

© 2011 Rod Hess

● INTRODUCTION ●

If you attended my *Normative Leadership* training program or read my book, *Normative Leadership: Powerful Skills for Creating Your Path*, you learned the science of “how to” become a Normative Leader. The normative system, consisting of the attitude and skills, serves as the foundation for any leader seeking to influence change and/or development in a group. The system can be universally applied to any group or organization in any field. This is the simplistic beauty of the model. Now, I will show you how you can use the system in working with adolescent youth in any venue.

Throughout the many transitions that we make in life as human beings from birth to death, one of the most difficult times is that of adolescence. Growing through the period of adolescence is a difficult time for kids. They are evolving from being kids into teenagers. They are highly influenced by peer pressure. They are seeking to establish their own identity and testing the limits of their independence from parents. Couple this with the physical bodily changes that occur along with the onslaught of sexual hormones that flood the system, and you have a recipe for chaos over the course of a few years. This is, indeed, a normal process that we as human beings have all experienced. However, some of the experiences may not have been “normal, healthy” adolescent experiences.

The peer group experience is a very powerful influence on behavior, and as you know, the norms of the group will dictate the quality of the experience that one has while a member of the group. If the norms are negative, the group members will use peer pressure to reinforce behaviors that are detrimental to the well being of group members. They will be encouraged to do things that may be harmful to themselves or others such as, alcohol or drug abuse, bullying or other illegal, immoral or unethical behaviors. Conversely, a group with a positive normative culture will enable group members to maximize their potential, both individually and collectively, through a culture that encourages support, cooperation and a sincere concern for each other's well being. This is why it is so essential that those of us who work with youth have a good understanding of how to facilitate this phenomena of peer pressure into a positive experience for the youth with whom we work.

You might be working with males or females, "delinquent" or "deprived," underachievers or superstars, or just the average everyday young person. You might be a counselor, group leader, teacher or social worker. You might work with adolescents in the inner city, suburbs, or a rural setting. No matter what the setting, this *Helpathy Group* model will serve you well. However, I feel there are three simple, but very important pre-requisites that should be outlined here in order for you to be more successful in implementing this program. They are:

1) A SINCERE Desire To Help Young People

Our children are our future and what we do in *our* roles, will determine what they in turn, will become in *their* roles. Society does not place high status/value in working with children. Professionals responsible for the direct care of kids must be guided by a genuine desire to work with kids. Your reasons for choosing the child care field (teaching, counseling, rehabilitation, etc.) will be manifested in the quality of interactions with your students and the success you will have in helping them achieve their goals. If you are in your field for the money or to just have a job with benefits, forget it. While these are important issues that should be part of your decision-making process before accepting an offer, if your heart is not in helping kids, you will not enjoy your job nor will you be effective in helping kids. Remember, your students are human beings with their own issues. They need to have good role models who are supportive, yet challenging of them in order to build solid, healthy relationships while preparing them for adulthood.

Sometimes, even though people seem passionate about working with youth, the seeds of their passion are really a facade that masks their true agenda - pedophilia or child abuse. Unfortunately, there are individuals who are drawn to the fields of human services, education and other youth-centered work who themselves, have had abusive backgrounds. They rationalize, since they have been through it, they can identify with the kids they serve and help them. Well, just because you have been through an abusive experience, doesn't necessarily mean that gives you better qualifications to help kids. Many "professionals" who have been victims of abuse, have never resolved their own personal issues pertaining to their experience and continue to carry the "baggage" associated with these unresolved issues with them. They are trying to help kids when they haven't helped themselves! Their "stuff" will interfere, in some way, shape or form, with providing good, healthy quality service to their kids.

To abuse the trust of kids in your care is a crime and the acts you commit against your victim will be brought to light at some point in time. Your acts may perpetuate the cycle of abuse that your victim may impose upon another innocent victim in the future. If these words are relevant to you, please do the right thing and: 1) find a new line of work that does not involve interactions with kids or, 2) resolve your issues so that they will not interfere with your ability to provide quality, professional services to kids and you will not be tempted to continue the cycle of abuse on new victims. Bottom line: you can't run away from yourself or your "stuff." Deal with it, let it go and move on. You can't change what happened to you, but you can change what happens in the future. Stand tall and do the right thing.

