Ways of Helping Groups Become More Effective

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Outline of Presentation

1. Optimal Groups and Balance
2. Types of Groups and Stages of Groups
3. Therapeutic Factors in Groups
4. Rules and Tools for Working with Groups at Different Stages
5. Creative Methods beyond the Usual Tools
6. Final Thought
1. Optimal Group and Balance

Optimal Group Structure/Interaction
Groups are either

Functional and Productive

or

Dysfunctional and Unproductive
Factors that Impede a Group’s Progress or Make it Dysfunctional:
1. Not Preplanning a Group which includes:

- Clarity of Purpose
  - Why have a group

- Setting
  - The environment

- Time
  - The length of the group meeting

- Size
  - How many people will be involved

- Membership
  - Heterogeneous or homogeneous

- Goals
  - Expected outcomes/accomplishments

- Commitment
  - Voluntary or mandated attendance
2. Negative group activities (which include but are not limited to):

- avoiding conflict,
- abdicating group responsibilities, i.e., not working on issues
- anesthetizing to contradictions within the group, psychic numbing,
- becoming narcissistic.
When Groups are Dysfunctional

They are more stuck than they are sick

The task of advancing the group is to help it get unstuck without becoming unglued.
Balance

BALANCED PROCESS AND CONTENT

Action
Who are we together?
Are all matters related
to content represented?

Warm-up
Who am I?
Who am I with you?
Is the purpose clear?

Closure
What outcomes
resulted from this
group experience?

content

process

Warm-up  Action  Closure
Content and Then Process

CONTENT FIRST, PROCESS AFTER

“We have lots to do today. So let’s get right down to business....”

content

process

Warm-up  Action  Closure
Process and Then Content

PROCESS FIRST, CONTENT AFTER

“Now for the first half hour tonight we are going to play some ‘noncompetitive games’ in the hope...”
2. Different Types of Groups

The Group Work Rainbow

Source: Robert K. Conyne, University of Cincinnati. Used with permission.
Psychoeducational Groups

- These groups are educational & informational. Their purpose and focus is on prevention, growth, or remediation.
- Size of psychoeducational groups will vary across settings.
- The leader of psychoeducational groups is in charge of managing the group as a whole, disseminating information, and breaking groups into subgroups when necessary.
Psychoeducational Groups

- The leader plans for session length, session frequency, number of sessions, and what will occur within sessions (i.e., the curriculum).
- Groups usually last from 50 minutes to 2 hours. They work best when they have a regular meeting time, such as once a week. The number of sessions offered will depend on the purpose, but the range varies from 4 to 20 or more sessions. The average number of sessions is 8 to 10.
- Overall, psychoeducational groups stress growth through knowledge, e.g., a life skills group.
Counseling Groups

- Counseling groups are preventative, growth oriented, and remedial.
- The focus of group counseling is on each person’s behavior. Although goals are personal, the group as a whole may share them, e.g., dealing with anxiety.
- Counseling groups are ideal for individuals experiencing usual, but often difficult, problems of living that information alone will not solve.
Counseling Groups

- The size of counseling groups vary ranging from 3 or 4 in a children’s group to 8 to 12 in an adult group.
- The number of group meetings fluctuates but is generally anywhere from 6 to 16 sessions.
- The leader is in charge of facilitating the group interaction but becomes less directly involved as the group develops.
Counseling Groups

- The topics covered in counseling groups are developmental or situational, such as educational, social, career, and personal.
- Counseling groups tend to be short-term.
- A major advantage of counseling groups is the interpersonal interaction, feedback, and contributions group members experience from each other over a period of time.
Psychotherapy Groups

- A psychotherapy group addresses personal and interpersonal problems of living among people who may be experiencing severe and/or chronic maladjustment.
- This type of group is found most often in mental health facilities, such as clinics or hospitals, and may be open or closed.
- The size of the group varies from 2 to 12 members. The duration of the group is measured in months, or years. The leader of the group is always an expert in one of the mental health disciplines who confronts as well as facilitates.
Psychotherapy Groups

- A variety of individuals, a heterogeneous group, works best. In order to select such a group, group leaders must prescreen carefully.
- Most often leaders of psychotherapy groups operate from a theoretical position e.g., psychoanalysis, gestalt, existential.
- Individuals in psychotherapy groups are often socially isolated and welcome a structured experience where they can “tell their story” and become more connected. Psychotherapy groups usually have members who are more resistant to manipulation by others.
Task/Work Groups

- Task/work groups promote efficient and effective accomplishment of group tasks among people who are gathered to accomplish group task goals.
- Major types of task/work groups are: volunteer groups, mission groups, goal groups, and working groups.
- Task/work groups do not focus on changing individuals. Whether the group is successful depends on group dynamics.
Task/Work Groups

- The number of members within a task/work group may be large, but this type of group usually works best with fewer than 12 people because unintended subgrouping does not occur.

