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INTRODUCTION

WHO SHOULD USE THIS BOOK?

Like its predecessor, *Creative Therapy: 52 Exercises for Groups*, this book has been designed as a practical guide to assist psychotherapists, group leaders, and specially trained teachers in mental health facilities, nursing homes, day programs, inpatient psychiatric units, special education programs, and support groups. It may be used as an adjunct to the psychotherapeutic treatment of such varied problems as Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, mental retardation, and depression.

The huge success of *Creative Therapy: 52 Exercises for Groups*, led to the development of this sequel, which contains 52 *new* therapeutic exercises complete with illustrations that may be photocopied for group members. The exercises serve as an avenue to therapeutic discussions of important issues that might not be shared through other techniques. Additionally, we have received feedback regarding the use of these exercises with the individual treatment of children. We have learned that children may enjoy the exercises, and are consequently less inhibited about sharing fears, concerns, and fantasies.

As we did in the previous work, this new book explains methods of energizing a group, and takes both new and experienced group leaders through the stages for effective implementation of structured exercises. We have used these kinds of materials successfully in a major New York City long-term care hospital. We find that these exercises can help group members develop interactive skills, motivate less verbal individuals to contribute to group discussions, and encourage group cohesiveness.

WHAT IS IN THIS BOOK?

Creative Therapy II: 52 More Exercises for Groups is presented in an uncomplicated fashion so that the exercises will be nonthreatening to group members. The format allows the leader to refer to directions for each group meeting, and to photocopy the accompanying illustration, which becomes each member's worksheet. In each exercise, members complete a picture that focuses on a particular theme. A discussion follows in which the members discuss what their completed pictures reveal about themselves. Each member is able to look at his or her own illustration and express an initial response that might otherwise have been forgotten. The illustrations are intentionally simple to encourage participants to express themselves as freely as possible.

HOW DO YOU USE THIS BOOK?

Creative Therapy II: 52 More Exercises for Groups combines the structured expression of art groups with the therapeutic communication of verbal discussion groups. The worksheet provided with each exercise serves as a springboard to discussion for group members. Each exercise is accompanied by a step-by-step set of instructions for the group leader.

Group members sit at a table, preferably in a circle. The leader hands out photocopies of the chosen exercise to members at the beginning of the session. The leader should seek to involve members immediately by asking about the picture.

The group leader introduces the theme, describes the exercise according to the instructions that accompany each drawing, and asks for feedback and comments from the group members. This initial discussion should be used to prepare the members for the task that follows.

Next, group members are given a time frame and directed to "fill in" or complete the exercise with their responses. Additional supplies such as crayons, markers, or pencils may be handed out at this time.

It is important to be certain that everyone has a clear understanding of the task. If questions arise, it is recommended that members be encouraged to ask each other to paraphrase the instructions. In this way members become actively involved and discover they can be helpful to one another.

Setting up a time frame is an important aspect of the structured exercise. These projects work best if the group members understand how much time is set aside for drawing, and how much time is for discussion. For example, in a 1-hour group, 20 minutes might be used for explanation and drawing, and 40 minutes for discussion.

These exercises should be nonthreatening. To reduce anxiety, group leaders should explain that content is more important than artistic talent, and that the drawings are used simply to promote discussion. Some members may be resistant to drawing because of self-consciousness or physical limitations. Encouragement is helpful, but too much encouragement may become stressful. An alternative is to avoid adding extra pressure by allowing anxious members to write rather than draw their interpretations.

Group discussion immediately follows the drawing period. The leader should state a few minutes ahead of time when this will take place. Once group discussion begins, all members' comments should then be directed to the group as a whole.

Members are asked to volunteer to discuss their interpretations. The leader becomes a catalyst to promote and encourage verbal interaction and help focus the discussion. As members see one another present and receive feedback, more may volunteer to discuss their work.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Projective art tasks introduce ideas that provide encouragement to groups searching for a common theme (Dalley, 1984). In addition, these structured exercises have a variety of other uses: to initiate members into a group process; as a warm-up technique; to help a group work through a particular stage in its development; to enhance group members' abilities to interact and share freely; to focus on a specific group need; and to help reduce group members' anxiety and uncertainty. For example, if used with children, the exercises allow the child to indirectly or directly express important ideas, fantasies, and feelings. Significant information about family members and dynamics are often shared as a result of this approach. It must be understood, however, that these techniques are intended as a tool - as one part of a total approach to meet the goals of a particular group.

Structured exercises are a way of accelerating group interaction. Getting in touch with suppressed emotions helps the group as a whole as well as the individual members. Specific exercises may be chosen to help the group work through a particular problem (Hansen, Warner, & Smith, 1980).

Yalom (1983) describes the use of structured exercises with lower-level, inpatient psychotherapy groups. These groups often consist of members with a limited attention span, fearfulness, and confusion. Structured exercises may help such members express themselves. The use of art or drawing exercises is especially helpful in fostering self-expression. These exercises may also stimulate group interest and provide variety. We believe the exercises in *Creative Therapy II: 52 More Exercises for Groups* are very effective with this type of group.

Structured exercises also help insure that no one dominates, and that everyone has an opportunity to speak. A balance of verbal input is created. Monopolistic members must develop self-control to allow other members to have their turns. Shy or nonverbal

members profit from the required participation, such as described by Levin and Kurtz (1974). These authors studied the effects of structured exercises in human relations groups and concluded that the inactive person benefits from a change in behavioral expectations. Greater opportunity for participation generates more ego-involvement, self-perceived personality changes, and increased group unity.

How does group therapy help group members? Feedback from one's peers, if properly channeled, can be a potent therapeutic force, promoting qualitative changes in self-expression, growth toward self-actualization, and changes in interpersonal behavior.

In his classic work on group psychotherapy, Yalom identifies key curative factors associated with the group process. We believe that many of the exercises included in *Creative Therapy II: 52 More Exercises for Groups* facilitate the curative process. Generally, the exercises encourage sharing and development of trust among group members. The drawings illustrate common fears and anxieties and allow group members to see how each share many of the same concerns. Through the use of the illustrations, members are encouraged to support each other in finding solutions to problems and to learn to support each others' needs. Skilled therapists will strategically use the exercises to support the development of other curative factors within the group.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF THESE EXERCISES?

Through experience, we have found these exercises and materials to be of great value. It is important, however, to realize the limitations of their use. As we have said, these exercises are to be used as a springboard to discussion as an adjunct to other therapies.

Yalom (1985) describes possible negative effects structured exercises can have on groups. He suggests, for example, that they can create an atmosphere where critical stages of group interaction may be passed over. Structured exercises may also plunge the group members into sharing significant negative and positive feelings too quickly. In addition, the group leader may be too heavily relied upon by the members. This dissipates a group's potential effectiveness as a therapeutic agent.

The Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles encounter group project (1973) studied how structured exercises influence groups. The leaders who used relatively large numbers of structured exercises with their groups were often more popular with group members. However, group members were found to have a significantly lower outcome level than members participating in groups using fewer structured exercises.

There must be a balance to the use of structured exercises. The degree to which they should be used must be carefully weighed by the group leader; otherwise the leader runs the risk of reducing the group's potential and infantilizing the members. Some factors that determine the amount and type of structuring to be employed are the type of group, member characteristics, and the leaders' theoretical orientation (M. S. Corey & G. Corey, 1987).

