

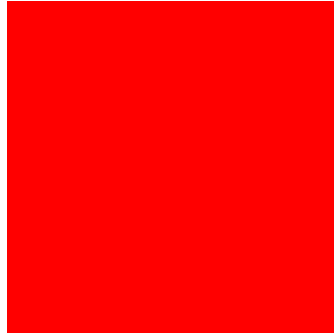


EIGHTH  
EDITION

# Group Counseling

STRATEGIES AND SKILLS

Ed E. Jacobs  
Christine J. Schimmel  
Robert L. Masson  
Riley L. Harvill



# Group Counseling

## Strategies and Skills

EIGHTH EDITION

**ED E. JACOBS**

West Virginia University

**CHRISTINE J. SCHIMMEL**

West Virginia University

**ROBERT L. MASSON**

West Virginia University (retired)

**RILEY L. HARVILL**

The HarBeck Company



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Ed E. Jacobs, Christine J. Schimmel, Robert L. Masson, Riley L. Harvill

Product Director: Jon-David Hague

Product Manager: Julie Martinez

Content Developer: Wendy Langerud

Media Developer: Kyra Kane

Art and Cover Direction: Vernon T. Boes

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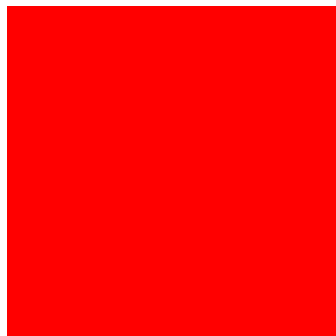
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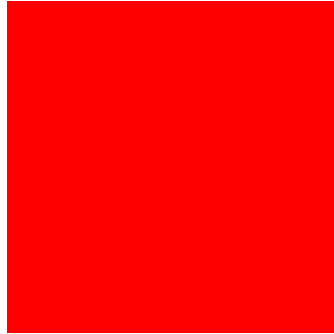
## About the Authors

**Ed Jacobs** is the coordinator of the master's program in the Counseling, Counseling Psychology, and Rehabilitation Counseling Department at West Virginia University. He is also the founder and director of Impact Therapy Associates. He teaches courses in techniques, theories, group, and addictions, and conducts workshops throughout the United States and Canada on group counseling and Impact Therapy. Ed has written five other counseling books: *How to Select and Apply Change Strategies in Groups*, *Impact Therapy: The Courage to Counsel*, *Leading Groups in Corrections*, *Impact Therapy*, and *Creative Counseling Techniques: An Illustrated Guide*. In the past few years, Ed has been traveling worldwide introducing counselors to his group counseling and impact therapy ideas.

**Christine Schimmel** is the coordinator of the school counseling program in the Department of Counseling, Rehabilitation Counseling, and Counseling Psychology program at West Virginia University. She has been a counselor educator for over 15 years and has taught courses in school counseling, counseling techniques, group counseling, and counseling children and adolescents. Chris has written two other counseling books: *How to Select and Apply Change Strategies in Groups* and *Impact Therapy: The Courage to Counsel*. Chris currently serves as the secretary for the WV Board of Examiners in Counseling, the licensure board for professional counselors in WV. She is a former school counselor. Her teaching and research interests are in the field of school counseling.

**Bob Masson** is Professor Emeritus at West Virginia University and remains active in the counseling field by teaching courses at Florida Gulf Coast University in Ft. Myers, Florida. Bob was a professor for more than 30 years at West Virginia University in the Department of Counseling, Counseling Psychology, and Rehabilitation Counseling. He also served on the State of West Virginia Board of Examiners in Counseling and remains a Licensed Profession Counselor. He has taught courses in counseling techniques, theories, group counseling, and rehabilitation counseling. Bob enjoys bicycling and sailing with his wife, Kathy.

**Riley Harvill** is the president of the HarBeck Company, a leadership training and consulting firm located in Dallas, Texas. Over the past several years, his work has focused on individual and team coaching with U.S. and Canadian police and fire departments. Before co-founding the HarBeck Company, Riley was an associate professor at University of North Texas in the Counselor Education Department, where he taught courses in individual and group counseling.



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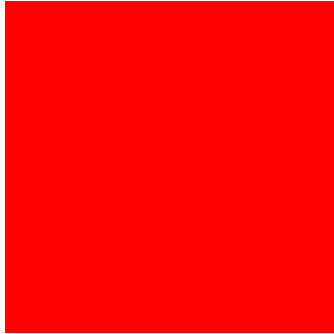
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## Preface

**G**roup Counseling: *Strategies and Skills*, Eighth Edition, provides an in-depth look at group counseling with an emphasis on practical knowledge and techniques for effective group leadership. For this edition, we are excited to include additional videos that bring to life the skills presented in this textbook. For the seventh edition we made 43 short videos showing specific skills. The new clips show an integration of many skills and techniques. The book and video clips are for counselors, social workers, psychologists, and others who are leading groups in a variety of settings. Our active approach to group leadership reflects a belief that the leader is primarily responsible for the planning and implementing of the group. We have found that in most settings—schools, hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, and mental health centers—the leader must take a very active part in facilitating the group. In this book, we offer a reader-friendly, practical, how-to group text. This book is written for students.

