

Group Therapy

How is group therapy helpful?

1. When people come into a group and interact freely with other group members, they usually recreate those difficulties that brought them to group therapy in the first place. As group therapists facilitate a safe interpersonal environment, group members are able to give support, offer alternatives, or gently confront each other in ways to help resolve difficulties or develop alternative ways of dealing with the difficulties.
2. Group allows people to better understand how they tend to relate to others and the kinds of interpersonal patterns they tend to engage in.
3. Group assists people to develop new ways of relating to people.
4. Sharing concerns, struggles, and possible solutions help people to see that they are not alone and can be helped. Many times people feel very unique in their problems. It is encouraging to discover that other people have similar kinds of experiences, and/or have already worked through a problem that deeply disturbs another group member.

Group is most effective when members...

1. Are committed to honestly expressing their thoughts and feelings in the moment, as they occur within the group, especially those feelings toward other group members and the therapist(s).
2. Speak directly to people.
3. Stay aware of your thoughts and feelings, including physiological reactions.
4. Are spontaneous. You don't need to have everything figured out before you express your thoughts and reactions.
5. Are aware of the roles you play and your behavior. Some of us tend to behave similarly in many situations (e.g. patterns of withdrawing, responding with aggression when feeling vulnerable, being the peacemaker, the care-taker, etc.). People will behave in group much the same way as we do with other people in our lives. By observing yourself and others in group, you can learn more about the patterns and roles you tend to take on.
6. Listen attentively. Rather than making quick assumptions or judgments, or tuning out.
7. Don't speak for others, speak for yourself.
8. Give feedback. Share your feelings and reactions to others, whether positive or negative. In the long-run, honestly communicating your experiences will help to enhance trust and safety in the group.
9. Are open to feedback when others give you feedback about their reactions to you. Remember, like you, they are here to try out new ways of expressing themselves directly. An easy mistake one can make is to either accept the feedback too readily, or to too quickly reject the feedback. The most constructive approach usually is to listen and think through what parts of the feedback may fit.
10. Decide for themselves how much to disclose. Progress will only occur when you take some risks and share about yourself. However, monitor your comfort level as you go along.

11. Work actively on the problems that brought them to the group. At times this involves talking about important issues in one's life, and at other times it may entail choosing to listen supportively and to speak less. Groups work best when all members have a share in the group time.