

AUCKLAND HOMEBIRTH ASSOCIATION
STRUCTURE & ORGANISATION SINCE INCORPORATION

The Auckland Homebirth Association is made up of parents and midwives. The parents are mainly mothers who are also coping with new babies and toddlers and also have other family responsibilities. As their families are their priority, it is important that the workload is shared among as many people as are prepared to make a contribution. Although we recently incorporated, we did this for legal reasons and to make ourselves acceptable to those doling out funds. Such incorporation does not imply a patriarchal or paternal style of leadership! (In Leadership for Change patriarchal leadership is defined as authoritarian with final responsibility (power) vested in one person who controls through his ability to perform the leadership role; control flows down from the leader. Paternal leadership is more subtle, less overpowering, exercised by refusing to share skills on the assumption that nobody else can exercise them as well as he does. This makes members indebted and dependent. Bruce Kokopeli & George Lakey). On the contrary we strive to operate as a collective, sharing leadership which puts the members of the group in charge. This requires that we share information and skills so that newer members can learn the ropes and thus become effective lobbyists in the cause of home birth. This is not only a learning process for them and the oldtimers, it diffuses the workload, keeps enthusiasm high and the organisation cohesive. As a collective dedicated to the democratic process decisions are made at our monthly meetings (committee) which all members are welcome to attend, and to encourage this committee meetings are advertised in advance in our Newsletter.

However, any group that intends to get things done - and there is lots to do - has to have some kind of 'structure' or 'organisation'. A flexible structure is a useful tool to distribute power. In fact, informal/unstructured groups where no one is directly accountable mask power and will eventually destroy the group because supporters drop by the wayside when their efforts and contributions are not recognised or appreciated. Our 'structure' is a Committee elected at the A.G.M. and as such is accountable to the membership. Some members are elected to do specific jobs. By defining the roles of these officers we make the process of decision-making open and available to everyone: our membership understands what is expected of the office holders and the office holders know what is expected

of them.

Our elected office holders are: Spokesperson
Secretaries
Treasurer.

The Spokesperson is the facilitator/coordinator/organiser and the official representative of the Auckland Homebirth Association. As such she is our PR officer who fronts up to the media and gives the collective point of view in line with the aims and objects of the N.Z. Homebirth Association with due regard to the local circumstances. She chairs all general and committee meetings and is a member of all sub- and ad hoc committees. In this way she keeps her finger on the pulse of the Auckland Homebirth Association which enables her to keep the group united and on target.

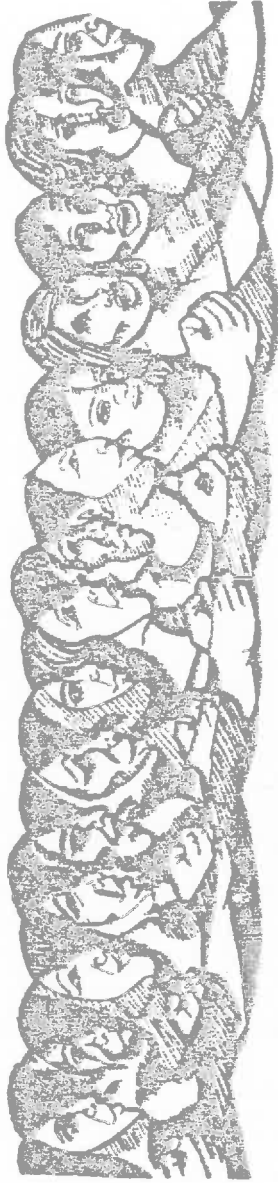
The Secretaries do the bulk of the hard work. We have two who were elected to share the secretarial job, plus a Minutes Secretary. The secretaries are responsible for collecting, answering, filing all inward and outward correspondence. Much of the correspondence involves routine enquiries and can be dealt with on receipt. Any letters of a controversial nature are presented to the Committee meeting for discussion. All inward and outward correspondence should be listed on the agenda and brought to each meeting. The secretaries should also prepare a comprehensive agenda for each Committee meeting. They are also expected to keep the numerous files in order and available so that information is easily available. They also maintain and update the membership list.

The Minutes Secretary takes and transcribes the minutes sending a copy to each Committee member.

The Treasurer looks after the finances. All monies and invoices are turned over to him. He presents a financial statement at each Committee meeting and an audited statement to the A.G.M. He presents the bills for payment and pays them.

The quarterly Newsletter (Auckland Branch & National) is produced by a Newsletter collective which determines the content and the sharing of the workload. The Editor is responsible for collating the material, getting it typed, layout, taking it to and collecting it from the printer. Separate groups then collate and mail it.

Support Groups in Auckland Central, South and West Auckland and North Shore organise the Homebirth antenatal classes, maintain their libraries and collect the registration fees. Some also run postnatal support groups and coffee mornings.



