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Book Review of *Teams for a New Generation: A Facilitators Field Guide*  
By Greg Robinson and Mark Rose (2007), AuthorHouse Publishing

Therapeutic recreation specialists, experiential educators, challenge course facilitators, and the like will find this resource to be very useful in ensuring that programs grounded in “experiential facilitation” produce genuine therapeutic opportunities for clients. Robinson and Rose highlight several critical skills and considerations regarding the use of experiential forms of therapeutic recreation interventions. The book is shaded toward a corporate team building perspective; however, the presented concepts translate well into therapy environments. In particular, the importance of focusing on the nature of behaviors, rather than just the successful performance of behaviors, is especially refreshing, considering the tendency of so many facilitators to follow a mechanistic, cookbook approach to processing therapy experiences. Consider the common practice of rating or scoring performance of a client group (e.g., “I’ll give you 6 out of 10 points on cooperation, let’s see if we can do better, what suggestions do you have?”). Robinson and Rose would most likely argue that this strategy, alone, temporarily encourages productive behavior, but does little to help clients understand why they have difficulty with the presented challenge in the first place. Behaviors such as dominating group discussion or lashing out at others may disappear as the facilitator points out these tendencies, but this suppression is temporary unless the client understands why they tend to react in this way.

The authors provide a specific framework for understanding the reactive emotional responses of clients participating in such programs, and how these responses impact the potential for self-reflection, collective learning, and change. Under this model, clients are encouraged to “slow down their emotional and belief responses to create opportunities to choose responses”. This approach goes beyond the tendency to simply observe performance, or behavior, and then

process its outcomes and relevance to the outside world. By encouraging self-awareness of reactive and defensive behavioral tendencies, such as withdrawal or dominance, the facilitator enables an opportunity for “collective learning”.

In practical terms, this book clearly emphasizes facilitator development. The authors make this point when stating, “We firmly believe that the most important tool a facilitator brings to a group is himself or herself. Consequently, what can cause the greatest limitation to a developing team is also the facilitator” (p. 1). The first four chapters are dedicated to explaining the concept of collective learning. Chapter 4 in particular gives a detailed overview of the four stages of the collective learning dynamic. Specific behavioral patterns are discussed that might indicate difficulty in moving through these stages, such as assuming control, playing the hero, blaming, getting busy, and withdrawal. These behaviors indicate difficulty in dealing with chaos brought on by a particular challenge or stressful situation.

The remaining chapters are very applied, discussing issues such as recognizing facilitation opportunities, self (facilitator) awareness, and awareness of group dynamics, as well as several useful tools for tracking, illustrating, or reflecting on individual and group processes. Several assessments and mapping tools are provided for use in the field, which serve the purpose of creating awareness of emotional awareness, group tendencies, collective learning. Taken as a whole, this book can be a very useful training tool for therapeutic recreation professionals, particularly for those who utilize experience-based modalities such as group initiatives or challenge courses.