

# Group counseling and therapy



Group counseling and therapy involves a group of about ten people meeting on weekly basis together with a trained counselor or therapist so as to discuss and open-up to the problems and struggles they may be facing. There are group sessions which discuss a whole range of problems while other groups target specific problems. Group counseling is effective as people are given an opportunity to interact freely thereby generating solutions to the problems confronting such parties (Forsyth, 2009). Support and concerted alternatives are offered which enable the group members develop social skills and alternative ways of relating with members of the entire society. Feelings of anxiety, depression as well as isolation are addressed since the group members are accorded a sense of acceptance and belonging when in the group therapies.

Group therapy and counseling sessions have overtime faced massive criticism due to failure to maintain appropriate and acceptable ethical requirements. The public as well as mental health practitioners have leveled criticism to group leaders of such groups who organize, plan and conduct the group counseling movements. Though the therapeutic powers of the group counseling cannot be underestimated, ethical issues in regard to group counseling need be adhered to (Butler & Fuhriman, 1983). This document explores the ethical issues required to steer into success group therapy. The implications of successful and responsible leadership of group therapies will also be addressed.

Literature review

Confidentiality

The counseling therapists should protect the information obtained from the group members. Any information given by the clients either through artwork, conversations, and discussions or through professional relationships between the clients need be treated with outmost privacy and respect. The group members of a counseling group are not entitled to disclose any form of confidential information from any member of the group. Similarly the group members are expected to adhere to rules of confidentiality thus no activity which is undertaken in the group is expected to be shared to a person outside the group. According to McDermut (2001), the names of the members of the counseling group should also not be disclosed.

Incase disclosure of information is imminent especially when the information is required for legal and disciplinary actions, then the concerned parties need be consulted. Both the group members and counseling therapists need to keep or dispose records regarding group members in ways which maintain confidentiality. During research, the information disclosed by the research participants need be treated with outmost privacy with the group members instructed not to disclose the information to unauthorized parties (Kanas, 2005). Observance of confidentiality is critical as it permits the development of a trusting, respectful as well as safe counseling atmosphere which makes it possible for individuals to openly share their feelings and experiences with the other different group members.

### Professional competency

The counseling therapists involved in group counseling need be professionally trained in order to maintain high levels of professional

competence as well as integrity in their undertakings. When armed with adequate knowledge and constant adherence of the stipulated laws, ethical issues as well as professional standards, instances possible conflict of interests witnessed during therapeutic sessions will be averted. The counseling therapists need have legal knowledge which will be vital when giving advice on matters requiring legal attention. The therapists need maintain a neutral outlook to the group members issues in order to give any member a chance to discuss their issues thereby generating solutions which are workable and totally devoid of influence from another party. A counselor need resist from giving direct advice to the group members at all costs but rather ought to provide a framework which will lead to generation of resolutions to the prevailing problems of the group (Dingle & Baker, 2008). Direct advice should be offered when the alternative chosen by the group members is either maladaptive or considered unethical.

### Responsibility

Group therapies require high responsibility levels in order to ensure their successful completion. The group members need to attend the group counseling sessions on a regular basis in order to ensure consistency. Punctuality of all members to the group counseling sessions need be adhered to in order to make it possible for members to address the issues at hand effectively. To ensure successful discussions, members are advised to give all information regarding their experiences and struggles which they are going through. Such members ought to talk openly about themselves and provide adequate feedback, and perhaps related solutions to other members of the group. High levels of responsibility should be demonstrated especially

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when a group member wants to leave a group (Lambert, 1999). A valid reason to warrant the move and prior notice should be provided both to the group members and the therapist coordinating the affairs of the entire faction. Honesty and respect need be emphasized so that the initial objective of forming the group will be achieved.

#### Payment of service fees

Consultation fees for counseling need be paid on time. Some group members fail to undertake responsibility to pay the necessary dues to steer the counseling sessions into completion. In order to avoid inconveniences caused by unpaid balances, the therapists need give reasonable notice to the group members who are yet to settle their dues. Similarly, group members need to adhere to the prescribed mode of payment for the counseling sessions.

#### Informed consent

The counselors need to furnish group parties with adequate information regarding the purpose of the group as well as information regarding the nature of services which will be provided. Essentially, group members need be availed information regarding the techniques and procedures which will be employed to steer the group therapy. The counselor has moral authority to possibly let the entire group know of their qualifications, experience and credentials possessed which will be vital in the group therapy. Such a move will help build confidence among the group members. The counselors need to adequately maintain awareness of the group members regarding different cultural meanings that exists among various members (Jacobs et al, 2009). Some members of the group may be culturally inhibited to disclose some

information, hence the perceived need in addressing such issues. The existing cultural diversities in the group members need be considered.