Additionally, the group leader should keep in mind three of the considerations noted by Pfeiffer and Jones (1983). First, structured exercises should address the specific goals and purposes of the group. The leader should choose exercises directed at interests, concerns, or problems of individual members or of the group as a whole. Second, a more than casual understanding of the members is important, because revelation and exploration of fantasy can be threatening and anxiety-provoking. Less threatening exercises are recommended for groups with anxious or guarded members to promote openness rather than defensiveness. Third, different issues surface at various stages of group development. Groups will function best when the level of feedback expected corresponds to the developmental stage of the group. In early stages of group development, exercises that focus on openness and building trust are more appropriate. Exercises that focus on critical feedback and appraisal will be more successful in the later stages of group development.

CONCLUSION

Creative Therapy II: 52 More Exercises for Groups should offer rewarding experiences for both group leaders and group members. The structured exercises in this book make it easier for group members to focus ideas, feelings, and experiences related to the topic of discussion. Members further benefit from revealing themselves, exchanging feedback, and supporting one another emotionally.

The purpose of this book, however, is first and foremost to help group leaders, therapists, and teachers conduct their groups by providing a framework for successful group experiences. Through the use of specific suggestions, we describe the procedures necessary for group leaders to handle the widest variety of group therapy applications.

In addition, the use of these exercises may also help to alert group leaders to issues for further exploration in individual counseling or other group therapies. Although designed primarily for groups, with slight modification these exercises can be used in individual treatment. In particular, they may be most helpful for children.

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**CREATIVE THERAPY II:
52 MORE
EXERCISES
FOR GROUPS**

Exercise 1

THE TALK SHOW

Purpose:

1. To promote group identity and cohesion.
2. To provide an opportunity for open communication and the expression of negative feelings.
3. To encourage empathy and support.

Materials:

One photocopy of the illustration for each group member; crayons, markers, pens, or pencils.

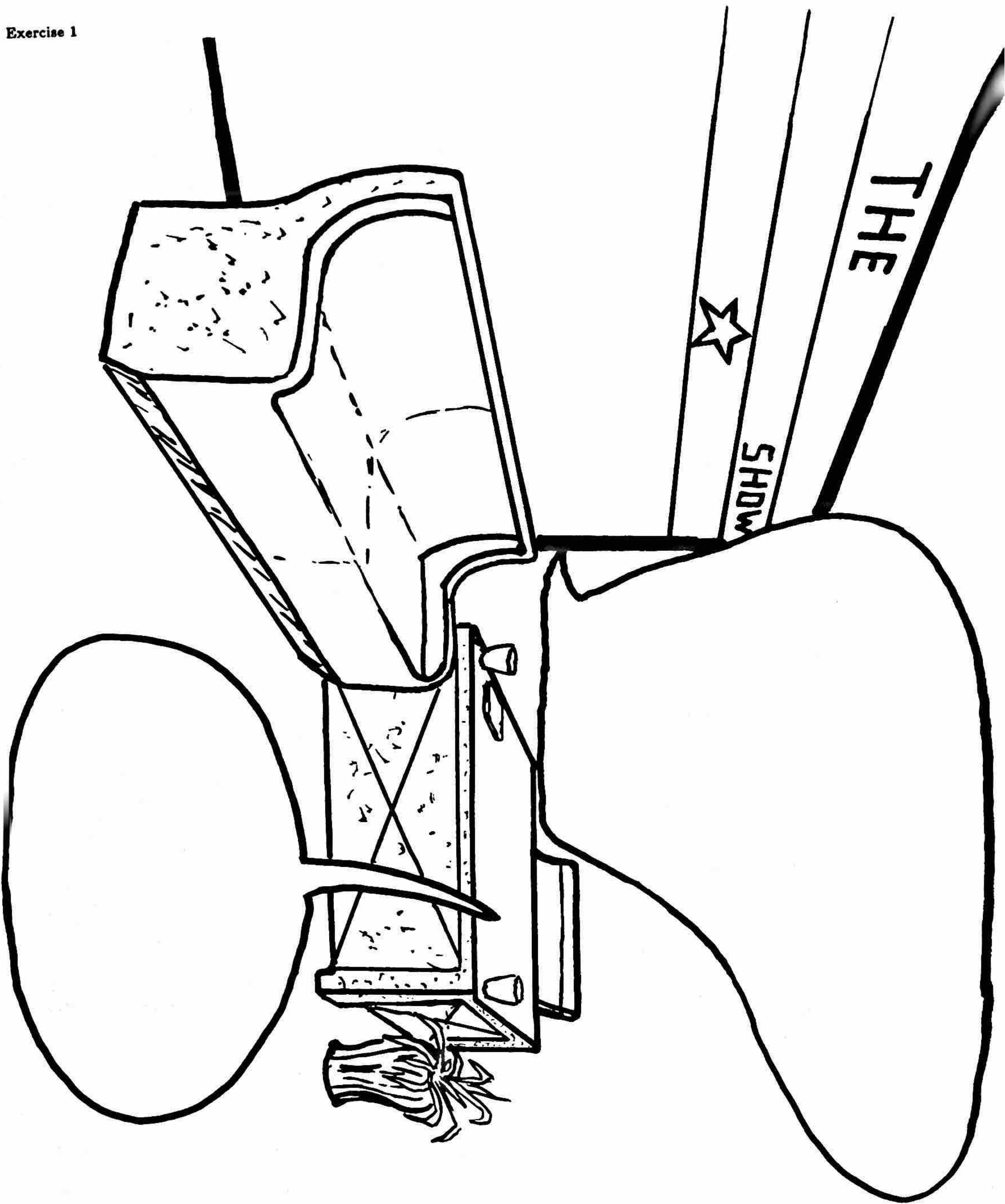
Description:

- A. The group leader hands out the materials.
- B. The leader begins a discussion of the various types of forums and formats for expressing opinions, exchanging information, and sharing experiences with others.
- C. Members are asked to imagine being a talk-show host.
- D. They are guided to focus on the empty couch in the illustration and imagine it as part of the set of a talk show. Members are encouraged to think about provocative guests that would offer topics of interest and also interact with the audience.

Group Discussion:

Members share their illustrations and reveal what they imagine each guest is talking about. Other members are encouraged to act as the talk-show audience, and to ask follow-up questions of each guest. The group members may even want to debate some of the controversial issues introduced by the guests on the talk show.

This exercise is effective with a variety of group types at any stage of development. It can be interpreted on many levels, and may help members express personal concerns in an accepting environment.



Exercise 2

THE STATE LOTTERY

Purpose:

1. To express individual needs through fantasy.
2. To provide an opportunity for sharing feelings about what might be missing from each other's lives.
3. To promote group interaction in a nonthreatening way.

Materials:

One photocopy for each member; pens, pencils, markers, or crayons.

Description:

- A. The significance that numbers such as birth dates have in people's lives is explored with group members.
- B. The materials are distributed.
- C. Within the illustration, members draw what they would do with their winnings if they actually won the lottery.
- D. In the space provided, members are asked to fill in those numbers that have special meaning to them.

