

# **THE FIRES OF GROUP WORK - SUCCESSFUL PASSAGE**

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Everywhere today there are groups of people forming to accomplish some particular aim or other. In every case, certain laws of group endeavor begin to take their toll on the group's ability to function. This process will continue until the group expires without fulfilling its work, or until it achieves its goals.

When a group of people decides to begin a project or endeavor intended to serve the needs of the general populace or to assist in an experiment which will result in useful information for the service of humanity, that group is usually completely unaware of the disciplines which will be demanded of those involved. It is believed that the beneficial purpose, itself, should be enough to cause all to go well and to attract all needed assistance toward its achievement.

A group of volunteers Founded and Staffed The Robert Muller School in Arlington, TX, for sixteen years, beginning in 1980. The School became fully accredited from birth through high-school as an alternative to public education. It was the first School to implement Robert Muller's world-renowned *World Core curriculum*. In observing the process of this long experiment, a pattern of specific group "tests" or, what came to be called "fires" became apparent. Recognition of these fires can be useful for any group attempting to set in motion activity to achieve a specific goal of service.

Since few groups are aware of the processes underway and what will be demanded of each member, individuals enter into the chosen activity blindly, and are often left totally dismayed by the process and unable to complete the work intended. It is hoped that this booklet will be of helpful use to groups who might be attempting a similar endeavor.

The four "fires" described in this booklet will be recognized as universal in their impact, as every group deals with one or more of them in achieving any goal whatsoever. If one has been involved in any group endeavor or project in the past, it will be easy to recognize how the group fared or failed in the passing through each of these fires.

The word "Fire" connotes "heat," "burning," or "purifying." These are accurate descriptions of the processes of passing through the stages of group work from beginning to successful achievement of the group's purpose.

The four Fires, which occur in chronological order in the process of a group endeavor, are:

- 1) Inspiration
- 2) Dedication
- 3) Integration
- 4) Unity

Each member involved in the process of moving toward the group goal must meet the tests of each of these, along with the group as a whole. It is important to note that as long as a group member or the group as a whole is involved in any of these without having passed through it and moved to the next, the group work will suffer in various ways which will actually threaten the purpose and its fulfillment.

Passage can be a very short process for some members, and very difficult for others, but the group and its purpose are certainly at stake in successfully moving through each of the fires.

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## **THE FIRST GROUP FIRE - THE FIRE OF INSPIRATION**

The group who first makes the decision to begin an operation such as a World Core Curriculum School, for instance, will be starting out of Inspiration. They certainly will be aware also of the basic essential and necessary requirements. These are not the areas where the "Fires" begin to take their toll. The initial group, or person who recruits a group, is already Inspired by the purpose and is impelled to move forward.

When the initial group with its stated purposes approaches others to participate, the first danger is faced. If persons get involved out of secondary reasons, and are not deeply interested in the initial purpose, (or *Inspired* by it) the group is already headed for difficulty. Secondary reasons might be that they are involved with a personal agenda. This can be along any of several lines -employment, education for one's own child or children, to please an involved friend, etc. When a person is not Inspired by the foundational purpose, the other fires will be found much more difficult to stand through. Such a person will make innumerable complaints about things which leave the *Inspired* members undaunted.

The principal surge of Inspiration comes from within oneself and is almost inexplicable; for the one who feels it, there is no escape. For the one who does not feel it, intellectual "pros and cons" will be the constant plague. If the doubts are not expressed, one might wrongly assume that the group will not feel an effect. This condition is serious, however, for there is ignorance of an absolutely vital fact the subtle forces and energies are at *least as much a part of the group's function as any purely physical function or expression.*

As long as there are those involved in the group's activities who are "not sure" or have "misgivings" about what the group has as its goal, these attitudes will be countermanding and will cause undercurrents of doubt, actually adding to any problem which may arise by holding a defeatist consciousness - or "I knew this wouldn't work."

Not only are the uninspired coworkers in a group unable to support fully, unless their secondary issues are intertwined irrevocably with the initial purpose, they will be a constant source of strife as the group proceeds through the next steps.

Bearing that in mind, and granting that *all* involved are inspired to move forward in the establishment of something like a World Core Curriculum School, the next fire is one of great importance. Unless it is passed through successfully, the entire project will be stopped in its tracks.

## **THE SECOND GROUP FIRE - THE FIRE OF DEDICATION**

Once the group has reached agreement that the work ahead is something each feels impelled to do, things are set into motion. Decisions are made as to the necessities for procedure. The responsibilities are sorted out among the group members with each attending to a cooperation suitable to individual ability. The work is activated in accordance with ability to accomplish the required necessities.

