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## **SOCIAL GROUP WORK PROCESS**

### **SUMMARY**

Group work process consists of various stages. **Intake, study, objectives, goal setting, intervention strategies and evaluation** are part of this process.

**In intake STAGE**, members are selected according to the benefits they will gain from the group effort.

**Study phase** is where a detailed study about the advantages and disadvantages of the group members are studied for formal intake into the group.

**Objectives** are defined to give a clear idea about how the group must function and for the purpose of evaluation and guidance.

**Goal setting** is where the goal is set and activities, assignment of responsibilities to the members are executed.

**Intervention strategies** are strategies which are used to intervene into the functionality of the group, and on the members of the group

**Evaluation** is done in a periodical manner to evaluate about the level of achievement of the group as well as of the group members.

### **Intake**

During intake, the presenting concerns and needs of prospective members are identified. Judgments that some or all of these people could benefit from a group approach are made.

An agreement is often formulated between the members of the group and the group leader about **tentative** group goals. This stage may also be referred to as the contract stage, as the leader and the members make a commitment to pursue the situation to the next step.

## **Study**

**Study can be also termed as “fact finding”** or “gathering of facts or information”. Intake and study are going together. It includes collecting facts about each individual in the group or group as a whole.

**Here the principle of individualisation is important.** That is each individual is unique to the group worker and each group is also unique to the group worker.

Fact finding in social group work is done by means of **(1) observation and listening in the group, (2) occasional individual contacts with a group member or with members of his/her family, and (3) home visits and a sound knowledge of the economic and social influences of the neighbourhood and work place from which the individual or his parents come.**

**Fact finding** in social group work, therefore, relates to the **understanding of the individual, to his role and his relationships in the group, to the kind of impact the group has on individual, to the individuals’ impact on the group, to the whole group atmosphere, to the interpersonal relationships outside of the group, and to the social and economic environment. Without this knowledge group work cannot be effective.**

### **Tools for Fact finding**

- Basic knowledge of Individual & group dynamic behaviour
- Active listening to the group members
- Observation, consultation and help from outside
- Home visit
- Occasional individual contact

## **Objectives**

When our objectives are clear, we are helped in the determination of the kind of service or program that the agency should provide, and our conception of the purpose will control the specific emphasis of the program.

Naturally, statements of purpose do not constitute a program, nor do they bring programme into reality; but they do help us to know what type of program is most important to us.

Our objectives should be utilised at the point of deciding upon constituency or clientele with whom we work. It is practically impossible to make wise judgments regarding constituency, except in terms of agency objectives. It is equally difficult to develop satisfactory relationships between the agency and the constituency unless there is clarity as to the purpose to which all parties subscribe.

**Our statement of objectives** provides us with essential guideposts to the kind of leadership we need. **This aspect of leadership is important from the point of view of both paid worker and unpaid volunteer workers. It will help the agency to outline the kinds of skills needed by all the people who work with agency groups.**

**Our statement of objective** can be utilised continuously in the process of financing the agency, providing plant and equipment, and dealing with all physical matters of operation. It is distinctly necessary to use the agency purpose as a point of reference in budget making because what the agency is trying to accomplish should be the chief motivating factor in the way it allocates its funds.

**Our objectives are put to work at the point of evaluation;** in fact a major aspect of evaluation process revolves around the matter of purpose. When the agency faces the question of evaluation, it is accomplished by using its stated purpose as the basis upon which it checks out its work. Thus, when purpose are clear, individual and group energy can be effectively mobilized and focused; priorities can be determined logically and soundly; programs can be measured; and public support will be sustained.

- **Objectives** are tasks you set out to achieve in manageable stages, working towards your **aims**. Choose objectives that you know you can achieve.

- **Objectives can change** - so it's good to have an aim that keeps you going in the same direction. The more precise and defined your objectives are, the easier it is to follow a plan to reach your aim.
- Once you have set your objectives, you can record your progress. It's possible to evaluate a process which has defined objectives.
- If you are involved in a project with others, it helps if you have stated your objectives or has them written down. Then you know which objectives you share and which ones cannot be fulfilled in this group.
- It's not usually possible to reach all your objectives at once. You will also recognise which objectives you want to reach in your study group and also which ones you will try to reach in other areas of your life.