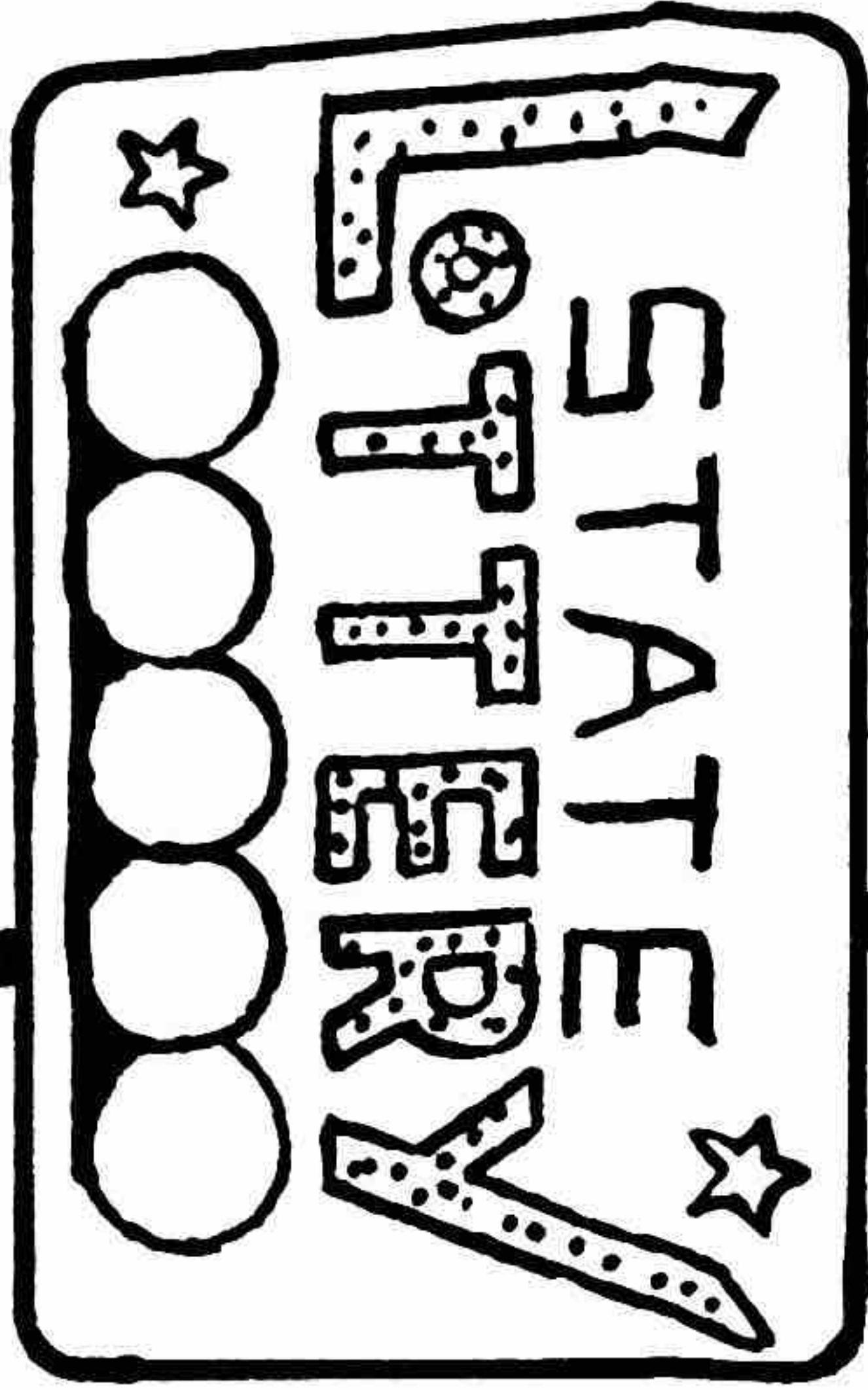
Group Discussion:

Members take turns describing how the imagined lottery winnings would be spent. Members tell how this windfall could change their lives. The leader helps members explore similarities and differences in choices. Members exchange views on what these choices might reveal about each other. Members then share the significance (if any) that their "winning" numbers have played in their lives.

This exercise may help leaders recognize some unfulfilled needs of members. It is effective with any group type, in all stages of development, and may be an effective tool for groups in the early stages of development to help become better acquainted with one another.

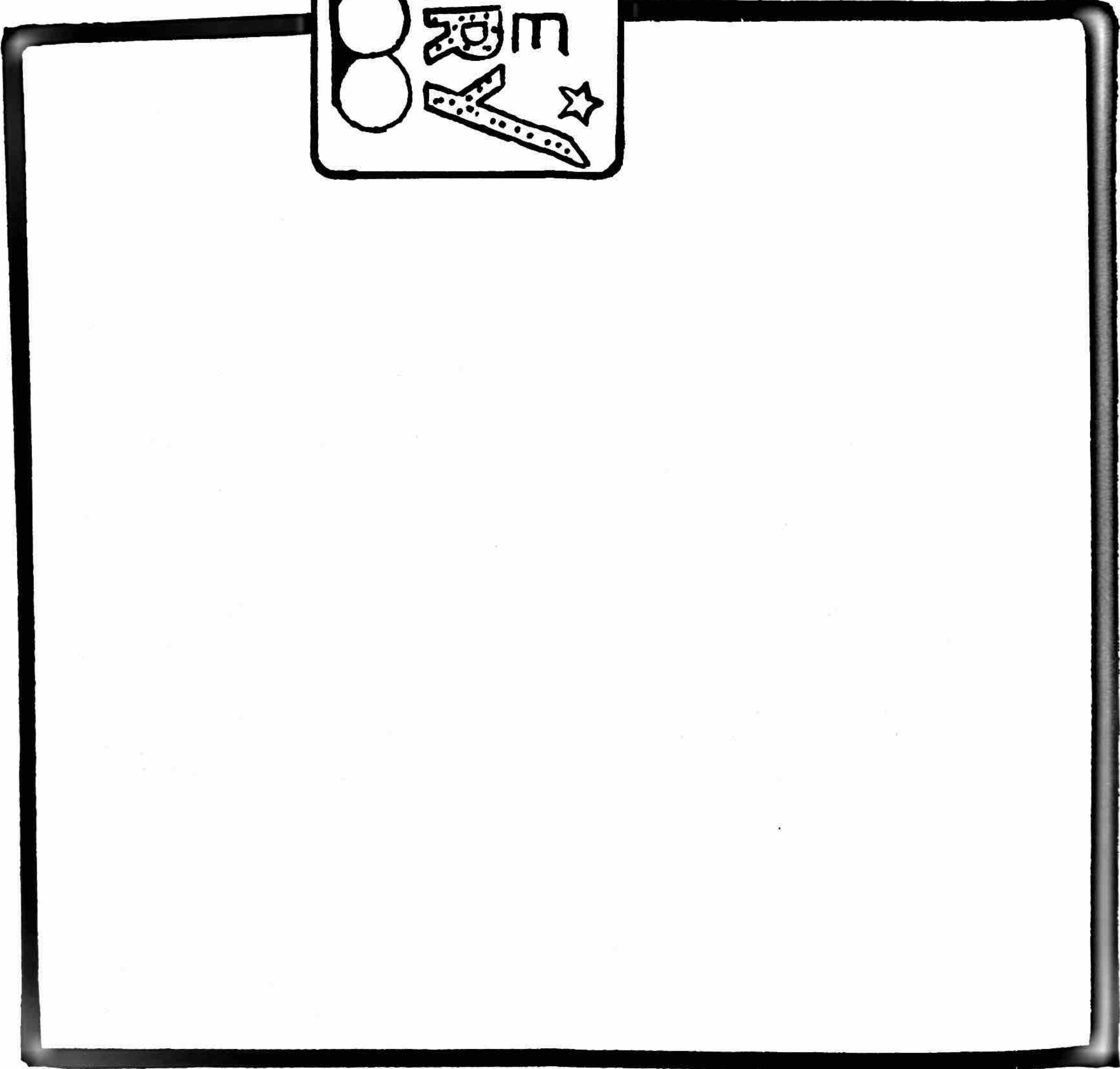
Exercise 2

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Exercise 3

LEFT OUT OF THE CROWD

Purpose:

1. To recognize feelings of rejection.
2. To give and receive advice in order to better understand life experiences.
3. To promote empathy and support.