At this point the second fire begins to flare up. Each inspired group member must dedicate time and effort to the project for it to succeed. It is at this juncture that other parts of the lives of the group enter in to compete with the intended and inspired work. Each one will have to choose between many options in use of time, always allowing the needed amount for the success of the inspired work - **If** they are **Dedicated** to the inspired endeavor.

The life of every group member will be different and present various demands upon the individual group members. As long as the required work is accomplished and attended with no laxity, all will be well.

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Problems arise when individuals find personal life demands interfering with the work and the group must wait for particular aspects to be attended while the "missing" member takes care of other concerns.

A wise spiritual Teacher has written, "If we really desire to serve and to be useful, we shall need to adjust the patterns of our living so that we make time available for what is really important. Many people quite unconsciously act according to the dictum, 'service as convenient.' Others see the problem but do not see how they can find time for what they would like to do. More often than not, no solution can be found until the person decides to put a life of service first, *no matter what the cost*. Once this reversal has been achieved, solutions can be found."

"No matter what the cost," seems to mean different things to different people. It doesn't mean "even if a vital personal responsibility must be set aside." But these responsibilities are sometimes difficult to discriminate. Cousin George stopping through town at the same time of a group meeting should not be characterized as a true responsibility. It is more in the nature of a test of one's dedication. Cannot the cousin be carefully and lovingly made comfortable until one returns from the important prior engagement?

A useful self-questioning relating to the group life of service is, "if every member of the group had my precise attitude about this issue, would the group work be served more efficiently?"

There are various strictly personal interferences which are deemed responsibilities, which have nothing to do whatsoever with the true values of the Inspired Work. These will be such items as "the dinner party which was arranged months ago," or the "children's football game" which cannot be missed just for the group - the discrimination between a "right," and a "higher right," will be the continual test for the server who is burning in the Fire of Dedication. Every decision must have the values of the Work at its core. This criteria will be spontaneous when the server has completely succumbed to the Fire of Dedication.

Goethe's piece on **COMMITMENT** is pertinent here:

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy,  
the chance to draw back,  
always ineffectiveness.

Concerning acts of initiative and creation,  
there is one elementary truth  
the ignorance of which kills countless  
ideas and splendid plans:

That the moment one definitely commits oneself,  
then providence moves too.

All sorts of things occur to help one  
that would never otherwise have occurred.

A whole stream of events issues from the decision,  
raising in one's favor all manner  
of unforeseen incidents and meetings  
and material assistance which  
no one could have dreamt  
would come their way.

Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it  
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.  
Begin it now.

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A group will find without fail who is willing to put the work aside for lesser personal issues, or, in other words, is not truly *dedicated*. These members can be useful as *tangent* helpers for some of the Work, but cannot be trusted for availability at any time needed. They have not passed through the Fire of Dedication, and would not be capable to move into the third Fire.

These fires, in their totality, can take a long time and the group undergoes a great deal of stress in the process. True Inspiration and Dedication are absolutely necessary for success, as each group discovers.

### **THE THIRD GROUP FIRE - THE FIRE OF INTEGRATION**

(also called, "Getting to know you.")

The third fire is actually the most difficult for every group member, for it entails spiritual growth to pass through which few anticipate. It is during the process of this fire that most groups will fall apart or have member after member fall by the wayside, unable to continue in the Inspired, Dedicated Work. It is the true reason why few groups retain the original members. Often, even though *the original objectives are reached*, the Group has lost and replaced members who were unable to withstand this Fire.

The group has been very confident in its purpose and knows everyone is intent on its achievement at this point. As they begin the day-to-day activity implementing the work, things begin to change.

Since there are no perfect people, and all Serving Work on the planet must be accomplished by imperfect people, it is during the day-to-day interchange between the Inspired, Dedicated Workers that the imperfections become apparent to one another. This is something which cannot be avoided.

"Imperfections" come on several levels and can appear to exist depending upon the perspective of those who notice them. The only attitude to carry the entire group through, would be, **"I'll accept your faults, If you I'll accept mine - while we both do what we have set out to do."**

When a problem occurs between group members, there is invariably a "spreading of the word." This amounts to attacking attitudes and defensive ploys to fend off the attack. These incidents have lasting effects as a subjective smear on the otherwise purely instituted effort. The group energy is somewhat diverted from the Inspired Purpose to which all are Dedicated.

For some, those imperfections they *believe to* have perceived, *prove to* be too difficult to bear, and trouble is increased by speaking about it to others in the group. An immediate schism is brought about in the subtle, or invisible, energies of the group through which will flow amazing challenges to the Work. From that moment forward until a healing takes place, the group members will be working within the stress of that schism attempting to do the Inspired, Dedicated Work. It will cause the visible and invisible levels of activity to move against each other.

