

This paper appeared in *The Laboratory Method of Changing and Learning: Theory and Application*. K. Benne, L.P. Bradford, J.R. Gibb, R.D. Lippitt, eds. Copyright 1975 by Science and Behavior Books, Palo Alto, CA 1975

## **CHAPTER 13 (Part I)**

# **THE PERSONAL GROWTH LABORATORY**

**By John Weir**

Personal growth is the dual process of maturation and development whereby an individual moves toward the fulfillment of his physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual potential. By this definition, personal growth training is older than recorded history and most of our established institutions are personal growth "centers." Schools, hospitals, factories, churches, prisons, bordellos, the military, the family, psychotherapy, and human relations training frequently subscribe to goals congruent with this definition. They are just a few of man's inventions in the effort to find growth.

They differ mainly in the theories and methods they use and in the results they obtain. The most commonly used methods involve pain, fear, punishment, isolation, rejection, threat, external control, confrontation, assault, exhortation, and evaluation. Less frequently love, caring, personal autonomy, acceptance, affiliation, self-determination, and freedom are used. Results vary from sustained personal growth, on the one hand, to developmental rigidity and fixation, violent resistance and delinquency, regressive dependency and passivity, and psychotic withdrawal, on the other. The critical question becomes: which theory, what goals, and what methods are to be used? Each institution has its answer, with its own dogma, myths, and rituals.

The practitioners within the human potential movement in the United States seem to be in general agreement on their major goals. Simply stated they are: to help participants become more self-accepting, self-directed, responsible, effective in their relations with others, efficient in their use of biological energy, in contact with their physical and psychic processes, and better able to discover and actualize their potentialities. The emphasis is more on the process of Becoming than on the content of Being.

The methods to reach these objectives are not so widely agreed upon. For many years verbal exchange has been the principal method, extended somewhat with psychodrama and sociodrama. In recent years, however, there has been a rapid proliferation of new approaches. Among them are sensory awareness, body movement, nonverbal activities, dramatic improvisation, behavioral prescriptions, finger painting, clay modeling, drawing, dance, nudity, primal screaming, bio-energetic expression, consciousness expanding drugs, Yoga, dreams, guided fantasy, pseudonyms, rituals, meditation, desensitization, and Gestalt experiments. Each has dedicated proponents and contemptuous critics.

A thorough examination of even part of this maze of purposes, practices, and results would require several books and a lifetime of laboratory participation. It would indeed be presumptuous of anyone to attempt to cover this subject in a single chapter. My solution to this problem is to describe in detail the personal growth workshop I am conducting at the present time. Thus I can give a detailed report of at least one way personal growth training can be conceptualized, designed, and conducted.

My justification is that I am very familiar with the origins of this design and with the reasons for its particular structure. My reservations are, first, that you, the reader, can never fully understand the process of personal growth simply by reading about the content, structure, and theory of a workshop. It must be experienced to be understood. And, second, this process

is an ever-changing interaction among the participants, those around them, and the working design. What happens is the consequence of where they are in life at the moment of interaction. The circumstances of personal growth are always new, and always organic to the here and now of their emergence. So while I can detail the fine structure of how I use the laboratory method for personal growth, the experiential and the personal components of the subject matter will elude us. I am saddened by this realization.

## PERSONAL BACKGROUND

I am convinced that the design and conduct of a particular laboratory represents a personal expression of the knowledge, experience, and values of its staff members. I can only "be" me and "do" me at all times, so to know me is to know my lab, and vice versa. Perhaps your understanding of my point of view will be increased if I recount a bit of personal history and note some of the experiences which, I now see, strongly influenced my thinking. At the time, I was not aware of the significance of these events nor did I anticipate how they would contribute to my differentiation.

I can now trace the professional me back to my studies in the late 1940s. At that time, I discovered my "Holy Trinity" of Gestalt psychology: Koffka, Kluver, and Koehler. Their principles of figure-ground relationships and the selective nature of perception provided the framework for my personal epistemology and led me eventually to the development of the percept language. Arnheim's theory of isomorphism gave me the basis for a theory relating stimulus input patterns, mental imagery, and motor output patterns. I use it to help participants recover any of these elements of a past experience lost because of the pain or fear that originally accompanied them. The laboratory work on body awareness, transference, and physical expression is based on this concept.