Materials:

One photocopy of the illustration for each member; pens, pencils, crayons, or markers.

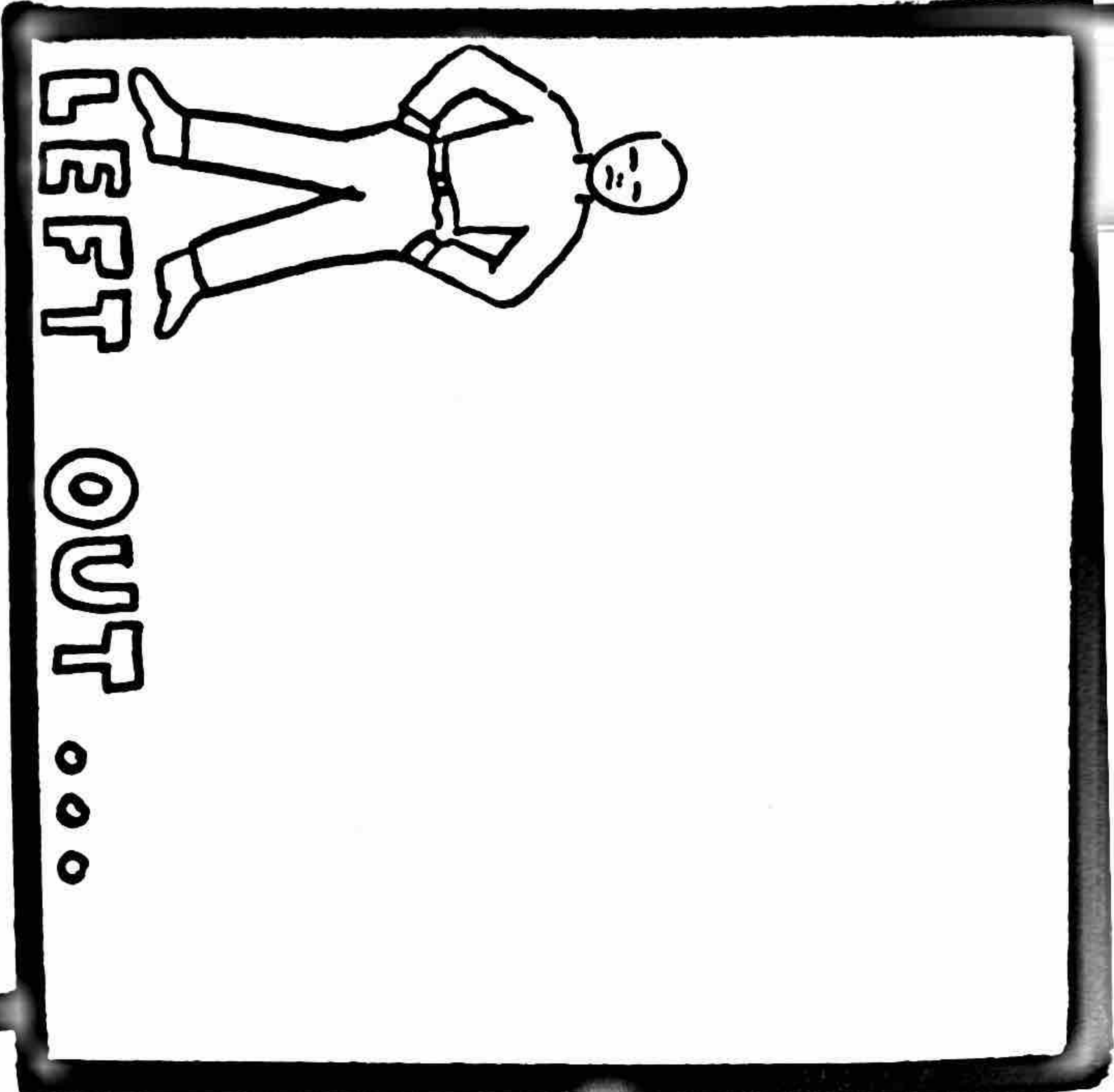
Description:

- A. The leader initiates a discussion about the social and psychological aspects of "feeling left out of the crowd."
- B. The materials are distributed and the leader asks members to think about a situation in which he or she has felt this way.
- C. Members are told to first draw the situation they were excluded from in the lower right box labeled "... The Crowd."
- D. Next, they draw how it felt and what they did about it in the upper left box labeled "Left Out"

