

GROUP THERAPY

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CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

OBJECTIVES

At the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

- Define group therapy
- Explain the reasons for conducting group therapy
- Describe who is involved in group therapy?

INTRODUCTION

- **What is group?**
- *A group can be defined as “a collection of two or more individuals who meet in face-to-face interaction, interdependently, with the awareness that each belongs to the group and for the purpose of achieving mutually agreed-on goals.”*

Group therapy

- Group therapy is a psychological treatment where individuals of between 6 to 12 come together for a face to face interaction led by a trained group therapist.
- The individuals have similar psychological/mental health problems

- Group therapy can be viewed as one of “Helping each other heal and grow”
- A group can also be defined by its task or function.
- Without a task focus, the group remains a collection of individuals.

Uses/importance of Group Therapy

1. Group therapy provides an opportunity to learn:

- ‘With’ and ‘From’ other group members from the accounts related by them
- That you are not as different as you think, others have similar problems as you.
- That you are not alone in your thinking

2. An entire group can benefit from sharing thoughts and experiences.

3. By focusing on interpersonal learning:

- It helps individuals get along in a more honest and authentic way with other people.

- It provides a support network for specific problems and challenges.

- Being part of a group working toward a similar goal provides patients with the reassurance of being part of a team and are therefore not judged harshly by members of the group compared to the outside world.
- This is through confidentiality observed- thus a safe haven
- Group interaction gives group members an opportunity to try out new ways of behaving and to learn more about the ways they interact with others.
- It increases social networks

11 characteristics that make group therapy effective

- Universality (“I’m not alone nor have unique problems”)
- Group Cohesiveness
- Altruism (unselfish giving)
- Instillation of Hope
- Imparting Information (educational)

- Interpersonal Learning
- Development of Socializing Techniques
- Imitative Behavior
- Corrective review of the Primary Family Group
- Catharsis –provides a point of let out

Starting a Group

Selecting group members

- Good group therapy begins with good client selection.
- Clients improperly assigned to a therapy group are unlikely to benefit from their therapy experience.

BUILDING A GROUP: SELECTION OF MEMBERS

- In selecting group members, the therapist should ask two questions.
 - 1) Is the member likely to benefit from the group experience?
 - 2) Is the member likely to make a positive contribution to other members?

Exclusion Criteria

- Unwillingness or low motivation to participate - Generally, individuals benefit from group therapy when they wish to be in a group.
- Extremely high level of distress- an individual with very high levels of distress cannot benefit at that point in time e.g. an individual in an immediate crisis.

- Incapacity for connection
- An individual is expected to have ability to attend to, identify with and form a relationship with one another, which form the capacity for connection.
- If the individual lacks this, he/she is not a good candidate for group therapy.
- This is because one of the renowned factors of therapy entails individuals' recognizing that they are not alone in their suffering

- Noncompliance with rules - Every group has rules that safeguard the rights and safety of the members and that create an atmosphere in which the goals of the group can be pursued.
- Maintaining confidentiality, putting feelings into words rather than actions, attending the sessions regularly and making timely payments are among the most common rules that group therapists establish.

- When individuals provide evidence that they are unable or unwilling to observe these rules, they are not appropriate for a group

Capacity for Connection

- Group therapy in most of its forms requires that members have some rudimentary ability to attend to, identify with, and form a relationship with one another.

- This requires the therapeutic factor of universality which entails individuals' recognizing that they are not alone in their suffering.
- For universality to work, however, the member must have a readiness to identify with the other members who are sharing their struggles, because without it, he or she will fail to see commonalities in experience no matter how clearly they are presented.

Cognitive Limitations

- Group therapy makes cognitive demands on members.
- It requires that they be able to listen to one another, respond appropriately, and concentrate in a sustained way on the events of the session.

- Its important to remember that:
- clients will fail in group therapy if they are unable to participate in the primary task of the group-whether due to:
 - Logistical problems
 - intellectual problems,
 - psychological or interpersonal reasons.

- clients in the midst of some acute situational crisis are not good candidates for group therapy,
- they are far better treated in crisis-intervention therapy in an individual, family, or social network format

- Deeply depressed suicidal clients are best not admitted to an interactionally focused heterogeneous therapy group either. This is because:
- It is difficult for the group to give them the specialized attention they require (except at enormous expense of time and energy to the other members),
- At the same time, the threat of suicide is too taxing, too anxiety provoking for the other group members to manage.

- Good attendance is so necessary for the development of a cohesive group that it is wise to exclude clients who, for any reason, may not attend regularly.
- Poor attendance may be due to unpredictable and hard-to-control work demands, or it may be an expression of initial resistance to therapy.

- Traits a client must possess to participate in the primary task of the dynamic, interactional therapy group.
- They must have
 - a capacity and willingness to examine their interpersonal behaviors,
 - to self-disclose,
 - to give and receive feedback.

In selecting members, one must take into account:

Heterogeneous/Homogenous- to be informed by the purpose of which the group was formed.

Appropriateness of group due to behavior

Gender balance

Recruiting a Group

- In recruiting a group you must therefore
- Conduct Screening interview-
- Take into account group size
- Group setting

Group Stages

Initial stage (Orientation and exploration):

- Get acquainted
- Determine structure of group
- Explore members' expectations

Transition stage (Challenge and resistance occurs):

- Group leader may be challenged
- Increased anxiety in members

Working stage (Cohesion and productivity occur):

- Members focus on identifying goals and concerns
- Work on goals in group and outside of group
- Practice new behaviors

Group Process

First session:

- Clarify ground rules and guidelines.
- Build cohesiveness and trust.
- Discuss confidentiality.
- Discuss active listening for each other.

Remaining sessions

- Summary of the initial meeting.
- Establish therapeutic atmosphere.
- Leader models facilitative behaviors.
- Establish a relationship.
- Address members' concerns/problems.

- Explore previous solutions, look at alternatives.
- Set goals, try new behaviors, assign homework
- Report and evaluate results

- Groups generally meet once or twice weekly, with each meeting lasting anywhere from one to two hours.
- Group therapy sessions can be structured to allow new members to join at any time, or the meetings may remain closed to just the original members of the group until the program is over, which could be several weeks to a year.

Implications for Different Ages-

Group counselling

- Group settings can help children in formative years acquire social skills, improve ethnic/racial relationships and shape a positive attitude towards school.
- Group counselling can support preadolescents in dealing with family, peer pressure and anger management.

CONCLUSION

- Group therapy is helpful for individuals who find it difficult to practice on their own as they get a boost from others.
- However, not everyone who benefits from groups.