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Group Insight Game (GIG)

The Group Insight Game (GIG) is a group procedure that Sperry Andrews has developed over decades; in 1990 he founded the Human Connection Institute in the USA. The group sits opposite each other, on site or via video conference. Whoever is not speaking maintains uninterrupted eye contact with the person



Figures from the IHR study database · Last updated 2026-10-07

How to Read This Dossier

ESTABLISHED

measured in humans, with a comparison group

PLAUSIBLE

supported by mechanism, animal studies or observation

HYPOTHESIS

a likely connection that still needs to be tested

Group Insight Game (GIG) at a Glance

ORIGIN:

The Group Insight Game (GIG) is a group procedure that Sperry Andrews has developed over decades; in 1990 he founded the Human Connection Institute in the USA. The group sits opposite each other, on site or via video conference, and takes turns speaking two sentences about what everyone perceives together in the present moment; whoever is not speaking maintains uninterrupted eye contact. A session lasts about two hours.

EVIDENCE BASE:

no study on the procedure itself · 778 papers on related components, of which 61 controlled in humans

STRONGEST EVIDENCE:

- Connectedness in the group: A non-randomised controlled study with 49 international students showed advantages of in-person activities for interaction and the number of relationships [9].
- Loneliness and stress: In 78 adults with severe loneliness, stress and loneliness decreased after five group sessions, still evident after three months; oxytocin nasal spray additionally strengthened bonding among group members [4].
- Interpersonal synchrony: A systematic review examined 12 publications on neurofeedback and 7 studies on brain stimulation; synchrony is regarded there as a target for autism spectrum disorder and social anxiety disorder [2].
- Interpersonal mindfulness: The three-process model proposes self-awareness, self-regulation and prosociality as the mechanism of action; its protocol envisages 640 participants in 480 dyads, results are not yet available [7].

LIMITATIONS:

- No studies in humans have yet been recorded for the procedure itself; participant experience reports are the only available source on its effects, and they are not study results.
- 16 experience reports from 2 public sources, of which 13 showed improvement and 3 were unclear; some originate from the provider side and are therefore not first-hand accounts.
- Whether the states arise from the conversation guidelines, eye contact, the group situation or expectation cannot be separated on this basis; a systematic recording of tolerability is still outstanding.

CLASSIFICATION:

A group procedure with uninterrupted eye contact whose components are research-connectable and whose controlled testing is at an early stage.

1. What Group Insight Game (GIG) Is

In turn, each person addresses the whole group with two sentences and describes what the group seems to perceive, feel and understand together in that moment: only in the present, without reference to the past or future and without I-statements. Closing the eyes signals that they have finished. A session lasts about two hours.

According to Andrews, this creates shared, undivided attention with deep accord, calmness and the experience of being connected with all people and nature; he names mental and physical well-being, team collaboration, joint decisions and conflict resolution as applications. From 1988 to 1993 Andrews worked with psychologist William Braud at the Mind Science Foundation in San Antonio on laboratory studies of being looked at without awareness. Experience reports from participants are available for the procedure itself, but no controlled studies.

2. Direct Evidence Base

No studies in humans and no controlled investigations are recorded for the Group Insight Game itself. Participant experience reports are therefore the only available source on its effects, and they are not study results. Whether the described states arise from the conversation guidelines, eye contact, the group situation or participant expectation cannot be separated on this basis. A controlled test is still outstanding.

3. Related Evidence: What Studies in the Same Direction Show

If few or no studies exist for a procedure, that says nothing about its effect — only about the state of research. We therefore examine what is known about the procedure's components: 778 papers on related procedures and mechanisms, of which 61 controlled in humans. The references lead to the source list at the end of the page.

A non-randomised controlled study with 49 international students showed that offers with in-person activities had advantages over pure self-help materials in improving interaction and the number of relationships ⁶. In a randomised, double-blind study, 78 adults with severe loneliness received five weekly group sessions, preceded by either oxytocin nasal spray or a placebo. In both groups, perceived stress and loneliness decreased, still evident after three months; oxytocin additionally improved bonding between group members ³. There was no comparison group without group sessions.