Throughout the book and in the videos we discuss and demonstrate many different kinds of groups. The examples offered help the reader understand how an effective leader utilizes both basic and advanced leadership skills. We integrate the skills and examples described in the text with the role-play demonstrations presented in the videos.

We recognize that group leadership is one of the most difficult forms of counseling performed by therapists, school counselors, drug and alcohol counselors, correctional counselors, nurses, and others in the helping professions. Our goal is to bridge the gap between theory and practice. We present a sophisticated how-to approach for both beginning students and experienced practitioners. In each chapter we address the needs of counselors, social workers, correctional officers, ministers, nurses, and others who may be reading this book. The purpose of the text and videos is to integrate traditional theories and concepts of group process with thoughtful strategies and specific skills.

## Other Changes and Additions to this Edition

In this Eighth Edition we have also made the following changes and additions:

1. We have updated references throughout the text to reflect current concepts and research findings relevant to group process.
2. We eliminated Chapter 18. We put some of the content from Chapter 18 in appropriate chapters.
3. We have moved the section on legal issues from Chapter 18 to Chapter 1. This change is in response to feedback from a number of consumers and reviewers who felt that learning about ethical considerations regarding group work should come at the beginning of the book.
4. We moved the coleading section from Chapter 18 to Chapter 6. We added a video on coleading.
5. We moved evaluation of groups from Chapter 18 to Chapter 3.
6. We add segments on motivational interviewing in Chapter 13 and on working with military groups in Chapter 17.
7. We added longer videos so the viewer could see the skills being used in the beginning, middle, and closing phases of sessions. Also the viewer will see the members and theories used in a variety of ways that help make groups more engaging.

## Organization

Our readers, from time to time, have suggested a reorganization of the chapters to flow more with their individual teaching or learning styles. We have considered such changes with each revision, but have concluded that instructors vary in their use of the text based on their previous experience with teaching the group course. It would be nice if we could offer various arrangements to the chapters depending on how the book is going to be utilized; but because we cannot, we chose the order that seems to work well for many. Readers who are currently leading groups usually go to the chapters that are relevant for their immediate needs.

Our own approach has been to teach an overview that includes basic skills, planning, beginning groups, advanced skills and techniques, and finally approaches for closing a group. The last two chapters cover problem members and special populations—many educators have students read these chapters during the first couple of weeks of the semester.

Specifically, the three opening chapters provide an overview of group leadership. In these chapters, we examine various kinds of groups, leadership styles, uses of current theories, group dynamics, therapeutic forces in groups, group process, and the purpose of groups. In Chapter 1, we introduce our approach to group leadership based on the principles of impact therapy, which is an active,



multisensory approach to counseling. Also in Chapter 1 we present a clear picture of different approaches to leading groups and discuss in detail the differences between the interpersonal and intrapersonal approaches to leading. We have also moved the sections on legal and ethical issues in group counseling to this chapter so that the reader becomes grounded in the importance of following ethical guidelines. Chapter 2 focuses on the importance of understanding therapeutic forces, including those presented by Yalom (2005). Chapter 3 emphasizes the importance of clarity of purpose, which is a key element in the successful outcome of nearly any kind of group. We demonstrate this in the three videos on clarity of purpose.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 cover a range of both basic and advanced leadership skills for planning and implementing a group, as well as specific strategies and skills for initiating the first and second sessions of a group. Chapter 4 is on planning groups. Included in the chapter on planning are sample plans with a detailed discussion of each plan. Chapter 5, which focuses on the first and second sessions of a group, describes the many different things a leader must consider in the first sessions. We provide numerous examples of how to begin various kinds of groups. We also present techniques for the introduction of members and the introduction of a new member during the second or subsequent sessions. Three videos on beginning groups are provided. Chapter 6 focuses on basic skills of group leading. Summarizing, clarifying, and using one's eyes in effective ways are among the skills discussed. Three videos are on basic skills. We also discuss coleading and provide a video showing two leaders working together.

Chapter 7 affirms the importance of establishing, holding, and deepening the focus in a group. We present creative ways to "get the focus" and a discussion of the depth chart, which is a tool for monitoring the depth of a session. Six videos are presented regarding the focus of the group. Chapter 8 offers techniques for skillfully drawing out quiet members and cutting off members who ramble or otherwise diffuse the focus of the group. We provide seven visual segments on these two concepts.

The essential uses of rounds and dyads are outlined and illustrated by numerous examples in Chapter 9. Three video segments focus on different kinds of rounds. Other exercises are discussed extensively in Chapters 10 and 11. Written, movement, fantasy, and creative exercises are among those reviewed in these chapters. Techniques are presented for introducing and processing the exercises, along with ethical considerations, and specific cautions for using them. We provide four visual segments that show effective use of exercises.

Chapter 12 is devoted to the strategies and skills important to the critical middle sessions of a group. We offer a way for the leader to prepare for dealing with topics during the middle sessions. We discuss four topics in detail: sex, need for approval, religion, and self-esteem. We also address issues of trust and commitment, common mistakes some leaders make during this period, and various strategies for increasing the group's effectiveness. Chapter 13 is on the use of counseling theories in groups. We offer brief descriptions of nine theories and many examples on how the theories can be used in groups. We provide many videos that show the effective use of theories in a group.

