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**Section:**

**PROCESSING**



## **PROCESSING SECTION CONTENTS**

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## **PROCESSING – SHADOW LEADERSHIP**

Shadow leadership is not difficult to understand when we realize this is the way parents work with their children, preparing them for the time they will leave home. It is a challenging and rewarding type of leadership. It is challenging for one reason because the focus is on youth, not the adult leader. As a result, some adult leaders are unsure about their relationship with youth and either disappear in the shadows or become too dominant and overshadow the young people. When a good shadow relationship exists, it is rewarding because of its effectiveness in developing strong leadership traits in youth.

The characteristics of effective shadow leadership change constantly according to the specific needs of the young person and the task he is expected to accomplish. It is important to analyze the maturity of the young leader and extend help according to individual needs.

1. There are times when the shadow leader, of necessity, takes a dominant role and leads out.
2. At other times they work side by side...leader and youth, closely together.
3. The best times of all are when the adult leader can quietly watch. He is not noticeable, but he is still there.
4. He always waits close by for helping when needed, with as much help as needed.
5. No matter how hard the young leader might try, he cannot get away from a good shadow leader.
6. For the leader knows that when a shadow is gone, there is no light.
7. And youth can get lost in the dark.

Consider the following steps for building an effective working relationship with youth:

### **Developing Trust**

First, the shadow leader and youth must get acquainted by finding time to be together, to start communicating with each other. They should decide when they can get together, how often they should meet, and where. During this time it is important for the leader to be fairly explicit with his help, talking about who should do what for whom and when. He should be aware of things the young person does that deserve sincere compliments. Youth are extremely perceptive and will not respond to insincerity. When the youth understands that he is expected to function in his calling, this is the beginning of trust. This phase must be successful to go further.

### **Building Closeness**

Second, closeness is built by doing things together; planning, organizing, and solving problems. This is the time for gathering information from the youth. The shadow leader turns into a question asker, asking for responses and planning ahead but avoiding telling the youth directly what to do. He teaches youth to start things on their own, then compliments and praises the youth's independence. The youth cannot be independent until the shadow leader and the youth have a close working relationship and have done things together. This phase is more or less complete when the youth begins to start things on his own, when he expresses concerns to the leader, and asks for advice and suggestions.

### **Giving Support**

Third, the shadow leader gives support to the young leader, reinforcing what the young person decides. Security and confidence grow as the shadow leader expresses appreciation and trust in the young leader

as an individual. Like a coach, he is on the sidelines, cheering the youth on. This phase is reached when they can talk to each other about a project or task, evaluate how it was received by others, and take suggestions and criticism without being defensive. When this building process breaks down, the shadow leader must start all over developing trust and building closeness before this third phase will be reached.

#### **Notes for success:**

1. Young leaders must not be expected to assume responsibilities beyond what they have been trained to handle.
2. Training is a continuing process.
3. Each new assignment or task means that additional leadership training is needed.
4. Youth must be given every possible opportunity to learn and grow.
5. Youth imitate the kind of leadership they see and receive.

#### **Increasing Effectiveness with Processing**

How can our students get the most benefit from the processing sessions that we structure? That is the question that we always want to ask ourselves and our colleagues. The following are some sample suggestions. By no means is it an exhaustive list. Use this as a starting point and continue to add to it as you work with different groups and accrue more experiences.

1. **Structure Regular Periods of Time Throughout the Course.** As pointed out in the introduction, it is important to establish right from the beginning of the course the expectation that we will take time to be introspective and reflective and share our thoughts and feelings. We want participants to consider processing as an integral component of every course.
2. **Vary Style and Method Used.** As a member of the human race we tend to get comfortable with certain ways of doing things. As a result we develop our own patterns and habits. This frequently causes us to do activities, such as processing, in a similar manner all too often. Therefore, we need to become aware of our own behaviors and monitor how we choose to structure our sessions. Make a personal goal to try some of the different approaches delineated in the section on the methods of processing. Using different styles and methods provides for a good change of pace and increases your chances of reaching all members of the group.
3. **Alternate the Times of Day.** For courses that are longer than a day or two, you have the luxury of bringing the group together at various times for the purpose of processing. However, we often wait to process until the end of the day. This decision has a few shortcomings. First, if you get into camp late, processing is the activity that gets eliminated. Second, at the end of a good day of adventure-based experience, people are tired. Often when we bring the group together they begin to “zone out” and think about other things (which is frequently a nice warm sleeping bag.)  
The suggestion that we are making is not to eliminate using the evening but to make use of other times during the day as well. Spend time before you break camp. Plan a break in the morning or the afternoon. Give students a journal, short solo or dyad break after a high impact activity. Have a group discussion before beginning dinner (increases on-task behavior and succinct discussion) or have one of the instructors get the food cooking while the other facilitates the group discussion.
4. **During Discussion Provide Sufficient Wait Time for People to Think.** There is a tendency for instructors to ask a question and then expect individuals to immediately respond. Research indicates that the mean amount of time that educators wait after asking a question is one second. If individuals

