

Strategies for Building Ecologically Aware and Active Communities: Diverse Discussion Groups

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ABSTRACT Communities have rich networks of social relationships if and when they are flourishing economically and politically. In hard times, however, the various groupings within a community may splinter and fragment, resulting in little communication, and few relationships. Television has undoubtedly contributed to this breakdown in many communities, but so too do declines in the economy, divisive political or social issues, and natural or man made disasters. In such difficult situations, many individuals are stressed, and as a result, it may be possible for social change agents to intervene, and set up new ways to establish and develop meaningful relationships for significant numbers of participants. Particularly for those who are severely stressed, options to change are often sought. The use of diverse discussion groups as one means offers a community wide method of enhancing human relationships to enable members to better understand and cope with or manage problematic issues. Practitioners from several disciplines may use ecological principles to approach communities and intervene through use of “diverse discussion groups”.