Overview

Do you ever wish, as a person with visual impairment or blindness, you could say, “I am not alone”? Have you wished you could meet others who are in the same circumstances as you, perhaps living with a family member who is blind or visually impaired? No matter how you are dealing with vision loss or blindness, meeting with others who have a similar condition may be appealing. Without a supportive group, you may find it difficult to overcome some of the hurdles associated with vision loss. The goal of this course is to provide you with the information you need to decide whether or not to join a self-help support group for visually impaired or blind people or their family members.

This course, “Self-Help Groups: An Introduction,” explains why and how to participate in a self-help group for people with vision loss or their family members. It is a prerequisite for the course “Self-Help Groups: Advanced Topics,” which covers more in-depth information, especially about starting
and leading a group. This course is divided into four lessons. Lesson 1 outlines the history, characteristics, and benefits of self-help groups. Lesson 2 examines group dynamics, and lists factors that affect group membership. Lesson 3 suggests ways to participate successfully in a self-help group. Lesson 4 describes how a self-help group can enable you or a family member who is blind or visually impaired to more easily navigate through the phases of adjustment to blindness and visual impairment.

No prerequisite courses are needed before starting this one. To complete it, however, you’ll need the materials that The Hadley School for the Blind has provided.

The self-directed activities in each lesson are for your personal development only. Therefore, do not send your answers to your Hadley instructor. You can always contact your instructor, however, to either clarify these activities or discuss your answers. To do so, just call 800-323-4238 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Central Time.
This course includes four assignments: one at the end of each lesson. These assignments enable your instructor to measure your ability to apply the concepts presented in the lessons. Submit each assignment after completing its lesson, then wait to hear from your instructor before sending in the next assignment. In this way, you have the opportunity to apply any corrections or comments to subsequent lessons and assignments.

Complete each assignment in the medium of your choice. Then mail it to your instructor at The Hadley School for the Blind, 700 Elm Street, Winnetka, IL 60093. If you are blind or visually impaired, you may send your assignments in envelopes labeled Free Matter for the Blind, provided they are in braille or large print (14 point or larger), or on cassette or computer diskette. Sighted students must affix adequate postage. To fax your assignments, or to send them electronically, contact your instructor for a cover page or an e-mail address.
Lesson 3: Participating in a Self-Help Group

The previous lessons provided much information about self-help groups. Lesson 1 outlined the history, characteristics, and benefits of self-help groups. Lesson 2 examined the dynamics that take place in self-help groups. This lesson identifies some important factors for successful participation in a self-help group.

You may be wondering what a typical group meeting would be like, especially for a newcomer. This lesson describes what happens and how people typically behave in a self-help group. It explores how confidentiality helps to create trust among the members of a self-help group. It also suggests communication techniques that can enhance your participation in a self-help group. Familiarizing yourself with this information will enable you to decide whether or not to join a self-help group for blind or visually impaired individuals or their families.
Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to
a. Describe a typical self-help group meeting
b. Discuss the importance of trust and confidentiality in a self-help group
c. Describe communication techniques that may enhance participation in a self-help group

Attending a Self-Help Group—What to Expect

If you are thinking (and perhaps worrying) about attending your first self-help group meeting, remember that the decision to attend probably did not come easily for any of the group members. It may have been preceded by a family crisis, the sudden worsening of an eye condition, depression, a need to take control, or some other impetus. Whatever your circumstances, it is safe to assume that, like you, the other group members brought to their first meeting hope for better times combined with a great deal of uncertainty.

