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THE BENEFITS OF GROUP PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING

Annotation. A group psychological counseling offers a unique way for you to address your concerns. In this group, you will be helped both through discussions and listening to the experiences of others with similar problems. You will also be helped by giving support and suggestions to other group members. This group counseling approach has the advantage of accessibility. Due to minimal cost involved, the counselor can provide help to a larger community of people. Over the course of your life, you may discover that you have many concerns that could be addressed in a group counseling setting. The skills and insights you gain in each group will increase your overall psychological well-being and effectiveness in life. Group Psychological Counseling is a lecture and group discussion session which is conducted by a psychologist. Group participants share their life experiences and learn from one another. Each group session lasts 90 minutes. Group sessions are scheduled in an interval of one week. By participating in this group, you are expected to feel better and to become more effective in your life. From your side, it needs your commitment to come and join the group sessions every week. This brochure will help you understand why and how group psychological counseling

works. If you have confidence in group psychological counseling and understand how it works, you will benefit more from participating in it.

The term "group" in group psychological counseling can be regarded as a collective noun. From a grammatical point of view, it refers to a noun that specifically indicates the collection of several things. In the specific scope of psychological counseling, the concept of "group" is often used in several ways: first, the "group" points to the organizational nature of the group (such as the students of a class, the staff of a department, the inmates of a prison, etc.); second, the "group" is a combination of people themselves (such as a psychological counseling group, a work group, etc.); third, the "group" indicates the relationship between people (mainly refers to the members of the group and their internal relationship). The first two meanings belong to the entity group, while the third meaning belongs to the existential group. In the practice of group psychological counseling, whether it is the existential group, the entity group or the enterprise group, it is possible to carry out psychological counseling through appropriate methods. However, when we talk about "group psychological counseling," it usually refers to a group of people who have psychological problems or need psychological health and are organized for counseling purposes. At this point, the "group" refers to the combination of people themselves.

Keyword: psychology, group psychology, influence, positive emotions, work, interaction with people.

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ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА ГРУППОВОГО ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО КОНСУЛЬТИРОВАНИЯ

Аннотация. Групповое психологическое консультирование предлагает вам уникальный способ решения ваших проблем. В этой группе вам помогут не только обсудить, но и выслушать опыт других людей с аналогичными проблемами. Вам также помогут, предоставив поддержку и предложения другим членам группы. Преимущество такого подхода к групповому консультированию заключается в доступности. Благодаря минимальным затратам консультант может оказать помощь более широкому кругу людей. В течение своей жизни вы можете обнаружить, что у вас есть много проблем, которые можно было бы решить в рамках группового консультирования. Навыки и идеи, которые вы приобретете на каждой группе, повысят ваше общее психологическое благополучие и эффективность в жизни. Групповое психологическое консультирование - это лекция и групповая дискуссия, которые проводит психолог. Участники группы делятся своим жизненным опытом и учатся друг у друга. Каждое групповое занятие длится 90 минут. Групповые занятия проводятся с интервалом в одну неделю. Ожидается, что, участвуя в этой группе, вы почувствуете себя лучше и станете более эффективными в своей жизни. С вашей стороны, необходимо, чтобы вы были готовы посещать групповые занятия каждую неделю. Эта брошюра поможет

вам понять, почему и как работает групповое психологическое консультирование. Если вы доверяете групповому психологическому консультированию и понимаете, как оно работает, участие в нем принесет вам больше пользы.

Термин "группа" в групповом психологическом консультировании можно рассматривать как собирательное существительное. С грамматической точки зрения, это существительное, которое конкретно указывает на совокупность нескольких предметов. В специфической сфере психологического консультирования понятие "группа" часто используется в нескольких значениях: во-первых, "группа" указывает на организационный характер группы (например, учащиеся класса, сотрудники отдела, заключенные тюрьмы и т.д.); во-вторых, "группа" - это совокупность самих людей (например, группа психологического консультирования, рабочая группа и т.д.); в-третьих, "группа" указывает на отношения между людьми (в основном относится к членам группы и их внутренним взаимоотношениям). Первые два значения относятся к группе существей, в то время как третье значение относится к экзистенциальной группе. В практике группового психологического консультирования, будь то экзистенциальная группа, группа организаций или корпоративная группа, возможно проведение психологического консультирования с помощью соответствующих методов. Однако, когда мы говорим о "групповом психологическом консультировании", это обычно относится к группе людей, которые имеют психологические проблемы или нуждаются в психологическом оздоровлении и организованы для целей консультирования. На данном этапе под "группой" понимается объединение самих людей.