I have never forgotten my excitement at the insight into human behavior I gained from Prescott Beck's *Self-Consistency* and Marguerite Sechehaye's *Symbolic Realization*. These were two small books that had a big impact on my thinking. Hans Reichenbach introduced me to scientific philosophy and demonstrated the tremendous power inherent in selecting a set of premises and pursuing them to their logical conclusion. This strategy enabled me to devise and then develop first, cross-group observation or fish-bowling, then microlabs, then pseudonyms and blind walks, then tube theory, and transference accommodation, and most recently the percept language. Reichenbach also made it possible for me to appreciate and admire the elegance of Skinner's *Behavior of Organisms*.

At this time I was having my first group experiences as a part of my internship in clinical psychology. I worked with groups of five to ten "patients" diagnosed as "sick" and given "psychotherapy" by the group "therapist" who was usually a psychiatrist, occasionally a psychologist. These were called "group therapy" groups and the goal was to "make the patient well." Here my immersion in Freud and Fenichel was intense, exciting, and illuminating. Transferences and counter-transferences were the coin of the realm, their elucidation the Holy Grail we all pursued. I am still on that Quest.

The early 1950s was my Wilhelm Reich period. His *Character Analysis* provided me the bridge between psychoanalysis and physiology. I read and reread *The Function of the Orgasm* and *Cancer Biopathy*. I searched for verification of his clinical observations, repeated his bion experiments, and built an orgone accumulator. I explored some of his notions of muscle-armorings, such as studying the relationships among body movements, the expression of hostility, and the frequency and timing of seizures of a group of epileptics. This work was in the direction of the contemporary theories of bio-energetics of Alexander Lowen and of Stanley Keleman. Reich's thesis of the mind-body identity was most convincing. I dismissed that dichotomy from my thinking and from then on conceptualized the human organism as a unitary, integrated system. I prize this orientation as a valuable professional asset.

My Rorschach instructor was Bruno Klopfer, the most wily of tricksters, perhaps even more sophisticated than Hermes. I went with him on long journeys of discovery deep into the underworld of Carl Jung where I learned about archetypes, symbolic processes, individual differentiation, and the racial unconscious. I haven't seen a Rorschach in many years; I see what I learned from Klopfer and Jung in every laboratory session.

It was at this time that I began to learn about "T groups" and laboratory education. These were groups of eight to fourteen "normal" adults experimenting with an exciting new way of learning about human relations and collaborating in the study of group processes with the aid of professional educators (teachers, professors, scientific researchers). The leader's (trainer's) task was to help the members learn about group structure and process and their effects on individual and group behavior. People met around a large table and discussed whatever they chose, pausing frequently to identify the emerging interpersonal and social processes. The educational goal was to increase the member's awareness of group processes, his skills in group membership, and his ability to give and receive personal feedback. Participants in these "Human Relations Laboratories" were mostly "newcomers" who had not been in a T group before.

In the late 1950s my earlier acquaintance with Carl Rogers developed into a deeper friendship. He had always astonished me with the ease and intensity with which he could give me his full attention, but now I experienced my autonomy, my personhood through him in a new way. His theory and application of NonDirective Counseling took on a new meaning and importance for me. I see now that, for me, I began to develop a new concept of individual responsibility. Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* initiated my movement away from organizing and precipitating training events. I began creating conditions and opportunities and waiting for the Gestalt to emerge; for the target to attract the arrow. Rosen's *Direct Analysis* showed the way and gave me the courage to work directly with unconscious processes.

In the early 1960s I became dissatisfied with talking as the only mode of communication. It was too removed from behavior. It was easy to dilute or distort or obscure the meaning or the intention of the speaker. It became clear to me that verbal expression and exchanges were, in a sense, behavior substitutes. I wanted to work more directly with behavior. In my first experiment in this direction, when one group member said to another, "I'd like to know you better," I suggested he get out of his chair and say this to the other persons without words. They met in the middle of the group and expressed feelings with a glance, then a handclasp, then a hug, and finally a long, searching look into each other's eyes. It was evident to everyone that a thousand words had been spoken with clarity in the two minutes this exchange required. I excited myself with a fantasy of how productive a group could be if it devoted much of its energy to this kind of exchange. I began to experiment with very simple nonverbal interventions. I did away with the table, heightened the emphasis on personal feedback, and switched theory input from formal presentations in general sessions to timely and relevant "lecturettes" during the T group sessions. To the previous goals were added encouragement to try new behavior, and efforts to increase the long-term effects of the laboratory learnings. Participants were still mostly "firsttimers." The laboratory was still called a Human Relations Laboratory.