If you are attending a self-help group for the first time, you will probably find that the meeting is
conducted in five parts.
1. Pre-meeting welcome
2. Introductions
3. Orientation to the group
4. Discussion
5. Post-meeting conversation and cleanup

**Pre-Meeting Welcome**

If you are a newcomer, sometimes arrangements are made in advance for your transportation. Or, someone may meet you at the door. Usually the group leader or a designated group member will welcome members—especially newcomers—as they arrive at the meeting place. This person is often stationed near the door to offer a gentle handshake and an introduction. In a group for the visually impaired, this member will also explain the logistics of the room, such as where refreshments and washrooms are located, the seating arrangements, and so on. Usually a member will help you find a seat, offer you refreshments, introduce you to others, and stay with you for the duration of the meeting.
Introductions
At the beginning of the meeting, the group leader or designated member will acknowledge the newcomers. This person may ask all present to introduce themselves and, perhaps, to briefly outline their reasons for being in the group. As a newcomer, you may feel shy at first, but this first chance to speak is almost always a positive experience.

At this point, a long-standing member may speak to the newcomer and welcome him or her to the group. More experienced members may also describe their first meetings and the role group membership subsequently played in their continual adjustment to blindness or visual impairment.

Orientation to the Group
After the introduction, the leader or a designated member usually reviews the group guidelines, rules, or procedures. Typically, these include the length and format of meetings, confidentiality guidelines, how members are recognized in discussion, how newcomers can become active
members, options for volunteering, whether transportation is available, and other necessary information.

Every group has formal or informal rules about how people participate and what is appropriate to discuss in the meeting. Usually these guidelines are reviewed at each meeting, but sometimes they are unspoken or assumed. In either case, if you are new, take your cue from others to learn how members contribute, and respond to, thoughts and feelings about the discussion topic. Also note whether members offer opinions, and if so, how.

Above all, listen. It is easy for newcomers to be so concerned about what they are going to say that they miss what others have to offer. In the following example, one person put it this way:

I don’t think I heard much of anything anyone said at the first few meetings I attended. I was so anxious to make a good impression, I spent most of the meeting silently rehearsing what I was going to say in the event I was asked to
speak. Looking back, I realize now that I missed a lot of good ideas and could have been helped a lot more if I had just listened.

Remember that support groups are not therapy groups, although some very personal matters may be discussed. In deciding what to disclose and what not to disclose within a group, it is usually best to stay within the general guidelines and, if the guidelines are unclear, discuss the matter with the group leader or with a member who has attended for awhile.

**Discussion**

As discussed in Lesson 1, self-help groups have diverse formats. A speaker may present on a certain topic, or there may be a hands-on workshop. Following such activities, members usually participate in a discussion or question-and-answer session. If a meeting is devoted solely to discussion, there may be a designated topic, for example, changing levels of independence. Other meetings may focus on reports by members
regarding their progress since the last meeting, including frustrations, challenges, and success stories.

During the meeting, the newcomer may be encouraged to speak. There is certainly no pressure for the newcomer to do so. If you are in this situation and are uncomfortable about speaking, simply say something like, “I think I’ll just listen tonight. But I’m very glad to be here.” Perhaps the only thing that comes to mind is how difficult it is to think of something to say. Say so! Surely some of the members remember being a tongue-tied newcomer, and they may share their own first-time experiences.

**Post-Meeting Conversation and Cleanup**

After the close of the session, there is often a chance for refreshment and casual conversation. It’s important to stay awhile to take advantage of the chance to meet people. Many helpful and supportive exchanges happen during these informal times, sometimes referred to as “the meeting after the meeting.” This is also a time when group
members commonly share information on how to contact one another on a personal basis.

Cleaning up after the meeting is, for many people, an excellent way to begin to feel at home from the very first day. You will often hear other members begin to put back the chairs or clear away the dishes. As the young woman in the next example learned, an offer to help is never refused.

When I attended my first group, I was so nervous that I almost backed out. But when I got there, everyone was so friendly. They made things so easy for me, that I was really glad I had come. Certainly a lot of views were expressed and I didn’t agree with all of them, but what impressed me most was how accepting everyone was of each other. Everyone seemed to have this accepting attitude. Toward the end, I felt so much at home that I even helped wash the coffee cups before my ride came to pick me up.
Self-Directed Activity

Test your knowledge of the material in this section by completing this self-directed activity. Do not send your answers to your instructor, however, as these activities are included for your personal development only.