#### Ethical Issues Differences: Individual Counseling versus Group Therapy

Group therapy has massive benefits in as far as finding remedies is concerned concerted efforts are involved, whilst individual counseling involves limited ethical issues considerations. In individual counseling, confidentiality is maintained between the counseling staff and the client while in group counseling all members of the group must vow to maintain privacy of all discussions undertaken by all the parties. In group therapies, individuals possess different magnitudes of the problems they are undergoing through. The counselor need be committed to steer the group discussions in an organized manner such that each group member's problem will have a solution availed. In individual counseling, the clients are not inhibited to talk about their issues like the case in group therapies where a group member may shy away from discussing the issues affecting him. According to Frikart & Zellweger (2003), biasness may also result in group therapies where stereotype conclusions may result based on the discussions advanced by the group members. Group counseling may not provide the best treatment options for the kind of concerns being advanced especially when the group members may fail to agree. Thus unlike in individual therapy where the ability to derive a solution lies entirely on the client, group therapies may be marred by instances of difficulty in resolving ethical issues. Stigmatization is often characterized with group therapies especially when a group member is dealing with taboo inadequacies or other related problems.

## Why therapists prefer individual counseling over group therapy

Individual counseling involves an individual talking openly to a therapist about the problems bothering such individuals. Here, the therapist avails a chance to the person to openly solve the challenges affecting them while at the same time finding long-term solutions to the problems affecting the clients. Clients as well as therapists prefer individual counseling due to the non-judgmental and empathetic environment accorded by the therapeutic procedures employed. Suggestions and insights are accorded by the therapist and the client is not left with feelings of biasness which may be exhibited in group counseling sessions (Hoglund, 2002). Through individual therapy, a therapist is able to prescribe a workable solution to the problems affecting the client. A therapist is able to create a rapport and a trustworthy relationship; hence such clients are satisfactorily able to share even the deepest worries and deep-seated fear without much inhibition. Through undivided attention accorded to any client an amicable solution which is workable is availed. A client is not inhibited about providing information regarding the issues they may be going through.

The knowledge that it's only the therapist who will have access to ones secrets is a key pointer as to why many people prefer individual therapy. Group sessions are marked with several instances of reflecting about many peoples problems. This consumes a lot of time and finding amicable solutions to address each member's queries may not be fully availed. Lack of adequate involvement by the group members make the counseling sessions boring and at times unbearable hence the reason people may prefer individual counseling where adequate time will be accorded to them and

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their deepest worries and queries will be addressed. Some group leaders lack the expertise and knowledge to adequately steer the group sessions into completion thus inability to support techniques with adequate theoretical framework limits the effectiveness of group therapies. Unless when the members of a group belong to the same social group for instance cohorts or students of a particular institution, it may prove problematic to organize a meeting which will not be conflicting to member's interests (Clarke, 1992). Thus a client getting a convenient time slot may be problematic thus the reason why a personalized therapy session would be preferred since it will be slotted when the client is available and is likely to benefit more in the counseling session.

#### My leadership qualities and the approach I use in group therapy

I have been involved in counseling a group of young men who have been released from prison with the intention of equipping them with essential skills to integrate them to the community, thereby getting to be productive and useful members of society. Through the group therapy which I offer, I intend to improve interpersonal relationships of these ex-prisoners thereby instill confidence in them. A fundamental guiding force of this group has been pegged on the idea that experiences of group therapy influence changes in individuals and the ability to precipitate changes in people within a group which shares similar problems is easy. I have facilitated several sessions of group therapy in addition to conducting workshops on a daily basis. Nevertheless, I have largely been involved in observing the interactions among my group members who make much of the contributions regarding the changes and attitudes which they should uphold (Callahan, <https://assignbuster.com/group-counseling-and-therapy/>



2004). The group members have been vocal in providing workable solutions as they are experiencing the same feelings of rejection, hopelessness and stigmatization.

My primary role as the group counselor has been to facilitate effective interaction in the group. When friendly environment is availed, the members have been able to learn from each other. I also assist the young men establish personal goals incorporating such values as honesty, hard work and determination which deemed useful in their integration to the community. Through follow up, I intend to check whether the group members carry on the values they learn during the group therapy sessions to the outside world where feelings of appreciation will be exuded by the members of the society (Frikart & Zellweger, 2003).

