



From the first aid kit of donna Morgan,
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As groups work on important issues that face their communities, they are usually focused on external factors affecting their work. Just as important as these external factors are internal group processes—the way the individual group members are working together. Below is a “black bag” of techniques with which to monitor a group’s health and catch small problems before they develop into serious ailments.

- **Select a physician.** Assign a couple of group process observers who hold the responsibility of calling the group’s attention to process problems so that the **whole group** can work on solving them. They should be good at noticing when people are uncomfortable or offended and should be tactful but not shy about speaking up when they observe problems.
- **Keep charts updated.** Make notes during meetings. Record such things as whether everyone is speaking and being listened to or whether one person is dominating. To help notice when people are not speaking, make a list of the people at a meeting and keep track of how many times each person speaks. Pay attention to body language and conversation flow. Share your observations at the end of the meeting, using specific examples from your notes, but be tactful and non - accusatory.
- **Listen to the patient.** Encourage the facilitator to provide a short time at the beginning of each meeting for people to make personal check-ins. This gives them the opportunity to briefly share events from their own lives that might affect their actions with the group. Have a suggestion box into which people can drop ideas on how to make meetings better. Share these ideas with the group.
- **Prescribe medicines in appropriate doses.** Suggest various discussion techniques to the group: round robin and pairing off are good ways to get quiet people involved. Brainstorming is a good way to energize the group.
- **Schedule regular check-ups.** End each meeting with a plus, minus, change evaluation in which people can reflect on both the process and the product of the meeting.
- **Reschedule missed appointments.** Call people who have missed meetings just to check in with them and express the group’s interest in keeping them involved. If they have a problem with the group, bring it up tactfully and offer to help deal with it.
- **Get second opinions.** Don’t try to solve the group process problems by yourself.