are not quick enough to come up with a response, the educator repeats the question, rephrases it, asks a different question or calls on someone to respond. When instructors break out of the pattern of bombing individuals with questions and increase wait time to five seconds after asking a question, people give longer, more thoughtful responses. More people take the time to think and individuals feel more confident in sharing their thoughts. As a result the quantity and the quality of discussion improves.

5. **Ask Open-Ended Questions.** If you decide to use a processing format in which you want to have a discussion and you choose to ask the group, dyads, or individuals a few questions, it is best to try and ask questions that invite discussion rather than one or two word responses. The first step is to recognize that questions have distinct characteristics, serve various functions, and created different levels of thinking. Questions such as, “Did you enjoy the hike today?” “Who felt that they were challenged today?” call for one word responses. Questions such as “How would you compare today’s hike to yesterdays?” and “What personal challenges did you encounter today?” set the stage for students to think in greater depth and provide opportunities for sharing more personal information. An additional consideration when forming questions is to try to be explicit enough to ensure an understanding of your question, but at the same time, try to avoid using so many words that people forget what the actual question is. Stay with what, how, and where questions. Why’s tend to receive rationalizations and lose focus on the experience.
6. **Ask One Question at a Time.** On occasion, instructors seeking to get to the meat of a topic or issue will blurt out a series of questions rather than raising a single question, discussing it, and then moving on. For example, “How do you think that you worked as a team and what can you do to improve that in the future?” is a bit too much stimuli. Discussing part one of the question and then, if appropriate, moving to part two is a more effective practice.
7. **Own the Questions That You Ask.** Most of us have gone to school for long periods of our life. Through the process of educational enculturation many individuals come to think of answers to questions as being either the right or the wrong answer. Even though the setting is different, as an instructor of an adventure-based course, you are still the teacher in the eyes of most of the individuals that you will work with. Therefore, many times that you ask a question, course participants will believe that there is a right or wrong answer to the question. So whenever possible, it is a good practice to try to de-emphasize the right or wrongness and set a tone for open discussion. One way to do that is for you to own the questions that you ask. For example, you could begin the discussion by saying “We got into camp late last night; I was wondering if anyone had some ideas about how to remedy that in the future?” or “I’m curious, how did you feel about paddling in whitewater today?” By simply letting them know that this is a personal question it lessens the potential that students will tell you what they think you want to hear.
8. **Give Students Specific Feedback.** As expressed in the section on feedback, page 34, whenever possible try to be specific with your praise and/or criticism. To tell students that they did “a great job today,” you have given them a positive message but little more. The day was composed of many hours and many interactions. What aspect of the day made it great? Getting out of their sleeping bags? Putting their packs on? Getting in the rafts? Using the latrine? A more specific statement such as, “It was super to see the way that you supported each other on the trust fall. You talked about what order to go in. You let the people who expressed concern go first and made sure that everyone was ready before having the person fall. It was enjoyable to see you work together like that.”
9. **Guard Against Small Talk.** If you are using the large group format and people begin to have their own private conversations, there are a few things that you can choose to do. First, you will want to

make a quick survey of what may be causing these conversations. Is one person dominating the talk? Has the discussion been dragged on too long? Are you doing all the talking? Are people comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings with the group? Some interventions that you can consider include (a) making a short comment about the difficulty of listening to someone when other conversations are occurring, (b) asking if people want to divide up into dyads to discuss this point first and then come back to the group (c) establishing a “power object” which is held while talking and placed in the middle of the circle for the next individual to pick up and hold while he or she is talking. Therefore, group members are reminded that only one person should be talking, or (d) terminate the discussion since people are beginning to get scattered and unable to be attentive.

10. **If People Are Not in the Mood, Cut the Session Short.** Making every session into an “encounter group” makes many individuals resistant to getting together for a debrief. Don’t try to make every session intense and profound. Don’t expect people to talk or push them when they are not ready. It’s not uncommon after an intense group meeting for the next group session to be more superficial. If you bring the group together and try to structure a session and you realize that they are not into it, ask if they want to cut this session short or think about using an alternative method of processing, such as rounds or giving people a short isolation opportunity.