1. Outline the structure of a typical group meeting.

2. When you attend your first meeting, what would be an effective way to get to know people and feel at home?

3. If you are asked to speak and you don’t feel comfortable doing so, what would be an appropriate response?

4. Suppose you are attending a meeting of a self-help group for individuals with vision loss. One person in the group is a newcomer. Give examples of how you and other members could make that person feel welcome and at ease.

When you are done, compare your answers with the suggested answers that follow.
**Suggested Answers**

1. Outline the structure of a typical group meeting.
   a. Before-meeting welcome
   b. Introductions
   c. Orientation to the group
   d. Discussion
   e. After-meeting conversation and cleanup

2. When you attend your first meeting, what would be an effective way to get to know people and feel at home? If you stay after the meeting and help to clean up, you will likely get to know the members better and feel more at ease with them.

3. If you are asked to speak and you don’t feel comfortable doing so, what would be an appropriate response? The following responses would be appropriate: “Thanks, but I think I’ll just listen today.” “I prefer to pass, but thank you for asking.” “No, thank you. I’m really enjoying just listening today.” “No, thanks. I don’t feel comfortable speaking right now.”

4. Suppose you are attending a meeting of a self-
help group for individuals with vision loss. One person in the group is a newcomer. Give examples of how you and other members could make that person feel welcome and at ease. To make newcomers feel welcome and at ease, follow these suggestions:

- Make sure they are aware of the location of amenities, such as washroom facilities, refreshments, and so forth.
- Accompany them to a seat and, if appropriate, sit next to them.
- Offer refreshments.
- Answer questions the newcomer may have about group format.
- Make introductions as necessary.

**Trust**

Whom do you trust absolutely? They are people whom you could rely on in any situation, who would never knowingly do anything that would injure the relationship between you, and who would never divulge your secrets. A successful self-help group is built on a foundation of trusting relationships.
To develop this trust, members must feel sure of confidentiality. Confidentiality is generally interpreted to mean that what is heard in the group, remains in the group.

In some groups, absolute confidentiality is a mandate. For example, anonymity is one of the hallmarks of 12-step programs such as AA. It is essential that people retain utmost privacy in these groups because members’ addictions, if known, may compromise their work and personal situations. Another situation in which protecting confidentiality can become particularly sensitive is in small communities. In large cities, it’s easy to be anonymous, but less so in a small town.

In most groups, however, members negotiate the desired level of confidentiality. This negotiation process usually takes place at the formation of a new group, and usually the group leader reviews the terms of confidentiality at each meeting. If the leader does not mention this issue, it is perfectly permissible for you to do so. Consider the following possible questions:
• Can group members talk with each other outside the group about something heard in the group?
• Can information be discussed with others outside the group if the person’s name is not used?
• Can information be discussed with spouses or roommates?
• Does the member speaking need to ask for confidentiality in each specific case?

Members of a self-help group often make a distinction between ethical sharing and idle gossip. Sometimes members say, “You may share my story if you think it could help someone outside the group, but don’t use my name.” Or, “If you think my experience would be of use to someone outside the group, ask me first. I’d like to be the one to decide whether to share it, or at least know who else will know.”

New members often ask, “How can I be sure that group members will really keep my confidence?” If you’re unsure about the confidentiality of a group,
it’s important to raise this issue even if you are afraid that others might resent it. Indeed, this is an issue that concerns almost everyone in a support group. Simply discussing the issue with other members can raise your level of trust. Sometimes reviewing the issue results in a change of policy.

