

Jacobs, Masson, Harvill & Schimmel's  
(2012)

# 15 Therapeutic Forces

# 1. Clarity Of Purpose

- In **unsuccessful groups**, the leader often is **unclear as to the purpose** and, thus, **confuses the members**.
- For instance, a leader might say the group is educational but spend most of the time doing therapy.
- The leader might say the group is for support but spend the majority of the time focusing on one person or on one topic that is not relevant for most of the members.

## 2. Relevance Of Purpose

- The **purpose** must be **relevant for the members**.
- For members in prison, talking about their future jobs would not be relevant if the members had another 5 years on their prison sentence – a more relevant topic would be getting the most out of prison or getting along with others in prison.

## 3. Group Size

- Group size can definitely **affect group dynamics**.
- The size of the group will depend in **part of its purpose, the length of time of each sessions, the setting available, and the experience of the leader**. 5 to 8 as the ideal number of members for most groups.
- **Education groups** usually have from 5 to 15 members; **discussion groups** usually have from 5 to 8. **Personal growth, support, and counseling/therapy groups** have from 5 to 8 members, although there can be as few as 3 and as many as 12.

## Cntd...3. Group Size

- If the group is **too large**, members very often to hesitate to share or do not have time to share.
- Groups that are **too small** can cause members to feel too much pressure to participate, creating an equally negative force.

## 4. Length Of Each Session

- **Enough time** must be allotted for **each session**.
- Members may feel they did not get their chance to share.
- The group never really accomplishes much and the sharing never gets very personal.
- Eg :
  - i. For education, discussion, and task (~ 1 to 2 hours)
  - ii. Group in school (40-50 minutes)
  - iii. Children (30 to 40 minutes)
  - iv. Therapy, support, and growth groups( $\geq 1\frac{1}{2}$  and  $< 3$  hours)

## 5. Frequency Of Meetings

- The number of meetings per month depends on many different factors, the most important being the **purpose of the group** and **the composition of the members**.
- Groups in residential setting (two to three times a week)
- Support groups (once or twice a month)
- A leader should pay attention to the **effect of the interval between sessions**.

## 6. Adequacy Of The Setting

- One is convenience - **the location is easily accessible.**
- The **privacy** of the meeting room.
- **The room is comfortable** – the wall decorations are like, the lighting, seating arrangements and chairs. The relative size of the chairs – same size.
- There is a **comfortable carpet** to sit on and the members agree.
- Whether or not to use tables – serve as **barriers between members.**
- **Best seating arrangement is a circle**, so that all members **can see one another.**

## 7. Time Of Day

- If the group meets right after lunch or late in the day, the leader and the members may be tired.
- **Choose a time** that seems best for the **majority of those involved**.

## 8. The Leader's Attitude

- The leader's feelings about leading a group definitely **affect how the group will go**.
- Inability to control negative members.
- Having a negative attitude – leader is being required to lead a group with people he does not like or on a topic in which he has little or no interest.

## 9. Closed Or Open Groups

- Whether the **membership will open or closed**.
- **Closed groups** – that is, no new members are admitted once the group is established.
- **Open basis** – members join and leave periodically.

## 10. Voluntary Or Non-voluntary Membership

- It would be nice if all groups could be held on a **voluntary basis**. However, the courts and settings such as correctional institutions, residential treatment centers, and schools often mandate group participation.
- It is important to **adapt to this dynamic**.
- Yalom (2005) and Corey (2008) state that **negative attitudes about being in a group** can be transformed by the leader's ability to prepare members for the group.
- To make the **first session successful**, the leader must **plan the group on the assumption** that **there will be negative attitudes**.

## 11. Members' Level Of Commitment

- Desiring to be **cooperative** rather than resistant, disruptive or hostile.
- Members **lacking commitment** are :
  - I. Those who are forced to attend
  - II. Those who want to direct the group
  - III. Be the center of attention
- All kinds of negative group dynamics occur when there is little commitment.
  - I. How do you know if there is commitment? Conduct pre-group interviews.
  - II. To observe your members.
  - III. Tell how they feel about being in the group. Eg : “what is your feeling about being in group?”.

## 12. Level Of Trust

- Trust will usually develop over time if the group is **moving in a positive direction.**
- Problems of trust often occur when **members have very different points of view.**

## 13. Members' Attitude Toward The Leader

- Do they like him? Do they respect him? Do they trust him? Do they respect his group leadership skills?
- In most groups, **members will have a variety feeling toward the leader.**

## 14. The Leader's Experience In Leading Groups

- A beginning leader may be an **antitherapeutic force** because **the leader lack skills, may be nervous, and will make mistakes.**
- For a **good therapy group** to occur, **the leader must be experienced in individual counseling** and have knowledge about counseling theories.

## 15. Co leadership Harmony

- If the **two leaders are in sync with each other**, then it is almost always a **positive force**.
- When **the leaders view group leading in two different ways**, then **co leading can serve as an antitherapeutic force**.

## Concluding Comments

- All groups go through at least three stages: **beginning, working and closing.**
- Some groups go through **additional stages.**
- **Group process** (also called **group dynamics**) refer to the **attitudes and interaction of members and leaders.**
- **Therapeutic forces** are the **many different elements operating in a group.**
- It is also important for **the leader to be aware of both process and content during any session.**