## **Goal Setting**

In the first few meetings, groups often spend a considerable amount of time discussing the goals. When the worker discusses the groups purposes, the process of goal formulation begins.

Goals continued to be defined and modified as the functioning of the group and its members are assessed. A goal is an end toward which an individual or group of people is working. It is an ideal or a desired achievement that people value. Setting goal is the first step in measuring the effectiveness of a group.

Once goals are set, the task necessary to accomplish the goal must be determined next, responsibilities for carrying out the tasks must be agreed upon or assigned, and deadlines for completing those tasks must be set. As the process proceeds, the extent to which deadlines have been met and tasks achieved must be evaluated.

The final measurement is whether the group has achieved the goals or not. An effective group is one that has considerable success in achieving its goals. Group members will be more motivated to achieve group goals if they are involved in setting these goals.

**Through involvement**, members will be (1) more likely to have their personal goals become a component of the group goals, (2) more aware of the

importance of choosing these goals, and (3) more committed to providing their resources to achieve the goals.

Firstly understand **synergy**. Synergy in simple terms means that as a group you will come up with a better response than you all would as individuals. If you align yourself with people who have similar goals, in most cases, you will achieve better outcomes and stay more motivated. There are some exceptions to the rule, but around 90 percent of the time you will end up with a more positive outcome.

Secondly, you should look at obtaining a mentor or a coach. Working in a team doesn't mean you have to tell everyone about your goals and have them help you achieve them. **If you took this approach most people would ask what's in it for me? A way to still involve people, and have something in it for them, is to look at obtaining a mentor or a coach in your particular field. A mentor could be an expert who you take out for lunch once every month.** A coach could be a life coach or something along those lines, whom you pay to meet with and who helps make you accountable for your goals.

The key is really to find **like-minded individuals** who have **similar goals** and **to try and motivate each other** and **work together** to **achieve a better outcome for everyone**. **Unless the person is a mentor or a coach, then the relationship really has to be win-win for everyone. There will be little benefit if only one person has success and the rest don't. It is also best to have a close group of people who you trust. Group work, is better if everyone knows each other's strengths and weaknesses.** This way you can all help each other and focus on the areas where you have strengths.

Finally, while working as a group, or been accountable to a mentor or a coach can help improve **your goal setting**, it doesn't take away from the need to be accountable for yourself. At the end of the day, how you work, and how motivated you stay is all dependent upon you. It is up to you to make it happen!

## Intervention Strategy

### Gestalt Therapy

In gestalt therapy the worker aids the clients in learning how they prevent themselves from maturing. It is the aim of worker to help the client to become aware of and accept responsibility for how they make themselves feel better.

### **Transactional Analysis**

It is a process of analysing and explaining intra-personal and interpersonal processes. **This therapeutic model was developed by Berne.** He proposes that personal change can be maximized through group psychotherapy where the social processes are much more varied than just one to one relationships.

According to Berne, individuals are products of social processes and they use social processes. Within the group settings individuals can be made aware about their **self-defeating behaviour**. Once they are aware of their behaviour they can do something for changing it. The group provides a **safe environment for practicing new behaviours**.

### **Behavioural Model**

According to this model, specific group programmes are implemented to alter dysfunctional patterns and learn new styles. The expertise of Behavioural group therapist is essential in assessing and devising a treatment plan for each individual member within the context of the group. **The group worker calculates the specific elements of the disturbing behaviour to be decreased or desired behaviour to be developed.** Other group members provide assistance and feedback concerning progress throughout the stages of the treatment process.

### Facilitative Intervention

#### **Gentle Interventions**

**Doing nothing** –leaving the group to sort things out for themselves

**Using silence** – essential for reflection; helpful to restore calm; allows space for **thinking** and **problem solving** (we often don't appreciate how much we actually know and silent thinking often releases information from our unconscious mind); can provide an opportunity to **explore with individuals or small groups** the basis of their fear of silence.

**Support** –verbal and non-verbal contributions, which support what is happening or what is being said. This empowers individuals and the group and helps integrate you into the group.