Ключевые слова: психология, групповая психология, влияние, положительные эмоции, работа, взаимодействие с людьми.

In catalogue FOREWORD healthresume, group psychological counseling is mainly used contextual counseling, community psychology and group counseling principles and methods of psychological problems in the group to help solve one of the guidance process. Group psychological counseling is a kind of psychological healing and education, which fundamentally adopts guidance and transformation method. It focuses on promoting the psychological health of other group members, making the necessary adjustments and improvements for the psychological problems and obstacles of the group members, and helping them restore their ability to self-control and self-adjust. Therefore, group psychological counseling generally has guidance property, but also has the function of preventing psychological problems and obstacles.

The positive effects of the deliberate use of group counseling that practitioners and clients experienced led to increased endorsement and use by both professional counselors and the American public. Since that time, the growth of group counseling has been dramatic. Such growth testifies to the value of group counseling as a means of helping individuals with a variety of personal issues and problems.

Contemporary practice of group counseling had its roots in social forces that emerged after devastating World Wars. In the setting of soldiers' psychiatric hospitals during World War II, clinicians observed that informal therapeutic interactions among patients having similar problems were occurring and that these interactions seemed to be helping. This led to the first deliberate use of group counseling. Upon returning to civilian life, soldiers and officers voiced a desire to

have this form of counseling available to them in their communities. As a result, practitioners began experimenting with groups in nonmilitary settings.

Though the modern history of group counseling is relatively short, discussion of the intimate personal problems of an individual in a group or communal setting is as old as civilization itself. In America, the meeting of Quaker "clearness" committees, in which members of the community join to help an individual gain insight into and resolve personal problems, is a historical example. Confidential exchange of personal problems and self-help in small communal settings have always been an important part of the support structure of many societies.

The second key theorist of this study is Aaron Beck, the founder of cognitive therapy. Beck's central thesis is that emotional disturbances are largely determined by the nature of an individual's thoughts. In other words, it is not events as such, but the meaning of events, that causes emotional upsets. According to Beck, emotional reactions are guided by mental filters, through which events are perceived in a biased and distorted way. Moreover, negative thoughts prevent individuals from seeing reality and themselves in a balanced and healthy manner. Distorted or biased cognition can influence reality in self-fulfilling ways. Beck also notes that social interactions are seriously impaired by depression and that alienation, loneliness, and interpersonal problems form a vicious circle that maintains and exacerbates depressive symptoms. This provided the foundation for Beck's incorporation of group therapy as part of his cognitive therapy approach. In doing so, Beck draws upon the third key theorist, Irvin Yalom, as Beck's fusion of cognitive therapy and Yalom's therapeutic factors are highlighted in this investigation.

Theoretical foundations of this study are based on three key theorists. The first key theorist, Sigmund Freud, is perhaps the most well-known figure in the

field of psychology. Freud's major contribution was the claim that the human psyche is not a unitary monolithic entity but has a dynamic structure comprising several interacting agencies. He posited three such agencies - the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is the primeval part of our psyche, which harbors our innate, biological, largely antisocial, and amoral needs and wants. Being the source of irrational desires, the id is in perpetual conflict with the regulating agencies of the ego and the superego. The function of the ego is to mediate between the demands of the id, the constraints of the superego, and the external social world. The superego is the internalization of societal and parental values, and it is the source of guilt when its rules are transgressed.

