

LONG ISLAND INSTITUTE FOR GROUP WORK WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH

a newsletter about working with children and youth in groups

Volume 6. Number 2.

❖ Sixth Year of Publication ❖

Spring 2001

From the Editor

To self disclose or not to self disclose? This is a frequently voiced dilemma raised by group workers. We wonder, "When kids ask, should I reveal details about my life to my group members?"

- *Are you married?*
- *Where do you live?*
- *How much money do you make?*
- *Do you have children?*
- *When was the last time you had sex?*
- *Did you ever smoke pot?*
- *Did anyone in your family ever die?*

And so on and so forth...

We struggle with these questions. Some group workers are immediately and unflinchingly forthcoming believing that, "full self disclosure builds trust" or "shows that you're real." Other group workers won't budge and are grounded in the idea that, "self disclosure dilutes transference" causing whatever fantasies and associations kids have about us to evaporate before they can be explored. If these are two points on a continuum, most of us probably find ourselves floating somewhere in the middle. Of course there are true believers on both ends, the *anything goes gang* and the *blank slate set*.

When it come to self disclosure I've found as many subtleties in direction as there are influences, in print and from the podium. Left with uncertainty during a moment in a group, we are ultimately alone. When this happens you might ask yourself, *Who is asking me what, why are they asking it now, and who else is listening?* This question speaks to knowing the intent of question, understanding the questioner, and being oriented to the context - the timing and situation. It's not easy to metabolize all this in the public setting within which group work is practiced (that is, there is always an audience).

Sometimes questions by kids seem precisely designed to knock group worker-adults off balance. For example, there is the question that leaves every kid in the room with a half-smile/smirk in anticipation of an achilles-heel-revealing-meltdown by the grown up. But of course it doesn't always work. Some group workers have a real down-to-earth quality and natural absence of deadly seriousness that allow them to take disorienting tactics of kids' probing and embarrassing

questions in stride and with good humor. This unusual quality helps buy time in the sorting out process, giving the worker some room to decide whether or not a genuine request for information has been made, and what to do about it.

But it is not always easy to think on one's feet. Sometimes we hesitate or freeze and the group takes over, as in this affirming interchange among a group of boys I met with some years ago: "Andy, do you have sex?" "He probably has the sex life of a rock." "He must have sex, I think he has two kids." "What happened Andy, did the condom break twice?" I just sat in flustered silence.

Self disclosure is not only about life history and details about our lives, it's also about our feelings and thoughts, deep and fleeting. Even in situations where we think that we are keeping knowledge about ourselves from a group, our speech, dress, gestures, etc. may reveal more about ourselves to group members than we think.

Can you always conceal how you feel? Should you? Did you ever feel moved in a group? Did you shed tears? Would

you? Have you ever been furious in a group? Did you ever lash out? Would you? Were you ever tickled by a group? Did you laugh out loud? Would you? Is it okay to show kids your passion when you feel deeply about something? Do your values and opinions count for anything in group work? Should they be hidden from view or openly shared?

Recently during a supervision meeting a colleague told me about a group member who asked her where she lived. I asked a few questions about the interaction. Two of them were: "When did she ask you the question?" (ans.: During the ending phase of the group) and "Did she have any losses in her life?" (ans.: Multiple losses). This is what I mean by understanding the question, questioner, and context a little better before plowing ahead.

Self disclosure is one of those issues that group workers struggle with throughout their careers. It comes at us in so many different forms, and so often sneaks up on us unexpectedly. To deal effectively with self disclosure group workers

» » *Continued Page 3.*



Looking Back ... A Reminiscence Lost and Found on Outward Bound

By: Bruce Kaufstein, ACSW

This is the 16th
feature in a
continuing series

On a recent Saturday afternoon in Harriman State Park, hiking with a group of adolescents, I commented to my co-leader, "I remember hiking the same trail over 25 years ago." And now, I walk these trails on Saturdays 20 to 25 times per year, leading a wilderness group program for teenagers with serious emotional problems.

