

Discussion Thread: Member Selection & Group Structure

Yalom & Leszcz (2020) wrote about the superiority of group therapy to individual therapy for clients with SUDs, concerning the aspects of social learning, social support, and social networks. What are your thoughts about their position? Do you agree with their belief that group therapy is superior to individual therapy for these clients, or do you believe that both are equally important for clients dealing with SUDs? Please explain your reason(s).

Reference:

Yalom, I. D., & Leszcz, M. (2020). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy*, (6th ed.). Basic Books.

Reply 1: *As counselor educators, we understand the importance of creating an effective group therapy environment for emerging counselors to experience a group for themselves. This not only helps them experience the phenomenon of group but gives them the belief that group is an effective form of therapy. Yalom and Leszcz (2020, p. 372-373) point out that a major contribution to the efficacy of group therapy is the preparation phase. How do we as counselor educators prepare emerging counselors for a most effective group experience?*

Greetings. Thank you for the question presented this week. To create a most effective group experience, we, as counselor educators, can prepare emerging counselors in several ways. First, we can discuss about the importance and relevance of group therapy, as compared to individual therapy. For instance, Yalom & Leszcz (2020) discussed about the superiority of group therapy to individual therapy for clients with SUDs, regarding the aspects of social learning, social support, and social networks.

Then, we, as counselor educators, must model for emerging counselors how to establish an effective group, even via use of the preparation stage. We must teach about the importance of preparing clients for group and demonstrate what this looks like for emerging counselors. It is important that we prepare emerging counselors to speak honestly with the clients about some of the issues, which might arise when attending group, as well as about appropriate behavior. It is also important that emerging counselors make clients feel safe (Smith & Doyle, 2022).

Next, we can prepare emerging counselors by teaching them to be honest about the criteria for inclusion and exclusion, which could drastically affect the effectiveness of group therapy. It is important to recommend clients to groups where their culture and idiosyncrasies will not negatively affect the group's process ability to grow. For that client to have a most effective, group experience, emerging counselors must be aware that specific clients dealing with specific issues might not be appropriate for certain groups.

Finally, we must stress the concept of "here and now" in the preparation stage. This will prepare emerging counselors how to stay in the present about what the group is experiencing and set the group up for effective success.

References:

- Smith, L., & Doyle, E. M. (2022). Preparing student therapists to work with Black mental health: Attending to the social and institutional organization of "culture" in Canadian counsellor education. *Canadian Psychology*, 63(4), 623-636. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cap0000343>
- Yalom, I. D., & Leszcz, M. (2020). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy*, (6th ed.). Basic Books.

Reply 2: *How do you deter dropouts from your groups in the past or present?*

Greetings. Thank you for the question you have presented this week. I deterred dropouts from my groups in the past and in present in several ways. First, I honestly used inclusion and exclusion criteria, when I was working as an addiction's counselor, to see if the client was ready for change before recommending him/her to the OP or IOP group. Yalom & Leszcz (2020) wrote that prematurely leaving group could negatively affect the individual, as well as the group. I can remember the group asking about the individual and why the person never returned. It can affect the group's morale if not corrected and redirected, so I made sure that people, who were in the group were made aware about all aspects of coming to group.

Next, I do my best to deter group dropouts by addressing any resistance or lack of group attendance when a pattern is recognized. I would most often do this in the client's individual session. Clough et al. (2022) wrote about the different factors that can affect client outcomes, as it pertains to group therapy. As a therapist, I did my best to recognize the client's specific circumstances and did my best to be as understanding as I could be and to not allow my personal biases to affect my working relationship with the client.

Presently, I have my own private practice. I do my best to be empathetic and understanding concerning client's view of group therapy. I measure the client's "stages of change" level and do my best not to take it personally when they do not come to group. It is my job to provide the service and to encourage participation, but I do my best to discuss the group's effectiveness. In the end, it is up to the client to participate.

References:

- Clough, B., Spriggs, L., Stainer, M., & Casey, L. (2022). Working together: An investigation of the impact of working alliance and cohesion on group psychotherapy attendance. *Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 95(1), 79-97. <https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12364>
- Yalom, I. D., & Leszcz, M. (2020). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy*, (6th ed.). Basic Books.