



Attention, Cooperation, Purpose: An Approach to Groups Using Insights from the Work of Bion

Robert French, Peter Simpson

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This book describes an approach based on attention that can help individuals and groups to cooperate more effectively. It presents the first book-length reassessment of Wilfred Bion's ideas on groups. Every group has a purpose or purposes - or, as Bion put it, "every group, however casual, meets to 'do' something." The approach described here shows how individual group members' use of attention - both broad or "evenly suspended" and focused - can promote a better understanding of purpose, making it possible for them to do what they have met to do. This work of attention enables group members to maintain a clear sense of their purpose and also to recognise how easily they can become distracted, losing focus and dispersing their energies into activities that are off task. The approach builds on the authors' experience of using Bion's insights into group dynamics over twenty-five years in different contexts, formal and informal, as group members, managers, leaders, teachers, consultants, researchers, family members, and friends. The book aims to introduce Wilfred Bion's ideas to those who may never have encountered them, but it also develops those ideas in a way that offers fresh insights for those already familiar with his work. Throughout the book the authors use stories from their own experience to make the ideas accessible to anyone who is seeking to enhance their contributions to group life, to find the truth behind their experience, or simply to make things less confusing.

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