I began hiking and canoeing with a friend after graduating from college. As a New York City slicker, the outdoors were foreign to me. Years of chain smoking and routine culinary orgies in Chinatown and Little Italy had transformed my Adonis physique into that of the Pillsbury Doughboy.

I huffed and puffed and sweated and cursed every step of the way as I trailed far behind my Paul Bunyon college buddy who introduced me to the Harriman State Park trails. Initially, when I felt uncomfortably challenged, disturbing, defeatist thoughts raced through my mind. Nevertheless, the hikes and canoe trips were affecting my self-esteem and level of confidence, not to mention my muscle tone and bulging waistline. Clearly, something profound was happening to me in the woods. I breathed and hiked easier; I hurt less; I felt energized; I experienced

meditative calm, clarity, and focus.

My wilderness outings were limited to day trips and occasional overnights on weekends. I was primed for longer, more demanding and challenging adventures, but none of my friends were willing to "sacrifice" an entire week's vacation to go backpacking. So, I researched and planned a solo-backpacking hike on the Appalachian Trail through the Great Smoky Mountains in North Carolina.

Fully equipped, I arrived at the park in the early afternoon and embarked up a mountain trail leading to a lean-to for safe sleeping on the Appalachian Trail. I soon realized that day hikes in Harriman State Park were not adequate preparation for backpacking in the Smoky Mountains. This trail was steep! And the weight of my backpack, loaded down with all my new equipment and a week's worth of food made me feel like I was relapsing to the physical and emotional state of my first painful, discouraging hikes. I was obsessed with morbid thoughts. "What if I break my ankle? Who would ever find me out here? What about bears? How could I sleep out here when the guidebooks all recommend sleeping in fenced in lean-tos for protection from bears? What's a New York City

social worker doing here alone in the mountains of North Carolina?"

By dusk I was still hiking up a trail that seemed to have a 45-degree incline. I would never make it to the lean-to before dark. I decided to make camp while there was still daylight. I bear-proofed my backpack, suspending it from a branch about 15 feet in the air and set up my tent on a terrible incline. After preparing and eating a very dissatisfying dinner of macaroni and cheese, I crawled into my sleeping bag for a restless night's sleep.

In the morning, I checked my maps and emotions and came to the conclusion that I was not ready for this challenge. Down the mountain I hiked, setting up my tent at a public campground, surrounded by families with loud children and RV's. I spend the next five days taking day hikes, always returning to my base camp. I returned to New York feeling dissatisfied and defeated.

Determined to successfully meet the challenge of a prolonged wilderness adventure, the next summer I enrolled in a 28-day wilderness course at the Minnesota Outward Bound School. I flew to Duluth and took a bus to Ely, Minnesota. I had no trepidation about this program. In fact, I was arrogantly confident. I was

in much better shape than last summer. I was jogging 2-3 miles daily. I was a sophisticated east coast intellectual social worker. I worked in a group work agency and had been leading groups for a couple of years. And I was now a veteran who had hiked in the Smoky Mountains.

I looked forward to easily completing the Outward Bound course. My goal was to win recognition as the most respected and valued member of the group. I believed I would usurp the leaders' roles, as I would certainly be smarter and more sophisticated than any Midwestern rube that spent his time leading wilderness groups in Minnesota. After all, I was "Bruce Kaufstein, the Group Worker!"

I was quickly humbled. The first five days at the base camp felt like army basic training. The other 10 patrol members, as we were referred to, seemed to be soaking up the experience. The social worker in me decided to "strut my stuff." I shared my feelings. "I'm struggling with this experience." And I didn't stop there. "I'm hurting. I'm bruised and scraped and black and blue. I can't find a foothold, and not just while I'm rock climbing. We are always running. We never stop

» » Continued on Pg. 3.

» » Continued from Page 2. and rest. This seems like boot camp. Why don't we take more time to get to know each other?"

My pitch was met with silence, patrol members shuffling their feet and distancing themselves from me. The looks on their faces did not reflect respect and awe, but impatience and disdain. I knew these looks. They were the looks given the nerdy adolescent who joins a group late and doesn't speak the group language. One patrol member finally broke the silence and declared, "You've just got to give it some gusto man!"

