

## **PROCEDURES FOR THE WORKSHOP<sup>1</sup>** by Brenda Dervin, dervin.1@osu.edu

### **GIVEN WE CAN ASSUME THAT...**

- \* We come together in a collective undertaking -- to assist each other in refining our projects and our uses of Sense-Making in these projects.
- \* We reflect many differences between us (experience, focus, field, purpose).
- \* We have a common interest in the interpretive and/or Sense-Making.
- \* Our purpose is to do some genuine talking with each other, not lecturing at each other.
- \* We get the most out of sessions if we focus on strugglings -- the journey, not the destination.
- \* Most humans think best if appreciated (and most stop thinking if attacked).
- \* We have not read the same authors and are not failures because of this.
- \* Talking time is a precious resource and should be shared fairly.
- \* Listening time is a precious resource and should be shared fairly.
- \* Shy ones often have profound offerings and procedures should encourage their entry.

### **GIVEN THAT ACADEMIA HAS TAUGHT US SOME BAD HABITS...**

- \* Listening only for things we disagree with, or consider wrong.
- \* Praising only that which is like us.
- \* Attempting to say all we have to say whenever we speak.
- \* Believing that what we say must be thoroughly "cooked" (i.e. logical, coherent, gap-less).
- \* Giving more talking time to those who speak loudest, longest, most aggressively.
- \* Reminding others of how unsuited/ badly prepared they are for the work they have chosen.
- \* Engaging in search & destroy missions whose goal is to show how we could do it better.
- \* Assuming that coherency exists out "there."
- \* Requiring that what person 2 says follow from what person 1 says.
- \* Sharing only "solutions" not "struggles."
- \* Keeping the struggles hidden or assuming them transparent.
- \* Feeling anxious about not having a chance to talk.
- \* Feeling anxious about having a chance to talk.
- \* Searching for the perfect leader.
- \* Requiring/allowing the leader to control both process and content.

### **WE ESTABLISH THESE TENTATIVE RULES FOR LISTENING AND SPEAKING ABOUT THE WORK OF OTHERS...**

- \* Listen for things to praise (practice a new strategy for listening)
- \* Rephrase "criticisms" into suggestions (e.g. I found this useful, you might...).
- \* When commenting on a presenter's project try to do so on his/her terms or in terms that will be understandable across a number of discourses.
- \* Choose from all things you might say the 2-3 you think most useful to speaker & group.
- \* Practice handling a workshop structure that does not emphasize imposed coherency.

### **AND FOR SPEAKING ABOUT YOUR OWN WORK...**

- \* Talk in a relaxed and conversational mode -- this workshop is not designed to judge you.
- \* Avoid lecturing, or "delivering" a paper, or re-presenting your precis.<sup>2</sup>
- \* Start where your precis stopped.
- \* Given limited time, plan ahead for the few things you really want to share.
- \* Focus on your struggles, the cutting edge of your work; not only your achievements.
- \* Raise issues in the most general way possible so as to begin to build bridges across discourses.
- \* Understand that we are all captives of our discourses and can and must ask for each other's help in building bridges across.
- \* Pose questions to the group -- where I would most like your input, most like discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> Workshop on "Sense-Making" at the International Communication Association, May 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Before the workshop 2-3 page precis of each presenter's work had been precirculated