A systematic review on interpersonal neural synchrony in mental disorders examined 12 publications on neurofeedback (9 independent studies) and 7 studies on brain stimulation and describes synchrony as a target for interventions in autism spectrum disorder, reactive attachment disorder and social anxiety disorder ². **Hypothesis:** The uninterrupted eye contact of the GIG could act at this point; it has not yet been measured in the procedure.

A theoretical three-process model of interpersonal mindfulness proposes that mindfulness training increases self-awareness, self-regulation and prosociality and thereby improves the quality of interpersonal interactions; the associated protocol envisages 640 participants in 480 dyads ⁵. Results of this protocol are not yet available.

PLAUSIBLE A systematic review on psychedelic therapy with psilocybin, ayahuasca or ketamine examined in 12 studies the association between mystical experience — with features such as oceanic boundlessness, ego dissolution and universal connectedness — and symptom reduction; ten of the twelve studies found a significant association via correlation, mediation or prediction ¹. The studies are predominantly small and low in diversity, six of twelve were open and therefore susceptible to bias. **Hypothesis:** The experience of unity and connectedness that Andrews describes for the GIG belongs to the same experiential domain, without this demonstrating an effect of the procedure.

4. Mechanism of Action

PLAUSIBLE The first step of the mechanism shifts attention to shared perception in the present moment, supported by eye contact and the avoidance of certain words and references. That unfamiliar speech and behaviour patterns trigger an elevated state of attention fits the three-process model of interpersonal mindfulness, which proposes self-awareness and self-regulation as the mechanism ⁵.

HYPOTHESIS The further steps — joint breathing and feeling, a common sense arising from deep relaxation and shared observation, the reinterpretation of apparently negative energy as a resource and a jointly experienced intelligence — are derived from the description of the procedure and have not been directly tested in related research. The studies on group interventions against loneliness show that joint activities can improve connectedness ^{6 7 8}, but say nothing about the specific states described by the GIG.

HYPOTHESIS The planned laboratory experiments with participants thousands of miles apart and the description that autonomic nervous system responses changed highly significantly to attention-based stimuli after the teaching of connectedness point to the laboratory studies on being looked at without awareness that Andrews conducted from 1988 to 1993 with William Braud at the Mind Science Foundation in San Antonio. Whether such remote effects between spatially separated persons can be reproduced under controlled conditions is an open, testable question.

5. Experiences of Those Treated (Forums and Blogs)

Experience base, no studies: 16 experience reports from 2 public sources, evaluated by occasion, outcome, duration and side effects. Outcome according to report: 13× better, 3× unclear. Experience reports are not controlled, not representative and subject to the selection of those who write — they show what people experience, not what the procedure achieves.

As experience base, not as study result: Of 16 available reports, 13 describe an improvement and 3 remain unclear. The improvements predominantly concern a lessening of the feeling of separation, deep connectedness, calm and peace, a disappearance of the sense of time and tears without shame; repeatedly the experience is described as sustainable and more easily accessible than meditating alone. The duration ranges from a few minutes within a session through an evening and weekly meetings to recurring sessions over years. No report mentions side effects.

A portion of the reports originates from the provider's site and is therefore not a first-hand account; they describe, among other things, participants who joined the circle exhausted, ill or in a family crisis and afterwards reported expansiveness, closeness and hope. The three unclear reports do not name a concrete effect, but rather an approach experienced as simple and effective or a memory of shared creative time. Contradictions between the reports concern above all the duration until the experience sets in — from two minutes to several sessions — and the question of whether the effect is tied to a single session or to regular practice.

Evaluated sources: Instructions of the Human Connection Institute · web.archive.org

6. Plausibility Profile (FAIR)

Plausibility: medium — 7 of 15 points

The profile is not proof of efficacy. It answers a different question:
COULD IT BE THAT THE PROCEDURE ACHIEVES SOMETHING, EVEN IF STUDIES ON IT ARE LACKING?

Five dimensions, each 0 to 3 points, each with justification. It is recalculated as soon as new works or reports are added.