My experience

over the 28-day course challenged my identity on a daily basis. In time, after earning the respect of the patrol, my forays into the emotional realm of the experience were welcomed, enabling me to offer leadership in facilitating group discussion and process, that might otherwise have been a neglected dimension of the adventure.

Clearly, the day to day physical demands of the challenge, immersion in a beautiful, serenely natural setting, interactions with fellow members, pensive introspection, rhythmic paddling, and the successful completion of

the course had a profound impact on my life. 25 years later and with the benefit of a special vantage point and little more wisdom than I had brought with me to Minnesota, I am Bruce Kaufstein, group worker of a wondrous wilderness program for adolescents.

Bruce Kaufstein, MSW is coordinator of the Wilderness Respite Program and clinic coordinator for North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center; Roslyn Heights, NY, 11577

From the Editor

» » Continued from Page 1. must be self-reflective. In this age of cost containment and increasing groups that are programmed for brevity, we need more self-reflective group workers who take time to explore the many sides and angles of tough practice issues. (see this issue's "TIPS for...column for more suggestions on handling self disclosure).



**Mission Statement
Long Island Institute for Group
Work with Children & Youth**

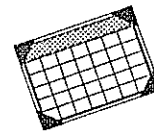
The Mission of the Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth is: To promote and enhance effective group work practice with children and youth through advocacy, education, and collegial support. **HUH?!?** is the Institute's quarterly newsletter dedicated to providing information, inspiration and support for anyone working with young people in group settings.

Steering Committee

- Chairpersons: Joanne Ditchik-Stutz (Nassau)
Cynthia Cavallo (Suffolk)
- Coord. of Group Work Svcs.:
Michelle Laser
- Steering Committee: Cari Abatemarco;
Aimee Colton; Roseline Felix;
Stacey Levin; Maureen O'Connor;
Catherine Papell; Andrew Peters;
Carol Sutker
- Project Coordinator: Andrew Malekoff

LOOK

The Summer-2001 Issue of **HUH?!?** will be exclusively devoted to our March 16th Action Research Conference: Isolation or Inclusion - Creating Safe Spaces for Lesbian and Gay Youth.



**Save
The
Date**

March 8, 2002

The Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth will hold a professional conference on March 8, 2002. The theme of the conference will be Group Work and Youth Development. Watch HUH?!? for more information.



Subscribe to HUH?!?

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (____) _____

Send your check for \$5 payable to;
**L.I. Institute for Group Work
With Children & Youth/NSC&FGC
Attn: Jane E. Yazdpour
480 Old Westbury Rd; Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-2215**

Isolation or Inclusion: Creating Safe Spaces for Lesbian and Gay Youth

By Andrew Peters and Cari Abatemarco

Since its founding in 1993, Long Island Crisis Center's Pride for Youth Project has been addressing the problem of homophobia through community education and supportive services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. In the spring of last year, Pride for Youth launched a new project to tackle the issue of school-based homophobia in a different way. In collaboration with the Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children and Youth, Pride for Youth organized LGBTQ students, their non-gay allies and adult allies into an Advocacy Network to implement a year-long project utilizing an action research approach.

Action research is an intervention strategy that assesses a social problem then mobilizes a community to organize and address the problem. Action research utilizes individuals affected by a social problem as investigators, organizers, and advocates.

Applying action research to the problem of homophobia involved documenting the extent of homophobia in the schools and promoting positive responses to the problem. Staff, students, teachers, and other adult allies came together to create surveys assessing the level of

homophobia in Nassau County schools, distributing these surveys, and then analyzing the data. Students also collected stories describing the problem through peer-to-peer interviews. Throughout the year, the

March 16th, 2001 at North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center, network members will present the finding from the surveys and peer-to-peer interviews. The conference will provide the opportunity to share ideas,

For more information about the conference call Cari Abatemarco or Andrew Peters at (516) 679-9000.