About this time I also began conducting so-called "Advanced Human Relations" workshops. These were for people who had had previous laboratory experience. Many were T group trainers, ministers, counselors, educators, and other members of the helping professions. Working with these more experienced participants in an "advanced" setting I was free to experiment with new methods and new or expanded training goals.

In 1964, I started working with my wife, Joyce, on the design of a different approach to laboratory education. We came together as convergent streams from quite different origins. Mine, as sketched above, hers from expressive dance, Yoga, dance therapy, group psychotherapy, and the fine arts.

We replaced much of the conventional T group verbal exchange with nonverbal and physical encounters, and increased the attention given to physiological and symbolic processes. We removed all furniture and began to work in an empty room, using cushions for the sit-down periods. We introduced the use of lab pseudonyms, improvisations, finger painting, clay modeling, and behavioral prescriptions. We designed sessions in sensory awareness, body movement, and nonverbal activities. To the training goals we added increased sensory awareness, behavioral spontaneity, and self-control.

This began a process of design development and synthesis, and training strategy refinement that still continues. Joyce and I have learned to do our own individual and interpersonal growth work together and to apply the resulting personal learnings to our professional work. We have learned that there is a very close relationship among our individual personal growth, its effects upon each other, and the changes that emerge in the design and conduct of our labs. Furthermore, as we move toward greater self-differentiation, our lab design and the way we work together and separately becomes more precise, more congruent, more differentiated, and more effective.

The new methods worked well. After a while we stopped using the format of three or four T groups of ten to fifteen people with a trainer. Instead, we brought everyone together and did all our work in a "community-of-the-whole" consisting of the thirty-five to forty-five participants and three to five staff members.

The first time we tried this experiment we were apprehensive, but found almost immediately that we had much more data and more resources with which to do the work. The richness and variety of resources of the larger group soon excited everyone and we all quickly discovered that with a little self-discipline the large group could work more effectively and be more helpful to individual participants than a small group. From that time I have always preferred a large group and multiple staff.

It was becoming clear that personal growth, as we had come to know it, was a life process, present in everyone and occurring in an unconscious, fortuitous manner depending on chance events in an individual's life. In 1969-1970 we began to learn how this process could be identified, facilitated, and managed in a deliberate, conscious manner if a person had the necessary knowledge and motivation. Our laboratory goal then became the teaching of the principles and practices of managing one's personal growth processes. They were to be learned and practiced in the laboratory and applied to one's life thereafter. We called this a Laboratory in Self-Management.

Currently, we see that the ultimate biological function of personal growth is to enable one to develop the personal qualities, skills, and the life style for which he has the potential. Self-management enables one to do so in a conscious program of reaching for ever higher levels of maturity or individuation. This is done through the resolution of parental transferences whereby the participants discovers their unique identities, free themselves from dependence and counter-dependence on parental images, embrace their existential aloneness, and accept sole responsibility for the management of their lives.

Our strategy to help participants make this journey we provide them with theories and with as many opportunities, techniques, and strategies as we can devise for them to experience and understand this differentiation process during and after the laboratory, and to acquaint them with various resources, internal and external, that are available for their continuing differentiation. Our basic objective is to help them learn how to grow themselves. A goal that seems identical with the nature of organismic development, that is to enable each person to travel toward his own personal distinction, to become more fully differentiated into his unique individuality. This is our Laboratory in Self-Differentiation.

This brings me to the present in the review of what I now see as the significant professional and intellectual experiences that brought me to where I am today. To these should be added the usual living experiences of sickness, operations, injuries, deaths, successes and

failures, marriage and parenthood. Some of these experiences seemed tragic or unfortunate, but, congruent with the Law of Opposites, I find I have learned important things from and through each of them. I continue to do so. If I had missed any of them I believe I would be less differentiated today. Again, I am reminded that all experience can be, and usually is, growth-producing. Only sensory isolation, awareness-dulling, and inactivity are anti-life and lead to a living death.

I also recognize the influence of a large number of co-workers and participants on my professional and personal development and on the evolution of the kind of laboratories I conduct. Through and with them I have done much of my personal growth.

We are now ready to look at the Laboratory in Self-Differentiation in detail.