Chapter 14 focuses specifically on skills and techniques essential for leading therapy groups. We discuss the role and responsibilities of the leader, the process of therapy, specific techniques, and common mistakes. We also outline ways of conducting therapy with a member while involving all the other members. We have created many videos that relate to Chapter 14.

Chapter 15 contains techniques for closing sessions and groups. We have five examples of closing on the various videos. Chapter 16 offers strategies for handling problem members (the chronic talker and the negative member, for example) and situations (such as resistance, sexual feelings, and conflicts between members). Chapter 17 deals with issues specific to certain populations, such as children, adolescents, couples, older people, and those who are chemically dependent, divorced, survivors of sexual abuse, and adult children of alcoholics. In the videos we varied the kinds of groups so there are segments with kids, teenagers, and those in treatment centers. We conclude the book with the encouragement to watch the videos numerous times, especially the last five where many skills and techniques are utilized.

To simplify the presentation, we use *he* and *she* alternately to represent the leader and group members. We also use the terms *counseling* and *therapy* interchangeably.

## Supplements for Students and Instructors

**DVD and Video.** In addition to the core book, the Eighth Edition of *Group Counseling: Strategies and Skills* can be bundled with new videos highlighting topic-specific group counseling skills along with over 40 videos that demonstrate many different group leadership skills. The videos found in the DVD are also available online through the Group Counseling: Strategies and Skills CourseMate website.

**Cengage Learning Testing, powered by Cognero Instant Access.** Cognero is a flexible, online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content as well as create multiple test versions in an instant. You can deliver tests from your school's learning management system, your classroom, or wherever you want.

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**Helping Professions Learning Center 2-Semester Instant Access Code.** Designed to help you bridge the gap between coursework and practice, the Helping Professions Learning Center (HPLC) offers a centralized online resource that allows you to build your skills and gain even more confidence and familiarity with the principles that govern the life of the helping professional. The interactive site consists of six learning components: Video Activities organized by curriculum area and accompanied by critical thinking questions; Ethics, Diversity, and Theory-based Case Studies; Flashcards and Practice Quizzes; a Professional Development Center, and a Research and Writing Center.

## Acknowledgments

We wish to express our appreciation to our many friends and students who contributed ideas and insights to the Eighth Edition of this book. We also in particular wish to thank those who participated in the role-plays for the video clips, both as leaders and as members. Although the authors provided guidelines regarding the issues to explore in each role-play, the participants presented these roles in such a way as to create very realistic scenarios.

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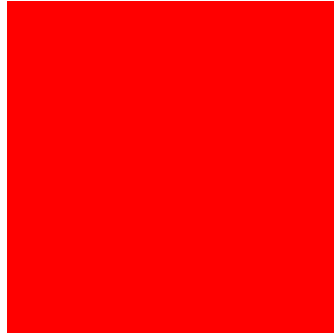
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*Ed E. Jacobs*  
*Christine Schimmel*  
*Robert L. Masson*  
*Riley L. Harvill*



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

If you are a new group leader or a student studying group leadership, you may be thinking that you know very little about groups, especially if you believe you have never been in one. Actually, everyone has had some kind of group experience, be it in classes, orientation sessions, job-training sessions, Sunday-school meetings, staff meetings, or counseling or support groups. Depending on the leader's ability, some of these experiences have been valuable and some have not.

If studying group counseling is new for you, you may be asking yourself several questions:

- What are the advantages of leading groups?
- What kinds of groups are there?
- What happens in groups?
- How do I prepare for leading my group?
- What do I do if nobody talks?
- What should I do if someone talks too much?
- What leadership style should I use?

This book was written to answer these questions. In this book, we provide a wealth of information and practical examples, hints, and techniques that will increase your understanding of group dynamics and enhance your effectiveness as a group leader. We believe that reading this book will improve your ability to lead all kinds of groups, trainings, and meetings. Our emphasis is on skills, techniques, and the art of leading.

In this chapter, we discuss a number of basic considerations: who should lead groups, reasons for leading groups, kinds of groups, group versus individual

counseling, use of theories, group counseling in a multicultural context, group leadership styles, leadership functions, what makes an effective leader, ethical considerations regarding group leading, and potential group problems.



---

## GROUP COUNSELING SKILLS: Introduction

We encourage you to take a few minutes and watch videos 1.1 and 1.2 (“Introduction”), where we show two brief videos of a group: one being led by a leader without skills, and one being led by a leader with the skills that are highlighted throughout this book. In the introduction, you will hear about our model of leadership and get a preview of what you will be learning in this book.

---

## Who Should Lead Groups?

Knowing how to lead groups is beneficial to anyone in a helping, teaching, or supervisory role. Any helping professional who is looking for an economical and effective means of helping individuals who share similar problems and concerns should use groups. Many counselor educators talk about how counselors no longer have the option of just doing individual counseling (Bauman, 2009; Corey, 2012; Gladding, 2012; Jacobs & Schimmel, 2004). Currently, more and more administrators in schools, agencies, and correctional settings are requiring their counselors to lead groups.