2) A Willingness To Challenge Yourself To Grow Beyond Yourself

We all have some baggage that we will carry through life. To the degree it impacts upon our ability to function effectively as a human being/professional, depends upon our attitude. In the *Normative Leadership* book on page 151, I offered suggestions for "Breaking the cycles of prejudice: Seeking the Balance." The first recommendation was to *know yourself*.

Who are you as a person? What are your strengths? Developmental areas? What is the style you use in your interactions with your students? Peers? What is your "button" that individuals can push that causes you to lose your composure and react emotionally to people and situations? The Normative Leader model challenges you to be a role model and be able to "practice what you preach." Therefore, it is extremely important that you be willing to make modifications to your pattern of behavior in order to model the behaviors you want your students to assimilate into their pattern of behavior. Unfortunately, this has been a downfall of many human service professionals. They lose credibility with their students because they *talk the talk* but fail to *walk the walk*. Consequently, kids don't respect them and they become ineffective. You must be willing to honestly take an introspective look at yourself and make the necessary changes to gain the respect of your students by consistently *walking the talk*.

3) A Group of Young People Who Are Responsive to Peer Pressure.

Although there are individuals in groups/society who are "isolates" and prefer to minimize their interactions with others, most people are social creatures who have varying degrees of comfort within group settings/situations. We grow up in families, attend schools, play on teams and work in groups, and have all felt the impact of peer pressure at one time or another. Good or bad, right or wrong, peer pressure is an extremely influential force that if harnessed correctly, can help individuals, and the group, to achieve great heights. Therefore, you must have students who are responsive to peer pressure in order for this model to work.

Although adolescence is a difficult time in a young person's life, it doesn't have to be a period of chaos. Adults need to tread lightly, give some room for growth and independence, but be close enough to provide structure and support as kids test the limits of their *I know everything and you're stupid* mentality. Although as adults, we try to caution them via the voice of experience, the

precedent that each generation has set regarding the rebellious nature of adolescent behavior confirms that, unfortunately, kids must learn through their own experiences. Providing a powerful, positive peer group, will hopefully, make the period of adolescence a more healthy, positive and productive process. Thus, the purpose of this book.

● MY NORMATIVE ROOTS ●

Before I answer the question, “*why a Helpathy Group?*,” I would like to give you some history of my experiences with groups to show the progression that led me to creating the *Helpathy Group* model.

In my *Normative Leadership* book, I wrote of how I met my mentor in January of 1974, when I *accidentally* enrolled in his Normative Systems class. Our relationship grew over the summer and was solidified when I received notice that I was officially accepted into the University of Pittsburgh’s Graduate School of Social Work for the fall semester. That September, in addition to my course load, I audited Sam’s Normative Systems course to gain more knowledge about the normative model. Another course he taught was a group dynamics course that taught students how to run a GGI (Guided Group Interaction) group model that was being used in the field of juvenile corrections.

Guided Group Interaction by definition is a *form of group process that uses peer group pressure to change behavior*. It is a sociological treatment model which was developed by Lloyd McCorkle, who in 1945, used it with military prisoners at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. McCorkle, F. Lowell Bixby and Albert Elias, later adapted it for use with male juvenile offenders at the Highfields Program in Highfields, New Jersey. Eventually, GGI programs began to evolve throughout the country in the 1960’s.

Sam Ferrainola had exposure to the GGI model through Saul Pilnick, a consultant who was teaching the normative model and had written about his experiences in using the GGI model in a community-based program in which he was involved called, Collegefields. This was an after school program in Newark, New Jersey, where court committed kids received academic tutoring, counseling and participated in GGI groups as part of their probation program.

Having been trained in normative cultures and the GGI models, Sam Ferrainola introduced it into the residential treatment program where he worked in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As his expertise and reputation in the models grew, so did his opportunities. He obtained grant money from a local foundation and brought the normative curriculum into the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh. He also helped to develop the plan to decentralize the juvenile court system into community-based offices where GGI groups would be run by probation officers. While teaching at the graduate school, he also conducted normative training programs for human service agencies throughout Western Pennsylvania. As a graduate student, I accompanied him on many of these sessions to observe and learn more about the model, but more importantly, how to teach it.