## **THE SELF-DIFFERENTIATION LABORATORY**

Our preference is for a lab of 35 participants equally divided as to sex, and varied as possible for age, education, occupation, religion, and race. We prefer four staff members; ideally, two male and two female. A group of this size and composition contains large varieties of physical and personality types, of life styles, and potential transference images. Consequently, there will be a wide range of sensations, perceptions, and reactions to the experiential sessions. This offers the younger, the less experienced, or the naive participant an expanded view of life, and provides a rich background against which everyone can compare his personal experience. There's a friend, an enemy, and a stranger for everyone. The body movement and activity sessions are done with the total group. Some are done in pairs, some in trios, and some in quartets, and always in sessions-of-the whole, which we have come to call community sessions, where everyone is present and participates in the activities.

### **Duration**

The amount and kind of work that can be done in a residential workshop vary significantly with the time available. Lasting personal growth of any magnitude can occur only within a time-span that permits the participant to orient himself to the design, develop a high degree of trust, confront himself at a deep level, reorganize his perceptions, then live with this reorganization long enough to become familiar with it, and to identify the process that produced it.

The pace of this sequence seems to be the same for most participants. For the kind of laboratory goals we wish to achieve, five continuous days seem to be the very minimum. And this is true only for some participants. It will not be sufficient for all. Eight continuous days, or two weeks, with open week-ends, seem to enable nearly everyone to do significant work. Week-end labs are too brief. They may generate intense feelings of exhilaration and social intimacy, but as vehicles for lasting growth, I have found them inadequate, so I no longer do them.

### **Staffing**

The composition of the staff and the areas of their professional competence are extremely important in this kind of personal growth laboratory. As power figures, staff members are the most frequent objects of the participants' transferences. So they must know how to recognize, accommodate to, and work with such relationships.

A staff member whose style is to get into the group and "do his own thing" becomes oblivious to the transference processes of the participants. He needs to have enough separation and enough distance to respond to transferences sensitively and appropriately; not to initiate but to respond. He must be mature enough to observe himself as he would a participant, being

what he needs to be, doing what he needs to do for his own growth, only if it does not disrupt the work of the participants. After the lab, on his own time, his observations of himself and his lab experiences will provide the data for his continued personal work.

Staff also must be able to facilitate and guide the transference relationships that develop between participants. If this is done properly, the person doing the transferring usually experiences some resolution, and the transferee isn't used beyond the limits of his willingness to cooperate or his ability to understand his role and respond.

They must be familiar with, and able to work with the wide range of dramatic, highly emotionally charged episodes that occur when participants are confronting themselves and others at deep and meaningful levels. They must know when to encourage greater risk-taking, when to set limits, and when to be silent. It is essential that staff members do significant work on their own transferences. They must be familiar with their own symbolic processes. They must have a highly developed clinical insight. They must be willing and able to give themselves fully to the process. The more often a staff member has been where the participant needs to go, the more guidance and reassurance he can provide.

Staff members must have the physical stamina and adaptability to participate fully in the movement and activity sessions along with participants. They must be able to model ways of working in these sessions and of processing the personal data that are generated.

The staff team is composed so as to provide as many as possible of the needed transference and archetype images such as father, mother, brother, sister, child, trickster, warrior, witch, devil, clown, etc. Then the participant will have the opportunity to make the transferences necessary for his personal work. In addition, each person's culture and social class gives him success images to emulate, but does not permit or encourage the exploration of other dimensions; a process that is necessary for full differentiation.

I have been fortunate in having had the opportunity of working many labs with the same staff members. These long-term relationships, plus an intimate knowledge of my own personal growth experiences, have led me to a strongly held conclusion. This is that staff members will design a lab and make his training interventions in some relationship to where they are in the journey towards self-actualization. His or her growth urges, fears, and longings always assume central importance in their laboratory work. As they increase their self-awareness, their interventions become richer and deeper. As they resolve specific transference residuals, those transferences will no longer dominate their interactions. As they continue their differentiation, their lab work becomes wiser and has more impact. In their areas of blindness, they will continue to generate from certain participants stereotyped reactions in a repetitive manner. As each staff grows, so do their labs. As they get stuck, so do their labs. Maturity of lab design and execution results from maturity of staff.