Another issue that affects your ability to trust group members is fear. If you cannot trust others—or yourself—you may well be experiencing fear of being betrayed or ridiculed, or of not being able to handle a situation. One reason such fears are difficult to overcome is that most people believe that their fears keep them safe. That is why simply willing yourself not to be afraid usually doesn’t work. But one way to overcome these fears is through positive experience. If you participate in a self-help group without being betrayed or ridiculed—indeed, if you find that you can master a difficult situation—your fears will dissipate, and you will be open to trust. If, however, you do not give yourself the opportunity to overcome the fears, you will remain unable to trust.
Sometimes your sense of trust is hindered by faulty perceptions. For instance, if someone perceives you to be helpless because you have vision loss, you will not trust that person. Other faulty perceptions include notions about people based on their skin color, age, gender, profession, or ethnic background. Some are about situations, such as, “You can’t have a good time unless refreshments are served,” or “You can’t make any friends in a large group.” Once you correct your faulty perceptions, you will again be open to trusting others. And one of the best ways to do so is to participate in a group where people can appreciate and respect one another and where trust can grow.

**Self-Directed Activity**

1. Why is confidentiality so important for building trust among the members of a self-help group?
2. What kinds of questions may be asked in a group to clarify the issue of confidentiality?
3. How can you dispel fear and faulty perceptions? What is the advantage of doing so?
Suggested Answers

1. Why is confidentiality so important for building trust among the members of a self-help group? Members of a self-help group need to feel confident that matters they discuss in the group remain private. Confidentiality is important to ensure that members feel safe and their privacy is respected.

2. What kinds of questions may be asked in a group to clarify the issue of confidentiality? Some issues that may be discussed include
   a. Can group members talk with each other outside the group about something heard in the group?
   b. Can information be discussed with others outside the group if the person’s name is not used?
   c. Can information be discussed with spouses or roommates?
   d. Does the member speaking need to ask for confidentiality in each specific case?

3. How can you dispel fear and faulty perceptions? What is the advantage of doing
so? Fears and faulty perceptions can be overcome by positive experience, which can come through participation in a self-help group. As you overcome fears and dispel faulty perceptions, you can develop trusting relationships.

**Communicating in a Self-Help Group**

How often have you discovered that you misunderstood someone, or someone misunderstood you? Have you ever felt that you are talking and the other person is not really there? Do you always give your full attention to someone who is talking to you? These issues are important if you want to communicate successfully, especially in a self-help group. It is not just the content of the discussions that enables members to progress, but how members talk and listen to one another.

One of the most important skills to learn is listening. Research has shown that people concentrate more on what they are going to say rather than on what the other person is saying.
Listening, however, is the key to successful group participation. Not only do good listeners contribute more to the group, they get more out of it!

Good listening involves more than just hearing. For example, if someone shares a significant problem or story, listeners often respond by relating a problem or story of their own. Have you noticed how many responses include the words “I” or “me”? Often, listeners give advice or prescribe solutions. Such responses could be called “hearing but not listening,” and unfortunately this happens often in a support group where people share deep personal concerns.

Listening is a skill that can be learned. Take note of the following tips for successful listening from Dr. Edward Wakin, professor of communications at Fordham University.

- Avoid jumping to conclusions. Hear the speaker out and plan your response only after you are certain that you’ve gotten the whole message.
- Look for the main ideas and avoid being
distracted by details. Focus on the key issues.

- Watch for feelings. Often people talk to vent emotions. Feelings, not facts, may be the main message.
- Be aware of your own attitudes, prejudices, cherished beliefs, and emotional reactions. Your convictions and emotions can filter or distort what you hear.
- Give the speaker the benefit of the doubt. People often try to respond with their minds already made up. Prejudgments can shut out new messages.
- Learn to listen beyond what people say to what they mean.

Recall the following ways that people do and do not listen.

You are not listening when

- You say you understand before you know the speaker well enough.
- You have an answer for the problem before the speaker has finished telling you what
the problem is.