## Reasons for Leading Groups

Corey (2012) opens his text on group counseling by saying, “Although there is still a place in a community agency for individual counseling, limiting the delivery of services to this model is no longer practical, especially in these tight financial times. Not only do groups let practitioners work with more clients, but the group process also has unique learning advantages” (p. 2). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has recognized the importance of groups. In the ASCA national model, leading groups in schools is promoted (ASCA, 2003).

There are many valid reasons for using a group approach. Two reasons are common to all groups: Groups are more efficient and groups offer more resources and viewpoints. Other reasons for using a group approach include the feeling of commonality, the experience of belonging, the chance to practice new behaviors, the opportunity for feedback, the opportunity for vicarious learning by listening and observing others, the approximation to real-life encounters, and the pressure to uphold commitments.

## Efficiency

Having several clients meet as a group for a common purpose can save considerable time and effort. For instance, a school counselor who is responsible for 300 students will barely be able to see each student once during a school year using only one-to-one counseling. However, school counselors can meet the needs of many more students by having groups for advising, values clarification, personal growth, support, and problem solving. Groups provide a framework that promises to deliver services to the largest number of students with the most efficient use of time (ASCA, 2003; Bauman, 2009; Day, 2007; Jacobs & Schimmel, 2004; Van Velsor, 2009). Groups can certainly save time in situations where there is a need to orient residents, patients, or prisoners to policies and procedures (Stohr & Walsh, 2009). If a supervisor finds that her staff members have different opinions about an issue, bringing the people together for one meeting is more efficient than having individual meetings. In most agencies and schools, professionals are incorporating groups into their overall program to help handle the increasing caseloads. They no longer have the luxury of just working with individuals.

## Experience of Commonality

Many people have feelings they believe to be unique. Having people get together in a group allows them to discover that they are not the only ones having similar thoughts and feelings. As group members share personal concerns, thoughts, and feelings, they are often amazed that others in the group have similar concerns. Yalom (2005) uses the term *universality* when he discusses the value of people getting together. Following are some examples of groups where the experience of commonality can be helpful:

- Parents whose children have died
- Pregnant teenagers
- Children new to a school
- Recently divorced persons
- AIDS patients
- Soldiers who have returned from war

## Greater Variety of Resources and Viewpoints

Whether they are sharing information, solving a problem, exploring personal values, or discovering they have common feelings, a group of people can offer more viewpoints and, hence, more resources. Group members often relate that one of the most helpful aspects of being in a group is the variety of viewpoints expressed and discussed. When only two people get together, it is possible they will possess similar information, values, or ways of seeing the world. Usually this is not the case in a group setting—members will have a variety of opinions and ideas, thus making the experience interesting and valuable.

## **Sense of Belonging**

Writers in counseling and psychology have pointed out the powerful human need to belong (Adler, 1927; Berne, 1964; Glasser, 2000; Maslow, 1962). Being in a group can satisfy this need in part (Steen, 2009; Trotzer, 2006; Yalom, 2005). Members will often identify with one another and then feel part of a whole. A sense of belonging has proven beneficial in such groups as those for veterans, women, men, ex-convicts, addicts, addicted teenagers, people with disabilities, and the elderly. Members of these groups report that the experience of being accepted was one of the most important features of the group.

## **Skills Practice**

Groups provide an arena for safe practice (Capuzzi & Gross, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 2012). Members can practice new skills and behaviors in a supportive environment before trying them in real-world situations. The range of new behaviors to explore is nearly infinite; members can practice interviewing for jobs, learning how to make friends, being more assertive, asking for a raise, or talking to significant people in their lives. They may share personal facts about themselves, confront others, talk about difficult subjects, look at others when they talk, cry in front of others, laugh with others, sing with others, or disagree with others. Assertiveness, communication, parenting, marital enrichment, employer–employee relations training, and police riot-training groups are all examples of groups where members might experiment with new behaviors.

## **Feedback**

Groups provide an opportunity for members to receive feedback. Group feedback is often more powerful than individual feedback because when only one person is giving feedback, the receiver can dismiss that person's viewpoint. When six or seven people are saying the same thing, it is difficult to deny the accuracy of what is being said. In groups where behavior rehearsal is a major component, the suggestions, reactions, and perceptions of others can be valuable.

There are many kinds of feedback and ways of giving feedback in a group. Frequently, members will have the opportunity to hear both first impressions and updated impressions. Because feedback can be such a valuable part of group counseling, we have devoted an entire section to feedback exercises and how to deliver effective feedback (see Chapter 10).

## **Vicarious Learning**

A number of authors have discussed the positive value of vicarious learning in groups (Lefly, 2009; Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2008; Van Velsor, 2009). Members frequently have the opportunity to hear concerns similar to their own. On countless occasions members have said such things as, "That's exactly the same problem I have." Other members have said, "Listening to you has really made me aware of the fears and hang-ups I have."



## Real-Life Approximation

Groups replicate real-life situations better than one-to-one counseling. Different writers have discussed the idea of groups as a microcosm or reflection of society (Hagedorn & Hirshhorn, 2009; Yalom, 2005). Trotzer (2006) calls groups “minisocieties.” Sometimes the group setting becomes a temporary substitute for the community, family, work site, or organization. In the comparatively safe atmosphere of the group, emotions, human behaviors, and attitudes such as confrontation, rigidity, fear, anger, doubt, worry, and jealousy can be identified and discussed. Being exposed to these in a group environment enables individuals to learn methods of relating and coping that may extend into their everyday living.