### **Introduction to the Laboratory**

Our participants' laboratory experience begins when they read the description of the laboratory theory, goals, methods, and expectations and apply for admission. The description says in part:

Personal growth is a continuing process of self-differentiation. From conception to death, one is always in transition, moving toward ever greater degrees of individual uniqueness. This process is an orderly one, with change occurring in sequential phases and with its facilitation and inhibition partly a matter of personal choice. The movement of a person through this developmental sequence can be facilitated through increased self-love, personal autonomy, self-understanding, and will. Self management theory provides a set of guidelines whereby this process of self-differentiation can be enhanced and "managed" more consciously and more deliberately. It can supply a "design for living" with explicit directives for continued self-differentiation.

The central objectives of the workshop will be to help the participant (1) assess his present state of differentiation, (2) experiment with the application of self management theory to his personal growth processes, (3) focus his energy in the service of his continued self-differentiation, and (4) gain a keener appreciation of the inter-relationships among his present environment, his life style, and his growth needs.

The necessary elements for successful differentiation through self-management include awareness and acceptance of physical and psychological functions, access to unconscious processes, sensitivity to interpersonal relations, acceptance of responsibility for one's existence, behavioral flexibility, and self-discipline.

Exploration of these elements will be sought within the framework of general theories of self-development, self-management, and self-differentiation. It is intended that the workshop participant will continue thereafter to use these theories and his workshop experiences as guidelines for his continued psychic, somatic, and spiritual development.

Formal application affirms interest in and acceptance of these statements and implies that the applicant may already be working toward these same personal growth goals. The second interaction occurs when he next receives a letter suggesting he adopt an assumed name. This letter says, in part:

One of the objectives of this laboratory is to provide you with the opportunity to experience yourself in as many new ways as possible. Giving yourself a pseudonym, and a new back-home biography, if you wish, is one of the more successful we have discovered. We invite you to try it in the lab we are going to do together.

Pick any name you'd like, classical, mythological, symbolic, a noun, verb, adjective, etc. Perhaps you've always wanted to be called by another name. Perhaps you've always disliked the name your parents gave you and would like to experience yourself freed of all the negative connotations accumulated over the years. Or perhaps you'd like to see if people would respond to you differently or if you would experience yourself differently if you had a different name. A name may emerge as you think about where you are now at this time in your life. It may represent a state of being, a current transition you'd like to experience more fully, or an exploration of an as yet unrealized potential. It may become a self-confrontation, a self disclosure, or a self-liberation.

You may also choose to construct a new personal history made up in the way you think would be most helpful in your personal growth. It can be simple or elaborate, realistic, or fantastic and you can reveal as much or as little of it as you wish. Or, if you prefer, you may withhold all background facts about yourself and let people experience you as they encounter you in the here and now without the labels, relationships, status symbols, etc., that usually precondition their reactions to you.

"You may change your name and biography as often as you like during the lab and should you decide, you may drop your assumed name and take on your back-home name. Let the laboratory registrar know as soon as possible what your new name is. She or he will arrange to have your mail, phone calls, and messages translated into your assumed name before delivery to you. Come to the lab using it wherever possible. There will be no disclosure of your back-home name and personal data until you make it, at the time and place of your own choosing.

Assuming a new name has many personal growth possibilities. Through it a person may experience a new self-image. He or she may live an "ideal" self. Such name may indicate a person's condition, aspiration, or illumination of the moment. One may explore one's dark side or frightening side. One may live with aspects of self that one does not like. One may intensify a transference. One may inflate, belittle, or laugh at oneself. One may symbolize new growth urges. One may regress, express moods, feeling, and emotional changes. Most human experience can be interiorized through personal names and explored at explicit and symbolic levels. Assuming a new name always initiates a continuing self-confrontation.

### **Beginning of the Laboratory**

We begin the workshop in the late afternoon with an opening "ceremony" of about an hour's duration. This ceremony has both verbal and non-verbal components. It is sometimes designed, rehearsed, and staged by the staff, sometimes allowed to develop spontaneously. Our intention is to provide a common initial experience, to convey important themes of the lab, to start participants on their personal journey, and to present a scenario from which we can build a separation ceremony at the end of the lab.

The first evening we share how we came to select our pseudonyms. This tells us something about where each of us is in our journey through life as we begin our work together. It also initiates the process of community building and provides each participant an opportunity for an initial public commitment to his or her personal work.

This is followed by a discussion of the dream process, its relevance for personal growth, how we will use dreams in the lab, and suggestions on how to remember what we dream. Participants are urged to keep a dream journal and to report their dreams to someone the morning after they have had them. Analytical interpretation or speculation as to their meaning is discouraged. Guided fantasies will be treated similarly with the reporting done during the community sessions. Dreams and fantasies are important aspects of this lab, especially in times of high stress when these processes become most significant.

