



PHASE 3 — PRACTICUM

Week 29 of 36

# Groups vs Individual Mentoring

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Sessions 85–87

Tuesday • Wednesday • Thursday

FORGE — Facilitating Opportunities for Reentry, Growth & Empowerment

*Dooly State Prison*

# FORGE Curriculum

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## Phase 3: Practicum — "Lead and Serve"

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# Week 29: Facilitating Groups vs. Individual Mentoring

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## Week 29 Overview

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**Purpose:** Participants have been doing both group facilitation and one-on-one mentoring for weeks now. This week names what they've been feeling — that these are fundamentally different skills. By the end of this week, every participant should be able to articulate the difference, identify which approach a situation calls for, and adjust their style accordingly.

**Sessions This Week:** - Session 85 (Tuesday): Groups vs. Individual — Different Skills, Different Energy - Session 86 (Wednesday): Field work — independent facilitation with periodic observation - Session 87 (Thursday): Field work — mentoring meetings with mentees + community circles

**Materials Needed:** - Easel paper or whiteboard (if available) - Case presentation forms (1 per participant — see Session 85) - Journals/notebooks - Talking piece for circle process

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# SESSION 85: Groups vs. Individual — Different Skills, Different Energy

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**Day:** Tuesday **Duration:** 2 hours **Facilitator(s):** Program Lead or Senior Mentor

## Learning Objectives

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By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify at least 5 key differences between facilitating a group and mentoring one-on-one 2. Describe strategies for managing group energy — including dominant voices, quiet participants, and emotional contagion 3. Explain when to use group settings vs. individual meetings based on the situation 4. Present a case from their field experience and receive peer feedback

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## Session Plan

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### Opening Circle (10 minutes)

**Facilitator:**

*"Check-in. You've been out in the field now for several weeks. The talking piece question today is: **What's one thing that's surprised you about doing this work for real — something you didn't expect?**"*

Send the talking piece. Listen for themes — particularly anything related to the difference between working with groups and working with individuals. You'll reference these later.

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### Review and Reflection (10 minutes)

**Facilitator:**

*"Before we get into today's topic, let's hear from three people. Last week's field work — what happened? What went well? What's still sitting with you?"*

Call on 3 participants. Brief updates — 2-3 minutes each. Don't solve problems yet. Just listen and acknowledge. If something connects to today's topic, flag it: "Hold that — we're going to dig into exactly that today."

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## **Instruction: Two Different Jobs (25 minutes)**

**Purpose:** Name the reality that group facilitation and individual mentoring require different skills, different energy, and different preparation.

### **Facilitator:**

*"Here's something nobody told you in Phase 2, because you had to feel it first: facilitating a group and sitting down one-on-one with a mentee are two completely different jobs. You've been doing both. Some of you are naturally better at one than the other. That's normal. But a FORGE mentor has to be able to do both — and has to know when each one is the right tool.*

*Let's break it down."*

**Write two columns on the board (or discuss verbally):**

### **GROUP FACILITATION:**

*"When you're in front of a group, your job is to manage energy. Not just one person's energy — the energy of the whole room. You're reading 8, 10, 12 people at once. You're watching who's checked out, who's about to blow, who's dominating, who hasn't said a word. You're holding the space for the group to do its own work.*

*In a group, you're not the expert. You're the keeper. You set the conditions — then you get out of the way and let the group do what groups do: hold each other accountable, share experience, normalize struggle, and build community.*

*The biggest mistake new facilitators make with groups is talking too much. You're not teaching a class. You're facilitating a process. The less you talk, the more the group works."*

**Pause. Let them sit with that.**

### **INDIVIDUAL MENTORING:**

"One-on-one is a completely different animal. When you sit down with a mentee, the energy is all between two people. There's nowhere to hide — for either of you. It's intimate. It's personal. And the skills that matter most are listening, patience, and knowing when to push and when to just be present.

In a one-on-one, you can go deeper. You can ask questions that would be too personal for a group. You can sit with silence. You can follow where the mentee needs to go, not where your lesson plan says to go.

The biggest mistake new mentors make one-on-one is trying to fix everything. Your mentee doesn't need you to solve his problems. He needs you to help him see his own thinking clearly enough that he can solve them himself. That's MI. That's what you trained for."

### Key differences to highlight:

"Let me name some specific differences:

**Preparation.** For a group, you need a plan — an opening, a topic, activities, a closing. You can't walk in and wing it. For a one-on-one, you need to know your mentee's situation and have an idea of what to explore, but you have to be ready to throw your plan away if something more important comes up.

**Energy management.** In a group, emotional contagion is real. One person's energy affects everyone. If someone gets upset, the whole room shifts. You have to be able to hold that without getting swept up in it. One-on-one, you only have one person's energy to manage — plus your own.