The social context of the group experience is valuable in many other ways. Not only are maladaptive emotions and behaviors scrutinized and worked on, but members also are given the opportunity to discover how people honestly react to them over a period of weeks or months.

## Commitment

Commitment to work on specific concerns often has more strength when made in a group setting. Although people often make such commitments in one-to-one situations (counselor–client, nurse–patient, supervisor–supervisee), the motivation to honor them seems to be stronger when they are made to a number of people. This is one of the most helpful aspects of groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Weight Watchers, and groups that help people stop smoking, find a job, or become more assertive. In these groups, members make at least an implied commitment to stop, start, or change certain behaviors. The combination of support, subtle expectations, and the desire not to let down the group is often a powerful motivation for behavioral change.

## Kinds of Groups

Some people think the term *group* refers exclusively to a counseling or therapy group for troubled individuals. In fact, there are many different kinds of groups with a variety of purposes. A leader may form a group to discuss or decide something, to explore personal problems, or to complete a specific task or achieve a specific goal. During your professional career, you will most likely have the opportunity to lead many different kinds of groups. The techniques discussed in this book can apply to all kinds of groups and also to meetings, workshops, classes, and family counseling.

Educators have classified groups differently. The Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW), which is a division of the American Counseling Association, sets forth training standards for four kinds of groups: guidance/psychoeducational, counseling/interpersonal problem-solving, psychotherapy/personality reconstruction, and task/work groups. Gladding’s (2012) list of

kinds of groups includes group guidance, group counseling, and group psychotherapy, along with some additional traditional and historical categories. Don Ward (2006), former editor of *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, has an excellent article that gives the history and evolution of the different kinds of groups. He states, “it also seems that overlapping and blending of group types in the same group experience often best represents the reality of the evolving practice of group work” (p. 95).

We have created seven categories of groups, based upon their different goals. Some goals reflect what the members gain from the group and others what the members will do in the group.

### *Categories of Groups*

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Education               | 5. Counseling and therapy |
| 2. Discussion              | 6. Support                |
| 3. Task                    | 7. Self-help              |
| 4. Growth and experiential |                           |

## **Education Groups**

Often, helping professionals are asked to provide clients with information on various topics. The following are examples:

- Rehabilitation clients learning how to use a wheelchair
- Students learning study skills
- People with diabetes acquiring information on nutrition
- Women learning how to protect themselves from being raped
- Managers learning how to better supervise employees
- Fifth-graders learning about the harmful effects of drug use

In each of these groups, the leader provides information and then elicits reactions and comments from the members, thereby serving sometimes as an educator and other times as a facilitator of discussion. It is very important for the leader to conceptualize this dual role. There is no set formula for how much one should be in each role—it depends on the amount of information to be covered, the amount of knowledge the members already have, and the amount of time available. Likewise, there is no set format for the number of sessions or length of meetings. Often, education groups are held just once for 2 to 8 hours. Others meet for a number of weeks, 1 or 2 hours per week.

## **■ EXAMPLES**

This group is composed of eight students who want tips on how to study more efficiently. It is 20 minutes into the first session.

**LEADER:** Okay, let's talk about the different ways of going about studying a chapter in a text. What are the ways that you do it?

**JERRY:** Well, I just read the chapter and underline.

**BILL:** I do the same thing.

**KEVIN:** I try to outline 'em, but it takes me too long.

**BOBBI:** I just read it twice and hope for the best.

**LEADER:** Let me give you some ideas. One of the best things you can do is to sit down and skim the chapter for the main idea of what you are going to read. Often, there is a summary at the end of each chapter. Then decide the kinds of questions that the professor might ask. If you can, look over your other tests and try to get a sense of the kind of questions you have been asked before. How does that sound?

**BECKY:** Well, I never thought of skimming the chapter.

**JIM:** I like that idea.

**CHU:** Me, too. Would you suggest underlining or taking notes or what?

**LEADER:** I would suggest writing a question that summarizes the topic and then underlining the answer. Most people, however, don't learn from underlining alone.

**KEVIN:** That's true for me. It's not helpful for me to underline. But when I take notes as I read, I remember.

**JIM:** Yeah, I like that idea. I've been underlining too, but it hasn't helped. I think I'd better take notes.

The leader's role in this group is to offer helpful suggestions and ideas concerning ways of studying and to get members to share methods of studying that do and do not work for them.



This group is composed of five women who weigh more than 200 pounds. The purpose of the group is to educate the women about behavior modification methods of losing weight. It is the second meeting, and it is 10 minutes into the session.

**LEADER:** Get out your list of things other than food that are reinforcing for you—let's talk about them.

**RHONDA:** I realize that I do like to read, although I don't do it, and there are three or four TV shows that I like. I also put on my list that I have two friends who live back in Missouri that I would like to call but don't.

**PHYLLIS:** Gosh, that's strange. I also put down that I have some friends who live in California that I would like to call. The other thing I like to do that would be good for weight control is walking early in the morning. I'll bet I haven't gone for a good walk in the morning for over a year.