In late 1974, Sam was recommended for the job as Executive Director of the Glen Mills Schools by his normative mentor, Saul Pilnick, who at that time, was a consultant to the Board of Directors at the school. Glen Mills was a private, non-profit residential treatment facility for court committed males, ages 14-18. At that time, the school was \$750,000.00 in debt, had no programs for kids, it was a secure facility with 30 kids, 150 staff and a per diem cost of \$124.00 per day per student. It was on the verge of being closed, for a few years earlier, two students were locked in the secure unit and one set fire to a mattress. No staff had the key to open the door and consequently, one student died and the other was severely burned. While others saw problems, Sam saw this as a potential opportunity to put his normative training into practice and create a new model for residential treatment in the field of juvenile corrections.

Another contributing factor that influenced Sam's decision to move to Glen Mills, was the political climate at the Graduate School of Social Work. Having brought the normative curriculum to the graduate school through a grant, some of his superiors and colleagues did not like the terms through which this program began. Although Sam had an MSW (Master of Social Work) degree, his colleague, Del Carlise, did not. Del had worked with Sam for many years and had run GGI groups with kids from the streets of Pittsburgh. As a condition of the grant, Del received a formal title as a "professor" and was allowed to teach GGI as a graduate level course. His lack of formal credentials did not sit well with his peers and the upper echelon of the school. Sam's rationale? Del was a "flying sergeant." He went on to explain, that after World War I, we saw the need for an air force. During the war, most of the pilots who had combat experience were the rank of sergeant or below. As we began to build our air force, these instructors taught the lieutenants, captains, and others of higher rank, aerial combat maneuvers and strategies. Although their students out-ranked them, they had the experience. Brilliant! (Del taught at the graduate school, got his master's degree while there and then finished his bachelor's degree). Needless to say, Sam was a high status isolate who challenged the system. The "revolutionary" normative model was on a collision course with the traditional "clinical" model taught in the schools of social work.

While the field saw delinquency as a *psychiatric syndrome* Sam was a behaviorist preferring to see delinquency as a *social fact*, as espoused by sociologist, Emil Durkheim, caused by social phenomena such as peer pressure. Sam had experienced the clinical model over the years and would always say, "*it hasn't worked in the past, it's not working today and it won't work in the future.*" So, he rationalized, *why repeat the same mistake? Why not try something different?* So, in February, 1975, frustrated with the politics of academia and excited about the challenge of applying the normative model, Sam accepted the position as the new Executive Director of the Glen Mills Schools. His vision for the school was to create *the best school in the country for kids*. He arrived with an untested model, a belief in himself, and the courage of his convictions. History was about to be made in the field of juvenile corrections.

I joined Sam in December of 1975 after obtaining my MSW degree and began my career as an assistant manager in Cottage 10. As part of my responsibilities, I facilitated GGI groups in the cottage. I also trained the staff in how to run groups. GGI groups were run in each cottage Monday through Friday. Teachers were also taught how to run groups, for if there was a behavior problem

in class, they were to stop teaching their lesson and address the behavior via the group process. GGI was a core component of our treatment program at the school. However, it was not the main reason for our successful turn around of the program. ***Remember this, just because you have a GGI or another specific treatment program, doesn't mean you will be successful as an organization in meeting your goals. It is the organizational culture that will dictate the effectiveness of your treatment program!***

In 1977, I became the first Director of Training at Glen Mills under Sam Ferrainola. While searching for books to build my training library, I came across a second edition printing of *Cottage Six*, by Howard Polsky. In the forward to this second edition, Polsky dedicated the book to those visionaries who were doing something different in the field of juvenile corrections. I showed Sam this and recommended that we invite him to visit our campus and assess our program. Sam agreed. I found Howard at the Columbia University School of Social Work and he agreed to assess our program. After a two day observation, Howard met with our management team. He was overwhelmed at the quality of the program and facility. He could not believe the overall pleasant disposition and respectful manners our kids presented on a daily basis. In summarizing, he recognized what Sam envisioned when he said, *I've traveled the world giving lectures on the (Polsky) diamond and people have always said, 'Howard, the diamond is a powerful concept and we understand how it can hurt a group, but what do you do about it?' I didn't really know until I saw Glen Mills. It's the norms!*

GGI was successful because of the overall normative culture we created at the school. As the school's reputation grew, Sam would always present guests who toured our program with the following question: *If you were to implement a GGI program, a quality athletic program and a top notch food service program, how would you rank these in order of importance in changing behavior?* Most would choose GGI first, athletics second and food service third. Sam ranked food service first, athletics second and GGI third. He reasoned that if kids have a full stomach (three meals of all you can eat, plus a snack before bed) they'd be physically satisfied. Secondly, if staff who took on additional responsibilities of coaching varsity sports teams used the normative concepts in building their team's culture, there would be discipline and good sportsmanship norms that would carry over into the cottages throughout campus. Thus, the overall, predominate *team culture* that was modeled and reinforced by the status students (athletes) minimized the incidents of negative behavior on campus. Lastly, the impact of a GGI program would be directly proportionate to the quality of the organizational culture and the group leader's ability to build a strong culture within the group. Thus, the outcomes would be seen at the cottage level rather than the overall campus. Fortunately, as the overall norms on campus got stronger, so did the quality of our GGI groups.