The first morning session is devoted to reporting the previous night's dreams. At this time, we introduce a special point of view which we will emphasize throughout the lab. We start with the centuries-old philosophical theory of solipsism which states that only the self exists, or can be proven to exist. In our application, we take the position that, as far as I, the perceiver, am concerned, the external world "exists" only inside me as sensations and images. Objects, as experienced, are solely the consequence of my perceptual processes. If I close my eyes and drop the pen with which I am writing, it no longer exists for me, except as a memory. All my experience takes place solely within me, within the confines of my body. It occurs continuously, from moment to moment. I live only in the here and now.

This process of perception is selective. In the formation of an internal image, I "select" specific elements from my total memory field, my awareness at that moment, and omit others. So I may see the vase in Figure 1 while others may see the two faces or vice versa.



Figure 1



Our frame of reference for the lab, then, is that each of us is continually perceiving and organizing his world in his unique way, never precisely the same as anyone else. I am "doing" myself and you are "doing" yourself. Your "existence" is for me always my perception of you, the "you-in-me," and I "exist" for you only as the "me-in-you." You are there, you act, you may even physically influence me. This has the consequence of changing the "you-in-me" and the "me-in-you." How I "do" the "you-in-me" is determined by my needs, my perceptions, and my past experiences. It is, I am, always my own responsibility. This is true both for how I do myself and how you do yourself. We conclude that the perceptual elements of our interpersonal interactions consist of a "you," a "me," a "you-in-me," and a "me-in-you."

We use this frame of reference as the basis for processing all of our lab experiences. For example:

My dreams take place entirely inside of me. The images, the feelings, and the actions are all of my own construction. They are therefore also my own responsibility. During dreaming, my sensory systems are turned down or off to the point where my dream imagery is stimulated, not from the outside, but from the inside. Even if I experience a sensation from some external stimulus that is impinging on me while I sleep, I incorporate it into my dream sequence in such a way as to make it congruent with the ongoing content and imagery of my dream work. My dreams are my own doing: I "do" me when I "dream me." I can deny them, or repress their content, but they still remain solely me "doing" me. Dreaming is my process.

My fantasies are my associations. I construct them from my memories, my images, my longings, and my fears. They may be influenced a little or a lot by stimulation from without, but I remain the sole agent of their construction. I "do" me when I "fantasy" me.

You are there. So I experience you. But I can never experience an absolute or "true" you, only the "you-I-know-at-this-moment," the "you-I-perceive," the "you-in-me." I experience you in my own selective way, imposing my perceptual organization on the elements of you I am able and permit myself to experience. I form an internal image of you, this "you-in-me," and react to this perception as "you." You are and always will be this product of my perceptual process, this "you-in-me." Our neurophysiology prohibits it, us, from being otherwise. In general, all my perceptions of others, my projections, my transferences, my blindnesses, and my illuminations take place within me. They are my doing and my responsibility.

The object in my hand exists for me only so long as I can see or feel it/me. If I close my eyes and drop it/me, I cease having awareness of its/my presence. Without sensory input I experience only my internal processes. I experience me through these processes, plus my sensory input. This is the active process of me "doing" me. Whatever I experience and whatever I make out of my experience is my doing and my responsibility. Change can occur only by me "doing" me in a new or different way.

One consequence of conceptualizing these four varieties of experiencing in this way is that I can now look at any one of them/me as if it/I were any other. For example, I illuminate me when I consider me awake as if I were dreaming and when dreaming me, as if I were awake. Making this reversal and living in it/me, for a while has led me to an expanded self-awareness and convinced me of their/my interchangeability. When I discover and fully take into myself the realization that all the "good" and "bad" aspects of myself, awake or asleep, are the consequence of me doing myself, I exhilarate myself at the promise of greater management of my existence, delight in the freedom of no longer being so controlled by the "others-in-me," and expand with the ownership of formerly rejected parts of myself. Honoring personal aspects of myself gives me the opportunity to integrate them into my conscious awareness.

One of the early goals is to live in this frame of reference until it becomes our mode of conceptualizing and reporting our experiences. We have found it helpful to employ a "language" that constantly reinforces the orientation and confronts the speaker with the consequence of his changed perspective. At various times we have referred to it as

transference language, ownership language, and responsibility language. At the present time we have settled on percept language as being the most definitive.