Advocacy Network provided support to schools that have taken positive steps in addressing this issue, helping them establish and maintain Gay-Straight Alliance clubs and bias reduction programs.

This project will culminate in a conference for students and adults entitled: "Isolation or Inclusion: Creating Safe Spaces for Lesbian and Gay Youth." At the conference scheduled for

successes, and challenges. The conference planners hope to mobilize participants into a permanent Advocacy Network providing a voice for LGBTQ students. The conference will also include a multi-media exhibit designed by students, expressing the problems that LGBTQ youth face. The exhibit will bring attention to the various forms of homophobia within school settings.

Chaos Corner

self-dis-clothes, your?
got any kids?
a regular mate?
ever smoke pot?
or
masturbate?

make a good living?
gotta nice pad?
ever get weepy?
or
feel really mad?

when you made love
for the very first time?
did you feel awkward?

did it blow your
mind?

you
know
all about us.

we
know
nothing of you.

you say we don't
need
to

but

we
wonder.

we
do.

by andy malekoff

PARENTAL PAUSE PAGE HUH?!?

Parental Pause Page (PPP) is an occasional page dedicated to parents of teens and pre-teens

Spring 2001

No Room for Swelled Heads or Bruised Egos...

by Andrew Malekoff

Growing up I belonged to lots of groups. Most were sports related. Many only lasted a few hours at a time, like the choose-up teams we'd organize. We'd start with football in the fall and then move on to basketball and stickball. We also devised more unconventional "street" games that were often complex variations of hide-and-seek and cops-and-robbers, grand psychodramas that combined elements of justice, surprise, fear, and lots of running, jumping, climbing, and colliding.

Sometimes the games weren't too complicated at all. We had snowball fights and free-for-alls called "kill the man with the ball" and "king of the hill." Some of these were games of unbridled aggression with only a few loosely defined rules to prevent blindness and paralysis.

The games were pretty easy to organize. *Presto*. Someone would begin the phone call chain, a meeting place and time would be determined, and everyone would ride their bikes or walk to the playground and hop the fence to the playing fields.

We'd choose up teams, agree on rules, and play. *Magic*. These were games I always looked forward to.

Later I got involved with organized sports like little league baseball and later high school and college teams. I guess what I was playing before that was *unorganized sports*. In organized sports there were coaches, formal practices, predetermined rules, and strict schedules. There was no choice about who was on your team. You were stuck, for better or worse, with the same teammates every game. In organized sports there was more of an emphasis on winning and losing and on how good or bad you were doing.

In unorganized sports we also cared about winning and losing and we wanted to play well, but everyone seemed to get over it faster. There was no room for swelled or bruised egos to grow or

fester. And besides, the next day teams changed. The only loyalty was to the game. We had a stake in making it work and adhering to a self imposed structure, so that we could enjoy our time together.

The ephemeral nature of unorganized sports was appealing. No adults knew the outcome of the games so they couldn't remark on them or critique anyone's performance. Parents never knew who got a hit, made an error, or struck out. There were no records or box scores in unorganized sports, no documented history of one's performance. There was only the shared memory of being together and away from grown ups for a few precious hours. Our parents had no stake

in what we did in the playground as long as we stayed out of trouble.

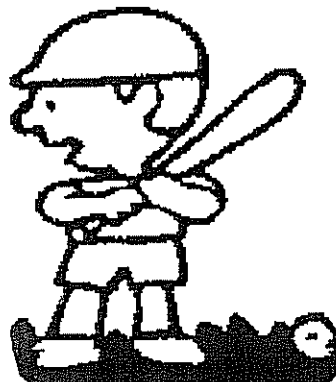
I have to admit that it feels a little *cliché* writing

This reminiscence originally appeared in HUH?!? Volume 5 No. 4. It is repeated here to welcome another spring of Little League Baseball and youth recreation.

about this now. I know that I'm not saying anything new and earth shattering. Don't just about all grown ups romanticize the past, recall childhood games of days gone by, and lament the present state of affairs? Maybe it's an adult rite of passage. Nevertheless, I think we've come a long way from choose up games where we could temporarily escape the adults in our own lives, to today's leagues where we too often obsessively intrude on our own kids' time and space.