**Clarifying** – checking what is happening, checking your understanding of contributions, checking acceptability of process.

### **Persuasive Intervention**

**Questions to move the group** –can be very gentle e.g. “are you ready to go on now?” or more firm “are you ready to go on yet?”

**Questions on where next** –the move on is assumed and emphasis is on where next e.g. “Ok so where do you want to go now?”

**Suggesting choices** –this will have a direct impact on what happens next so try not to limit choices unnecessarily.

**Suggesting paths** –offering various ways the group could proceed if they have lost their way and ask for suggestions.

**Sharing your ideas** –giving your view is probably more directive than you intend depending on how much power the group has invested in you **as the facilitator**.

**Suggesting action** –the most persuasive intervention useful if the group is completely at a loss or if the energy is very low but still offer several options.

### **Directive Interventions**

**Guiding the group** –by suggesting what you would do in their situation, or do something yourself such as write on the flip chart.



**Choosing for the group** –you deciding what the group should do next e.g. “I think it would be useful for us to stop at this point and ...”

**Directing the group** –telling the group what they will do next.

### **Types of Interventions**

#### **Clarifying and Summarizing**

Clarifying refers to resolving misunderstanding or incorrect perceptions in what members are saying. Summarizing refers to providing a summary of the major points and accomplishments of a discussion.

#### **Synthesizing and Generalizing**

Synthesizing occurs when several points and ideas are put together in a common theme.

#### **Probing and Questions**

When the group needs additional information or needs to explore additional ideas.

#### **Reflecting Feelings**

Most messages have two parts: the content and the speaker’s feeling, often expressed nonverbally. Reflecting feelings refers to communicating back to the speaker’s points of view.

#### **Providing Support, Coaching, and Counselling**

Providing support includes encouraging group members to talk and express ideas. The team is encouraged to think about the problem and develop solutions. Coach and counselling may occur in a private meeting with individual, particularly the formal supervisor of the group.

#### **Modelling**

Managers have many responsibilities, it is important for group members to learn how to make process interventions. Members should be encouraged to take over the role of process interventions.

**Feedback Observations** Feedback to work groups can occur at meetings or to individuals after meetings. There should be no feedback to individuals or groups until they are ready to receive it.

### **Structural Suggestions**

The manager makes structure suggestions about the work group membership, communication patterns, allocation of work, assignment of responsibility, and lines of authority.

### **Evaluation**

#### **Evaluation of individual growth**

Group is composed of individuals. They become the member of the group because of certain needs and desires. Therefore, the main objective of social group work is to fulfil these needs and desires in accordance with the prescribed rules and procedures. But how can the worker be able to know the level of fulfilment of their needs without evaluating their growth process. The worker evaluates the presence of each member. He evaluates their level of participation in the group activities. Sometimes it happens that the member because of difficulty in adjusting himself in the group remains usually absent giving one or the other reason. The worker evaluates the growth of skills, methods of problems solving, behaviour techniques or knowledge gained by the member through the group experience.

#### **Evaluation of the group**

Group is the medium for achieving individual's objectives and individual personality development. Therefore, it is essential for a worker to evaluate the effects and growth of group as a whole. The group worker evaluates the group organization, a social responsibility fulfilled by the group, maturity that has achieved, skilfulness, and expertness has developed, the techniques of problem solving have been learned and mutual understanding and cooperation have developed among group members.

## **Evaluation of the member's contribution to group**

The focus here is on the contribution of the member to the development of the group, not on his total personality. This calls for an assessment at the end of each meeting.

A primary aspect of group evaluation involves asking group members directly about the effects of the group. When conducting an evaluation with group members, the leader should ask broad questions about the strengths of the group, the weaknesses of the group, and ideas for improving the group (Zastrow, 1997) as well as seek feedback about any particular activities or techniques used. This form of evaluation can be done verbally during check-in rounds throughout the course of the group process. Group members, however, may feel pressure to please the group leader by giving desirable answers (Rubin & Babbie, 2008), especially at the beginning of the group process, when the group is still forming and members may be more guarded and less comfortable giving honest feedback. Such check-ins are more likely to elicit useful information midway through the group and in environments where open and genuine dialogue has been established between members and the group leader.

