

# Theories of group therapy



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## Brief Therapy and Group Therapy- Assignment One

Within this reflective piece I will be exploring my experience of group process. I will be looking at how this has helped develop my knowledge of group process and linking theories which may have contributed to furthering my learning.

## Yalom

Therapist such as Ervin Yalom (1995) specified that interpersonal groups is viewed as the most important out of the influential approaches within the group approaches. Yalom (1995) perceives the group as a small-scale version of society within the group he believes that individuals are able to become self-aware of how others perceive them interpersonally and how their incorrect assumptions impact their relationships (Yalom 1995). Ervin Yalom (1995) likes individuals within the group to concentrate on the here and now especially the group experience rather than paying attention on what issues they may have regarding home/work (Yalom 1995). Yalom states that when the group faces factors such as; conflict, organisation issues, goal setting and failure with communication they will reveal how they prefer to interact with others as well as themselves (Yalom 1995).

Yalom (1995) has outlined 11 curative factors which he believes that emphasise change within several group settings. The 11 curative factors include; installation of hope, universality, imparting of information, altruism, corrective recapitulation of primary family group, developing of socialising techniques, imitative behaviours, interpersonal learning, group cohesiveness, catharsis and finally existential factors (Yalom 1995). Some of

the curative factors enable change and creates a therapeutic alliance (Yalom 1995).

There are few of the curative factors which are relatable within the groups I have formed. One of the curative factors that is applicable to the groups within my life would be catharsis. This curative factor allows members within the group to release hidden feelings (Yalom 1995). By expressing your feelings is a sense of one freeing themselves (Yalom 1995). I have noticed that within the groups I have maintained everyone is trusting of each other so each member as well as myself find it easy to vent our feelings.

Personally, this helps me to see that others are going or have experienced similar issues and makes me feel as if I have support around me if I need it.

Tuckman

Dr Tuckman (1965) created the 5 group stages. The 5 group stages focus on how a group first forms. The group will be friendly towards each other however there will be a little bit of wariness due to the group members being unfamiliar of each other (Tuckman 1965). Then it further goes to explain how the group will face conflict this will occur while individual group members start to become aware of their position. The group will then establish boundaries (Tuckman 1965). Finally, the group will reach stability, at this stage the group will perform at the best due to the whole merging their abilities. Tuckman (1965) identified the stages as; Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning.

The first stage would be forming. Within this stage each individual will concentrate on the leader (Tuckman 1965). They will follow the leader's

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direction and authority. They will be civil to the other members within the group however they will maintain a distance. Tuckman (1965) states that the leader would have to be open and ready to answer that the other may ask. There will be difficulties such as; limits strengths and weakness will be tested (Tuckman 1965). Members will tend to carry baggage of their past experiences which they will bring to the group. This could impact on how they behave within the group (Tuckman 1965). For example, when I started my counselling degree, I was friendly to the other group members however, I kept my distance from others. This was because big groups tend to make me feel anxious especially if I don't know anyone. Also, during secondary I tended to avoid making friends with everyone and only had one close friend. So due to this at the beginning I was cautious of who I became close with or who I could open up to. I feel as if as if opening up to a group of strangers immediately makes me feel vulnerable and anxious. So rather than trying to make myself the centre of attention I tend to take the " backseat" and observe my environment. Also, I don't like change or being in a setting where I lack familiarity, in some occasions this has led to me isolating myself from the group. As well as only surrounding myself with close family and friends due to the fact of feeling safe.

The second stage is Storming. This is considered to be the most difficult time for the members within the group (Tuckman 1965). Within this stage the members within the group focus on the impression they are making. They will tend to want to be valued by the other members, they will be in conflict due to feeling insufficient, they will also wonder about who will support them within the group and finally they will try and prove their value to the leader

within the group (Tuckman 1965). Members will see themselves as individuals rather than a group and may show hostility. Relating this stage to myself, a few weeks into the course I had made acquaintances within the group however I didn't consider anyone as a friend. During this period, I would support others in hope of developing friendships however, I kept a distance due to fearing rejection. However, when I become familiar with a group/person I tend to stick closely with that person or that set group, like I said before I feel safe. This has become a problem as some people state that I have become a part of a clique or duo. For example, I have a cousin who is similar within age and we are very close. Growing up everyone would say how me and her were "joint at the hip". However, even though most family members didn't seem to have an issue other family members would claim that we were catty or stuck up. Relating this back to the friendship group I have developed within university some members believe how we should not form separate groups and be a "whole" and fail to understand people sometimes form a better relationship with other and how sometimes people drift away from each other. This was one of the issues that caused conflict within our group. However, I feel as if the group is still stuck within this stage to due to conflicts/fights that have occurred during the 2 and a bit year of knowing the group.

The third stage would be Norming. If the group can reach this stage this is seen as a milestone (Tuckman 1965). Within this stage group members can make and implement big decisions, the ideas that the group have come up with will become reality, risks will be taken, and mistakes will be seen as a learning curve (Tuckman 1965). Individuals will have established

relationships will established as well as roles (Tuckman 1965). Within the group I have established relationship/friendship with 5 other members however not as a whole group. Within the separate group I feel as if we have reached this stage as we accept each other's viewpoints. For example, currently we have all paired up to complete a presentation. We have all got designated tasks to complete. However, if someone is not able to complete the task at hand another member will either swap or support the individual. Personally, I feel as if I am a " people pleaser" so I tend to take upon responsibility and other people's responsibilities even though I know I am not capable to achieving them or even though I may have enough on my plate. Within the groups I have maintained people always know when they need something, they can always count on me to help them. For example, if I went out with a group of friends and one person was short on money I will always offer and insist on paying even if it is not within my means.

The next stage would be Performing. Within this stage the group is considered to be strong (Tuckman 1965). The group will experience conflict however this is considered to be healthy and wont damage the relationships which have been formed (Tuckman 1965). Within the group there will be humour. There will be a trusting atmosphere and flexibility (Tuckman 1965).

The final stage is Adjourning. Within this stage the group will carry out an assessment of the year (Tuckman 1965). Within this stage they will look at each member's contribution within the group and look at transitioning roles (Tuckman 1965).

Belbin

Belbin (2003) developed 9 roles which he believed every group will have. The roles included; plant, monitor evaluator, specialist, implementer, shaper, completer finisher, resource investigator, co-ordinator and team worker (Belbin 2003). Each role has its strengths and weaknesses'. Relating this to myself I believe within the group I am the team worker. I believe within the group I am accommodating for example if someone is struggling with a task, I will end up taking up their responsibility or support them getting through the task. I consider other group members opinions and I am diplomatic. I listen to other members and I avoid any situation with the group that will cause conflict or friction. However, when it comes to a situation where I need to make a decision, I can become indecisive.

## Conclusion

Overall, there are many ways that theory has helped me gain a better knowledge about group processes. It has helped me understand the group stages by relating it to groups which I am a part of. It has also helped me recognise what my roles are within a group.

## References

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