**SALLY:** Oh, I'd go with you! I get up early, but I just sit around and watch the news.

**LEADER:** I hope the two of you will talk after the meeting about doing that. How about others? Margie, what about you?

**MARGIE:** My list doesn't make sense.

**LEADER:** Do you mean that the activities you listed are strange or that you did not do it exactly right? I'm not sure what you mean.

**MARGIE:** Well, I've got things like sleeping, exercising, washing my car, cleaning my house—you know, dumb things like that.

**LEADER:** I don't really see those as dumb. In fact, let's talk more about how you can use your "reinforcer list" to help you. Let me go into a little more theory....

In this example, the leader is both educating by providing information and facilitating interaction by bringing up topics, clarifying comments, and getting members to share.



## Discussion Groups

In discussion groups, the focus is usually on topics or issues rather than any member's personal concerns. The purpose is to give participants the opportunity to share ideas and exchange information. The leader serves mainly as a facilitator because he does not necessarily have more knowledge than the members do about the subject. Following are some possible examples of discussion groups:

- Book club
- Current events group
- Bible study group
- Lifestyle group

## ■ EXAMPLES

This group is composed of students discussing "how the family is changing."

**LEADER:** Let's list all the different forms in which families exist in our town. Each of you make a list. (*After a couple of minutes*) In looking at your list, what stands out to you?

**LYNN:** I never realized how many families aren't just the regular kind—that is, a mom, a dad, and some kids.

**DON:** You know, I think we need to be more accepting of all these kinds of families.

**HECTOR:** I agree, because I'm currently living with just my mom, and I remember that last year I was kidded about it.

**LEWIS:** Yeah, I think there is too much bullying of other kids. How do we stop bullies from having so much power?

**LEADER:** (*Intervening*) Wait, let's discuss the different kinds of families today. Maybe some other time we can talk about the bully problem.

**BILLY:** The thing I wonder about is all those single fathers. What do they know about babies?

The leader's role in this group is to generate discussion on the topic of the changing family. Because it is a discussion group, the leader did not let Lewis shift the focus of the group to dealing with bullies.



It is the monthly meeting of the Reading Club. The book being discussed is titled *Love and Addiction*.

**LEADER:** Let's do a quick round of 1 to 10. If you liked the book a whole lot, give it a 10; a 1 means you did not like it at all.

**LESLIE:** I'd give it a 7.

**RALPH:** 9.

**STEVE:** 10.

**TUYEN:** 7.

**CINDY:** 8.

**LONDON:** 9.

**LEADER:** Because most people did like it, let's talk about what stood out for you. What were two or three points that really hit you?

**STEVE:** There was just so much in there that helped me to understand the crazy relationship I'm currently in. I felt the authors were talking directly to me. I thought it was really interesting the way they described how people get into bad relationships.

**TUYEN:** It reminded me of the Bible and some of its passages. Don't you think the Bible is good for learning about relationships?

**LEADER:** Let's save that discussion for the end or later. Let's, for now, focus on this book.

**RALPH:** I thought the description of kinds of relationships was excellent. It really helped me to think through an old relationship that I'd had. On page 27—everyone look at that for a minute....

In this group, the leader used the 1 to 10 ratings to generate discussion. Once the discussion got going, she kept members involved and did not let the discussion shift off the main topic, the book the members had read.



## Task Groups

The task group is one in which a specific task is to be accomplished, such as discussing a patient on a psychiatric ward, resolving conflicts among house

residents, or deciding policies for a school. This kind of group usually meets once or just a few times and ends when the task is completed. Staff meetings, faculty meetings, organizational meetings, planning sessions, or decision-making meetings are examples of task groups. In the field of business, a *focus group* is a kind of task group that is used to evaluate products or perceptions of products.

The following list should give you a better idea of task groups:

- Members of a club choosing a slate of officers
- House parents deciding rules and policies
- Professionals involved in the treatment of one student (for example, a counselor, two teachers, a social worker, and a special-education coordinator)
- Professionals collaborating on a year-end report
- Committee deciding on location of a new highway
- An agency wanting to do something for returning soldiers
- Students or teachers talking about ways to curb violence on the playground
- Students or teachers trying to change some policies at their school

The leader's role in a task group is to keep the group on task and to facilitate discussion and interaction. In some task groups, the members stay focused with little intervention by the leader; thus, the leader's role is more facilitative. In other task groups, discussion becomes unfocused or conflict breaks out among members. In such instances, the leader intervenes and brings the group back to the task.

## ■ EXAMPLES

The purpose of the group is to discuss Oswaldo's living situation. (The child is currently residing in an emergency crisis shelter.) A houseparent, Oswaldo's mother, a social worker, and a counselor have been brought together. The leader of the group is the social worker.

**MOTHER:** I want Oswaldo at home! He's my boy, and that's where he should be!

**HOUSEPARENT:** Oswaldo has not been cooperative here, and I don't think he's ready to go home.

**MOTHER:** (*In a condescending voice*) I don't care what you think. I think the program here is terrible. He should be allowed to call home whenever he wants. And the policy about visitations should absolutely be changed. Let's talk about that!

**LEADER:** (*Seeing that they're off the task*) Wait a minute. Let's get back to our task, which is deciding whether Oswaldo is ready to go home.