- You cut the speaker off before he or she finishes speaking.
- You finish a sentence for the speaker.
- You feel critical of the speaker’s vocabulary, grammar, or accent.
- You are dying to tell the speaker something.
- You tell the speaker about your experience, making his or hers seem unimportant.
- You communicate to someone else in the room when someone is speaking to you.
- You refuse thanks by saying that you really haven’t done anything.

You are listening when

- You come quietly into someone else’s private world and let him or her just be.
- You really try to understand the other person even when he or she isn’t making much sense.
- You realize that the time spent together has left you a bit tired and drained.
- You allow the other person the dignity of
making his or her own decisions even though you think they may be wrong.

- You do not take on the problem; rather you allow the other person to deal with it in his or her own way.
- You hold back your desire to give good advice.
- You give the other person enough room to discover for himself or herself what is really going on.
- You accept gratitude by acknowledging how good it makes you feel to know you have been helpful.

You can enhance your listening skills by practicing a skill called responsive listening. When you listen responsively, you let others know that you have heard and understood them. If you know that someone has heard and understood you, you will be much more likely to listen in return. And as this process continues, trust begins to grow.

To practice responsive listening, you reflect back to the speaker, in your own words, the essence
(and perhaps the feeling) of what he or she said. In this way, you give the speaker the gift of being understood. For example, perhaps a participant in your group was complaining about the way a staff person spoke to him at a local sports facility. You could say, “I am hearing that you are upset about this staff person’s attitude toward your blindness.” Or, if you hear a participant making a suggestion for a new practice, you might respond by saying, “If I understand you correctly, you want our group to divide into smaller groups for discussion.”

Responsive listening is always worth doing as a way of getting to know a person better and letting them know you care about them. When a conversation is tense or disagreement arises, it is even more important to listen first and acknowledge what you hear. This allows trust to build among members of the group.

Note that acknowledging and agreeing are not the same. In fact, if you do not agree with someone, you will come to a better understanding if you first use reflective listening to acknowledge what the
person said. This happens because people want two things when communicating: to be acknowledged and to have their listener agree with them. When people are acknowledged through responsive listening, part of their needs has been satisfied.

As you acknowledge others, you will find that they will be more likely to acknowledge your position as well, even when they don’t agree. Simple mutual acknowledgment can contribute enormously toward creating an atmosphere in which it is easy to support one another while accepting and appreciating differences.

The process of responsive listening separates acknowledgment from other forms of communication like praising, approving, agreeing, or advising. When you acknowledge another person, you retain the option to

- Agree or disagree with a specific point of view, action, or experience
- Say yes or no to a request
• Say more about the matter under discussion

Responsive listening can be challenging, especially when another person is criticizing or disagreeing with you. It takes practice, but learning to listen to people’s criticisms or complaints without retaliating is a process that almost always pays off. Responsive listening keeps the conversation moving and demonstrates that each person respects and trusts the other group members.

In addition to listening skills, pacing and timing will help you communicate successfully. Oftentimes silence occurs in a discussion session. Silence makes some people very uncomfortable, so they rush to talk about something—anything—that will fill that emptiness. Others are glad to have pauses in which to consider what has been said. Some people need a long time to express their thoughts; others punctuate with lots of “uhs,” “ahs,” and “you knows.” Some people speak very fast, some may have a speech impediment, and still others enjoy the opportunity to orate. Getting used to
other members’ speech patterns can be a challenge, similar to accommodating various cultures. However, patience and experience will result in successful communication in a group.

Receiving feedback about your own communication style can be an important and rewarding part of group participation. Good communication skills bring rewards in your personal, business, and social relationships. These rewards are evident in the following example:

Lately I’ve been looking for a job, and the part of job hunting that has bothered me the most is the interview. When someone starts asking me about myself, I just freeze up and don’t know what to say. That is, I used to do this. For the past six weeks, I’ve been involved in a support group with other blind persons, and I’ve begun to talk. This is not to say I’m great at it, but I can now talk about myself, especially about how difficult it is for me to talk. The other members have been
really encouraging and helpful. One man, a retired bank manager, even offered to help “rehearse” interviews with me so they wouldn’t be so frightening. I put off getting involved with a group for years because of my shyness. Now, I can’t believe how helpful it has been.

