

Group Counseling

History

- Joseph Pratt, Alfred Adler, and Jacob Moreno, Cody Marsh and Trigant Burrow were the first to use group counseling.
- Early group efforts were similar to the traditional group guidance or psychological educational groups we see today.
- WWII: The war and its effects ushered in a proliferation in the use of group therapy.

Group Counseling

History

- T-Groups: This is a group experience whereby individuals come together to learn how to work in a group and to effect interpersonal change.
- The Human Potential Movement: Began in the 1960's and founded on the belief that most people only use a small percentage of their capabilities but that within a group experience, they can recognize their full potential.
- Encounter Groups: Designed to help normal individuals remove blocks that inhibited their functioning so that they could lead more fulfilling lives.

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History

- Personal Growth Groups: These are any groups that promote the personal growth of the individual (e.g. Gestalt groups, T-groups, encounter groups).
- Marathon Groups: An intensified encounter group that meets for a long period of time (e.g. 8 hours or a whole weekend.)



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Types of Groups

- Task Groups: A group that comes together to perform a task that has a concrete goal (e.g. community organizations, committees, planning groups, task force).
- Guidance/Psychoeducational Group: Preventative and educational groups that help group members learn information about a particular topic or issue and might also help group members cope with that same issue (e.g. support group for a suicide, transition group to prepare students to enter high school etc.)

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Types of Groups (continued)

- **Counseling/Interpersonal Problem-Solving Groups:** These groups help participants resolve problems of living through interpersonal support and problem solving.
- **Psychotherapy Groups:** These groups focus on personality reconstruction or remediation of deep-seated psychological problems.

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Types of Groups (continued)

- Support Groups: These deal with special populations and deal with specific issues and offer support, comfort, and connectedness to others.
- Self-help Groups: These have no formal or trained group leader. (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous or Gamblers Anonymous.)

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Group Counseling Competencies

- Competencies have been established by the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW):
 - Knowledge Competencies
 - Skill Competencies
 - Supervised Practice (10-20 clock hours)



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Advantages of Groups

- It provides a social atmosphere that is similar to the real world.
- Members can test out and practice new behaviors.
- Members can practice new interpersonal skills.
- They are cost effective.
- Groups help members see that they are not the only one who has that particular problem or issue.
- Groups provide members with support.

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Disadvantages of Groups

- Less individualized attention from the counselor.
- Confidentiality is more difficult to maintain.
- There are concerns with conformity and peer pressure.
- Not everyone can be in a group (e.g. those with issues too severe or those with poor interpersonal skills.)
- Scapegoating may occur.
- Group leaders are not always properly trained.

Group Counseling

Therapeutic Forces In Groups

Instillation of Hope

Imparting of Information

Corrective Recapitulation

Interpersonal Learning

Catharsis

Development of Socializing
Techniques

Universality

Altruism

Modeling

Group Cohesiveness

Existential Factors



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Stages of Groups

- Stage One (Orientation/Forming): Group members become oriented to the group and to each other.
- Stage Two (Transition/Storming): Anxiety and ambiguity become prevalent as group members struggle to define themselves and group norms. This stage is often characterized by conflict.

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Stages of Groups (continued)

- Stage Three (Cohesiveness/Norming): A therapeutic alliance forms between group members. Trust between members has been established.
- Stage Four (Working/Performing): Group members experiment with new ideas, behaviors or ways of thinking. Egalitarianism develops.
- Stage Five (Adjourning/Terminating): This is the time when the group disbands.

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Leadership Styles

- Authoritarian: Leader centered.
- Democratic: Participant centered.
- Laissez-Faire: No designated leadership.

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Leadership Functions

- Emotional Stimulation: Challenging, confronting, modeling self-disclosure etc.
- Caring: Showing support, praise, warmth, acceptance etc.
- Meaning Attribution: Explaining, clarifying, interpreting etc.
- Executive Function: Setting limits, providing rules, managing time etc.

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Group Leadership Techniques



- Facilitating communication: Giving constructive feedback, preventing members from engaging in negative behaviors (gossiping, storytelling etc.)
- Group Processing: Making comments on group process to keep the group therapeutic and attending to group dynamics.
- Directing the Focus on the Here and Now: Keeping the focus on right now and not going back to dwell on the past.

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Group Leadership Techniques (continued)

- Experimentation: Helping members try out new attitudes and behaviors.
- Universalizing: Helping members realize they are not alone in their problem(s).
- Linking: Connecting various feelings and concerns expressed by group members to present a common theme or universalizing aspect.

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Concerns in Group Work

- **Group Size:** Varies from 3-4 members to several hundred depending upon the group (e.g. psychotherapeutic or task group). Group counseling and psychotherapy generally work best with 6-8 members.
- **Participant Selection:** Screening is needed with counseling and psychotherapy groups. Some people are not well suited for group work.

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Concerns in Group Work (continued)

- Length and Duration of Sessions: Individual sessions are usually 50 minutes, group sessions range from 1-2 hours. Session duration can be only once or in some cases might last for years (e.g. open-ended psychotherapy group).
- Ethics: Confidentiality is hard to guarantee due to the number of participants.
- Group Evaluation: Outcome measurements are difficult to obtain.