A few rules and examples will illustrate how the language may be spoken.

I behave. I sense me. So I must own my experience. There are no impersonal pronouns such as "it," "one," "you," "that," etc., in the percept language. For them, substitute "I," "me," "mine," etc.

<b>NOT</b>	<b>BUT</b>
It's frightening	I am frightened
It makes me angry	I make me angry
It's a pleasure	I'm a pleasure
One gets scared	I get scared

I am the agent responsible for my sensations and my behavior, therefore only verbs in the active mode can report my experience:

<b>NOT</b>	<b>BUT</b>
I am frightened	I frighten me
I make me angry me	I anger me me
I'm a pleasure	I pleasure me
I get scared	I scare me

I "know" external objects only by my perception of them. That perception always takes place "in" me. Therefore the only objects I know are the "objects-in-me." Similarly with people -for me there is no "you" other than the "you-in-me."

<b>NOT</b>	<b>BUT</b>
You are beautiful	The you-in-me is beautiful
George is mistaken	The George-in-me is mistaken
I can't understand Ann	I can't understand the Ann-in-me
You are lying	The you-in-me is lying
I don't trust you	I don;t trust the you-in-me
He suspects me	The him-in-me suspects the me-in-him
I know you will like him	I know the you-in-me will like the him-in-me
You are angry at him	The you-in-me angers himself at the him-in-you
They don't like each other	The them-in-me don't like the other-in-each-of-them

We continually urge participants to report all their laboratory experiences in this language and in the present tense. A simple example may illustrate how this is following report:

"I climbed a mountain today. It was a hard climb. When I got to what I thought was the top I took my clothes off. I felt a little guilty. I walked around and discovered I wasn't at the top yet. I hiked through some undergrowth, became apprehensive, and put my jeans and boots on. Then I came to the main trail. I took my clothes off and climbed toward the top about a quarter of a mile away. I felt great. A ski structure came into view. It angered me to discover someone had built a building on this inaccessible peak. At the top I found people had left a horrible mess of garbage around. This disgusted me and I became more angry. Then I realized I could clean up the mess if I wanted and I felt relieved."

Translated into percept language and into the present tense the participant would hear himself say:

"I go up the mountain part of me today. I am a hard climb. I get to what I think is the top part of me. I take the clothes part of me off. A part of me says I shouldn't do me this way. I tell this part of me to go to hell. I walk around me naked. I discover I haven't reached the top part of me yet. I go through an under-growth part of me that I frighten myself with. I put on the jeans and boots part of me. I go through the undergrowth part of me and come to the main trail part of me. I take the clothes parts of me off again and continue my climb toward the top part of me about a quarter mile away. I am feeling me beautiful. Now I see a ski structure part of me. Some other people parts of me have structured me. I anger me when I discover other parts of me have structured me in this inaccessible part of me. I take me to the top part of me. I find the other people parts of me have left a horrible mess of garbage on the top part of me. I disgust me with these parts of me and anger myself. Then I realize I am alone on the top part of me and I can clean up this messy part of me and make me clean again. I feel me good with the knowledge of this power part of me."

This report can be heard as an account of a dream, a fantasy, or a physically experienced event. Telling it in this way helps the experience become a relevant part of the teller's existence and may provide him with some clues as to how and where he might grow himself.

At this time in the lab the teller was working on his parental transferences and experimenting with greater self-management. His report was a clear and concise statement of where he was on this journey at the time of telling.

## **TRANSFERENCE COMMUNITIES AND SMALL GROUPS**

Much of the theory we use is derived from Freud's concept of transference. This is the notion that a person "projects" onto another the important qualities and aspects of significant others in his life such as parents, siblings, and teachers. We consider this process to be central in the work of differentiation in the years fifteen to fifty. We do everything we can to activate, identify, illuminate, and resolve these transferences as a major part of our laboratory work. We accomplish this partly by making explicit the relationships among the participants and staff as transferences emerge among them, and partly by showing the way the laboratory activities and theory can be used by the participants in the service of their individual work.

Talking in the percept language constantly focuses everyone on the transferences that underlie most of their perceptions and interactions. The usual small group structure and processes emerge as individual participant processes embedded in transference relationships. As a consequence, there are significant differences between the group processes that occur in the transference community and those that may occur in other types of training or encounter groups. The effect is to modify or eliminate some of the usually dominant training issues and

conflicts. A brief description of several of them may further delineate important aspects of this type of differentiation laboratory and illustrate some of the essential values and attitudes that are offered for the participant's consideration.