- Two major differences between task/work groups and other types of groups. First, these groups may disband abruptly after accomplishing their goal. A second difference is members and leaders may have considerable contact with others in an organization in which the group is housed. The reason is that task/work groups need input and feedback from other than group members.
### Characteristics of Five Group Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forming</th>
<th>Storming</th>
<th>Norming</th>
<th>Performing/Working</th>
<th>Mourning/Termination</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characterized by</td>
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<td>initial caution associated with any new experience; attempt to avoid being rejected by others.</td>
<td>time of conflict and anxiety; group moves from primary to secondary tension; attempt to balance between too much and too little tension.</td>
<td>feeling of “Weness” that comes when individuals feel that they belong to the group; often enthusiasm and cooperation at this time.</td>
<td>by a focus on the achievement of individual and group goals and the movement of the group into a more unified and productive system.</td>
<td>participants coming to know themselves on a deeper level; primary activities in termination—reflect on past experiences, process memories, evaluate what was learned, acknowledge ambivalent feelings, engage in cognitive decision making.</td>
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**Peer relationships:**
- group members tend to be superficial and center conversion around historical or future events that do not have a direct impact on the group.

- group members tend to be more anxious in their interactions with one another; concern for power is prevalent.

- identification with others in the group; hope, cooperation, collaboration, cohesion.

- genuine concern on a deep, personal level by members for one another; greater willingness to self-disclose on the part of members; increased awareness in the group about individual participants and the world of each person.

- feelings of empathy, compassion, and care abound; participants relate to one another on a deep and sometimes emotional level; feelings of warmth and sorrow often occur simultaneously.
## Characteristics of Five Group Stages

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<td><strong>Task processing:</strong></td>
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<td>dealing with apprehension;</td>
<td>concentration on direct</td>
<td>members must agree on the</td>
<td>major emphasis on productivity</td>
<td>promoting a successful end to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reviewing members’ goals and contracts; setting limits; promoting positive interchange among members so they will want to continue.</td>
<td>objectives diminishes; a healthy &quot;pause&quot; takes place; scapegoating might take place.</td>
<td>establishment of norms from which to operate the group; groups accept both prescriptive and proscriptive norms; importance of commitment is stressed during this time.</td>
<td>whether the results are tangibly visible or not; maintenance of interpersonal relationships must be attended to and balanced with productivity.</td>
<td>the group and relationships in the group; consolidation of gains; finding of meaning in group, making decisions for new ways of behaving; prepare for a new beginning after group ends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Useful procedures:</strong></td>
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<td>joining, linking, cutting off, drawing out and clarifying purpose.</td>
<td>leveling, feedback, informal and formal feedback.</td>
<td>supporting, empathizing, facilitating, self-disclosure.</td>
<td>modeling, exercises, group observing group, brainstorming, nominal-group technique, synectics, written projections, group processing, teaching skills.</td>
<td>summarization, rounds, dyads, written reactions, rating sheets, homework, time limits, capping skills, and modeling.</td>
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3. Therapeutic Factors in a Group

Irvin Yalom has characterized positive forces as therapeutic factors within groups. For counseling and psychotherapy groups, these factors include the 11 factors that follow.
Therapeutic Factors in a Group

- *Instillation of hope* (i.e., assurance that treatment will work)
- *Universality* (i.e., the realization that one is not alone, unique, or abnormal)
- *Imparting of information* (i.e., instruction about mental health, mental illness, and how to deal with life problems)
Therapeutic Factors in a Group

- **Altruism** (i.e., sharing experiences and thoughts with others, helping them by giving of oneself, working for the common good)
- **Corrective recapitulation of the primary family group** (i.e., reliving early family conflicts and resolving them)
Therapeutic Factors in a Group

