



Descriptive Consultancy

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The purpose of this protocol is to help someone think something through, solve a problem, get advice. Paradoxically, it recognizes that the best advice is the least advice and that helping to define and set the problem is what is truly helpful in reaching resolution. It recognizes that when we are quick to give advice it is not very respectful of the person presenting the problem who has thought of the obvious questions already. It asks us to practice being more descriptive and less judgmental. It also asks us to focus on the person who is consulting with us and not to talk about ourselves and our experiences. This can be used with a group up to 30 and it can be used in triads.

Time

Approximately 40 minutes; times can be adjusted.

Procedure

1. Problem is described. (5 – 7 minutes)
2. Clarifying questions can be asked only if they are truly for information purposes and are for the benefit of the asker. (2 –3 minutes)
3. The presenter is silent while the group describes what they are hearing and try to develop a shared understanding of the problem and its complexity – What did you hear? What didn't you hear that you need to know more about? What can be built on/what is missing? (7 minutes)
4. The presenter responds and acknowledges or further clarifies the problem description. (4 minutes)
5. The presenter is again silent while the group brainstorms possible solutions/next steps. (7 minutes)
6. The presenter responds again. (5 minutes)
7. Debrief. (7 minutes)