Participants are joined in a common endeavor. Each is to make his own journey in his own way and in his own time. Dependency and counter-dependency are soon identified as transferences. They are usually parental; occasionally sibling. There are no staff "leaders" in a differentiation lab, only guides, protectors, and stimulators. The staff responsibility is to provide as many opportunities as possible for participant self-discovery and the enrichment of experiencing. Each participant has sole and total responsibility for his own "leadership" and for no one else's.

The participant's energy is invested in bio-energetic expression and in maintaining and resolving his transferences. A major laboratory goal is to help the participant discover and keep his own power, rather than to give it away or let it be taken from him. This is self-ownership. There is no possibility of, and no reward for, trying to accumulate group power or influence. That can be given only by the transferrer and always in the service of his transference and of his growth. Resolution of the transference dissolves this delegated influence as the participant reclaims his personal autonomy.

I discover my uniqueness by taking ownership of myself and my experience, and by assuming responsibility for my behavior. I cannot compete with you, or anyone else in this process. I, and only I can "do" me in my own way. Moving always at my own pace, there can be no win-lose. I am what I am, when I am. I Become when I am ready to Become. My transference needs are mine alone. They are unique to me. They can never be anyone else's. I can't "do" anyone else even if I want to, or am asked to. I can compete, and win and lose, but only with my own transferences.

I am the sole authority over me, the sole responsible agent for me, and the sole determiner of my behavior. I have no responsibility for anyone else's work. If I perceive another as an authority, I look to my transferences to see why I give him or her this power over me. The staff accepts no responsibility for my personal growth. That responsibility is mine alone. There is no staff leadership position in a transference laboratory, therefore there is no authority to resist or to lean on except as a transference image.

Transference is an unconscious process. Its resolution in a laboratory setting results from consciously recognizing and confronting it. No one can help another to do this except by agreeing to accommodate to the transference image projected upon him. If he can provide a good screen, he can perform a valuable collaboration and be very helpful.

The "friendly helper" always gets in the way as he tries to do the transferrer's work for him, or tries to change the other's feeling state in order to feel comfortable himself. So, too, the analytic helper who tries to demonstrate his omniscience by giving his psycho-analytic interpretation of everything that happens. He is almost always wrong with these projections of his own transferences. When occasionally he is close to being correct, he succeeds only in robbing the participant of the joy and rewards of self discovery. None of these "helping" strategies lasts long under the spotlight of the percept language.

Resistance to personal growth is always determined by the transferrer in the service of his transference. When he decides to "do" himself, he melts his resistance. It is not functional for him to resist the staff, design, or schedule except as his transference dictates. They are not imposed, but are there for the taking. We avoid making demands on the participants as this only stiffens the resistance by reinforcing the transference. The participant is the sole responsible agent for his existence.

Likewise, the participant's motivation for working on his personal growth is not a staff responsibility. The staff member may explore the participant's resistance with him, but whether the participant will work or not is his own decision. Staff members will also accommodate to

transferences made on them within mutually agreed upon limits but will not initiate such programs.

The reduction of these common training issues and conflicts frees participants to concentrate on their own self-actualization. It also releases large amounts of energy for the pursuit of personal growth through transference resolution. The concept of self responsibility is basic to most of these process differences.

We encourage each participant to be on the lookout for emerging feelings and memories. When this begins to happen we encourage him to "go with" his experience, to experience himself fully and completely in all aspects of his sensations, emotions, perceptions, and movements. If he asks for help it is given. If he wants to be left undisturbed so he can experience himself without distraction we see to it that his desire is respected. We protect him from the friendly helpers, the amateur psychoanalysts, the aggressively dependent, and the envious who may try to steal part of his experience for themselves. When a formerly long-avoided memory and feeling is fully experienced with all its attendant agony and despair, the participant is able, for the first time, to reintegrate it into his conscious life. As he does so, he frees himself to let other aspects of his past, present, or future emerge into awareness to be confronted and managed with greater self-assurance. We do everything we can to minimize aborting this emergence through premature interpretation, evaluation, or closure.

*You can read Part II of this article by visiting [www.reology.org](http://www.reology.org). The second half of the article provides John Weir's description of The Personal Growth Laboratory, which used to be conducted as a two-week long residential intensive. We continue to conduct this program today, but in shorter durations, usually six or eight days.*

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