Be assured, however, that there is no group who has ever escaped this fire and none who come out on the other side but who is scarred and bruised from the lessons teamed.

Such schisms can become multiple as one after another discovers difficulty with some member's real or imagined flaws, and the group may divide in its structure. If the poison is too virulent to heal, the group will eventually decide it is too difficult to continue. *The Inspired, Dedicated Purpose will be abandoned in futility.*

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Many groups are completely unaware of the three naturally different types of servers, i.e., those who work more directly out of their "head," those who work out of their "heart," and those who have a balance of the "head" and "heart" energies. The "head" and "heart" people often misunderstand one another. "Heart" does not mean the person is unintelligent and unthinking or over emotional. It simply means that the person will tend to have a preponderance of "love" in attitudes toward activities, while the "head" people are more likely to have "will" as their driving force. Both are needed and unless there is enough balancing force among the workers, the work will suffer. But, the two types don't understand one another's perspectives and often reach prejudicial conclusions about one another's management of the work. "Head" persons are not unloving, and "heart" persons are not without "will," they simply express these qualities in different ways. **If this is understood, and each member can grasp that the "difference" is not bad, but useful in the work, much time will be saved in attempting to clear the misunderstandings.** The Inspired, Dedicated Servers must realize that each group member brings *assets to the group as well as liabilities*. The assets are what will be used in Service of the Inspired, Dedicated Purpose. The *recognition and overlooking* of all imperfections will prove to be an Integrating source of Energy whether the individual workers are principally one type of person or another. One type is no more Inspired or Dedicated than another in relation to the Group's intended goal.

This is a most formidable, even painful, Fire because the persons involved are being subjected to forces which will not allow them to remain unchanged. Every pressure from another member's behavior or bringing forward ideas which might run at crosscurrents to one's own, will require adjustments to go through. These adjustments are what the Fire of Integration brings about. The adjustments will keep occurring until there is complete harmony among the Inspired, Dedicated Coworkers - or - they may never get through this Fire.

In very practical terms, after a group of persons begin to work together on a day-to-day basis, they get to know one another very well and all differences will surface. There must be 4 conscious understanding that these differences are *part of human existence, unavoidable, and are actually beneficia.* If not understood, the Inspired, Dedicated Server will find the Fire of Integration too difficult, and will choose to leave the project. *In every case, there will be a belief that the group or some group member was handling matters of dispute incorrectly.* Integration, then, is lost for that member. The group might learn from the experience and continue with a new Dedication, but the transmuting forces of the Fire of Integration will not subside until each member has learned that to "keep on keeping on" is the only way to achieve the Inspired, Dedicated Service.

Often, a person working *alone will* find it simple to set aside difficulties or put off the facing of challenges through various means. When these same forces are at work within a group, however, the group must deal with the problems as a whole, for all are affected. There can be no "putting off." Unless the group integrates in its facing of these forces, failure is often the result. **The goal can be reached if enough of the members remain and integrate, and it is within this Fire that most Group Work is completed.** There is more often a sigh of relief that the stresses of the difficult Integration are over and the Work is achieved, than a victorious sign of Integrated completion.

So, how does an Inspired, Dedicated individual handle the clearly unacceptable (to that individual) "ways" of other group members? First, an attitude of "giving-up" must take place within the heart of the "offended" member. Then, there must be a realization that the Inspired, Dedicated Co-Workers are part of the Group and have brought assets to the Service. **Above all, there must be no discussion of the Co-Workers with other Group Members to elicit corroboration of one's own assessment.**

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The assessment must change - the coworker, with assets and flaws, must be accepted in goodwill, understanding and appreciation that all are working in the same Inspired, Dedicated Service. This **goodwill and appreciation** will eventually replace all misgivings. The Fire of Integration will be passed, and past.

The Joys of Group Work begin to manifest as personal challenges are consumed in the Fire of Integration. Each beloved coworker is trusted beyond words; each has been attracted, Inspired and Dedicated as a conserver of the Group's Purpose. The Group's Inspired and Dedicated Purpose becomes the life-giving sustenance of the Group as it continues to meet every problem and challenge with confidence and surety. An unremitting love and unshakeable trust develops as challenge after challenge is met with victory of the assets over the "imperfections" of each member.

One might be bewildered by the fact that a group member is known to cause serious problems for the group how can one "overlook" real damage brought about by one person? Remember that many problems will be connected with the previous Fires. IF the member is not Inspired and Dedicated, Integration will not be accomplished.