As a leader of this group, there are several attributes which I possess and have been instrumental in steering the group into higher levels of growth. For instance, since the inception of the group I demonstrated a growth oriented lifestyle towards the members. This has in turn made the group members adopt a similar outlook. Presence as well as teambuilding skills are major attributes which I have utilized. I always ensure that I am emotionally present such that I share the joys, pains and frustrations of the members of the group. The group members ends-up acknowledging my ability to empathize with them especially with their worries about how their presence will be considered by people in the neighborhoods ware of their past life.

Confidence is a quality which I have continually utilized to guide the group members. Due to the personal power which I exude to the members, we are

able to develop attributes which lead to self empowerment. The group members learn skills vital to use when interacting with their peers. I have consistently utilized genuineness to relate in a non defensive as well as sincere manner with the group members. In instances where I fail to approve a particular aspect of a group member behavior, I look for a genuine way to notify the member regarding this aspect. Since genuineness entails an aspect of positive regard and precondition for empathy, I ensure the group members who exude exemplary behavior are rewarded or appreciated. I feel integration and genuine approach allows the clients self disclosure especially regarding the kind of feelings exhibited during the counseling session. Through exhibiting non-possessive warmth towards the group members, the coldness and hardness which maybe present in the hearts of the group members is completely removed thus the members are able to consistently talk about their experiences (Wulfert, 2007). Exuding warmth through my body language, facial expressions, proximity and eye contact has made my group members show confidence. As result, the interaction levels have been enhanced.

Through offering unconditional positive regard to the group members and accepting their unique attributes has been fundamental in facilitating changes in my group members behaviors. There are those members who have demonstrated instances of violent behavior but through my ability to enforce control and compliance with behavior dictated by another person, such acts have been rectified. When the group members feel accepted regardless of their weaknesses and unfavorable attitudes their dignity as well as personal worth is enhanced (Corey et al, 2006). I always ensure that I

do not pressurize my group members to change their identities. Rather I provide an environment which is devoid of judgmental and condemning statements which the clients would fail to appreciate. Since I am well grounded psychologically, I am able to work adequately with my group members in order to organize their feelings and energies which eventually result to growth and fulfillment. Since I accept my group members regardless of their unpleasant and uncongenial attributes they are able to drop the kind of behaviors which are not socially accepted in the society. This way the community will accept them and interact consistently with them (Battjes & Sears, 2004). In my interaction with the group, I completely avoid stereotyping and labeling of the members. Rather I do not put my members on the niche regarding their behaviors especially because they are ex convicts.

#### Group Changes and related Implications

Several changes are available which we can employ in our group to make tangible effects in the lives of the young people whom I am counseling. I intend to introduce behavioral interventions to create increased benefits of the counseling sessions. Through the introduction of behavioral therapy advanced by Skinner, I intend to incorporate societal and personal conditions which will warrant the group members to lead satisfying lives. Relaxation techniques will slow down the activity of the members thereby accord a chance to share the deep feelings they may be experiencing. Such activities as silence and breathing therapies give room for relaxation and the members will have the capability to give a different opinion regarding an issue when addressed from a point of relaxation (Battjes & Sears, 2004). Incorporating <https://assignbuster.com/group-counseling-and-therapy/>

the use of guided imagery to bring about relaxation is another change we wish to incorporate where the group members will be accorded a more relaxing atmosphere to deal with past inadequacies. Hypnosis is another strategy I wish to introduce to the clients. This will give an opportunity to the group members to speak about issues which the conscious mind would not be able to speak. Thus the motivating instinct which caused them be imprisoned will be released. These new changes may receive massive criticism amongst the group members who may find it difficult to adopt. Hypnosis and breathing therapy is quite difficult to undertake as they involve emotional integration of the body hormones in order to produce the desired results.

## Conclusion

Group counseling provides an effective way for people to effectively learn from their peers and the knowledge that there people going through the similar challenges make it even easier to come up with amicable solutions. The counselor need provide effective leadership and regard highly ethical issues within the group. This will enhance the productivity of the group in finding lasting solutions to the problems being witnessed by the members. Confidentiality is paramount in group therapies thus members need to make a personal pledge declaring that all information disseminated in the group will not be availed to other people whom are not part of the group. Through group therapies, clients get insights regarding how they are perceived by other members of the society and beneficial ideas which ultimately enhance their decision making process as well as the ability to solve problems. Group members are equipped with vital skills especially communication an

interpersonal skills through the ability to express and share ideas and feelings. Through group therapies, members gain encouragement through observation of the milestones achieved by members which show success on past inadequacies which made them seek therapeutic services (Forsyth, 2009). Proper consolidation and termination of group therapy should incorporate formulation of a conceptual working frame which will ensure that the insights acquired in the group are used in the outside world. Specific contracts as well as home assignments can act as practical ways in effecting changes among individuals especially when changes in behavior have to be demonstrated.