These days whenever I go to a playground to see local kids playing organized sports my focus is often interrupted by the ghosts of my youth. I always seem to end up in a dissociative state of some sort. At those times I feel like the little boy on the silver screen who

» » *Continued page 2. PPP*



» » Continued from pg.1. PPP
whispered, "I see dead
people."

I see faceless kids
arriving in all
directions
on their blurring bikes
huddling together
in a mass
to
choose up
sides
then apart
intense
arguing
laughing
rolling in the dirt
undaunted
by rain and snow

grown-up
free
for a time
and
then
back on their bikes
blurring away
to someplace special
drinking cokes
laughing
teasing
joking and

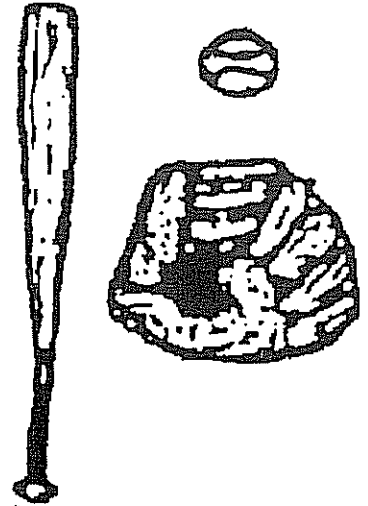
back on their bikes
scattering
back home
refueled
with
a
shared
memory
of a time away
and
together.



And then
I snap
back to
present
time and think to myself,

many years from now, in
a time most of us cannot
imagine, we will look back
at the era when our kids
were young. Some of us
will remember our
children as graceful young
athletes, others as gritty
competitors, others as
awkward yet persistent,
and still others as tentative
but game. And then they
will surprise us as they
develop in so many
unexpected ways.
However, it is what our
kids will remember about
this time in their lives that

is most important. What
will they remember about
their experience in youth
sports. Will they
remember being a part of
something special? Will
they remember the good
feeling that teamwork and
team spirit can bring? Will
they remember that adults
who guided them along,
patiently taught them new
skills, and encouraged
them from the stands?
What will they remember?
*We cannot afford
to forget that our kids are
still children, as we were.*



I Was There ... I Remember

You were only three years old and you fell down and I had to hold myself back from running to help you because I knew you had to get up by yourself.

You were only ten years old and you came home crying. We sat on the couch and you cuddled into my arms. You tried to act "grown up" but the tears were still there and I saw them.

You were only fifteen years old and you told me that the world felt heavy on your shoulders and I wondered about a kid who would take this world so seriously. And I wanted to tell you that this life was not so dreadful. But I knew I couldn't say that. I knew you had to find it out for yourself.

My part
to be your witness.
I had to watch
protect
wait
until
someday I could say
I was there ... I remember.

And then you would know that I had paid attention.

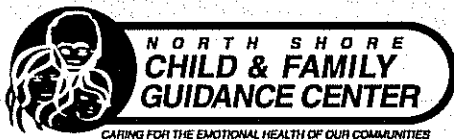
Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour

HUH?!? a newsletter about working with children and youth in groups
INDEX for Volume 5. Nos. 1 - 4. - Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall - 2000