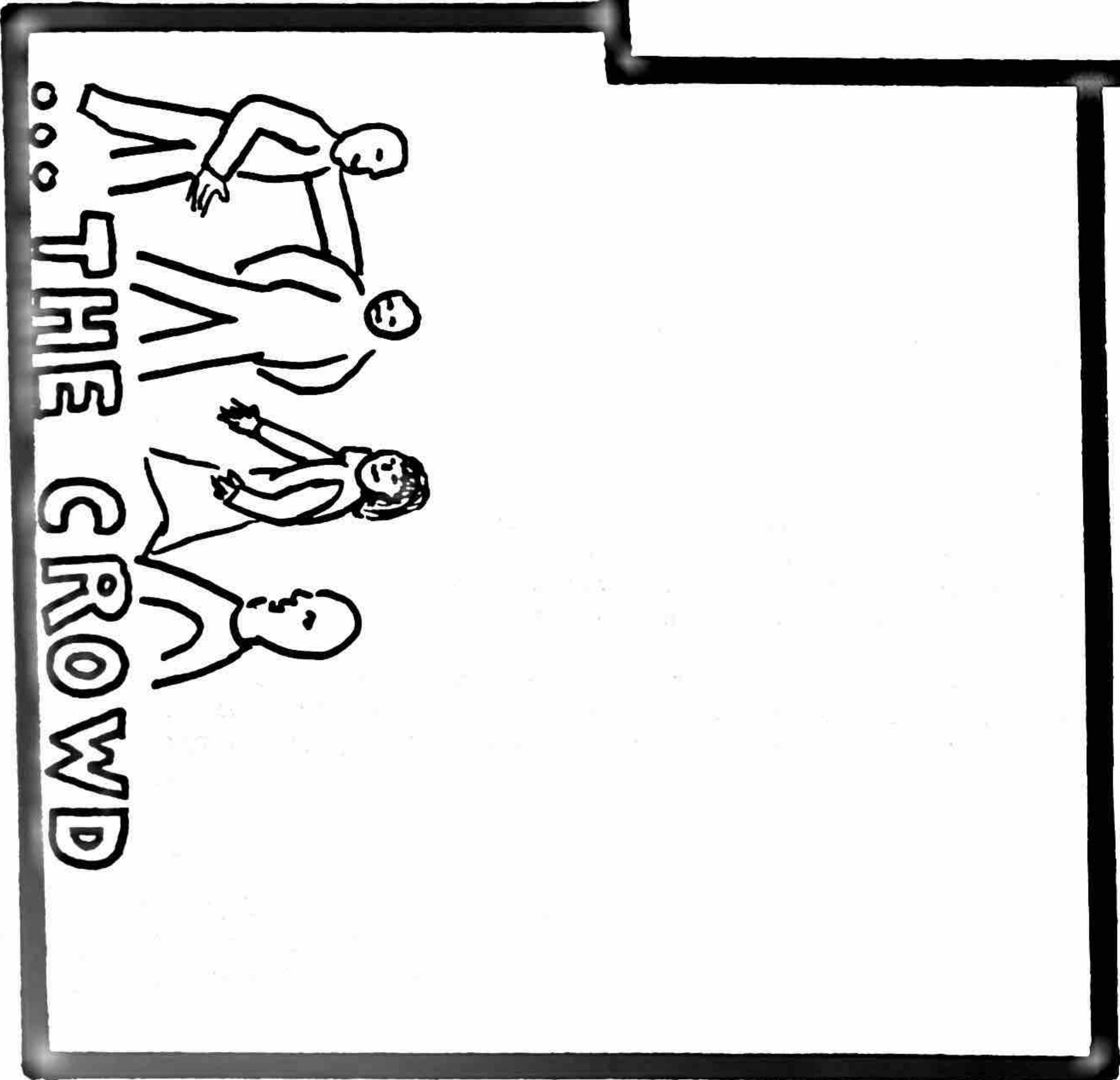
Group Discussion:

Members each describe the particular situation that they felt left out of. The group is encouraged to explore this subject, as well as provide empathy and support. Members focus on what the individual did about being left out, and explore the alternative choices they might have made in that situation. Though actual situations (and how they were dealt with) may vary, the leader should help members concentrate on feelings shared in common.

This exercise is recommended for groups in which members are more acquainted with one another, as they need to feel secure in order to reveal uncomfortable experiences and feelings of rejection. It is effective with all group types as it may be interpreted on many levels.



OF



Exercise 4

THE FAMILY FIGHT

Purpose:

1. To develop insight into interpersonal relationships.
2. To reinforce trust through self-disclosure.

Materials:

One photocopy of the illustration for each member; pens or pencils.

Description:

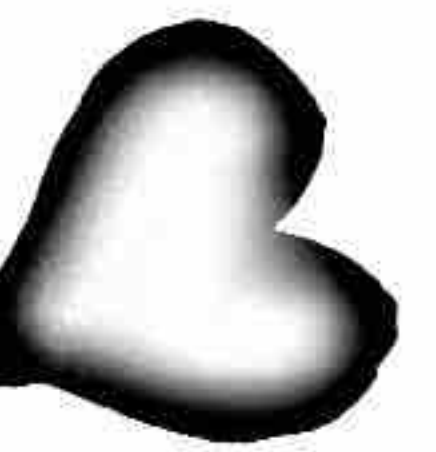
- A. While handing out materials, the group leader asks members to talk about how family fights are often emotionally charged, no matter what the argument is about.
- B. The group looks at the frame on the bottom left of the illustration, and discusses the tension and emotion involved.
- C. In response to the question "Who started it and why," members are asked to individually make up a story that might have led to the family fight. The story begins in the word bubble, and, if necessary, continues on the back of the page.

Group Discussion:

Each member reads their story of how the fight started, and describes related emotions. Then, they tell if the picture reminded them of any situation that influenced their response. After all captions are read, members are asked to reveal whose cartoon most closely resembled their own family.

Because the projective aspect of this exercise is less subtle, it is recommended for groups in which members are more acquainted with one another. It is effective with a wide range of group types, because arguments over either abstract or concrete issues reveal a great deal about interpersonal dynamics.