- **Development of socializing techniques** (i.e., interacting with others and learning social skills as well as more about oneself in social situations)
- **Imitative behavior** (i.e., modeling positive actions of other group members)
- **Interpersonal learning** (i.e., gaining insight and correctively working through past experiences)
Therapeutic Factors in a Group

- **Group cohesiveness** (i.e., bonding with other members of the group)
- **Catharsis** (i.e., experiencing and expressing feelings)
- **Existential factors** (i.e., accepting responsibility for one’s life in basic isolation from others, recognizing one’s own mortality and the capriciousness of existence)
4. Rules and Tools for Working with Groups

Parsimony – adoption of the simplest and most straightforward interpretation of the situation

Development – where is the group in its development, e.g., forming, storming, norming, performing, mourning

Systems Thinking – the group is a system; pay attention to interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics

Balance Content and Process
Core Group Skills

16 Core Group Skills

1. Encourage participation of group members.
2. Observe and identify group process events.
3. Attend to and acknowledge group member behavior.
4. Clarify and summarize group member statements.
5. Open and close group sessions.
6. Impart information in the group when necessary.
7. Model effective group leader behavior.
8. Engage in appropriate self-disclosure in the group.
9. Give and receive feedback in the group.
10. Ask open-ended questions in the group.
11. Empathize with group members.
12. Confront group members’ behavior.
13. Help group members attribute meaning to the experience.
14. Help group members to integrate and apply learning.
15. Demonstrate ASGW ethical and professional standards of group practice.
16. Keep the group on task in accomplishing its goals.
Make Use of Multiple Tools as well as Skills

If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail!

Group workers need a toolbox full of tools!
The Use of Tools

Group leaders use multiple tools in helping groups and members of groups advance. Most of these tools are atheoretical. Some, as noted, are theoretically based.

An important point to consider is that tools may be used with different types of groups (psychoeducational, counseling, therapy, task/work) and at various stages within a group (i.e., forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning). They may be used even if the group is not at a particular stage in its development.
108 Tools that may be used in a Group

- Acting “as if” (Adlerian)
- Active Listening
- Altruism
- Amplifying
- Attending
- Blocking
- Boundaries
- Brainstorming
- Capping
- Caring
- Clarification
- Coaching
- Collaborating

- Confronting
- Contract
- Cooperation
- Cutting Off
- Delegating
- Demonstrating
- Disputing
- Drawing Out
- Dream Analysis
- Empathizing
- Empty Chair Technique (Gestalt)
- Encouraging
- Executive Functioning (setting rules, limits, norms, managing the group as a system)
- Extinction
Acting “as if”

**Acting As If**

The specific situation where I would like to behave in a certain way by using the ‘act as if’ approach is:

* 

The specific ways I would like to behave in this situation are:

* 

The benefits of behaving this way would be:

*
Coaching
108 Tools that may be used in Groups

- Facilitating
- Fantasy Exercise
- Feedback
- Imitative Behavior
- Imparting of Information
- In and Out Circles (Fishbowl)
- Instilling Hope
- Interpretation
- Initiating
- Involving
- Joining
- Journaling (keeping a log)
- Leveling
- Life Script Analysis (TA)

- Imagery
- Icebreaker
- Humor
- Hot Seat (Gestalt)
- Homework
- Holding the Focus
- Here and Now Focus
- HELPING (Keats)
- Group Exercises
- Goal Setting
- Game analysis (TA)
- Free association (psychoanalysis)
- Linking
Feedback in a Group

- Feedback should be beneficial to the receiver and not serve the needs of the giver.
- Feedback is more effective when it is based on describable behavior.
- In the early stages of group development, positive feedback is more beneficial and more readily accepted than negative feedback.
Feedback in a Group

- Feedback is most effective when it immediately follows a stimulus behavior and is validated by others.
- Feedback is of greater benefit when the receiver is open and trusts the giver.
Linking
108 Tools that may be used in Groups

- Making the Rounds
- Making Wishes into Demands
- Meaning Attribution
- Modeling (behavioral)
- Modification

- Multimodal Method (Lazarus)
- Nominal Group Technique
- Nonverbal Behaviors/Cues
- Observing
- Operant Conditioning (behavioral)
- Paradox
- Permission
- Reflecting Feelings
- Rehearsal