Task Functions

1. Information and opinion-giving: offers facts, opinions, ideas, suggestions, and relevant information to help the group.
2. Information and opinion-seeking: asks for facts, information, opinions, ideas and feelings from other members.
3. Starter: proposes goals and task, initiates action within the group.
4. Direction-giving: develops plans on how to proceed and focuses attention on the task to be done.
5. Summarizing: pulls together related ideas, suggestions, plans, proposals, and restates them by summarizing major points.
6. Coordinating: keeps perspective on relationship between various sub-groups and individuals, between activities and proposed next steps, and helps to keep the group functioning smoothly over-all (keeps things from slipping through the cracks).
7. Diagnoser: figures out sources of difficulty the group has in working together and the blocks to accomplishing its goals.
8. Energizer: stimulates a higher quality of work from the group.
9. Reality-testing: examines the practicality and workability of ideas, evaluates alternative solutions, and applies them to real situations to see how they would work, drawing on past experiences and history.
10. Evaluating: compares group decisions and accomplishments with long-range goals and with values and standards the group has set for itself, drawing implications for the future.

Morale Functions

1. Encouraging participation: gives support to members to participate through giving recognition for contributions, being warm, accepting and open, and being responsive and attentive to group members' needs for involvement.
2. Harmonizing and compromising: helps turn conflict into opportunity for creative and constructive solution-finding, searching for common elements in conflicts and helping others to keep unity in mind when they disagree.
3. Relieving tension: creates fun, safe and relaxed atmosphere where members may feel secure and vulnerable, joking, playing games, taking breaks, doing non-work-related activities.
4. Helping communication: makes communication accurate and clarifies misunderstanding.
5. Evaluating emotional climate: pays attention to how people are feeling about the group and each other, helping people to express feelings and sharing own feelings.
6. Process observer: examines the processes the group uses, providing information and evaluation for improvement.
7. Setting standards: states and restates the group standards and goals to help group maintain awareness of direction of the work and of accomplishments, reestablishing acceptance of group norms and procedures.
8. Active listening: accepts input and thoughtfully considers it, is receptive to others' ideas, proposals, etc., and goes along with the

group when not in disagreement.

9. Building trust: accepts and supports openness and vulnerability of other group members, reinforcing risk-taking and creating safety.
10. Solving interpersonal problems: promotes open and disciplined discussion of conflict between group members to resolve conflicts and increase cohesion.



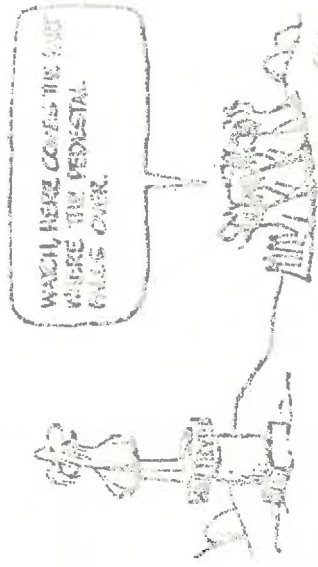
Within the task functions, there are several ways to help a group do goal-setting. We want to emphasize the importance of this because it is often overlooked by groups without "strong leaders." We must all pay attention to how a group is proceeding towards its long-range goals, and help target objectives which will help achieve those goals.

One quality that many people see as a leadership function is inspiration. Certainly leadership includes encouragement for the group to keep going even when things are very hard. One way to do that is to restate the goals and perhaps the ultimate vision of the group, and put the group's current situation in an optimistic frame-work. (These are goal-setting functions.) Another way is to encourage more warm support within the group, and to strengthen the connections between individual and group goals. Group singing is often effective for this; some songs have exactly that content, for example: "Come and Go With Me to that Land." (These are morale functions.)

Leaders who are skilled in these functions are called inspirational, although what they do turns the group toward itself for vision and renewed strength. There is another kind of inspiration which does not do this, but instead focuses the group's attention on a single person, sometimes perceived as charismatic. That person mobilizes the group through her/himself, by her/his enormous certainty, articulateness, and "presence." In a sense, the group then borrows its motivation and bolsters its shaky confidence by believing in its leader's vision and clarity.

We find this a tempting shortcut to group solidarity but self-defeating in the long run. It mystifies leadership and plays into the masculinist style of the certain, authoritative, and articulate leader. Further, the opposition then has an easier time hurting the group, by co-opting the leader or, if that proves impossible, by destroying her or him. The assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Gandhi are all reminders of how vulnerable movements can be when structured around a leader.

Patriarchy and Leadership Functions



New York Post

Of the leadership functions that we have recognized, the task functions (goal setting and goal accomplishment) are the functions most commonly thought of as "leadership." The morale functions that nurture the group members and their feelings are not seen as leadership qualities nearly as much.

The task functions also wield more power than the morale functions. Once the goals are set, the morale job is to address one others' feelings to the group's new direction. The task functions (goal setting, etc.) may involve independence of action, and therefore more power. As a result, the task functions are more likely to interact with other members of the group, while the morale functions are mostly filled by individuals within the group. Status in this society is linked to mobility, and status generally translates into power for those performing task functions.