- B** *Book Briefs*; "The Handbook of Group Play Therapy: How To Do It, How It Works, Whom It's Best For"; Sweeney; Daniel S. and Homeyer; Linda E.; Jossey-Bass, Inc. Publishers; Spring-00 pg.4.
- Bravo! for The Power of Group Work With Kids; A Report on Group work Conference held on October 29, 1999; Papell, Catherine P.; Spring-00 pg.2.
- C** Cavallo; Cynthia
Wake Up Professors and Bosses; Winter-00 pg.4.
 Reports from Directors; Fall-00 pg.1.
- Chaos Corner*; "blood sucker in the corridor" (poem); Malekoff; Andrew Spring-00 pg.2.
- Conference: A Report on Group Work Conference Held October 29, 1999; Papell; Catherine P.; Spring-00 pg.2.
- D** *Different Strokes for Little Folks*; Felix; Roseline; Winter-00 pg.4.
- Ditchik-Stutz; Joanne; *Eggs on the Fly, By and Bye*; Winter-00 pg.4.
- E** *Eggs on the Fly, By and Bye*; Ditchik-Stutz; Joanne; Winter-00 pg.4.
- F** Felix; Roseline
Different Strokes for Little Folks; Winter-00 pg.4.
Do You Speak Creole?; Looking Back ... A Reminiscence; Summer-00 pg.2.
- Friends for Now* (poem); Travis; Summer-00 pg.3.
- From the Editor*; Malekoff; Andrew
 Winter-00 pg.1.
 Spring-00 pg.1.
 Summer-00 pg.1.
 Fall-00 pg.1.
- From the Inside Out*; Malekoff, Andrew; Summer-00 pg.3.
- From Thrown for a Loop to Full Circle*; Levin; Stacey; Winter-00 pg.3.
- G** *A Fun Place? Why Not?*; Laser; Michelle; Winter-00 pg.2.
- Grown Ups Attending Youth Sports; *Tips for*; Fall-00 pg.4.
- H** Homeyer; Linda E. and Sweeney; Daniel S.; *The Handbook of Group Play Therapy*"; *Book Briefs*; Spring-00 pg. 4.
- Humor Me Guys*; Peters; Andrew; Winter-00; pg.2.
- K** Kids in changing Families; *Tips For*; Spring-00 pg.4.
- L** Laser; Michelle; *A Fun Place? Why Not?*; Winter-00 pg.2.
- Lester; Munson and Nack; William; *Literature Corner*; "Out of Control"; Fall-00 pg.4.
- Let Them Eat Cake*; O'Connor; Maureen; Winter-00 pg.3.
- Levin; Stacey; *From Thrown for a Loop to Full Circle*; Winter-00 pg.3.
- Literature Corner*; "Out of Control" Nack; William and Munson; Lester; Fall-00 pg.4.
- Looking Back ... A Reminiscence Do You Speak Creole?*; Felix, Roseline; Summer-00 pg.2.
No Room for Swelled Heads or Bruised Egos ...; Malekoff, Andrew; Fall-00 pg.2.
- M** Malekoff, ACSW, CASAC; Andrew
Chaos Corner; "blood sucker in the corridor" (poem); Spring-00 pg.2.
From the Editor, Winter-00; pg.1.
From the Editor, Spring-00; pg.1.
From the Editor, Summer-00; pg.1.
From the Editor, Fall-00; pg.1.
From the Inside Out; Summer-00 pg.3.
Looking Back ... A Reminiscence; "No Room for Swelled Heads of Bruised Egos ..."; Fall-00 pg.2.
rocky mountain writer's workshop (poem); Summer-00 pg.3.
- N** Nack; William and Munson;
- Lester; *Literature Corner*; "Out of Control"; Fall-00 pg.4.
- O** O'Connor; Maureen; *Let Them Eat Cake*; Winter-00 pg.3.
- P** Papell; Catherine P.; Bravo! for The Power of Group Work With Kids; Report on Group Work Conference Held October 29, 1999; Spring-00 pg.2.
- Peters, Andrew
Humor Me Guys; Winter-00; pg.2.
 Reports from Directors; Fall-00 pg.1.
- R** *Red in the Face But Still Hooked*; Sutker; Carol; Winter-00 pg.3.
- Reports from Directors; Cavallo, Cynthia and Peters; Andrew; Fall-00 pg.1.
- rocky mountain writer's workshop* (poem); Malekoff, Andrew; summer-00 pg.3.
- S** Serendipitous Evaluations; *Tips For*; Summer-00 pg.4.
- Sutker; Carol; *Red in the Face But Still Hooked*; Winter-00 pg.3.
- Sweeney; Daniel S. and Homeyer; Linda E.; *The Handbook of Group Play Therapy*"; *Book Briefs*; Spring-00 pg.4.
- T** *Tips for*:
 Grown Ups Attending Youth Sports; Fall-00; pg.4.
 Kids in Changing Families; Spring-00; pg.4.
 Serendipitous Evaluations; Summer-00; pg.4.
- W** *Wake Up Professors and Bosses*; Cavallo, Cynthia; Winter-00 pg.4.

