

Temperature Reading

Purpose

Temperature Reading is an activity by which a group can receive and respond to information about how it is functioning. This activity was designed by Virginia Satir.

Overview

A Temperature reading consists of five parts, each part offering group members an opportunity to express themselves within a specific theme:

- Appreciations
- Puzzles
- Complaints with Recommendations
- New Information
- Hopes and Wishes

For many groups, these themes often go unspoken, though they are part of group life. One of the benefits of Temperature Reading is that people come to understand that it is okay for them to express appreciation, to have questions about things they don't understand, to voice complaints, and to speak about their wishes.

The parts of a Temperature Reading are conducted in order, allowing everyone an opportunity to speak about each theme before moving on to the next. Speakers come to the front of the room one at a time to speak, and return to their seats when finished. Participation in any part is voluntary. Not everyone will have something to say about each theme.

A Temperature Reading begins with *Appreciations*, in which each group member may express appreciation for something done by another person.

The *Puzzles* theme gives group members an opportunity to talk about something they are confused about, or to ask for information they need from others. (Answers, of anyone has them, are held until New Information, below.)

The next theme is *Complaints with Recommendations*. Complaints are often solutions in disguise. In each complaint there is a hidden hope that things can be better. The person with the complaint is saying, "the situation would be better if ...", but may be able to verbalize the complaint only as a negative. The purpose of requesting complaints is to hear the issue; it does not mean corrective action is required.

The *New Information* theme is a time for group members to share important information that others may not know about. Also, at this time people may wish to offer answers to others' Puzzles, or to offer possible solutions to Complaints.

The Temperature Reading ends on a positive, forward-looking note with *Hopes and Wishes*. Group members have an opportunity to express what they would like to have happen, both for themselves and for the group. Each person gains some additional insight into others, and may choose to support others in attaining their hopes and wishes.

Who is Involved

- Facilitator
- Participants

Before Doing This***Supplies***

- Optional: The five phases of the Temperature Reading written on a flip chart or white board, positioned where participants can see
- Optional: Flip chart, paper, or index cards for recording issues to be resolved later

Facilities

- Closed room, large enough for all participants to be comfortable
- Room arranged comfortably, e.g., with chairs in a circle

Doing This***Guidelines for the Facilitator***

- Begin the Temperature Reading by describing the purpose. If this is the first Temperature Reading for the group, explain the different themes and give examples of each. Also, discuss the “Guidelines for Participants,” below.
- Start each part of the Temperature Reading by inviting participants to speak about the theme. For example, start Appreciations by asking, “Does anyone have an appreciation to offer?”
- If there are no responses for a theme, wait quietly for a moment. Be patient. People may be unused to speaking about these themes, and may need some time before they feel ready to speak. If there are still no responses, you may wish to get things started by offering a response yourself.
- During Complaints with Recommendations, if an issue cannot be resolved quickly, write down the issue to be dealt with later. Then, move on to the next issue.

Guidelines for Participants

When giving Appreciations:

- Invite the person (or people) you are appreciating to join you at the front of the room.
- Stand facing the person, at about the distance of a handshake.

- Speak directly to the person receiving your Appreciation, rather than speaking to the group *about* the receiver. Use “I” messages. For example, say, “Jill, I appreciate that you ...” rather than “I appreciate that Jill ...”
- Refer to a specific act or event, rather than to some general quality of the receiver. For example, instead of “I appreciate your helpfulness,” say, “I appreciated when you helped me set up the room for the board meeting on Wednesday.”

When giving Complaints with Recommendations:

- Remember to offer a suggestion for improvement.

After Doing This

- Follow up on any unresolved issues

Other Ideas

- You may wish to put a time limit on each of the themes, or on the whole Temperature Reading.

Related Activities

- Communication Skills

References

- Satir, Virginia. *The New Peoplemaking* (pp 289-292). Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1988. ISBN: 0-8314-0070-6.
- Satir, Virginia; John Banmen; Jane Gerber; and Maria Gomori; . *The Satir Model*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1991. ISBN: 0-8314-0078-1.
- Zahnd, Walter. *Temperature Reading*. Unpublished paper.