**COUNSELOR:** I have seen Oswaldo for five sessions, and he's still a very angry kid. My own opinion is he will not do well at home.

**LEADER:** Why don't you elaborate on why you feel that way and what you think would be helpful for Oswaldo?



The purpose of this group is to select one of three applicants to fill a vacant position in a small community agency. To make the decision, the director has brought together her staff of six to discuss the interviews.

**MONTEL:** I feel that we need a female, so I think we should hire Sarah.

**SHERI:** I agree we need another female.

**TOM:** (*Angrily*) Hold on just a minute! That's a bunch of crap. Why did we interview two guys if we were going to hire a woman? We never said anything about hiring a woman.

**DIRECTOR:** (*Recognizing a potentially volatile situation*) Let's talk about what we do need. I think both points are well taken. We never did decide we needed a woman. However, all things being equal, I think hiring a woman would be in our best interest. Let's go over each candidate's strengths and weaknesses.

**FILIP:** I didn't like the fact that Sarah smokes. None of us smokes. In fact, I think we should get the secretary to stop smoking.

**TOM:** Oh, I agree. Let's do that. Let's make a policy about smoking. (*Turns to the director*) How do we pass such a policy? I would like to make a motion.

**DIRECTOR:** (*Realizing that the group is off the intended task*) Wait! We're here to decide on the three candidates. We need to choose one of them. At the next meeting, we can set policies on smoking or whatever. Let's go over each candidate, listing strengths and weaknesses.

In each of these groups, the leader made clear what the task was and kept the group working on that task.



For anyone interested specifically in task groups, *Making Task Groups Work in Your World*, by Hulse-Killacky, Killacky, and Donigian (2001), is excellent. Also Van Velsor (2009) has an article on task groups in a school setting.

## Growth Groups and Experiential Groups

Members who want to experience being in a group and who are motivated to learn more about themselves often benefit from growth groups. T-groups, or *training* groups, were the first popular kind of growth group; the first one was held in Bethel, Maine, in 1947. Sensitivity groups, awareness groups, and encounter groups would all be considered growth groups. Growth groups are conducted in settings such as schools, colleges, community centers, and retreat centers. In these groups, members are given the opportunity to explore and

develop personal goals and better understand themselves and others. Goals may include changes in lifestyle, a greater awareness of oneself and others, improved interpersonal communications, and an assessment of values—all accomplished in an atmosphere of sharing and listening. Quite often in growth groups, considerable counseling will take place as different issues come to the surface.

One form of growth group is the experiential group, where the leader designs experiential activities for the members. Often these are conducted outdoors and involve physical challenges, risk taking, and cooperation among members. Perhaps the best known is the “ropes course,” where members are challenged on a number of activities that involve ropes. If you are unfamiliar with ropes courses, we suggest you do an Internet search of the term and read about the different kinds of ropes courses.

## ■ EXAMPLES

This group is composed of 10 teenagers who are out on the ropes course. They have just completed two activities.

**LEADER:** What have you learned so far?

**BUZ:** That fear is more in the mind!

**EDEN:** I agree. I never thought I could do the “Pamper Pole,” but when I saw Amiel do it, I thought, “I can do it.”

**STEVE:** The group support has been what stood out for me. I was really scared, but everyone kept telling me I could do it. That really helped.

**LEADER:** I want us to talk about the value of group support, but first let me pick up on what Buz is saying about fear often being in the mind.



The purpose of this group is to examine values. (This kind of group could meet in a school, a church, or a community center.)

**LEADER:** Today we are going to take a look at some of the things you value. First, let me have everyone stand up and get in a line behind Serj. (*Everyone is now standing in the center of the room in a straight line, with the leader standing in front where everyone can see him.*) On the count of three, I am going to ask you to move to the position that is most like the way you are. Toward the wall to your left is “spender,” and toward the wall to your right is “saver.” That is, if any time you have money you spend it, you would move all the way to the wall to your left. If you spend some and save some, you may want to position yourself in the middle, and so on. Everyone understand? (*Everyone nods.*) Okay, on three: one, two, three. (*Everyone moves.*)

**LEADER:** Any comments?

**DOUG:** I am glad to see I am not the only spender because my mom says I spend, spend, spend.



**TONI:** I wish I could spend. I always feel like I must save my money. That's why I'm up against this wall. Have you spenders always been able to spend?

**LEADER:** (*After letting several members comment*) The main point of doing this is to see that people are different and to help each of you get a better understanding of why you are the way you are. Let's now talk about why you are the way you are and whether you want to change.

In each of these examples, the leader initiated activities that focused members on relevant self-exploration and personal growth.



## Counseling and Therapy Groups

Counseling and therapy groups are different from growth groups in that the members come to the group because of certain problems in their lives. School counselors often lead counseling groups for students who have various problems at home, at school, or with friends. The leader focuses the group on different individuals and their problems; then, members try to help one another with the leader's guidance. The leader will, at times, play a dominant role by directing the session to make it more productive.