Long Island Institute
for Group Work With
Children and Youth
480 Old Westbury Rd.
Roslyn Hgts., NY 11577-2215

Non Profit Organization
US POSTAGE PAID
Permit # 271
Roslyn Hgts., N.Y. 11577



→ A Program of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center ←

Licensed and Supported by: Nassau County Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities; The New York State Office of Mental Health; Nassau County Department of Drug and Alcohol Addiction; New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. Supported by: State of New York Office of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities; The Nassau County Youth Board; New York State Department of Social Services; Long Island's United Way; Great Neck United Community Fund, Inc.; United Community Chest of Port Washington; Manhasset Community Fund.

R E S O U R C E S

✦ MAY 4, 2001 Substance Abuse in Children, Adolescents, and Families: The Consideration of Theoretical Issues, Clinical Interventions, and Developmental Factors. Professional Workshop at North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center; \$40 per person. From 9 AM to 12 Noon. For Registration Information Contact Barney Navas at (516) 626-1971 Ext. 337.

✦ JUNE 2, 2001 Special Training: Exploring Dimensions in Social Work Practice - Trauma, Loss, and Bereavement with Children and Adolescents. Presenters: The Staff of Bereavement & Trauma and Crisis Services of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center. This special conference will be held at Adelphi University; Garden City Campus. It will run from 9 AM to 2 PM and the fee is \$65 per person. Contact Marlene Shear at Adelphi (516) 877-4343 to register.

✦ The widely acclaimed book *Group Work with Adolescents: Principles and Practice*, by Andrew Malekoff, is available from Guilford Press in paperback. To order call Guilford Toll Free at 1-800-365-7006; Fax: 212-966-6708; E-mail: info@guilford.com; Website (secure online ordering) <http://www.guilford.com>.

HUW?! is the quarterly newsletter of the Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth, a program of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center; 480 Old Westbury Road; Roslyn Hgts., NY 11577-2215; Phone: (516) 626-1971 •• Fax: 626-8043. Executive Director/CEO: Marion S. Levins, ACSW; Director of Program Development and Newsletter Editor: Andrew Malekoff, ACSW. Newsletter Design and Layout: Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour. Participating Agencies: Coalition on Child Abuse & Neglect, Garden City; Youth Directions and Alternatives, E.Northport; Herricks School District, Albertson; Sanctuary Project, Huntington; Plainedge School District; L.I. Chapter for Advancement of Social Work With Groups; L.I. Crisis Center, Ballmore; Temple Sinai of Roslyn; Huntington Youth Bureau, Huntington. © Copyright March 1, 2001/USA.

TIPS: For Group Worker Self Disclosure

To self disclose or not to self disclose? is one of the most confounding and hotly debated questions that group workers face.

TIP: Remember, probing questions by group members might reveal more about the questioner than the subject. Don't respond in knee-jerk fashion, depriving exploration in the group. For example, when a group asked a male and a female co-leader if they were married they ultimately told them "no," but not before some exploration of why these preadolescents from changing families asked the question. Don't be paralyzed by feeling that you made a mistake, that you revealed too much too soon or unnecessarily withheld something that you could have easily shared. Be reflective. Talk it over with a trusted colleague. You can even tell the group how you felt about mishandling something. That's self disclosure too. It humanizes group workers even more than revealing a juicy tidbit about your past. Go slow. Don't trade off personal information for buy-in to the group. Orient yourself to the context, including group developmental phase, in which personal questions are asked or revealing something seems right. Never burden group members with your problems. Remember, it's not about you. Be self-reflective.