypersons alike about self-help. However, those who are deeply committed to "giving therapy away" will have to consistently address issues of power and powerlessness implicit in the helping relationship and will have to make a conscious effort to divest themselves of power when it is given to them. Only then can we empower others.

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