Status: 07.10.2026 · direct studies on humans: 0 · related studies: 778 · experience reports: 16

DIMENSION	POINTS	JUSTIFICATION
Direct studies on the procedure	○○○ 0/3	No studies on humans and no controlled investigations are recorded for the procedure itself.
Related evidence	●●○ 2/3	778 works, of which 61 controlled on humans, touch on the building blocks of the procedure without examining it itself.

DIMENSION	POINTS	JUSTIFICATION
Mechanism of action against known studies	●●○ 2/3	Eye contact, interpersonal synchrony and interpersonal mindfulness are connectable from a research perspective, yet the specific states of the process
Experience situation of those treated	●●○ 2/3	16 reports, of which 13 with improvement, yet a portion originates from the provider's site.
Safety and tolerability	●○○ 1/3	No report names a side effect, yet a systematic recording is still outstanding.

7. Call: Who Examines This?

A randomised controlled study would decide the open question: Group Insight Game against an active control condition, for example a group conversation without the speech and gaze guidelines, with measurement of loneliness (UCLA Loneliness Scale), perceived stress (Perceived Stress Scale, PSS-10), well-being (WHO-5) and the therapeutic relationship (Group Questionnaire, GQ-D) at the start, after the intervention and at a follow-up after three months. Additionally, physiological measures of interpersonal synchrony — for example heart rate variability or fNIRS-hyperscanning — could be collected before and after the sessions, as suggested by synchrony research^{2,4}. Such a study would have to assign participants randomly, keep the expectations of both groups comparable and define the evaluation in advance.

Innovation rarely has studies — the prevailing opinion then says “that does not work”. We say: This is an open question, and here it states how one answers it. Universities, training institutes and practices that examine or have examined this procedure can submit their work via info@ih-research.com; we include it in the study situation and update the profile.

8. Summary

Proven is the connectability of the components: 778 works on related procedures and mechanisms, of which 61 controlled in humans, touch on eye contact, interpersonal synchrony and interpersonal mindfulness, without testing the GIG itself [2] [7] [9]. A non-randomised controlled study with 49 international students shows advantages of presence activities in interaction [9].

Plausible is the first step of the mechanism of action: Attention is directed to shared perception in the present moment, supported by eye contact and avoided words and references; according to Andrews, unfamiliar speech patterns trigger a state of heightened attention, which fits the three-process model of interpersonal mindfulness [7]. **Hypothesis:** The further steps are derived from the description and have not been directly tested in related research: joint breathing and feeling, reinterpreting apparently negative energy as a resource, a jointly experienced intelligence. **Hypothesis:** The experience of unity described by Andrews belongs to the same experiential domain as the mystical experience in the review on psychedelic therapy, without thereby demonstrating an effect of the procedure [1].

A randomised controlled study would resolve the open question: Group Insight Game versus an active control condition, for example a group conversation without speech and gaze guidelines, with measurement of loneliness (UCLA Loneliness Scale), perceived stress (PSS-10), well-being (WHO-5) and therapeutic relationship (GQ-D) at baseline, after the intervention and at a three-month follow-up. Such a study would need to randomise allocation, keep expectations comparable in both groups and pre-specify the analysis; it remains open whether the effect persists over months and whether remote effects between spatially separated persons can be reproduced under controlled conditions.

9. What Remains Open

- Can the described states of shared attention, agreement and connectedness be separated in a controlled design from expectation, group situation and conversation guidelines?
- Does the procedure change measures of interpersonal synchrony, such as heart rate variability or interbrain coupling, in a measurable way?
- Does the effect described in the experience reports persist over a follow-up of several months?
- Does the procedure differ in effect from silent meditation forms or from group conversations without eye contact and presence rules?
- Can the remote effects between spatially separated persons described by Andrews be reproduced under controlled conditions?

Sources

1

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The links between physical activity and prosocial behavior: an fNIRS hyperscanning study
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Research, put in context. Every statement leads to the original paper; the decision in the individual case rests with the treating professional.
ih-research.com/en/knowledge/group-insight-game/ · Last updated 2026-10-07