

how your behavior is shaped and controlled by group definitions. You begin to see how you and others uncritically accept group definitions rather than creating your own definitions. Notice the definitions embedded in the following statements.

1. "I'm giving a *party*."
2. "We're going to have a *meeting*."
3. "Why don't you run for *election*?"
4. "The *funeral* is Tuesday."
5. "Jack is an *acquaintance*, not really a *friend*."

When you internalize this idea, you begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. When you more insightful about social definitions, you can redefine situations in ways that run contrary to commonly accepted social definitions. You then see how redefining situations and relationships enables you to "get in touch with your emotions." You recognize that the way you define things generates the emotions you feel. When you *think* you are threatened (you define a situation as "threatening"), you feel *fear*. On the one hand, if you define a situation as a "failure," you might feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as "a lesson or an opportunity to learn," you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize the control you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

You then might begin to integrate Strategy 10 ("Analyze group influences on your life") with the two strategies you have already internalized. One of the main ways in which groups control us is by controlling the definitions they allow us to use. When a group defines some things as "cool" and some as "dumb," members of the group try to appear "cool" and not "dumb." When the boss of a business says, "That makes a lot of sense," his subordinates know they are not to say, "No, it is ridiculous." They know this because defining someone as the "boss" gives him or her special privileges to define situations and relationships. As a developing thinker, you begin to decide which groups you allow to influence your thinking and which group influences you reject.

You now have three interwoven strategies: You "redefine the way you see things," "get in touch with your emotions," and "analyze group influences on your life." The three strategies are integrated into one. At this point, you can experiment with any of the other strategies (which follow), looking for opportunities to integrate them into your thinking and your life.

- Use wasted time.
- Handle a problem a day.
- Internalize intellectual standards.
- Keep an intellectual journal.
- Practice intellectual strategies.
- Reshape your character.
- Deal with your ego.

DEVELOPING

Focusing on strategies 1–10, which you have just read, write out a basic plan for your development as a thinker. List the first three strategies you will incorporate into your thinking and how you plan to do this. Be specific and detailed. Then at the end of the chapter, revisit your list and see how you are progressing. Add to your list as you internalize new learned ideas.

If you follow through on a plan, you are going beyond the Beginning stage; you are becoming a Practicing Thinker. We discuss this and the other stages of development in Chapter 17.