The potency for Good is increased in direct ratio to the ability of the group members to Integrate in their Inspired, Dedicated Work. It is summarily difficult, for human beings are not yet capable, in general, to "see through" the flaws of those with whom they spend day-to-day in occupation. In the instance of an Inspired, Dedicated Group, however, the foundational intention of the Group lends continual Power to override the flaws, if the individual members will draw upon that Power to overlook. Overlook the flaws and appreciate the assets. Keep all critical thoughts to oneself and replace them with appreciation of the assets.

As the shifting towards an unshakeable trust moves forward, the potency for Good is increased. The separative forces of the schisms are rendered powerless to hinder. The group develops a telepathic rapport which appears miraculous to onlookers. It might be well to mention here that while these conditions of growth are taking place internally, within the group, each group member is also acquiring a new perspective with relation to humanity as a whole. The group, in achieving integration, is also integrating with humanity in a way which precludes all separative attitudes. Love, Compassion, and Understanding become key features of empowerment internally, among the Group Members, and externally, relating to all other human beings. The Inspired, Dedicated, and Integrated Group is on its way to the Fourth Fire of Group Unity.

### **THE FOURTH GROUP FIRE - GROUP UNITY**

(A note here relating to the experience of *The Robert Muller School of Arlington, TX*. Only a small number of the **original** Group worked into and remained in **The Fire of Integration** throughout the last years of the School's tenure. Even though the Group attained its intended goal to fully implement *the World Core Curriculum and make their work available to the world*, it has been within *The School of Ageless Wisdom* that **The Fourth Group Fire** has been entered by **the same Group of Servers**)

It is expected that the future will bring many more Integrated Groups to this Fire. At present, there are many individuals, but too few Groups, who have passed through the Fire of Integration. Humanity is only approaching the time when Aquarian Energy will make Unity clear. A spiritual consciousness which will broach no separative attitude because of the inherent realization of Unity brings the group through this Fire.

Within this Fire will be found the burning of individual motives. This is a most painful Fire as it often involves the relinquishing of that which the server holds most dear.

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It must be remembered that as a group approaches this Fire as an Inspired, Dedicated, Integrated Group, each individual member has already succeeded in passing through the former Fires or is more than half the way through there is no turning back. Success is certain with perseverance.

The Purpose to be achieved must be accomplished through the work of imperfect human beings.

As the Inspired, Dedicated, and Integrated Group of Servers proceed, the illusion of independent existence is being burned away. The realization of the subjective Group Unity is seeking avenues through which to impact the consciousness of Group Members. There are no perfected groups, hence the problem of the Fire of Group Unity. Today, it is rare to discover a group of Servers who can persevere intact through the previous Fire of Integration. Invariably, member after member finds it impossible to integrate, always blaming others for their own inability to adjust to the Inspired, Dedicated, Integrating Group.

Remember, ALL of the servers are Inspired, Dedicated and at the point of this Fire, they are also Integrated with the Group. They have learned how to function efficiently. Here, the problems arise out of what is the course to take in different situations. The server is tempted to proclaim, "Of course, Right is chosen, Light is chosen, Love is chosen, Good is chosen, Liberty is chosen, and Truth is chosen over their opposites. How could the Group choose otherwise?"

The question must be asked, Whose idea of 'Right?' Whose idea of 'Light?' Whose idea of 'Love?' Whose idea of 'Good?' Whose idea of 'Liberty?' and Whose idea of 'Truth.' It is here that the Fire of Group Unity proceeds to rage. Remember that the Fires always burn that which stands as a barrier in consciousness between the Group and the next step the Group must take in its Inspired, Dedicated, Integrated Service.

Each group member sees clearly what good could come from certain group action. Each one has a personal vision, and each vision, in and of itself, may seem beautiful and correct. There must be another test to discover the action which will fit with the Inspired, Dedicated, Integrated Group Goal.

The words, "in conscious context with the Whole" might describe every correct vision, consideration, and action and this will always be *unanimous*. *Unanimous*, not from acquiescence into a lesser view on any member's part, but a unanimous realization of the "context within the Whole."

The unanimity will be arrived at through meditation and contemplation. Where the above context is missing in the conscious realization of the Inspired, Dedicated, Integrated Group Member, the Fire of Group Unity will seethe.

Each member can sense this and recognizes the view which lies correctly "within the context of the Whole" when it is presented by another Member.

When the group members have passed through the Fire of Group Unity, a phenomenal and unfathomable Power for Good attends the process, with immeasurable Joy as the principal underlying attitude while they carry out the Inspired, Dedicated, Integrated, and Unified Group Work

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## **ADDENDUM**

There is a Fifth, and even a Sixth, Fire which haven't been discussed here because *the Fire Of Group Unity* is as far as most groups can go at this time in history. The final two are *the Fire of Group Discipleship*, and *the Fire of Group Initiation*.