

# INTEGRATIVE LEARNING TEACHING STRATEGIES

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## The Good and New

Using the process of Good and New provides an excellent opportunity to set a tone of positive thinking for the rest of the day. This enhances opportunity for productive experiences. Emphasizing the good in our lives reduces stress and allows our energy to focus on finding solutions to problems or completing tasks. The Good and New may be seen as a therapeutic cleansing or stabilizing strategy. It provides an avenue to give oneself recognition for having provided something positive for oneself and for others. The idea of expressing something that has happened to you may start out as a simple act, but when you are talking about it to someone else, it can take on a more meaningful aspect. The fact of going home and having dinner with your family can seem more important as a result. In short, this exercise is a good stimulus to shape a positive self-image.

**Objective:** The participants will be able to demonstrate their feelings about something Good and New that happened to them recently. The purpose is for people in a group to feel good about themselves. Having each participant personally tell a large or small group his/her recent good experience helps to create an atmosphere that is positive and supportive in the classroom. This allows one to search his/her life for a short period of time and to come up with something that makes him/her feel worthy. The Good and New allows time for sharing and is great for a warm-up exercise. It also provides an opportunity for a non-verbal person to speak in a small group, when otherwise s/he might not do so. Further, we may associate this practice with the idea of "Give to the world the best that you have, and the best will come back to you." A positive attitude and an enriching environment are key attributes of the climate of accelerated learning. Method: The instructor or group leader announces that it is time for today's "Good and New". Each person who would like to speak stands and gives a short narrative of his/her good experience that took place in the past twenty-four hours.

The Good and New is a valuable way of beginning or ending a class, because it offers a positive way of enriching self-esteem for the individual and the group. It also creates an attitude of learning expectancy. This exercise helps everyone to turn attention away from the negative thoughts within themselves and from those that bombard them from without. In a very real sense it is transforming.

## The Go Around

**Objective:** The purpose of the Go Around is to enable each person in the group to speak and express his or her opinion without interruption from other group members.

**Process:** Group members sit in a circle. The allotted time is divided equally among them, with a share of time left for coming to consensus if necessary. Members may speak at random, but no one is to speak twice before each has spoken once, and no one is to speak four times until each has spoken twice. A person does not need to speak, and may use his/her time for silence should s/he so desire. Strengths: This technique encourages participation of all members by giving them their own uninterrupted time slot. It promotes active participation. It can be used with the Good and New and the Self-Estimation. It is important for a group to establish a feeling of sharing. In a situation where a group sits in a circle, the idea of wholeness is developed. Once that group has been established, each of its members should feel equal to the others, and not threatened to respond as one would if called upon to speak with the central figure in the front of the room. Sharing each other's thoughts on a particular topic, or even free flowing thoughts, offers a great opportunity to expand knowledge, the ability to question, and the ability to think about something that one may not have thought about before. This is an excellent opportunity for them to take center stage and have everyone's undivided attention in a relaxed, non-hostile, and non-threatening environment. If they know beforehand that they can share with others something

good, regardless of its value, they are apt to feel better about themselves, and perhaps look forward to coming to school. Implementation: It's possible with all age/grade levels. With younger children, the Think and Listen and the Good and New may be practiced before the Go Around.

### Think and Listen

Since the solutions to many of our problems are already within us, the Think and Listen gives us a chance to examine various possible answers.

**Objective:** To sharpen listening skills while allowing participants to express themselves verbally.

For this activity you will need a partner. One person assumes the role of the speaker and the other the role of the listener. The first speaker may express any feeling that he or she may care to share about anything. The first speaker talks for no longer than a previously set period of time (whether three minutes, five minutes, fifteen minutes or an hour). This listener gives the speaker his/her undivided attention, fixing his/her eyes on the eyes of the speaker. The speaker may feel some difficulty at first continuing without feedback, but skill develops quickly. It's almost like writing an oral letter. At the end of the preset time period, the partners will switch roles, and the second speaker will begin speaking. The speakers are not to be interrupted at any time during their time to speak. At the end of the total time for both speakers, feedback may be shared if desired. (If a speaker does not wish to speak, but would rather remain quiet, or express emotion in some other way, s/he may do so until the time is up.) In the Think and Listen, the climate is established wherein each is comfortable and at ease. A non-threatening atmosphere of mutual respect encourages the free flow of words. This process allows both the thinker and the listener to grow at the same time. The listener is learning tolerance, patience, and respect for the ideas of others. He or she is also perfecting his or her listening skills. The thinker during this time is allowed to express him/herself in a non-threatening atmosphere. This allows the thinker to grow in confidence and the ability to express ideas. The listener shows awareness and acknowledges the speaker non-verbally, acting as a sounding board, encouraging the speaker to continue thinking through and refining his or her thoughts by body language or eye contact.

The process of the Think and Listen provides an opportunity to speak and listen within a framework that is mutually beneficial to participants. It helps to improve concentration and develops one's listening skills. It also helps develop intelligence. It is a powerful stimulator.

### The Support Group

The support group is exactly what the title implies—support from the group. The formation of a support group may be to find some commonality of interest to make it easier to come together. Here we have a group of strangers or classmates who have come together, perhaps because they have a thirst for learning new ideas and techniques. They form as a group, not knowing what to expect from each other. Once the group is formed, the members can begin to share with each other concerns or ideas that will evolve with more clarity of understanding. There may not be any trust at first—merely respect for each other. In a sense those coming together are like infants—ready to learn as they go along with each meeting. The experience can be like starting anew in life—not knowing what is going to happen. Through warm-up activities like the Think and Listen, the Go Around, the Self-Estimation and the Good and New a barrier is broken. Hopefully, it will be replaced with trust and understanding. However, rules must be established at the outset that the group's purpose is to encourage a feeling of comfort rather than discomfort. Thus, as individuals feel more relaxed with each other, ideas become more creative and the task can be brought to early closure with little or no stress placed on any single person.