Let students know that they can pass on participation in any exercise. It’s their responsibility to make their own decisions. There is no need to force these activities. Stay with the concerns of your students. Use these activities only where they fit.

## **PROCESSING QUESTIONS**

In addition to using the levels of processing questions, there are times that you will want to ask questions that focus on specific thought, feelings, and behaviors. The following questions, some of which have been adapted from Knapp (1984), are useful to refer to when preparing for discussions.

### **Trust and Support**

1. What did it feel like to have your physical safety entrusted to the group?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the way you supported each other here and the way you support others back at home, school or the office?
3. What impact does trust have in your relationship with others at home, school or at work?
4. What is the relationship between managing risk and establishing a support system?

### **Communication**

1. What were some of the effective forms of communication that you used in completing this task? Ineffective forms of communication?
2. How were differences in opinion handled?
3. In what ways could the group’s process of communication be improved to enhance its problem-solving skills?
4. How could you improve your communication and networking?

### **Making Group Decisions**

1. How did the group make decisions for completing the tasks during the day?
2. Were you satisfied with the manner in which the group made decisions?
3. Were decisions made by one or several individuals?
4. Did everyone express his or her opinion when a choice was available?
5. What did you like about the manner in which the group made decisions? What didn't you like?
6. What is the best way for this group to make decisions?

### **Cooperating**

1. What are some specific examples of when the group cooperated during the activity/day?
2. How did it feel to cooperate?
3. How did cooperative behavior lead to the successful completion of the tasks presented during the day?
4. What are the rewards of cooperating?
5. What can you personally do to produce a cooperative environment at home or work?

### **Teamwork**

1. How well do you think you did?
2. How effective were you in completing the task?
3. How efficient were you?
4. How did you develop your plan of action?
5. What is the relationship between input into the plan and commitment to action?
6. What were the differences between having a common vision versus not having a vision?

### **Problem-Solving**

1. Have you noticed any patterns in the way you solve problems? Are they productive? Unproductive?
2. What effect did planning time have on the process?
3. How well did you execute your plan?
4. On a scale of 1-10, how committed were you to executing the plan?
5. What are the similarities and differences between the ways in which you have approached solving problems here and the way that you approach them at home, school or work?

6. What would need to change in order to enhance your problem-solving ability?

### **Leadership Roles**

1. Who assumed leadership roles during the activity/day?
2. What were the behaviors that you would describe as demonstrating leadership?
3. How did the group respond to these leadership behaviors?
4. When and how did the leadership role change during the activity/day?
5. Was it difficult to assume a leadership role in this group? Why?
6. What are the characteristics and qualities of a good leader?
7. What specific skills do you need to develop to become a more effective leader?

### **Following Others**

1. Do you consider yourself a good follower? Was this an important role during the activity/day?
2. What type of leader was it easiest to follow?
3. Did the manner in which the feedback was given make a difference to you? Explain.
4. What was difficult about being a follower?

### **Self-Statements**

1. Did you criticize yourself or put yourself down during the activity/day?
2. What did you say to yourself?
3. Do you usually get upset with yourself when you make a mistake or do not achieve perfection?
4. What could you say to yourself to counteract the put-down message?
5. What are some ways in which you were successful during the activity/day?
6. What self-messages did you give yourself when you were successful?
7. How can you increase your positive self-messages in the future?

### **Giving and Receiving Feedback**

1. What are some examples of when you received feedback during the activity/day? How did it feel?
2. Did the manner in which the feedback was given make a difference to you?
3. What are some examples of when you gave feedback during the day?
4. How did you express appreciation for another during the day?



5. What are some appreciations that you did not express?
6. Do you typically express appreciations?
7. How can you improve your skills in giving and receiving feedback?

### **Respecting Personal Differences**

1. What are some of the significant differences among group members?
2. How did these differences strengthen the group-as-a-whole during the day?
3. What would this group be like if there were very few differences among the group members?
4. What specific instances did being different help or hinder the group from reaching its objectives?
5. How can you increase your ability to respect and utilize personal differences?

### **Closure Questions**

1. What did you learn about yourself?
2. What did you learn about other group members?
3. What did you do today that you are particularly proud of?
4. How can you use what you learned today in other situations?
5. What beliefs about yourself and the other group members were reinforced during the day?
6. What specific skill are you going to improve as a result of this course?