Adler's (1958) Individual Psychology is probably the first psychology to give serious consideration to the group. For Adler, the individual and the group were inseparable; in order to understand one, you must look at the other. According to Adler, individuals are motivated by social interest - the desire for belonging and community feeling. Problems arise when an individual's efforts are misplaced in the selfish pursuit of personal power or recognition. Adler believed that insight into these dynamics would help individuals and groups to reorient their goals and cooperate with one another to achieve society's greater good. As a result, group counseling has been an especially useful technique for clients working from an Adlerian framework as they are more easily able to confront their sense of belonging and community feeling with the help of peers. Peers can then offer feedback and support as clients work to reorient their goals.

Group counseling is often a preferred form of treatment for many clients. Its popularity is based partly on the opportunity to gain support and feedback from other group members who share similar concerns. Group counseling is also more cost-effective than individual counseling for the counselor's time. Throughout the

history of group work, a variety of theoretical approaches have enhanced the use of groups in facilitating positive change. These theories include Adler's Individual Psychology, interpersonal theory, learning theory and behavior modification, and cognitive theory.

The group format extends the benefits of CBT in several ways. First, it can reduce the cost both in time and money. If information about the group focus can be widely disseminated, much time can be saved in individual screening. Second, members of the group act as natural role models for each other. Patients can be from similar backgrounds, reinforcing the learning process for everyone. Third, the presence of others with similar problems validates the suffering of individual members. This validation counters the sense of isolation common in depression and serves as a reality check for one's own distorted beliefs. Fourth, as Clarence Percival, a pioneer in group CBT, stated, "The group milieu provides an efficient, graded series of real-life exposures and challenges, within a supportive, structured learning environment." Graded exposure, or behavioral activation, is at the core of CBT for depression. Group members are encouraged to support, and gently challenge, each other to move through the hierarchy of graded exposures. Individual cognitive distortions that inhibit progress are quickly addressed by group leaders and members alike. Finally, the group format allows time for broader applications of CBT, such as relapse prevention.

Group cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) provides the dual opportunities to maximize the benefits of both CBT and group therapy. CBT is the most frequently empirically supported form of psychotherapy; it has clearly delineated procedures and is easy to utilize in groups. In CBT, group members learn to monitor and change their negative self-talk and beliefs. They are then exposed to feared situations and supported as they gradually begin to confront and master those

situations. In this way, they gain confidence and begin to heal. In group CBT, members help each other apply these techniques to their own lives, providing modeling, encouragement, and feedback.

The counselor's personal characteristics are also very important in group treatment. Being open, honest, and demonstrating good leadership are important qualities. Being able to make decisions and provide clarity to the group when needed will help facilitate the group process. The counselor must always be professional and maintain the highest ethical standards. It is also important that the counselor has knowledge and understanding of the cultural background of the group members. The way a group perceives its counselor is related to the counselor's fulfillment of the above-mentioned roles as well as the counselor's personality, manner, and style. Any perception that group members have of the counselor will affect their openness and willingness to participate in the group. The counselor plays a primary role in group treatment, and the effectiveness of the group is intimately related to the effectiveness of the counselor. Therefore, the effectiveness of the group is largely the result of the Counselor's experience, knowledge, and training, as well as the Counselor's personal and professional characteristics. Credibility, expertise, and the ability to relate to group members are the main qualities that the counselor must possess. The counselor's professional and personal characteristics and the counselor's knowledge of group process and discipline will greatly influence the counselor's perceived and actual effectiveness.

The counselor is the key person in group counseling and the group process. His or her expertise should include discipline skills and a good understanding of group processes and workings. Most counselors are educated and trained in individual treatment modalities. The main difference between individual and group counseling is that a number of patients or clients are seen simultaneously in group

counseling. Consequently, the counselor must have more skills in the management of the group treatment modality. The counselor's role includes both leader and facilitator of the group process. Additionally, the counselor can function in a number of other roles including educator, coach, model, consultant, and broker of services. The counselor provides the group with few of the following services: support, proper management, coordination, and therapeutic benefits. Upon entering a group, clients develop expectations about their counselor and make judgments on the counselor's competence regarding his or her ability to fulfill the roles mentioned above.

Interpersonal learning is another important group counseling technique. By working and interacting with others in the group, clients can develop a more accurate sense of how they are perceived by the world. They can learn about their strengths and weaknesses and incorporate feedback in a supportive and confidential environment. As with the other group counseling techniques, the counselor plays a crucial role in guiding the group towards this form of learning.

