



## Group Psychotherapy

While people seek psychotherapy for many different reasons, all have some problems in establishing and maintaining close and gratifying relationships with others. Often they have wished that they could be really honest about their positive and negative feelings with someone and get reciprocally honest feedback. The therapy group attempts to set up a situation where this type of honest, interpersonal exploration will occur.

Inevitably, members will experience others in the group similarly to the ways in which they experience intimate others outside the group, or similarly to the ways in which they experienced family members while they were growing up. All group members should be committed to learning about themselves and their relationships to others outside of therapy and how that all relates to their early relationships within their families.

To this end, all group members must be committed to the instrumental goal of expressing all their thoughts and feelings as they occur within the group. The way in which members can learn the most in a group is by being honest and direct with their feelings in the group at that moment, especially those feelings toward the other group members and the therapist(s). Members' thoughts and feelings in the present are the database from which group psychotherapy flows.

To foster these goals, there are several rules, which are important.

## Group Rules

1. Members will make a commitment to attend the group regularly for at least three months before making a decision about whether or not this is the group for them. It takes a minimum of three months for members to feel comfortable enough to begin to evaluate the usefulness of a particular group. The course of therapy is expected to be considerably longer than this.
2. Regular and timely attendance at all sessions is expected. Members agree to be present each week, to arrive on time, and remain throughout the entire meeting. As a member, it is your responsibility to notify the group in advance when it is absolutely necessary for you to be away or to be late for a group.
3. Members will notify the group at least one month in advance if they are considering leaving group. It is important for everyone to have an opportunity to express his/her feelings about the departure and to have enough time to explore this fully.
4. Members have a commitment to share all feelings, reactions, and thoughts during group meetings as a way of increasing their understanding of their own interpersonal dynamics.
5. As a member, you are agreeing to work actively on the problems that brought you to the group. This will require all group members to take their fair share of group time. Members also have a commitment to talk about important issues in their lives that cause difficulty in relating to others or in living life fully. It is assumed that these difficulties will be reenacted within the group and will be available for exploration by the group.
6. Members will treat matters that occur in group with utmost confidentiality. To that end, members agree to keep confidential the names and identities of all group members.
7. While you must observe the utmost confidentiality relating to individuals that are not part of your "treatment team" there are absolutely no secrets among members of your "treatment team". Your "treatment team" consists of your group therapist(s), your individual and/or couples therapist, your psychiatrist, and all members of your psychotherapy group. Thus what you share in the group or in individual and/or couples therapy, or with your psychiatrist will be shared with other members of your "treatment team" when anyone feels that it is important for your treatment to do so.

8. The use of any illegal drug, even when used recreationally, is strongly discouraged. Those who choose to drink alcohol, or to use an illegal drug, agree, by signing this statement, to abstain from drinking or taking an illegal drug on the day of the group meeting. Group members who are taking medication for a physical or emotional problem(s) will inform group leaders as to the nature of the problem(s) and the particular medication used.
9. Group members who are experiencing active addiction problems (food, alcohol, drugs, sex, etc.) may be asked to sign abstinence contracts with group leaders. Supplemental support, self-help group attendance, or other forms of treatment may be recommended to address particular types of problems. This will be assessed and implemented on an individual basis.
10. Members agree to use relationships in the group therapeutically- not socially. The group provides an opportunity for learning about one's problems in social relationships; it is not a gathering in which people meet to make social friends, and if used in that manner the group loses its therapeutic effectiveness. Therefore, as long as you are a member of this group, the only contact with other members of the group will be during the weekly group meeting. However, if by chance members do meet outside the group, it is their responsibility to discuss the salient aspects of the meeting inside the group. In general, outside contact drains the therapeutic energy from the group.

I am committed to the above therapeutic goals and rules for group psychotherapy.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_