

Boost Groups[©]

'A 20 minute process for enhancing group performance, generating new ideas, building trust and transforming the world of work'

Five elements of a successful Boost Group:

1. Create a 'thinking space'
 - Listen with respect and fascination
 - Treat each other as 'thinking peers'
 - Stand back...offer perspective and wisdom
 - Allow feelings to be expressed
 - Enjoy tangents and diversions
 - Be curious
2. Create 'cognitive dissonance'
 - If something contradicts a thought to which we are already committed, we are likely to resist the new learning.
 - If there is dissonance we can choose to resolve, rationalise or ignore it
 - If learning something in the past has been difficult, uncomfortable, or even humiliating, we are **less** likely to concede that what we learned was useless, pointless or valueless. To do so would be to admit that we had been 'conned' or were hopelessly naive.

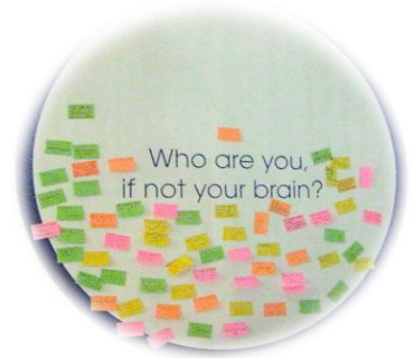


People are uncomfortable when they find themselves holding conflicting (or dissonant) thoughts. So a good group will challenge sloppy thinking and (respectfully) look for discrepancies between what is already known or believed and any new information (or a different interpretations) that is available. We can encourage useful dissonance by **helping each other spot the gaps between 'what we say' and 'what we do'**. Good boost groups will enjoy trying to explore that dissonance.

3. Create a 'pool of shared meaning'
 - Learning requires the free flow of relevant information
 - We each have our own 'pools' of knowledge, opinions, feelings and perspectives
 - We create richer, deeper 'shared pools' when we make it safe to explore different perceptions, add to each other's knowledge and build on ideas.
4. Between you, create a network of remarkable people
 - Seek out visionaries, non-conformists, thoughtful and insightful people...people who see the world through a different set of filters
 - Look at the fringes of your operation or organisation
 - Talk to people with whom you disagree deeply but can talk amicably
 - Read widely and contact some of the writers you come across
5. Create public commitment
 - As a group (or as individual learners), go 'public' with your intentions. Let others know what you are planning to do as a result of your reflection and learning
 - Create your own group of 'supporters' who can cheer your successes and give you the feedback you need to keep on track

Three steps to a successful Boost Group

Step one (2-3 minutes): Once you have gathered two or three colleagues around you, outline your issue (dilemma, problem, frustration, challenge, difficult relationship, etc) as clearly as you can. Your colleagues *mainly listen* at this point, asking questions only if they need to clarify something.



Step two: Take 10-15 minutes to explore the issue together. This is the most important stage. Don't rush this. Your colleagues' active participation is critical here. Their role is to help you explore the issue thoroughly by asking probing questions (see below) and to help you challenge any untested assumptions or unhelpful behaviours. ***It is critical that they hold back from 'jumping to conclusions' or 'offering solutions' at this point.***

Your colleagues could begin the exploration of your issue by asking:

- How did you first notice the problem?
- How did you react? Why?
- What were the first things you tried?
- How did others respond? Why, do you think?
- How did the situation make you feel?
- What else could you have done? Etc

Step three (4-5 mins): With the help of your colleagues, now begin to explore solutions or possible ways forward. Try to come up with at least **two** possible choices. Get them to help you weigh up pros and cons. Then take a minute or so to come up with a relevant and realistic 'action plan'.

If I don't know I don't know
I think I know
If I don't know I know
I think I don't know

R D Laing, *Knots*