Catharsis is one of the more powerful group counseling techniques. It is perhaps best described as an emotional cleansing. When a client experiences an emotional breakthrough in the group and releases feelings that have been bottled up inside, the resulting emotional relief can be quite powerful. One contributing factor to the effectiveness of catharsis in group counseling is the sense of universality experienced by the client. When a group member learns that others share similar feelings or have had similar experiences, the group can act as a validating force, which then encourages expression and further emotional release.

Group counseling requires special methods and techniques in order to be effective. Counselors need to have a good understanding of group dynamics and be able to apply specific group counseling techniques. Several techniques can be

utilized in group counseling. Two of the more commonly used techniques are Catharsis, and Interpersonal Learning.

If a person has negative experiences with others and then repeats the same patterns of poor communication within the group, the group can offer feedback for further examination. The group then becomes a source of information and knowledge which the person would not otherwise have obtained. One of the most significant self-help tools is the knowledge and insight gained from interacting with others. As group members begin to recognize and understand each other's difficulties, they gain a sense of belonging and acceptance. The usual isolation and secrecy surrounding emotional pain decreases. For example, a victim of sexual abuse may feel tainted and unworthy of love. Over time within the group, she will probably hear similar disclosures from others and then offer them the same acceptance and support they offered her. In this process, she begins to feel like a worthy and acceptable person. Group therapy helps individuals improve maladaptive patterns. People may talk about it, but until they confront and experience the conflict within a social framework, the pattern is unlikely to change.

In the group, people learn about different perspectives, ideas, and coping strategies. They replace serious self-criticism and negative self-attribution with a more benign and realistic view. By talking to others and by exchanging feedback and support, they gather useful information. As their social perspective broadens, their inner emotional world also expands. They learn more about their personality and the way they function in their everyday lives. Group members also have opportunities to broaden future social relationships. A person suffering from social anxiety will realize that the anxiety problem is a common problem. As he sees others coping with the same issue, his own anxiety will decrease. Furthermore,

when relationships develop inside the group, they act as a microcosm for relationships in the larger society.

Witnessing the validation of one's own experience by another person increases the feeling of safety and decreases the feeling of isolation. The group psychological counseling itself (usually a fixed group session where all participants attend the same sessions) provides a sense of structure and predictability in victims' chaotic and unpredictable environment. Although mass crimes occur within the same period of time, victim needs may shift and change over time. Whereas early on, victims primarily need to share their stories to make sense of what happened, later on, victims may need help with grief, guilt, or fear. As such, the group setting allows victims to discuss and express different needs as they come up over time, and to address these issues in a flexible manner.

Group psychological counseling offers victims an environment in which they can get emotional support and validation of their unique experience. Victims can feel supported by others who have similar feelings and have undergone similar events within the group setting. Furthermore, as many victims who have experienced comparable events within the same period may be in the same group session, victims can validate their experience and feelings through others' stories and expression of emotion and by professionals leading the session. This sense of validation and testimonial support is particularly necessary for victims of mass crimes, as their internal world, social world, and sense of identity and meaning in life have been shattered.

For all of these populations, engaging in group counseling offers the additional benefit of working on their intrapersonal concerns within the relationship crucible of the group. This means that clients not only get to work on their personal issues, but that they do so in a way that also enhances their social and relationship

skills. This is often more efficient than trying to learn these skills in individual counseling and can provide experiences that cut to the core of the client's issue in a way that a one-on-one relationship with a counselor cannot. Because of these combined intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits, group counseling is, in certain cases, the treatment of choice, rather than an individual treatment adapted for more than one person. In other cases, it is an invaluable adjunct to individual counseling. Group counseling can be implemented in a clear and structured way, allowing clients to maximize these benefits with a minimum of unnecessary confusion or chaos.

