



What is ZEGG-Forum?

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Forum is about liberation, understanding and communication now. It provides a framework for investigating human nature. Forum is not therapy, nor is it a method in itself; rather, it is a ritualized form of communication designed to enhance transparency, spiritual growth and community.

Forum is a special kind of communication process. It is a creative way for a group with a common vision and value system to create a safe space where members can share with the group in such a way that the consciousness of both the individual and the collective is raised. In the Forum, the personal is transmuted to the universal. In a light and non-judgmental climate of caring and acceptance the identification with, and attachment to emotional states is loosened.

In part, Forum provides a stage for thoughts and feelings that are ever present in daily life but which lie veiled or suppressed out of fear of rejection or judgment. It is a vehicle designed to bring into group consciousness what has been, until now, only present in the individuals' consciousness. In the course of this process of making the hitherto private public, implications and connections that were only latent may surface. In a single Forum session several individuals may work, in a series of Forums everyone will have worked, and thus over time the Forum becomes a powerful basis for raising the level of awareness of a whole community.

Forum is not, however, a collection of random personal sharing. Because from the beginning it is based on a set of shared values and long-term goals. What emerges is channeled by the commitment to personal change, honesty and aliveness. When used frequently in an ongoing group Forum ultimately becomes like a school of life, a classroom devoted to the exploration of Life and Truth.



In community it can be useful to separate problem solving and decision making. When a decision is to be made, it can start with a Forum process designed to make ideas, personal intentions or emotional background transparent. When this has happened, the decision making process can go ahead without being sabotaged by personal agendas.

Sometimes you will be surprised what you say when you step fully into the role of the actor in the center of the Forum and the process begins to flow. What emerges is the complexity of the human condition: its beauty, potential, paradoxes and violence. In Forum you experience the echoes of human history reflected in the experience of individuals and all these discoveries pave the way for change and development.

How can Forum Promote Nonviolence?

It is our fear of the insecurity and unpredictability of life that makes us want to dominate. We fear that which we cannot control or organize – feelings, longings, loneliness, weakness – or others, who are different from us. The life-force both inside of us and in the world cannot be controlled yet we are not comfortable with letting go and opening up to the constant change that is basic to all life.



It is our fear of the insecurity and unpredictability of life that makes us want to dominate. To transform the culture of domination we must make friends with all that is inside of us: our feelings, our loneliness, our deep wish for intimacy. Violence happens when we feel disconnected from others, nature, ourselves; nonviolence can happen when we allow real contact to take place.

And real contact can be such a challenge! We long for intimate friendship, for community, yet this longing to be connected brings up many fears for most of us. The sense of ‘the other’ creates fear of comparison and lack – am I good enough? Too loud? Too small? Do I like him/her; do they like me? So we create life-styles that keep people at a distance – by staying securely in our jobs, feeling comfortable with the TV or computer, using hierarchical structures of communication, hiding in workaholic or alcoholic behavior patterns or living in single apartments. Here to learn to be thankful plays an important role.



We fear real contact with people because it brings us face to face with the unknown in ourselves. We can discuss ecology, finances, politics, make decisions and still we be hiding from one other. Life wants true community – to know others from within, to be visible and seen at the deepest level – yet this sort of contact can be disturbing and will definitely bring change and upheaval. It also brings a great gift: a person in true contact with others cannot hurt, lie, murder or rape. Forum wants to be part of this learning to step into real contact with myself – my longings, my highest potential and my shadow – with other people, with nature, with life. What comes to the surface when we begin working in Forum is not always nice. The suppressed and the hidden may emerge into the light of awareness. This can be done playfully, or it can be done seriously, and one way or the other, it helps to create deeper contact.

How Forum Works

The individuals making up a Forum sit in a circle. One person goes into the middle as though going onto a stage while the others form the audience. The presenter or actor has the power and the space to speak and act without being interrupted by the others who initially play the role of observing and aware spectators.



The presenter brings with him/her a longing to communicate and learn through revealing in words and actions thoughts, feelings, values, opinions, emotions and judgments about a situation. The other, the facilitator, focalises and guides the process by intervening from time to time in the presenter's flow. In this way the presenter and the facilitator stage a kind of extemporaneous play together in the center of the Forum, while the group in the circle around them form the silent audience until the work is complete. When the presenter has

finished, others can step into the middle to give feedback and express what they perceived. Now the presenter can learn what others think about him/her and what they have to say which supplements, broadens and sharpens the personal issue he/she brought forward. The discovery of what others think and value about us, what perhaps keeps them from loving us, what meaning we have for them provides us with essential social feedback. After the feedback a new presenter stands and ventures forth into the center.