Another aspect of good communication is showing interest. Among those who are sighted, eye contact and facial expression provide clues that the listener is interested. If eye contact is not possible, simply turning the head in the direction of the speaker will suffice. Other ways of showing interest are by leaning forward, or murmuring an occasional “uh huh” or “I see.”

Signs of disinterest or lack of listening may be fidgeting, clearing the throat, or having a conversation on the side. Some of these examples might seem rude and exaggerated, but they do exist. These signs give the speaker the message, “You are not important.” People seldom intend to be rude. Sometimes they just don’t realize the
effect of what they do and say. One of the best places to practice showing interest is in a support group.

You can help listeners be more attentive, interested, and appreciative by expressing yourself clearly and completely. As you talk, people construct a picture of your experience. The more aspects of your experience you include, the easier it is for your listeners to understand you. In casual conversation, it’s easy to leave a lot of things unsaid and to depend on the listener to fill in the missing information. For example, a receptionist may say to a doctor, “Your three o’clock is here.” Taken literally, this statement makes no sense at all, although the doctor understands.

Often, this type of abbreviated conversation is successful. However, when communicating about more serious, perhaps emotionally charged issues, it may not work at all. Moreover, it might not work with people whom you don’t know very well. Indeed, your listeners may just fill in a completely different set of details than those you intended.
The more important the communication is to you, or the more serious the consequences of misunderstanding might be, the more your listeners need the full picture of your experience.

Listeners typically use five dimensions of experience to understand you. The more of these elements you provide, the greater the likelihood that your listener will fully understand you. These elements answer five questions:

1. What are the facts about what you are seeing, hearing, or otherwise sensing?
2. What emotions are you feeling?
3. How do you interpret the cause of these emotions?
4. What do you want to happen?
5. What effects or consequences will result if what you want to happen does indeed occur?

To apply these questions to a real-life situation, imagine a visually impaired student in a cafeteria. Although she is very capable of carrying a tray and using her cane at the same time, another diner
snatches the tray from her hands. “I’ll take that,” he says, thinking he is being helpful. If in her fury she cries at the diner, “I hate that! You’ve spilled my drink all over my tray,” the diner might feel unappreciated, misunderstood, and hurt. After all, he was just trying to help. She could clarify her communication, however, by answering the five questions in the following way:

a. What are the facts? She felt someone suddenly trying to grab her tray.

b. What feelings did that invoke? It startled and frightened her.

c. How did she interpret the cause of these emotions? It seemed to come out of nowhere.

d. What does she want to happen? In the future, when the diner wants to help a person who is blind, he might begin by asking if the person needs help.

e. What are the consequences? In so doing, the diner will have a chance to be truly helpful because he responded to a genuine need.
When you are in an emotional encounter, startled, or frightened, it is difficult to discipline yourself to ask the five questions and frame your response calmly. If, however, you role-play with members of a self-help group, it will become easier to remember the steps. Eventually you will be able to express yourself so as to avoid misunderstandings.

In addition to expressing your feelings clearly, expressing appreciation will lead to successful group relationships. For instance, you might notice someone’s contribution, work well done, or helpful actions. Although it can sometimes seem risky to express appreciation, it is another effective tool that can enable a relationship to be strong and flexible enough to accommodate differences and disagreements.

Being appreciative involves both words and feelings. To express appreciation meaningfully, you need to feel appreciative. One way of cultivating such an attitude is to begin looking for opportunities to say “Thank you.” For example, when you are in a restaurant and the food tastes
good, say something about it to your server. If a grocery clerk is especially helpful, mention it. When you see people gathering signatures or raising funds for a worthy cause, thank them. The possibilities are endless.