Group counseling has specific benefits for particular populations. For clients with social anxiety, the group provides ready-made, safe-to-fail experiments in social interaction, initially in the form of simply being in the group and then gradually adding conversational elements. For depressed clients, the group combats the sense of isolation that often accompanies depression, while also providing a more varied and intense social experience. Clients struggling with grief can connect with others who are experiencing similar losses. Psychotic clients can gain reality testing from others in the group, while at the same time enhancing their social skills. Clients who are members of a stigmatized minority can find support and validation from others who share their identity. Adolescents: Psychological counseling can help in many of the transitions of adolescence. An adolescent may need to resolve issues from childhood to be able to move on to the next stage of maturation, which is attaining an adult identity. An also may have a variety of adjustment problems to related to conflicts while integrating the adolescent identity with the adult identity. Talking about these issues may initiate changes. In the case of an eating disorder, the work of recovery must be initiated and maintained throughout the problem. In addition to individual therapy, an adolescent support

group can be helpful and can empower reluctant clients. It clarifies that the problem is not “only my parents,” are. They are straining against, the therapist, “These other kids have the same issues as me.” The therapeutic value of such a group is enhanced by the nonverbal sharing of grief and by increasing mutual accountability.

Children: Come into connection with themselves, their innermost being, their feelings, thoughts, and intuition; Gain insight into their problems; Find symptoms diminish; Experience increased self-esteem as they realize that they are not alone with their problems; Discover that others have similar problems and through mutual sharing and understanding, symptoms disappear; Learn from others ways of handling their problems and learning skills they can apply to their own life; Get opportunity of mirroring and feedback from several group members; Practice social, verbal, and nonverbal skills; Improve the ability to trust others and develop healthy initiation towards others; See own story in broader perspective; Learn to set limits for oneself and respect others; Experience having a safe space.

One study found that presenting problems did not influence the outcomes of the client in group counseling. Further, efficiency seems to be a hallmark of group interventions. In terms of counseling groups, there is evidence to suggest that group counseling is more cost effective than individual counseling and produces more positive outcomes than mass treatments. Some studies report that three to five group sessions are often the equivalent of 20 individual sessions. The managed care environment is increasingly identifying group interventions as cost-effective methods of meeting the mental health needs of its constituents. Throughout the literature, over and over, we hear about the cost effectiveness of group counseling and psychotherapy.

The literature concerning group counseling and psychotherapy is replete with evidence of the effectiveness and efficacy of this mode of intervention. Some people argue that when a large number of studies support the effectiveness of a treatment, we can be confident that this is the case. Further, clients' problems are located within their social context, thus clients have a greater probability of resolving their problems when they are being helped in a group that takes place in a social context more closely related to their everyday life.

In addition to general research indicating that group counseling is often as effective as individual counseling in addressing many personal concerns, several studies specifically examine the benefits of group counseling in disaster response. These studies concluded that group counseling can reduce symptoms of distress and improve functioning in disaster survivors, particularly when the group is conducted as a time-limited, organized psychoeducational activity. The group environment may be especially valuable in disaster response because it can provide social support, decrease a person's sense of being alone in the suffering, and help to normalize the person's experience and distress. As a result, disaster survivors may feel understood, validated, and supported in a group environment, which can help to reduce symptoms of distress.

Over the past 20 years, a substantial body of research has demonstrated the efficacy of group counseling and psychotherapy in addressing a wide variety of personal concerns. Commonly recognized benefits of group psychological counseling include the development of self-awareness, improved interpersonal skills and relationships, increased ability to understand and express feelings, enhanced coping strategies, a greater sense of empowerment, and improved mental health. These benefits may be particularly important for persons who are experiencing distress in the aftermath of an emergency, as they can help to prevent

symptoms from becoming more severe over time and to restore a sense of balance and well-being.

A group counseling leader should not exert undue influence on the group or any of its individual members to either gain or maintain leadership position or strengthen their own ego by attempting to arrange the group so that a particular member's revelations become public property or so that their advice becomes accepted as ultimate wisdom. Even when a leader is a professional in an area in which a group member seeks knowledge or skill, the member should be encouraged to seek help in their specialized area from someone who provides specialized training. In order to guard against the abrogation of leader responsibility to facilitate appropriate group and self-growth, it is necessary to be aware of ethical and professional standards that apply to group work.

