



Grace & Chaos

A short course on group facilitation
led by

Nick Totton and Polly McAfee

Four weekend workshops in London between
November 2020 and June 2021

This course is for anyone who wants to learn more about groups, how they function and how to facilitate them. It will focus primarily on psychotherapy groups, but should also be useful for counsellors, educators, activists, voluntary workers, alternative health practitioners etc. This will be the fourth time the course has run.

Grace and Chaos: opposite poles, yet both crucial for successful group process. Grace - the gracefulness of a well-functioning group or good group facilitation, effortlessly yielding to reality. And also 'Amazing Grace' - a transpersonal gift that sometimes emerges from deep quiet listening or from the storms of Chaos. Joanna Macy describes what she calls group synergy: 'It is like grace, because it brings an increase of power beyond one's own capacity as a separate entity'.

Mythologically, Chaos is the primal state from which the world is created. Groups need to go down into Chaos in order to pass a certain point in their alchemical journey; so group leaders need the courage and grace to allow chaos to happen, and to model openness to chaos, openness to not knowing, for the rest of the group. Complexity theory shows us how beauty and structure emerge spontaneously from chaos.

Grace and Chaos, Chaos and Grace: in a successful, living group process the two dance together, mirror each other, marry each other, become each other. We will learn about groups by being one: holding an open space for the group to do what it needs to do, and using theory in a creative and accessible way to make sense of our experience. This combines two possible group functions, process and task (i.e. learning). You will have opportunities to practice and develop facilitation skills by 'taking the wheel' of the group for a while.

On the course we will explore the following **themes**:

Group Field A group behaves in some ways like an organism, with its own needs, impulses, beliefs, dreams and moods. Each group has its own journey, which has to be travelled rather than analysed. The group field constellates people into the roles it needs filled in order to express itself: one individual's work on herself, or two people exploring a conflict, can often achieve something for the whole group.

Polarisation In any group, conflict is inevitably present, and will often emerge around big life themes and social issues. The group field develops through setting up polarities and resolving them. Conflict and chaos are creative forces; we will explore how to support and survive them.

Projection A central phenomenon in any group situation: whatever we find difficult to acknowledge and accept in ourselves, we discover and attack in others. Taking back projections is a key to group development - and so is expressing them.

We will experience the following **roles** (all of which will circulate around the group):

Participant Everyone has their role to play in and for the group. Each person needs to share their story, their facet of the whole; needs at times to take their own side, to be present as themselves without trying to be objective or facilitative. Arnold Mindell calls this Deep Democracy: attending to every voice in the situation.

Facilitator Someone who uses their awareness to witness and support the group's process. The facilitator identifies and encourages whatever is trying to emerge in the present moment.

Leader Leadership offers inspiration and guidance. It is not always carried by the designated facilitator; in fact, it can often appear in unexpected forms, in the bizarre, broken or taboo.

Disturber At times information has to come from outside the group consensus, in the form of dissent, sabotage, complaint. The disturber usually carries a hidden leadership function.

Silent witness At times some people will find themselves unable to take an active part because they experience helplessness, alienation, grief, frustration ... They are holding a difficult feeling for the whole group, so they are also hidden leaders.

Throughout, we will do our best to track and report our experiences as designated facilitators - what we each perceive and feel, are thinking, and how we move in and out of all the above roles. We will not always succeed, and others will sometimes need to take up the facilitator role for a while.

We will be exploring different **group facilitation models**, treating them not as competing but as complementary:

The **process** model supports the unfolding of the group field through the actions and interactions of participants, trusting that every voice needs to be heard and that what needs to happen is already trying to happen.

The **psychodynamic** model focuses on the unconscious fantasies of the group and its members, and how we project our own material onto group members, facilitators and leaders, and the group as a whole.

The **body psychotherapy** model tracks how participants' body states resonate so as to form a 'group organism', which oscillates between arousal and relaxation.

The **ecosystemic** model sees the group as a nodal point in a network of networks - relational, social, biological, spiritual - which will organically move into balance if not prevented from doing so. Conflict, difference, difficulty and competition are an integral part of this rebalancing.

Nick Totton

I am a therapist and trainer with over 35 years experience. Originally a Reichian body therapist, I have explored widely in a number of therapy modalities, and now practice my own approaches, Embodied-Relational Therapy and Wild Therapy, having started and handed on training courses in both.



I have a grown up daughter and a grandson. I have written several books, including *Relating: The Ground of Psychotherapy* and *WildTherapy*. I live in Cornwall with my partner and grow vegetables.
<http://www.nicktotton.net>

Polly McAfee

I am a counsellor and group facilitator with a particular interest in sex, gender and relationships. I am a Partner in the Centre for Psychosexual Health and teach on our Diploma in Integrative Psychosexual Therapy, as well as running personal development groups on women's sexuality.



I am a graduate of Grace & Chaos and have also completed groupwork trainings with Pink Therapy, the Gestalt Centre, Gaie Houston and the Institute of Group Analysis.
www.psychosexualhealth.org.uk

Course structure

The course consists of four non-residential weekend workshops at the Spiral Centre, 2 Shelburne Road, Islington N7 6DL, London. The Spiral Centre, www.spiralcentre.org, is a holistic therapy centre offering counselling, psychotherapy and complementary therapy. The workshop will be in a large ground floor room with a garden. Teas, coffee and biscuits will be provided.

Dates and times

The workshops will take place on November 7/8 2020, and Feb 6/7, April 17/18 and June 26/27 2021. They will start at 10 am each day and end at 5 to 5.30 pm each Saturday and 4.30 pm each Sunday.

Cost

The course will cost £1200. We suggest a deposit of £200 to secure a place, then £250 on or near each weekend, but we're open to other arrangements. If you cannot afford the full fee please contact us to see what we can offer.

Participants

There will be between 8 and 12 group members. You do not have to be a therapist, but the course is only suitable for those with some therapeutic experience. Contact us if you are not sure about this.

Booking

To book contact Polly, 07870 643260, pollymcafee@gmail.com. To discuss the course or if you haven't worked with either of us before please contact Polly as above or Nick, 01726 817620, nick@3-c.coop