**Confidentiality.** In a group, people share less because they know others are listening. That's appropriate. One-on-one is where the real disclosures happen. That's where someone tells you about the letter from his wife. That's where someone admits he's struggling. Respect that difference — don't try to force group-level vulnerability, and don't try to keep one-on-one conversations surface-level.

**Accountability.** Groups are powerful accountability tools. When a man makes a commitment in front of 10 other men, he's more likely to follow through. Use that. One-on-one accountability is different — it's relational. Your mentee follows through because he doesn't want to let you down. That's powerful too, but it's personal.

**Your role.** In a group, you're the facilitator. In a one-on-one, you're the mentor. A facilitator manages process. A mentor walks alongside a person. Don't confuse the two."

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## Managing Group Energy (15 minutes)

### Facilitator:

"Let's go deeper on groups, because that's where most of you are still building confidence. Let's talk about the five most common group dynamics you'll face and how to handle each one."

### 1. The Dominator:

*"There's always one person who talks too much. He fills every silence. He responds to every question. He means well — usually — but he's sucking the oxygen out of the room.*

*What do you do? Don't shut him down publicly — that kills trust. Instead: 'I appreciate your thoughts. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet.' Or: 'I'm going to ask everyone to limit themselves to one response on this next question.' Or, if it's persistent, talk to him privately: 'I can tell you're engaged, and that matters. What I need from you is to make space for the quieter guys. They need you to step back so they can step up.'*

*That's a service over self conversation."*

## **2. The Silent One:**

*"The opposite problem. Someone who never talks in group. Don't force them — that backfires every time. But don't ignore them either. Check in privately: 'I notice you're quiet in group. That's fine — but I want to make sure you're getting what you need. Is there something I can do to make it easier to participate?' Sometimes the answer is simple: he's an introvert. Sometimes it's deeper: he doesn't trust the group yet. Either way, respect it, but keep the door open."*

## **3. Emotional Contagion:**

*"Someone shares something heavy — maybe he just got bad news. And suddenly the whole room shifts. People go quiet, or they start piling on with their own pain. The energy drops or spikes.*

*Your job is to hold the space without shutting down the emotion. Acknowledge it: 'That's real. Thank you for sharing that.' Then decide: does the group need to sit with this, or do we need to gently redirect? There's no formula — you have to read the room. If the group needs to process, let them. If one person needs more support than the group can give, say: 'I want to follow up with you after this session. For now, let's...' and bring the group back."*

## **4. The Disruptor:**

*"Someone who's making side comments, joking at the wrong time, testing your authority. Don't escalate. Don't get into a power struggle in front of the group. Try the direct, low-key approach first: make eye contact, use his name, ask him a question that brings him back in. If it continues, pull him aside at break: 'Hey, what's going on? You seem like you're somewhere else today.' Often, disruption is a cover for something else — anxiety, anger, feeling out of place."*

## **5. The Conflict Mid-Session:**

*"Two people start going at each other during your group. This is your final exam in real time. Step 1: Don't panic. Step 2: Name it. 'Hold on — I can see there's a real disagreement here. We're going to address it, but we're going to do it the way we do things in FORGE.' Step 3: Use the conflict resolution model. If it can't be resolved in the moment, separate them and follow up individually. Don't let the group session become a battle between two people."*

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## When to Use Which Approach (10 minutes)

**Facilitator:**

*"Some things belong in a group. Some things belong in a one-on-one. And some of you have already learned this the hard way. Let me give you a framework."*

**Use a group when:** - The topic is universal — everyone can relate and benefit - You want peer accountability — people committing in front of each other - You're building community and connection - You want multiple perspectives on a problem - You're teaching a skill that benefits from practice and observation

**Use one-on-one when:** - The issue is personal or sensitive - Someone needs to be confronted and doing it publicly would shame them - A mentee is in crisis and needs focused attention - You need to go deep on someone's thinking or behavior patterns - Trust hasn't been established yet — build it privately first

**Facilitator:**

*"Here's the rule of thumb: **praise in public, challenge in private.** Celebrate growth in front of the group. Address problems one-on-one. Most of the time, that will serve you well."*

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## Case Presentations from the Field (35 minutes)

**Purpose:** This is the core of Phase 3 supervision — participants bringing real situations from their field work for peer consultation.

**Facilitator:**

*"This is your time. I want four case presentations today. Each person gets about 8 minutes: 3 minutes to present your case, 5 minutes for the group to respond.*

*Here's the format: 1. **What happened.** Describe the situation — group or one-on-one. 2. **What you did.** Walk us through your response. 3. **What you're unsure about.** Where do you need help?*

*The group's job is not to judge. It's to help. Ask clarifying questions, offer alternatives, share if you've faced something similar. This is how we get better."*

**Facilitate 4 case presentations.** Coach the group to ask good questions rather than jumping to advice. Watch for: - Is the presenter being honest about what went wrong, or performing? - Is the group offering genuine help or just validating? - Are there patterns across cases that you can name?