While GGI was one tool for working with our students in a group setting, we spent time building relationships on a 1-1 basis. While most human service organizations gave lip service to providing quality service delivery to their clients, Sam modeled and reinforced the normative expectation that students were the main focus of our program. His open door policy gave students access to him, but he was sharp enough to *read* when students were trying to manipulate him or get

staff into trouble. He always supported the staff and rarely circumvented their authority. Students knew that line staff members had power and this enabled many problems to be dealt with at the group or cottage level.

As staff, we worked together to develop strategies to reach our students, even if it meant crossing over departmental lines. If a certain staff member had a better relationship with a student in my group, I would ask that staff member to meet 1-1 with the student to *counsel* him regarding his issues as identified by the group. Whatever resources we thought would help, we employed them to meet our student-centered goals.

For us, counseling was not just an hour-long meeting that occurred in an office with the social worker, nor was it only accomplished during the group meeting. Counseling was accomplished on the basketball court, in the car while driving, over meals . . . anytime there was an opportunity to discuss the issues pertaining to the student, you were expected to use it. Additionally, we believed that you did not have to have a counseling degree in order to be a good *counselor*. Some of the best individuals who were excellent in reaching kids didn't even have a degree. They had a passion for working with kids, the students knew it and responded accordingly.

● “TWECKING” THE MODEL ●

As with any program, model or idea, there are those who, over time, change or modify the original theory or concept in order to “improve” it. *Normative Leadership* is my *evolutionary upgrade* of the normative culture model that I learned from my mentor. Harry Vorrath and Larry Bentro went beyond the GGI model to create the PPC or Positive Peer Culture model. This was a more structured model and it's application went beyond the juvenile corrections field for use in schools.

Over the six and one half years I was at Glen Mills, I visited other programs that used the GGI or PPC model. I observed group leaders facilitating these groups and saw there were great discrepancies in what I was taught and trained and how these group leaders ran their groups. I felt the reasons for this were: 1) there was very little written about how to run a GGI group; 2) there was no consistent training model that brought uniformity to what GGI was supposed to look like; and 3) the programs reflected the state of the organizational culture in which the groups were being conducted. Since very few leaders in organizations understood how to create/change the organizational culture, most programs saw average success.

As I managed the development of the staff training program at Glen Mills, I was always looking for ways to take the program to the next level. The culture was stable and I wanted to challenge the staff and students to get better. My thought was: let's teach the normative model concepts to the students. This way, they will learn valuable leadership skills they can take with them when they are discharged from the program. Staff's reaction - *you'll teach them all of our secrets and they'll use them against us!* My response: *This will make you a better practioner and help you develop your skills while making the kids better.* So, I began to create a program that would enhance

the GGI experience by enabling the group leaders to teach the normative concepts to the students, which in turn, would enable them to apply the concepts on a daily basis in the cottage.

After leaving Glen Mills in July, 1982, I continued to develop this model. Initially, I thought of incorporating into a GGI format, but decided to create something that could be used generically in any setting, not just juvenile corrections. Although some non-correctional programs have done this, the terminology of the GGI model, e.g.: labeling “problems,” such as a: *get high problem*, *authority problem*, *dis-respect problem*, and the emphasis on *confrontations of inappropriate behavior*, gave it a feel, over time, as a control-oriented, punitive model.

In 1988, I stumbled onto the word, *Helpathy*, and began to use it as the philosophy behind the use of the normative skills. Using this philosophy, it was, and is, my belief that if you have a strong, positive normative culture in a group, you could be part of the group and still retain your individuality. This is the *win-win* that we preach in the normative model. This is *seeking the balance* in my *Normative Leadership* model. At Glen Mills, our organizational culture was *out of balance* to the group side. Sam’s leadership style was Machiavellian and as the *Godfather*, you were expected to demonstrate your loyalty to the Glen Mills *family*. Questioning things could cause you to be labeled as *dis-loyal* and you were *confronted* and placed on the *watched list* for additional signs of inappropriate behavior. Consequences included isolation from the group, peer pressure by team members, job re-assignment and/or termination. This was group dynamics and organizational culture at the extreme. We had no real balance between the group and the individual. Our GGI groups leaned toward the confrontational, group-dominated side. We always seemed to be in the Control Phase of the group’s dynamics. Although we had control of our campus, we never really were able to shift to the Relationship Phase of the organizational/group’s development.