**Pretraining**
- Process Observer
- Process Skills
- Projecting the Future
- Promoting Positive Interchanges

- Protecting
- Psychodrama (Moreno)
- Questioning
- Reassurance
- Reality Testing
- Pat on the Back
- Positive Expectations
- Reframing
Rehearsal and Pretraining

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrZk8rRbm-E
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrZk8rRbm-E
What Does the Glock Say?
108 Tools that may be used in Groups

- Reinforcement (behavioral)
- Restating
- Reorientation
- Role Playing
- Role Reversal
- Rounds
- Self-Disclosure
- Screening
- Sculpting (Moreno)
- Self-Disclosure
- Self-Instructional Training
- Self-Monitoring
- Shame Attacks (REBT)
- Shaping
- Silence

- Shifting the Focus
- Social Modeling
- Strokes
- Structuring
- Suggesting
- Summarizing
- Supporting
- Task Setting
- Teambuilding
- Time-Limited Rounds
- Tying Things Together
- Universalization
- Using Eyes
- Written Projections
Rounds
Social Modeling
5. Creative Methods beyond the Usual 108 Tools:

- **Forming Stage of the Group:**
  - Train station
  - Poem as a Group Catalyst
  - Milling Around
  - Passive-Active
Poem as a Group Catalyst

In Golden Gate Park That Day . . . By Lawrence Ferlinghetti

In Golden Gate Park that day a man and his wife were coming along
thru the enormous meadow which was the meadow of the world
He was wearing green suspenders and carrying an old beat-up flute in one hand
while his wife had a bunch of grapes which she kept handing out individually
to various squirrels as if each were a little joke
And then the two of them came on thru the enormous meadow
which was the meadow of the world and then at a very still spot where the trees dreamed
and seemed to have been waiting thru all time for them
they sat down together on the grass without looking at each other
and ate oranges without looking at each other and put the peels
in a basket which they seemed to have brought for that purpose without looking at each other
And then he took his shirt and undershirt off
but kept his hat on sideways and without saying anything fell asleep under it
And his wife just sat there looking at the birds which flew about calling to each other in the stilly air
as if they were questioning existence or trying to recall something forgotten
But then finally she too lay down flat
and just lay there looking up at nothing
Creative Methods beyond the Usual Tools:

- **Storming Stage of the Group**
- 1-2-3
- Home Spot
- Hamlet Dilemma
Hamlet Dilemma

"To be, or not to be" is the famous opening phrase of a soliloquy in William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. Debate surrounds its meaning, and that of the speech, but most agree that it asks the fundamental question "why live."
Creative Methods beyond the Usual Tools:

- Norming Stage of the Group:
  - Group Mural
  - “Who” & “We” Songs
  - 6-3-5 Brainwriting
Group Mural
A Calm and Focused Combine Exercise

As Easy as 6-3-5:

A brainwriting procedure
small groups of 6 people each
write down 3 ideas to solve a problem in a 5 minute span
pass the paper around to the next person who expands on the idea, i.e., elaborates, or generates a new idea.
Creative Methods beyond the Usual Tools:

- **Performing**
  - Locomotion
    - (across the room)
  - Areas (four corners)
    - (mad, sad, happy, anxious)
  - Common Object
  - Acting “as if”
Creative Methods beyond the Usual Tools:

- **Mourning Stage of the Group**
  
- Pat on the back
- Rainbow
- Collaborative poem
Collaborative Group Poem

In the group I learned
to attempt strategies differently
to be receptive to new ideas
three ways to think outside the box (creatively)
how powerful the arts can be
the beauty and wisdom of learning together
to experience differences and similarities
creative new ways of thinking and doing
about myself and my potential

Now I am moving on.
Remember

In conducting a successful group, timing should be combined with theory and techniques, i.e., tools. There is no substitute for experience in working with groups and there are no benefits in letting inappropriate behaviors continue once they surface.

In working with groups, think about the developmental levels of group members. Remind yourself that there are many interventions you can make that may be appropriate. However, some will be more powerful and effective at different times in the group.
6. Final Thought

“Not everything that is tried can be changed but nothing can be changed unless it is tried.” James Baldwin

Groups are for a lifetime. Try a few of the suggestions mentioned today no matter what the season.