After all four presentations:

**Facilitator:**

*"What themes did you notice across these cases? What keeps coming up?"*

Let the group identify the patterns. Add your observations if they miss something important.

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## Closing Circle (10 minutes)

**Facilitator:**

*"Closing round. What's one thing you're going to do differently this week based on what we discussed today — either in your group work or your one-on-one mentoring?"*

Send the talking piece.

**Facilitator (after the round):**

*"Wednesday you're facilitating independently. I'll be observing some of you — you won't always know when. That's intentional. I want to see you when you think no one's watching, because that's who you really are as a facilitator.*

*Thursday — mentoring meetings and community circles. If you're running a circle this week, come prepared. Plan your opening question. Plan your rounds. Don't wing it.*

*See you out there."*

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## Session 85 Checklist

- Room set up in circle
  - Opening circle completed — "What's surprised you?" round
  - Field work review (3 participants)
  - Instruction delivered: group facilitation vs. individual mentoring
  - Five group dynamics discussed with strategies
  - "When to use which" framework shared
  - 4 case presentations completed with peer feedback
  - Patterns identified across cases
  - Closing circle completed with commitment to specific action
  - Wednesday/Thursday field work expectations set
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# SESSION 86: Field Work — Independent Facilitation

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**Day:** Wednesday **Duration:** 2 hours (in assigned area)

## Field Work Plan

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Participants facilitate sessions independently in their assigned dorms or units. Program Lead or Senior Mentor conducts periodic observations — not every session, not every participant, and not always announced.

**Observation Focus This Week:** - How does the participant manage group energy? - Does the participant adjust approach based on the group's needs? - Is the participant talking too much or creating space for the group? - How does the participant handle unexpected moments?

**Observation Notes:** Document on the teaching demonstration rubric (Part IV). Provide feedback at the next Tuesday supervision session or in a brief one-on-one debrief.

**Participant Expectations:** - Arrive early to set up the space - Have a session plan — opening, content, activity, closing - Complete a brief self-reflection after the session (in journal): What went well? What would I change? What did I learn about facilitating groups today?

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# SESSION 87: Field Work — Mentoring and Community Circles

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**Day:** Thursday **Duration:** 2 hours (in assigned area)

## Field Work Plan

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Participants conduct one-on-one mentoring meetings with assigned mentees and/or facilitate community circles.

**Mentoring Meeting Guidance:** - Review where each mentee is — what was discussed last time, any commitments made, any updates - Use OARS throughout - Document the meeting in mentoring logs: date, topics discussed, mentee's current state, any concerns, follow-up needed - If a mentee missed the last meeting, explore why without interrogating

**Community Circle Guidance:** - Plan the circle: opening question, topic for discussion, closing question - Arrive early, set up chairs in circle, have the talking piece ready - Keep the circle to 45-60 minutes — circles that run too long lose their power - Document: who attended, what was discussed (themes, not specifics), energy level, anything that needs follow-up

**Self-Reflection Prompt (journal):** "Today I worked one-on-one with [mentee(s)] and/or ran a community circle. What I noticed about my own energy and approach in the one-on-one vs. the group setting was..."

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# FACILITATOR NOTES FOR WEEK 29

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## What to Watch For

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**Group facilitation comfort levels.** Some participants will be natural group facilitators — they read the room, manage energy, and create space. Others will struggle — they'll talk too much, lose control, or freeze when something unexpected happens. Use your observations this week to identify who needs coaching in which area.

**One-on-one depth.** Check mentoring logs. Are participants going deeper in their one-on-ones, or are meetings surface-level? If logs consistently say "checked in, everything's fine," push back: "What questions are you asking? Are you using reflections? When's the last time a mentee told you something he hadn't told anyone else? If it's been a while, you might be staying too comfortable."

**Case presentation honesty.** The case presentations in Session 85 are only useful if participants are honest about what they're struggling with. If everyone presents a success story, push: "I want to hear about a time it didn't work. Where you walked away and thought, 'I don't know what I'm doing.' That's where the learning is."

**Burnout signals.** Weeks 29-32 are when some participants start feeling the weight of the work. They're carrying 3-5 mentees, running circles, facilitating sessions. Watch for signs of fatigue, irritability, or withdrawal. Address it early — this is exactly what the parallel process principle is about.

## Preparation for Week 30

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- Gather examples of positive FORGE-staff interactions (if any exist)
- Prepare scenarios about working with COs — both supportive and skeptical
- Think about your own relationship with facility staff — what's worked, what hasn't. Be ready to be honest about the complexity
- Review any incidents or interactions participants have reported involving staff