In our GGI meetings, we would identify the group member’s problems and the group would give feedback on how to help the student with the problem. We treated the student’s symptomatic behavior and rarely got to the core of his problem. Our culture was strong enough that students would *comply* to the normative expectations and modify their behavior to stay in the program. However, they would have problems *internalizing* the change, for they had no awareness of what was behind their inappropriate behavior. Unless they received some “counseling” from the school psychologist and were able to gain insight into the “why” behind their pattern, they left the program basically with the same *baggage* they brought with them. Experiencing this, I focused on developing a 1-1 model as part of the *Normative Leadership* and *Helpathy Group* models.

Each group member has a pattern of behavior that manifests itself during the group process. Sometimes these patterns are compatible with other group members and the norms of the group. Unfortunately, some patterns are in conflict with others. I believe behavior is a *learned process*, and if we learned behaviors that are inappropriate or hurtful to ourselves or others, we can *unlearn* them and change or modify our behavior. The 1-1 skills you have learned in the *Normative Leadership* model can also be used by you, the group facilitator, during group. This will help you to facilitate the group process to help the members probe and solve the real problem presented by a group member. Thus, seeking the balance between the group and the individual.

● WHY A HELPATHY GROUP? ●

When I would teach my seminars on the normative model, I would always caution the participants that what they were learning are very simple, but powerful skills that all leaders have used throughout history. The impact of these skills on the group was determined by the attitude of the leader. Without a *help norm* as the attitudinal foundation for using the normative concepts, people could get hurt. When I stumbled onto the word *Helpathy*, this became the philosophy behind the skills.

I defined *Helpathy* as, ***an attitude that exists within a group embodying trust, understanding, mutual respect and cooperation, to encourage the individual and collective development and use of human potential.***

While the term *Helpathy* sounds warm and fuzzy, it is quite the contrary. *Helpathy*:

- * challenges you to take an introspective look at yourself and then grow beyond yourself;
- * challenges you to practice what you preach on a daily basis;
- * enables you to see the *bigger picture* regarding the real issues within the situations you encounter and provides the skills to fix problems;
- * enables you to be *supportive, yet challenging* of others in helping them to see things about themselves or their situation they are unable to see;
- * challenges you to use your skills to create a *sense of balance* between the group and the individual in creating a win-win situations;
- * challenges you to STOP and examine *Self, Task, Others and Process* before you act or react to situations that occur in order to be more *balanced* in your response;
- * challenges you to be a *Normative Leader* in all that you do - abiding by the Normative Leadership characteristics and doing the right thing, because it's the right thing to do!
- * enables you to use 20/20 hindsight in the present.

With this as a philosophical foundation for the *Normative Leader* in working with both group and individual behavior, I then began to piece together the various aspects of my experiences to create a different model that could really help students to learn more about themselves, one another, and the normative skills that are necessary in creating a solid group culture. By doing this, students will be able to utilize the normative skills on a daily basis which will help them to become *Normative Leaders*. My rationale is that they have lived these concepts all their lives to date and some have had these concepts used against them. If they could see the power of the skills when used in a more positive sense, they will be able to hold onto their individual power and know how to constructively handle those who seek to manipulate or hurt them.

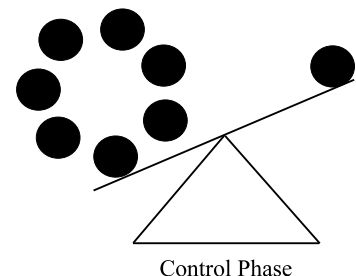
By definition, then, the *Helpathy Group* ***is a form a group process that provides a normative operating system enabling a group to create a culture of balance between itself and the individual while developing Normative Leadership skills for life.***