An essential component of group counseling is the promotion of the personal autonomy and growth of the individual members. To ensure that the needs of all members are given equal consideration, group counseling leaders should be recognized at the outset and throughout the counseling process as responsible for the facilitation of group- and self-growth rather than either covert or overt manipulation of the group and its individuals for personal or professional gain. It is important to recognize that leaders determine with the group its working conditions and procedures, within established professional and ethical standards.

The process of informed consent in group therapy includes not only the above parameters but other unique features of group process. These relate to the fact that the therapist cannot predict the evolving dynamics of the group. For instance, a group member may become your ally as a cotherapist one day, and the next day may be confronting you or taking an oppositional position against you as the leader. Much of this cannot be anticipated. Members should be told, and

reminded throughout the group experience, that the only way to fully preserve privacy is not to participate in the group, since anything they may say or do could potentially be witnessed by others. This is the inherent risk of group therapy. Nonverbal behavior is usually not protected by privacy the way verbal disclosures generally are; however, rules of confidentiality should also apply to nonverbal expressions.

Confidentiality and informed consent must be addressed in groups from the outset. Although it is more complicated in most group settings than in individual therapy, it can be managed. Members should be encouraged to respect one another's privacy and to mention outside the group only what others have shared in the group. The limits of confidentiality should be made clear and explained to potential group members prior to their joining the group. It is essential that group members become aware of the issues surrounding their consent to limits of confidentiality long before an outside disclosure by the leader occurs.

Conclusion. Looking to the future, there are many exciting opportunities for research on group psychological counseling and for its further development as a specialized service. Although group counseling is widely used and its benefits are well recognized, further empirical research is needed to better understand how group counseling can best help people and under what conditions. Existing research also has important limitations and it would be beneficial for future studies to improve upon these. Finally, it is important that advances in the field of individual psychological counseling are also incorporated into group counseling, and that the unique benefits of group counseling are highlighted to administrators, practitioners, and the public, so that group counseling continues to be available and utilized to help all those who would benefit from it.

Group psychological counseling is provided in diverse locations across the world applying a variety of theoretical approaches. However, all share the fundamental strength that talking is one of the most basic and powerful forms of human communication and that in talking and listening to each other, much healing and growth can occur. This chapter describes the specific benefits of group psychological counseling that have been identified in empirical research. In addition to benefiting from general psychological counseling, group counseling members gain unique insights from interacting with other group members, experience a sense of universality by learning they are not alone in their problems, and receive valuable social support.

Individuals who are experiencing relatively similar concerns find comfort in knowing that they are not alone. Another aspect of universality is being able to identify with and understand what others are going through. This can be quite validating and normalizing, which in turn promotes and enhances mental health. But some of the greatest benefits of group counseling come from actively participating in the group process, especially in group counseling as it harnesses the power of group support. As members begin to share their stories and actively engage in the group process by being themselves, group cohesion begins to increase and even more therapeutic benefits are experienced as a result. Group cohesion or unity is an essential factor; it affects all other aspects of group counseling. Part of the reason that counseling groups are so effective is that most humans are social beings who function best when part of a community and, as such, gain therapeutic benefits from being part of a community of others who are experiencing similar concerns. Group counseling clearly has its benefits. It is a unique modality that offers us the opportunity to connect with others and, in the

process, learn and develop as individuals. As is often said, "No person is an island." We need others.

In the counseling literature, group counseling is often referred to as group therapy or as having therapeutic benefits. Although these terms are used interchangeably in the counseling literature, from a counseling perspective, it is more accurate to consider group counseling as having therapeutic benefits, as long as counseling is indeed being provided. In a non-directive student-led group situation (which would not typically be considered group counseling in the formal sense), there may be some members who experience therapeutic benefits simply by talking about their concerns with others; but by and large, therapeutic benefits are a result of decision making on how best to act on those concerns and receiving support from group members who are experiencing similar concerns. This overview explores the following key benefits of group counseling as a foundation for understanding how to help our students and ourselves get the most out of the experience: universality, group cohesion, interpersonal learning, and feedback.

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