

THE BENEFITS OF GROUP THERAPY

Just what is group therapy?

In group therapy, five to ten people meet face-to-face with one or more trained group therapists and talk about what is troubling them. Members also give feedback to each other by expressing their own feelings about what someone says or does. This interaction gives group members an opportunity to try out new ways of behaving and to learn more about the way they interact with others. What makes the situation unique is that it is a closed and safe system. The content of the group sessions is confidential; what members talk about or disclose is not discussed outside the group.

The first few sessions of a group usually focus on the establishment of trust. During this time, members work to establish a level of trust that allows them to talk personally and honestly. Group trust is achieved when all members make a commitment to the group.

Why does group therapy work?

When people come into a group and interact freely with other group members, they usually recreate those difficulties that brought them to group therapy in the first place. Under the skilled direction of a group therapist, the group is able to give support, offer alternatives, or gently confront the person. In this way the difficulty becomes resolved, alternative behaviors are learned, and the person develops new social techniques or ways of relating to people. During group therapy, people begin to see that they are not alone. Many people feel they are unique because of their problems, and it is encouraging to hear that other people have similar difficulties. In the climate of trust provided by the group, people feel free to care about and help each other.

Some of the many benefits of group therapy:

- Exploring issues in an interpersonal context more accurately reflects real life.
- Group therapy provides an opportunity to observe and reflect on your own and others' interpersonal skills.
- Group therapy provides an opportunity to benefit both through active participation and through observation.
- Group therapy offers an opportunity to give and get immediate feedback about concerns, issues and problems affecting one's life.
- Group therapy members benefit by working through personal issues in a supportive, confidential atmosphere and by helping others to work through theirs.