The role of each member in the group is to be a listener as well as a facilitator. Of course, each one is also a thinker. Each participant is allowed to share emotions without feeling intimidated. In the beginning only positive thoughts are shared, good things that have happened to the members of the group. Each person is allowed to talk uninterrupted for a specific period of time, knowing that their time doesn't need to be shared with anyone else. Each may talk the

whole time, or use only a portion of the time, but the time remains entirely given to that person. This creates a sense of power, perhaps helping to stimulate the development of leadership skills. The support group allows each person to think about his/herself, how good s/he was in his/her accomplishments, regardless of how big or little they may seem to others. The tendency is to stop worrying about what others think of those accomplishments. This privilege is the result of only positive and constructive thoughts being given as feedback, which builds confidence and a sense of worth. The support creates in each member a feeling of belonging. Each becomes more aware of others and their need to share the same positive strokes. Giving and receiving feedback nurture each. Thus the support group can create a sense of fulfillment. A need that is present in everyone, however much it may fail to be identified, is satisfied to some degree by the experience of the support group.

### **The Self-Estimation**

The Self-Estimation is probably the most important of the accelerated learning techniques, although none of the others should be left out. For the most part, people are their own worst critics. As a person tries to discover the qualities about her/himself, he/she usually gives a negative description. If the support group is formed of individuals who are supportive, it will bring out each person by saying encouraging things about him/her.

The purpose of the Self-Estimation is to provide people with a non-threatening method of rating each other's performance. By verbalizing to the group his/her successes, the individual provides the group with an opportunity to reinforce those behaviors with positive feedback, thus affirming and fixing the behaviors. It requires practice, however, as even in a small group it is often difficult to point out one's own good points. We are taught not to boast or brag, and because of that we often are embarrassed when we are forced to admit to doing something right or well. Without the ability to see and admit our good points we cannot grow.

Each person in the group is given the opportunity to go through the whole process. The first stage is that the selected person constructs a list of things s/he feels have been done well. In other words, the person states what s/he feels is good about his/her performance. Then each member of the group will use the Go Around method and state what's good about the selected person's performance. The second stage is an opportunity for the selected person to look at areas for possible improvement of performance. During this stage it is important to focus not on what is wrong, but on what is still missing to make the performance even better. Again, the selected person speaks first, after which the other members of the group give their opinion. It is important that the selected person ask for the second stage and initiate the Go Around to discuss what is missing and can be improved. Thus the selected person controls the amount of feedback that is given. This increases safety in the group. People have the opportunity to build up their confidence sufficiently so that they are ready and eager to ask for criticism. No one who is insecure need initiate this stage, and thus no one need feel threatened. The process forces one to consider what one is doing well, this causes one to focus on what s/he is doing at all. By forcing the participant to think about what's going on around her/him, and where s/he is in relation to the rest of the group, the participant is also forced into thinking where s/he want to end up. This "forced" consideration then improves the individual's participation in the group as a whole. Cadets are encouraged to think of positive aspects of their lives. No matter what his/her background, each cadet is doing something well. Some cadets are encouraged to think of positive aspects of their lives. No matter what his/her background, each cadet is doing something well. This is sometimes stated verbally, and at other times is exhibited in unacceptable behavior. Stating what one is doing well will develop the habit and expectation of doing well. Much work may have to be done on the second stage of the Self-Estimation to make sure that people are ready for it.

However, the first stage is very valuable and should be used as often as possible. The application of this technique may be focused upon increased improvement and awareness within all academic areas, as well as within one's personal and social behavior patterns. It could easily enhance guidance and counseling situations between individual cadets and/or parents and professionals.

It allows active cadet participation in the learning process, concentrating primarily upon introspection, while also allowing formation of awareness by each individual of how his/her work compares with that of the group as a whole. The focus is placed upon improvement within an environment conducive to positive self-exploration. Also, a social climate is created that encourages the individual, during stage two, to seek outside suggestions if they are desired. This fosters integrative responses between cadets, teachers, community resource people, professionals, and others, with focus upon improving individual perceptions.

### **The Speak Out**

The Speak Out provides the opportunity for any member of the group, without fear of reprisal, debate or criticism, to speak openly about something which has affected him/her. Knowing that there will be no criticism allows the release from a sometimes-unconscious stress, which may affect positive reception of the ideas of others. In addition, the Speak Out may produce an attitudinal change in peers. The Speak Out is a release mechanism of the highest order. This method is used to get rid of any hostility or frustration an individual has built up over a period of time. It could be about any situation she/he heard, saw or encountered. It may or may not be commented on by others. The important thing is letting the individual feel others are not threatened by their way of thinking. The Speak Out is the catalyst that supports the other techniques of accelerated learning. It should be used as a culminating activity. It should only be used after the other techniques have all been introduced and practiced. It is important for the other techniques to be exposed and experienced within the setting, so that the participants can have an opportunity to learn how to listen, which is the most important skill of all. The participants must also learn how to be supportive of others. When the facilitator feels that the cadets have practiced the other techniques sufficiently, only then should the Speak Out take place in the learning setting