Group leaders may consider seeking feedback about group members' perceptions of the group through anonymous questionnaires to reduce the bias associated with assessment in front of the rest of the group. These types of written evaluations are commonly used in agencies at the conclusion of services. While they provide some indication of group members' level of satisfaction with the group, they do not measure its effectiveness.

To best evaluate the group's effectiveness, group leaders should utilize pre-group and post-group assessments that target the specific thoughts, feelings, and behaviours the group aims to change. To ask such targeted questions, the leader and the group members must have a clear understanding of the purpose of the group and the outcomes desired. A clear purpose directly informs the questions the leader asks at the beginning and end of the group to measure change. For example, a treatment group oriented toward alleviating postpartum depression might use a standardized measure of depressive

symptoms at the start of the group to assess members' functioning prior to treatment and then repeat the same measure at the end of the group to see if individuals, and the group as a whole, improved over the course of the group. Depending on the length of the measure and the time it takes to administer it, leaders might also decide to conduct evaluations midway through the group to get a sense of group members' progress and identify ways to improve the second half of the group.

If leaders are designing their own assessment measures instead of using standardized assessment tools, having a clear idea of the purpose and goals of the group is especially important. For example, the leader of a postpartum depression group might want to design questions asking how many days in a given week a group member feels sad, hopeless, or fatigued.

The leader might want to inquire about members' feelings toward their children and their perceptions of their ability to parent. Group leaders should carefully construct the questions they ask to avoid confusing or leading questions (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). Asking questions before and after group treatment will give the leader and group members a sense of the progress made toward their goals and help identify issues that still need to be addressed.

Group leaders may also choose to evaluate the group through observation. Group leaders often write progress notes after each group session that document the goal or topic of the individual session, the activities or interventions used, group members' reactions and discussions, and a brief analysis of the session. The leader might make note of techniques that appeared to work well in the group, as well as techniques or activities that fell flat. Observing, writing, and reading progress notes provides the group leader with valuable information and allows him or her to reflect on the progress of the group.

The group leader can observe whether the group members seem to be progressing through stages, becoming more comfortable with one another, and making progress toward their common goal. Observations and notes about the process of the group can also help identify particular group

members in need of more attention, such as those who are struggling or are especially quiet during group. Understanding these dynamics is difficult while one is conducting the group; thus putting them in writing and reflecting on them between sessions is an important form of evaluation (Northen & Kurland, 2001).

Group leaders should evaluate themselves over the course of the group. They may ask themselves questions related to different stages of the group process, including how well they met group members' needs during the initial stages of group and their effective use of relationship (ability to provide support to members), choice of interventions (use of skills and different approaches), structure of the group (empowerment of members, establishing norms), and ability to create productive and respectful interactions among group members (Northen & Kurland, 2001). Other forms of evaluation include asking colleagues to observe a group session or videotaping a session that can then be reviewed by a colleague or supervisor, who can provide feedback (Zastrow, 1997).

Evaluating the group process, whether through verbal check-ins, satisfaction surveys, pre- group/post-group assessments, or self-reflection, can create anxiety for group leaders. Group leaders may fear negative feedback or assessments that indicate the group intervention is not working. These are valid and common fears. Yet group leaders must work past these anxieties, because identifying interventions that are not effective and working to improve these interventions is the ethical responsibility of all service providers. Providing services based on the hope or a hunch that they are working is not best serving group members' needs.

To improve one's practice and service to others, social workers must seek evaluation of their group work and use that evaluation to actively improve their work. Negative feedback or assessment results, however, should not be taken personally or as indications of failure or incompetence. While the leader should take responsibility for addressing poor evaluations, this could take many different forms, including changing the format of the group, reassessing

who is included in the group, or changing the length of the group, the approach, or interactions among members.

Group leaders, especially new leaders, may be surprised at the positive feedback they receive from group members during evaluation. Group leaders should be aware of what they are doing well and should continue to do, in addition to identifying areas for improvement.

Furthermore, conducting evaluations during group may be helpful in drawing the group's attention back to the overall purpose and helping individual members' reflect on their level of motivation, progress, and efforts toward change.