THE FAMILY FIGHT



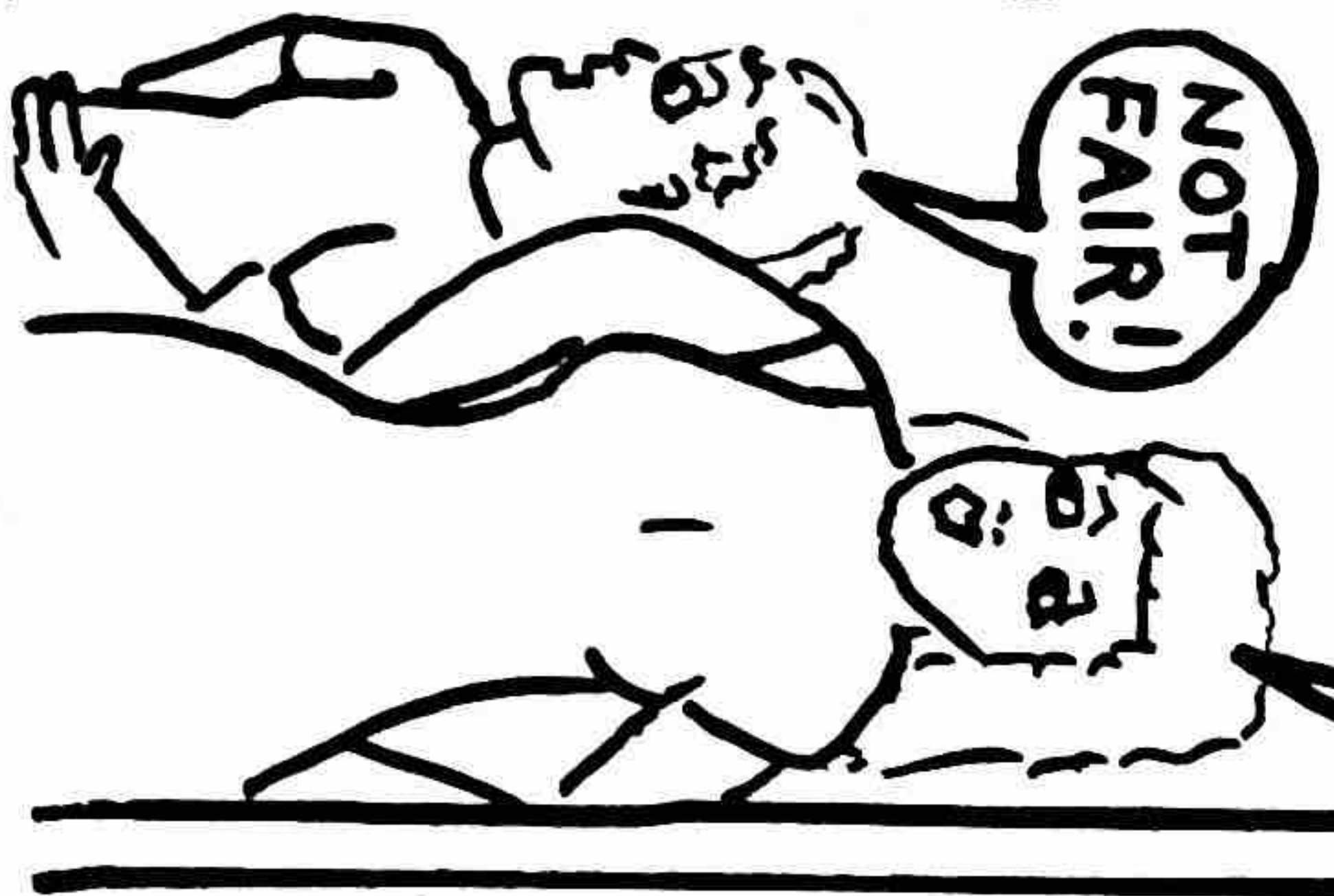
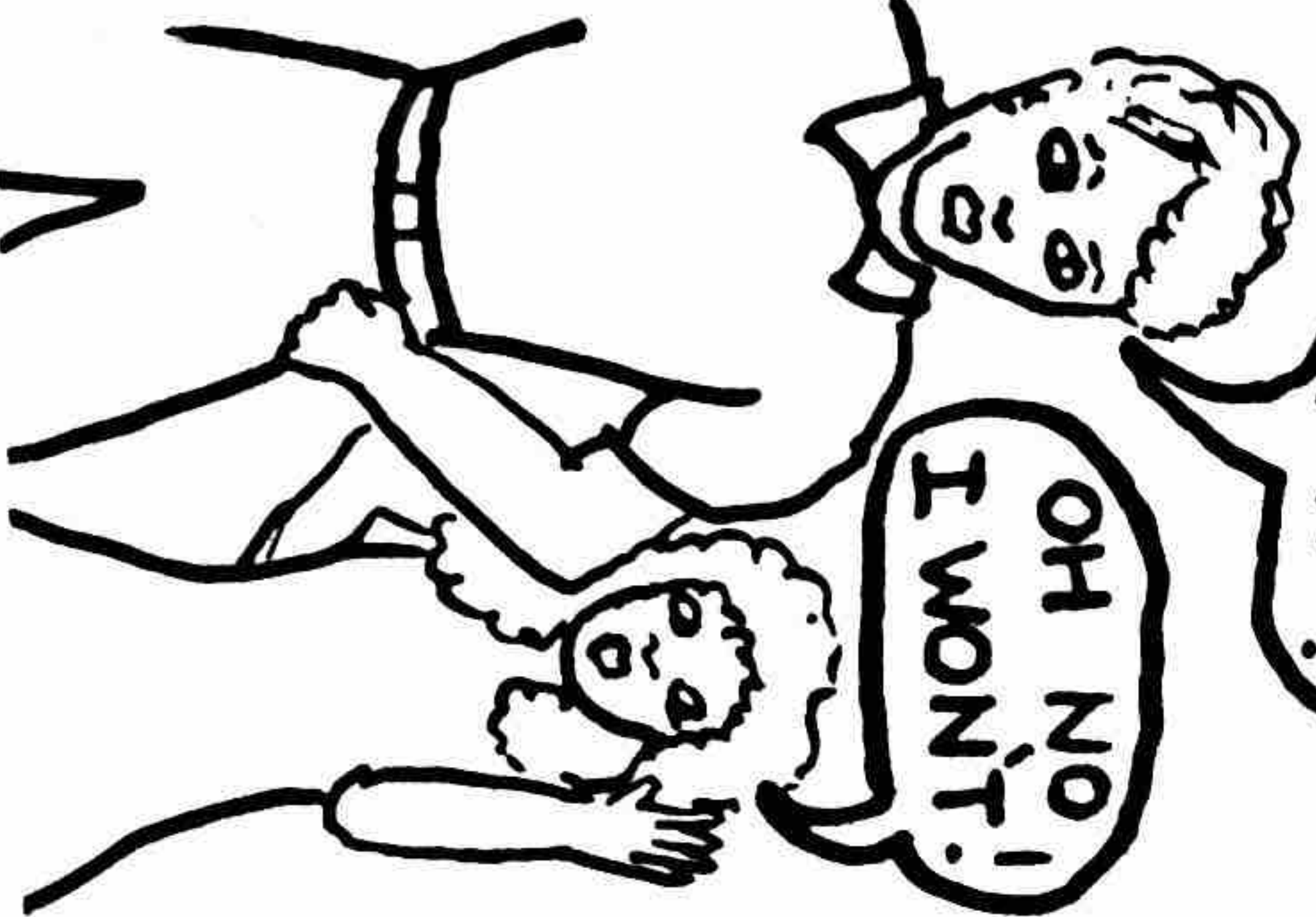
I'M NOT GOING TO STAND FOR THIS!

OH NO! I WON'T!

I'M SICK AND TIRED OF THIS! NONSENSE!

NOT FAIR!

WHO STARTED IT AND WHY?



THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED

[Large lined area for writing the story]

Exercise 5

THE SWIMMING POOL

Purpose:

1. To share memories and compare experiences.
2. To promote insight into individual behavior.
3. To explore feelings of self-evaluation.

Materials:

One photocopy of the illustration for each member; pencils, crayons, or markers.

Description:

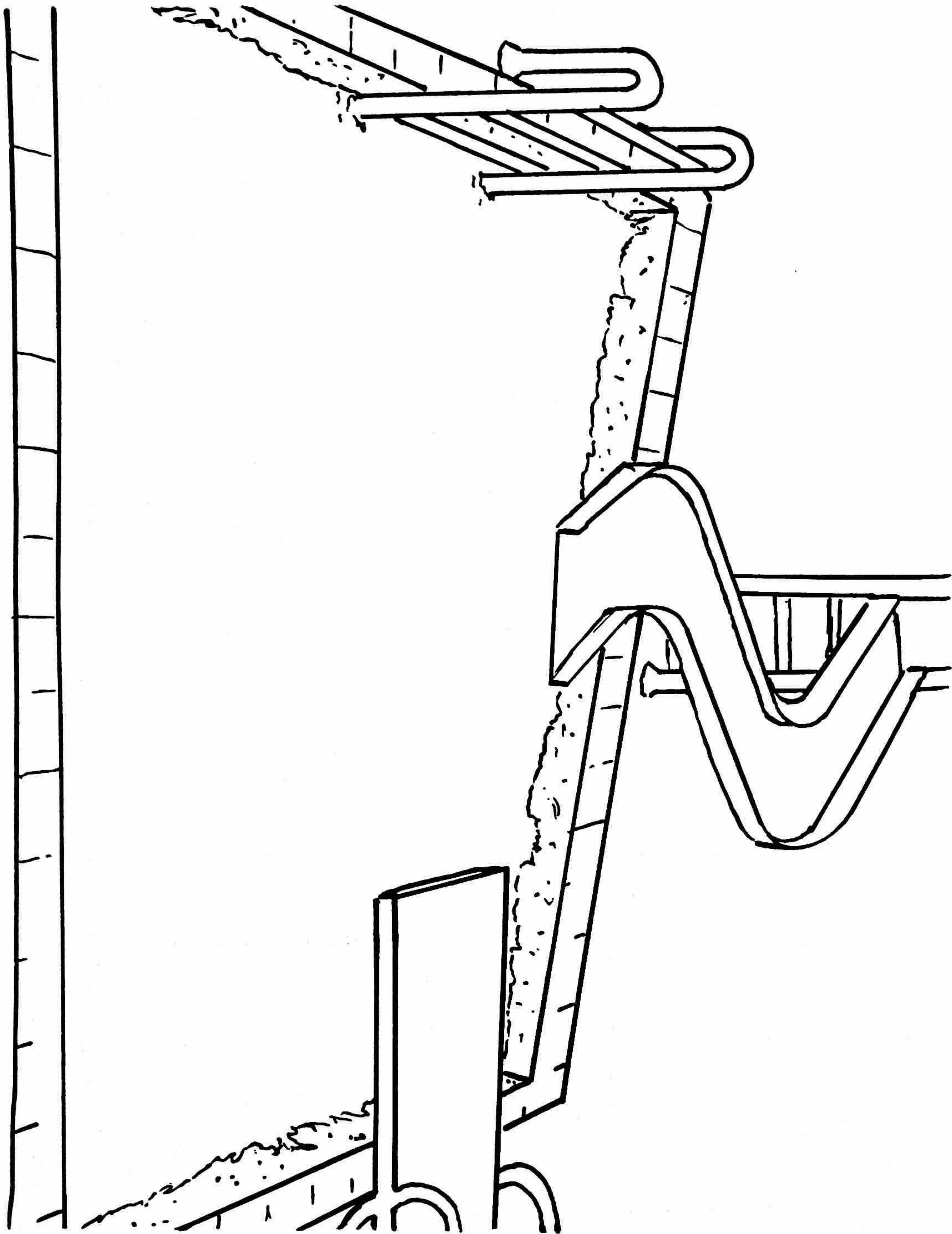
- A. The leader shows the illustration to the group and describes the swimming pool as representative of a big event that took place in their lives. The leader makes certain that members understand (a) the "dive" as meeting a challenge head on, (b) the "slide" as quickly entering a situation but feeling little control, and (c) the "steps" as proceeding slowly and cautiously.
- B. While handing out the materials, the leader tells members to recall a major event in their lives and think about whether they dove, slid, or gradually stepped into it.
- C. The group is told to draw the event in the pool and draw themselves on the diving board, slide, or steps according to how they think they approached the situation.

Group Discussion:

Each member shares the event depicted in the swimming pool. They describe the feelings they had that related to either diving, sliding, or stepping into the illustrated situation. Other members are encouraged to tell if they would have approached this big event the same way.

This exercise is most effective with groups that are able to think abstractly, in all stages of development.

Exercise 5



Exercise 6

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Purpose:

1. To incorporate group feedback into self-evaluation.
2. To promote empathy.
3. To develop group cohesion through mutual self-disclosure.

Materials:

One photocopy of the illustration for each member; crayons, markers, pens, or pencils.

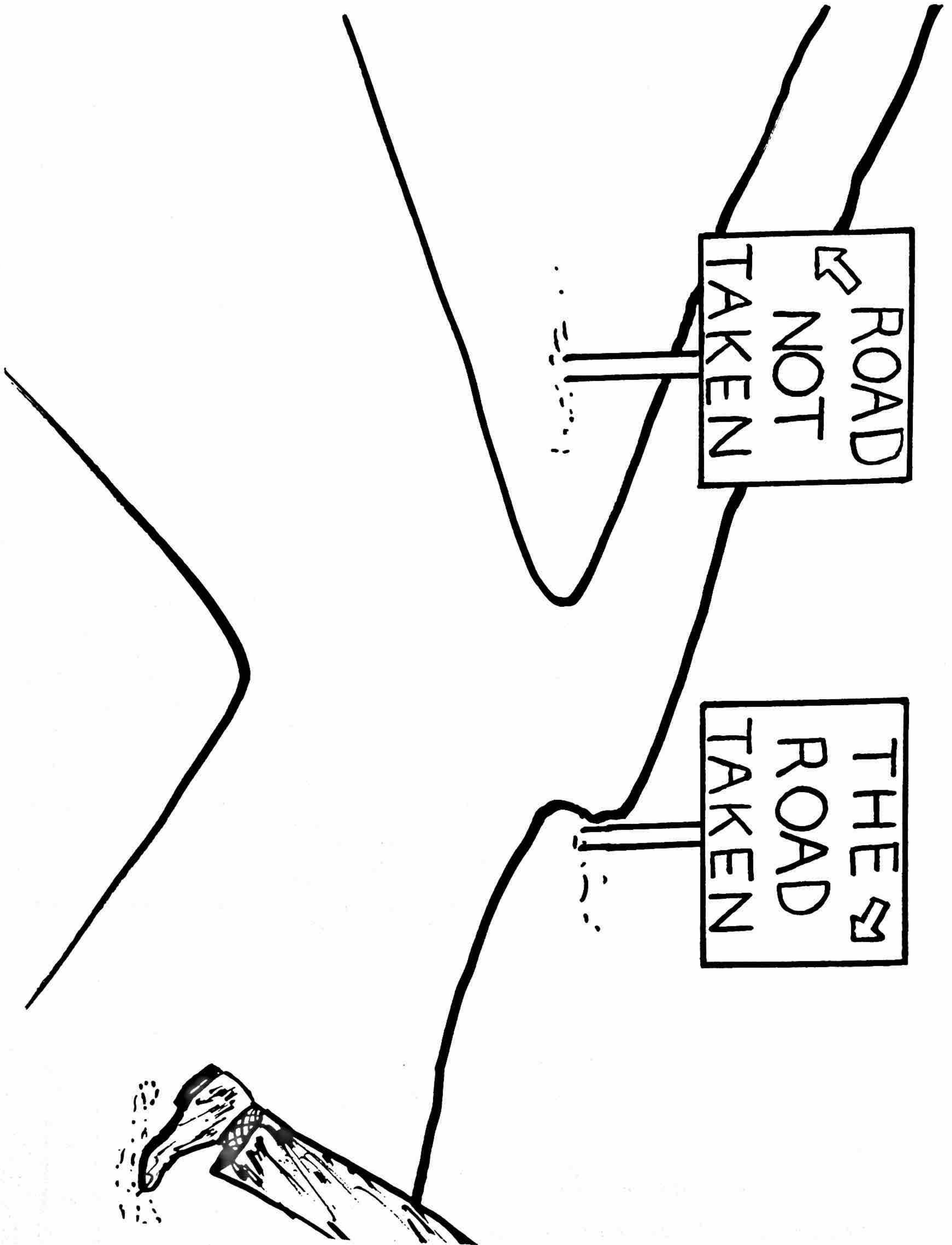
Description:

- A. The materials are distributed, and the leader asks how the illustrated road relates to life choices group members have made in various times in their lives.
- B. Members recall life choices made that they now have come to regret.
- C. They illustrate these on the depicted road where the sign reads "Road Taken." They draw in the choice that in retrospect they should have made on the road with the sign "Road Not Taken." They include what the outcome of this choice might have been.

Group Discussion:

Each member describes his or her illustration. First the member tells why he or she feels the wrong choice was made. The member then describes what the other road could have led to. The group leader encourages others to understand why the member initially chose the road and the circumstances which led to it. Frequently, group members are empathetic and supportive when regretted life choices are revealed.