The Role of the Facilitator

Each session of Forum, usually lasting about 60–90 minutes, is guided by a facilitator plus a co-facilitator, who remain members of the group but take on the temporary role of facilitating the process. The facilitators are the only ones who can intervene in the presenter's process. They must hold a high level of self-awareness and be able to channel the energies, issues and processes of the Forum. It is a role of service and can be fulfilled in different ways: as a soft moderation which guides just by asking questions that lead to the source of the issue; playfully and artistically; in a strict and directive way – but all forms of facilitation are to serve the presenter who stays fully responsible for the content and style of what is presented. Facilitators are people who feel drawn to the role and have



trained their skills. Forum facilitation is not neutral because Forum supports what is authentic, alive and true, that which comes into the light beyond politeness and the daily games of hiding and disguise. The ideal of Forum is to bring out the beauty of the person, revealing their highest potential. If a person is stuck with a problem the facilitator listens to the facts but also helps the person to detach. The facilitator will encourage the presenter to look at it from a higher perspective and learn from it.

Example: if one person envies a quality of another the facilitator may ask him/her to express that quality playfully, to act as if she has the quality herself. In this way, the presenter can find out whether there is a hidden quality in her that wants to emerge – and lead her to embrace and strengthen it by acting it out.

The more knowledge one has about one's own habitual patterns of thinking and behaving the faster one can perceive them in others and intervene in a supportive way. The skillful facilitator possesses a broad human knowledge, a high social consciousness and a deep sense of responsibility. While the facilitator does, to some extent, direct and shape the

Forum process, he/she remains in the role of a facilitator, asking questions to illuminate the issue, mirroring the actor in a way that allows exploration, reveals connections, and connects with the bigger picture. From there, solutions may happen.

Surrender to the process

Forum does not primarily aim to solve issues. Rather it aims to make the essence of an issue or person visible. When we see the core essence of a person a feeling of love that transcends personal sympathy wells up. Often Forum is also about sorting out the different factors and feelings that impact a situation. The solution of an issue more often than not turns out to be a letting go. When deeper understanding comes, a releasing of attachment takes place. This letting go seldom happens by attacking the issue directly. It is more likely to occur by taking a playful detour, which at first may seem to lead away from the solution.

Forum wants to lift the level of energy and wants to trigger the expression of life force. When the level of energy can be successfully raised, a change of perspective in body and soul take place. Sometimes this energy shift can be very simple – when the facilitator invites the presenter to move faster, or to exaggerate gestures, or to put a sound to a feeling. When the energy shifts, a new perspective may open up.

We have become so used to hiding our feelings that we often lose touch with them altogether. We laugh when we feel like crying, we say no when we mean to say yes, and yes when we mean to say no. In the Forum we allow different aspects of our being to speak. So you might go to one corner and speak for one aspect, then go to another corner and speak for another, perhaps opposite, aspect. Theatrical suggestions can shift the energy sufficiently enough for a thought buried deep inside to be expressed. You may discover that being angry with someone is just a surface emotion. At another level you may discover that the deeper wish you didn't dare to express is for a closer connection. As soon as one comes into contact with a deeper need and finds a way to express it and have it heard, the anger disappears.



Theatrically acting out inner dialogues or emotional processes is a step toward disidentification: I come to see that I am not this anger; I am not this fear; I am not this jealousy. This way of reacting is actually only one possibility out of many. To lose identification with these passing states means that I have found an inner position of witnessing what is. I have found my unchanging center. In that place you find yourself no longer attached to the seemingly so important plans, needs and fears that are

present in every moment. This insight allows for a more playful stance. From the perspective of being a witness you stop projecting the experiences of the past into the future and your intelligence is freed up to act. For example, when your partner or your

lover makes plans that do not include you, and you react with fears of abandonment you become identified with this fear of loss. As you express your fear or sadness, that very expression brings you back to your own joy and humor of existence. You disidentify from the fear and are able to see that the behavior of your lover or partner is simply his or her true path at this moment. You can be the detached witness of it.

This kind of work leads us to our core, our inner truth, to expression freed from hiding and pretence. Forum is above all about truth – not truth as a moral category, but the truth that shows itself when we listen deep inside and allow ourselves to trust others, the truth that emerges when it no longer makes sense to maintain walls and wear masks.

Doubtless the path to social consciousness, compassion and contact requires an inner metamorphosis and Forum, because it is simultaneously personal and social, has the power to bring this about in us.

Forum practice and outreach

The Forum evolved as a way to create essential transparency by embracing and cultivating the authenticity and diversity of its members. At the ZEGG community there are large Forums held periodically which the entire community attends; there are smaller Forums held by subgroups such as work departments, special interest groups, the youth; and there are also special trainings for visitors and guests from other centers and communities. Forum combines well with added tools like Co-Counseling, Non-Violent-Communication or Constellation Work.