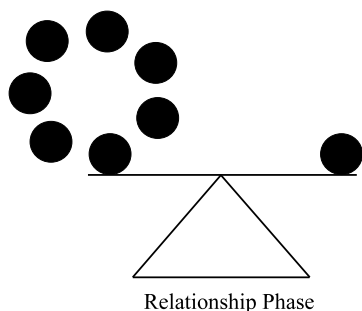
The *Helpathy Group* is not a treatment or therapy group. It is a *support group* where students can create a safe environment that enables them to discuss issues pertaining to themselves and relationships they struggle with at this particular time in life. It is an educational group where students can learn powerful leadership skills for working with both group and individual behavior. It is a group with a focus on behavior as a *learned process* that enables students to logically, *un-learn* beliefs that have hurt them and adopt new beliefs that enable them to move forward in a more happy, confident manner. The *Helpathy Group* is a leadership development program that prepares students to use their *Normative Leadership* skills to rise above the crowd and lead others.

Quite simply, the *Helpathy Group* is derived from 37 years of experience, knowledge, skills and a bit of creativity with the normative model. It is a combination of the GGI format of using peer pressure/support to change behavior, and the T-Group, or Training Group, model which is an experiential model that teaches how to understand group dynamics. In conjunction with the group skills, there are powerful 1-1 skills that can be used in a group setting to help group members learn to probe the real issues that affect behavior so that individuals can make adjustments to their pattern of behavior to create balance within themselves and with others. The *Helpathy Group* has other advantages:

1. It is consistent with the skills taught in the *Normative Leadership Program* for how to change the organizational culture so there is now a common language and skills that can be used at all levels throughout the organization;
2. It is applicable to *any venue* in working with youth;
3. It offers a system and skills for working with both group and individual behavior;
4. The 1-1 skills can be used when addressing behavior in group;
5. Once you, as the facilitator have control of your group, the relationship phase program offers a curriculum for teaching the concepts to the kids;
6. Students learn powerful skills that they will use in all aspects of their lives beyond your program;
7. Teaching the curriculum to the students will improve your normative knowledge base and ability in implementing the concepts in any work place;
8. Increases the quality of leadership of the students and maximizes their individual growth and maturity.

The *Helpathy Group* model will take you through the three phases of it's evolution. In the ***Control Phase***, as the group leader, you must get behavioral control of the group. Here, ***the needs of the group are more of a priority than those of the individual***. This is done strategically to establish yourself as the group leader and set the normative culture for how we will do things in the group. You will use your normative skills often and consistently - depending on the culture of the group. Once the group is under control and the members are responding to your leadership, you are ready for the Relationship Phase Program.

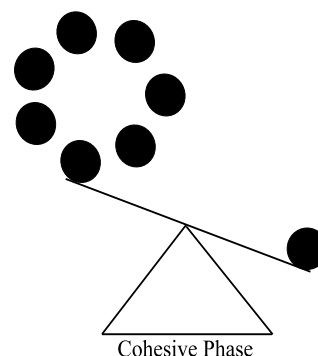




In the *Relationship Phase*, the norms are set and the group members adhere to them. *They comply to the norms but have not fully internalized the true reason behind the behavioral expectations.* They behave because there are consequences verses “it’s the right thing to do.” You will notice a difference among the group members. Some will follow the norms, some will be inconsistent and others will potentially be somewhat defiant or un-cooperative. *Overall, the group is under control and now you can begin to teach the concepts to the students.*

In this phase, there is a Normative Leadership Curriculum that you will integrate between your group meetings. Each lesson plan outlines specific objectives that you will accomplish in teaching the normative concepts to the students. It should be a fun process and you are encouraged to be creative in your teaching methods. Once a lesson is taught, the students can then discuss and apply it during subsequent group meetings to help them make the transition from theory to practice.

In the *Cohesive Phase*, the group practically runs itself. True leaders have emerged within the group and they tackle issues eagerly and with much maturity. *The group members have internalized the philosophy of Helpathy and live it daily. They have become true Normative Leaders* not only in group, but also on campus and in the community. Here, they *devise plans to help them dis-engage from the group and move onto the next transition phase of their lives.* They could be planning on going away to college, finding a job somewhere, moving to another city or just leaving your program. Whatever the case, *the emphasis in this phase is placed on the individual* and helping that person make a smooth transition beyond the group.



This is the basis and basics of the *Helpathy Group* model. There is nothing *new* in the model, for the components that define it have been used in their own right over the years. The blending and application of these components, the normative focus and skills, along with the relationship phase curriculum, makes for a powerful learning experience for both you, as the group leader, and your students.