Group members need to be able to think abstractly to complete this exercise. It is most effective when used in groups in the later stages of development.



Exercise 7

MOVING AWAY

Purpose:

1. To share feelings and fears about adjusting to change.
2. To empathize with one another about feelings of separation.

Materials:

One photocopy of the illustration for each member; crayons, markers, pens, or pencils.

Description:

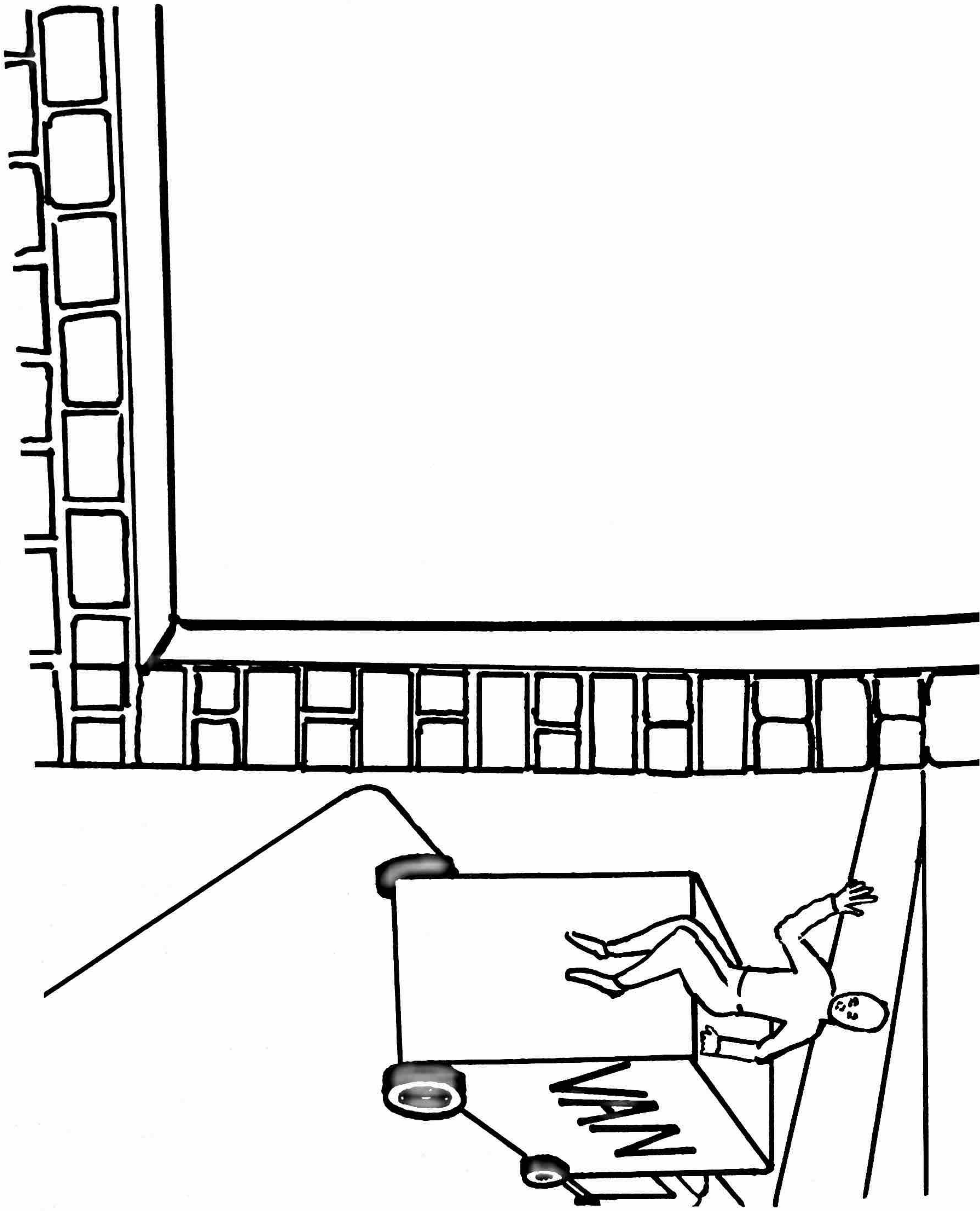
- A. The leader shares the illustration with the group, and asks members to imagine moving away from where they live at present.
- B. While handing out the materials, the group members are asked to think about the positive and negative aspects of where they live now. They are told to consider the things they like and dislike about their neighborhood, neighbors, and their living conditions.
- C. In the window, members illustrate who and what they would miss if they moved away.

Group Discussion:

Members describe their illustrations and the leader asks them to share their feelings about moving away from familiar people, situations, and surroundings. The group members are encouraged to share what they think these feelings reveal about each other. Similarities which evolve around moving away from negative situations and people will emerge.

This exercise is effective with all group types in all stages of development. It is a useful tool to introduce new members to one another in the early stages. It is also effective in later stages of development where members may want to clarify feelings about possible group termination, or actual fears about leaving the place they reside in.

Exercise 7



Exercise 8

THE SCRAPBOOK

Purpose:

1. To share memories and compare experiences.
2. To promote group identity and cohesion.
3. To understand group dynamics.

Materials:

One photocopy of the illustration for each member; pens, pencils, crayons, or markers.

Description:

- A. The leader initiates a discussion of how memories of experiences and relationships influence how we feel now.
- B. The materials are handed out. The leader asks members to think of any experiences, events or interpersonal relationships that have taken place within their group that have had an impact on them. Group members are reminded that these can be negative or positive.
- C. Members are asked to illustrate these memories either as a picture in the box or in words, or both.

Group Discussion:

Each member describes his or her scrapbook to the group, and reveals what effect these recollections have had personally. The leader encourages questions about these feelings and notes similarities and differences in choices of illustrations in each scrapbook.

When memories about past conflict or discord within the group are shared, members are encouraged to be supportive of one another. A frequent outcome is that members may reminisce about people who are no longer part of the group.

If negative experiences surface during this exercise, they may provide an opportunity to focus on unresolved issues within the group.

This exercise is effective with well-integrated groups in the later stages of group development.

Exercise 9

AT THE TRADING POST

Purpose:

1. To promote feedback about self-evaluation.
2. To increase understanding and acceptance among members.
3. To compare viewpoints and perspectives about self-evaluation.

Materials:

One photocopy of the illustration for each member; crayons, pens, pencils, or markers.

Description:

- A. The leader begins the exercise by introducing the idea that our personalities are made up of strengths and weaknesses. The group explores the concept of being able to trade personalities.
- B. While handing out materials, the leader tells group members to think about their own personalities and those aspects of themselves they would like to change.
- C. Each member illustrates that personal trait seen as a shortcoming.

Group Discussion:

Members present their illustrated personal trait and tell why they are unhappy with it. Then, members exchange traits, exploring how the other person's perceived shortcomings could be alternatively seen as a desirable trait to others.

Members describe specific situations where these traits would be assets. Exchanges continue until no one is left with their original illustration.

Group members are often surprised at how positively their own perceived shortcomings are viewed by others. This exercise is effective with groups in any stage of development, as long as members can think abstractly.