One way to express appreciation effectively is to use the first three of the five questions presented earlier in this section. These questions are

1. What are the facts about what you are seeing, hearing, or otherwise sensing?
2. What emotions are you feeling?
3. How do you interpret the cause of these emotions?

For example:

a. The facts? “I came into the room and smelled your perfume.”

b. The emotions? “I felt so happy you were here.”

c. The interpretation? “I always learn so much from what you have to say.”

Other examples might include “When I heard you ask for volunteers, I really wanted to help because
I know how much work you put into making this group successful.” Or, “When you offered me a ride, I greatly appreciated it—especially because I know my house is a bit out of your way.”

Up to now, this section has discussed the actual words used to communicate. People, however, convey only seven percent of their messages with words. People convey the remainder through body language and facial expressions. They also use voice quality, which includes rate of speech, pitch, volume, clarity, and tone. For people who are blind or visually impaired, the words and voice quality are even more important because together they convey the entire meaning.

*Rate of speech:* The average speech rate is 140 words per minute. Fast talkers sometimes come across as excited or busy. Some people imagine that slow talkers are sad or dull. Notice when you speak more rapidly or slowly; if possible, note the effect on your listeners.

*Pitch* is the range of your voice. Sometimes people talk at a higher pitch when they are happy or
excited, nervous or afraid. Low-pitched talkers can sound bored or depressed. Consider how varying the pitch of your voice can help to get your message across.

*Volume* is how loudly or softly you talk. A loud voice can indicate anger. Constantly speaking in a loud voice can be overbearing. Speaking softly can imply to people that you are gentle or shy.

*Clarity* refers to how well your words are understood—an important factor when relying on words to get your message across. Articulating clearly will help convey the message you intend.

*Tone* refers to the expressiveness in your voice. It includes variations in rate, pitch, and volume. Tone delivers a large part of your message, so make it count.

**Self-Directed Activity**

1. What can you do to be a better listener?
2. What five questions should you answer to help express yourself more fully?
3. What is the best way to express appreciation
effectively?

4. Why is voice quality important for conveying a message? What are the components of voice quality?

_Suggested Answers_

1. What can you do to be a better listener? Try the following:
   - Avoid jumping in on a conversation.
   - Keep your attention on the main point.
   - Listen for feelings.
   - Be aware of your own attitudes.
   - Learn to listen beyond what people say to what they mean.

2. What five questions should you answer to help express yourself more fully?
   a. What are the facts about what you are seeing, hearing, or otherwise sensing?
   b. What emotions are you feeling?
   c. How do you interpret the cause of these emotions?
   d. What do you want to happen?
   e. What effects or consequences will result if
what you want to happen does indeed occur?

3. What is the best way to express appreciation effectively? Answer these three questions:
   a. What are the facts about what you are seeing, hearing, or otherwise sensing?
   b. What emotions are you feeling?
   c. How do you interpret the cause of these emotions?

4. Why is voice quality important for conveying a message? Voice quality conveys a lot of the meaning of your message—perhaps more than the words you choose. What are the components of voice quality?
   • Rate of speech
   • Pitch
   • Volume
   • Clarity
   • Tone

**Summary**

This lesson described what happens in a self-help group and identified how people typically behave.
The lesson explored how confidentiality helps to create trust among the members of a self-help group. It also suggested communication techniques that can enhance your participation in a self-help group.

**Assignment 3**

Complete the following assignment in the medium of your choice. Begin by including your full name, student ID, address, and phone number. Also mention the name of this course, Assignment 3, your instructor’s name, and the date you plan to send this assignment to the Hadley School. Then respond to the following items:

1. Create a “Top 10” list of how to get the most out of a self-help group.
2. Has the information provided in this lesson changed your feelings regarding participating in a self-help group? Explain your answer.

Once you have completed this assignment, send it to your instructor according to the instructions in the Overview to this course. Then proceed to Lesson 4, Adjusting to Vision Loss and Blindness.
with Self-Help Groups.