Therapy groups are for members who have more severe problems. Examples of therapy groups include the following:

- Patients diagnosed as having emotional disorders
- Teenagers in an institutional setting
- People with an eating disorder or some other addiction
- People who suffer from panic attacks
- People who were sexually abused

It is important to realize that group experts do not agree on how counseling and therapy groups should be conducted. Opinions vary widely on the role of the members, the role of the leader, the appropriate tone, and the use of theory in the group. Some believe that members should be responsible for the majority of the therapy, with supportive probing and encouragement from the leader (Rogers, 1970; Yalom, 2005). Others feel that a confrontational, aggressive approach works best, such as in positive peer culture groups (Vorrath, 1974). Some believe that individual therapy by the leader, while the majority of the group observes, is very beneficial (Dyer & Vriend, 1980; Perls, 1969). Some leaders strictly follow one of the theoretical models, such as rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), transactional analysis (TA), or behavioral theory. Others use none of the individual counseling theories as their theoretical base: instead, they believe it is the power of the group interaction—sharing, involvement, and belonging—that serves as the main agent for change (Yalom, 2005).

Our leadership model for counseling and therapy groups is based on impact therapy (Jacobs & Schimmel, 2013), which is an active, creative, multisensory,

theory-driven approach to counseling. In our approach, the leader is primarily responsible for making sure that individuals working on issues get the best help possible. The leader will do whatever is most helpful—sometimes using other members' input and sometimes conducting therapy while the other members listen, watch, and periodically share. Later in this chapter and throughout the book, we discuss how to use an impact therapy approach and why this approach is well suited for most group counseling situations.

## ■ EXAMPLES

This group consists of five women whose husbands routinely physically abuse them. It is 20 minutes into the second session.

**LEADER:** A number of you have talked about your poor self-concept. Rather than us just talking about self-concept, I'd like for someone to volunteer to work on her self-concept.

**KATELYN:** I will because I feel terrible about myself, but I'm sort of scared.

**LEADER:** I think all of us understand your fear. Why don't you start by telling us more about how you felt growing up?

**KATELYN:** I always felt like a nothing. My parents definitely favored my brother and sister. They even told me that if they'd known I was going to be so much trouble, they would have never had me. *(Starts to cry)*

**JODI:** My cousin who lives in Cleveland told me she felt the same way. The other day she told me this story. She said ...

**LEADER:** *(With a kind voice)* Jodi, let's stay with Katelyn. How many of you have felt like Katelyn? *(All four raise their hands.)*

**SUE LIN:** Katelyn, I cried myself to sleep every night.

**KATELYN:** You did? So did I. I always felt everything was my fault....



This group consists of five teenagers who all recently attempted suicide. It is 15 minutes into the third session, and the members have been discussing their relationship with their parents.

**CARL:** At least your parents care! Hell, my old man hasn't been to see me since he brought me here. When he left, he said to me, "I'm done with you!"

**DIONE:** At least you have a dad. My mom has all these men over all the time. I can't stand it.

**LEADER:** *(In a caring tone)* Look, we could sit here and talk about how bad things are, but I am not sure that is the most helpful thing. What do the rest of you think?

**TRUDY:** I think we have to learn to feel good about ourselves no matter what our parents say and do. Like you said last time, we all need to learn how to cope with our feelings.

**LEADER:** Let's focus on the feelings you have about yourself and talk about how you can change your feelings by changing some of the negative "self-talk" that is in your head. I want each of you to think of the negative things you tell yourself throughout the week. I am going to write your thoughts here on the whiteboard and then show you how you tell yourselves all kinds of negative things that are not true.

In the first example, no specific theory was demonstrated, although the leader was most likely thinking in terms of Adlerian, REBT, or transactional analysis. In the second example, the leader was using impact therapy (writing on the whiteboard) and REBT to help these teenagers examine their poor self-concepts. (If you are a beginning student, you may not be familiar with the approaches mentioned. This is not important at this point. The crucial point is that the leaders of counseling or therapy groups should use some kind of theory and not just "wing it.")



## Support Groups

A support group, which consists of members with something in common, meets on a regular basis—every day, once a week, once a month, or twice a month. In this type of group, members share thoughts and feelings and help one another examine issues and concerns. Support groups enable members to learn that other people struggle with the same problems, feel similar emotions, and think similar thoughts. The following are examples of support groups:

- Victims of a natural disaster, such as a flood or tornado, who share feelings about the loss of loved ones, loss of property, or survivor's guilt
- Elderly people confined to convalescent centers
- Those whose loved ones are dying
- Individuals with a disability coming together to share their feelings and fears
- People with AIDS, hepatitis C, cancer, herpes, or some other disease
- Stepparents who find it helpful to share the specific difficulties experienced in a stepfamily
- Teenage mothers who are still in high school

The role of the leader in a support group is to encourage sharing among participants. Ideally, the interactions are personal, and members speak directly to one another. It is important for leaders of these groups to keep in mind that sharing is the group's purpose and goal. It cannot be achieved if the leader or any one member dominates.

## ■ EXAMPLES

This group is composed of community members who have recently experienced a disaster. A fire in a local movie theater killed 50 people. Of the 10 members present in the group, some were in the theater and managed to escape, and some lost loved ones in the fire. It is 45 minutes into the third session.

**LEADER:** How are you sleeping?

**JOE:** I'm still not sleeping through the night. I have this anger at God, and I don't know what to do with it.

**SHERITA:** I have the same feeling. I haven't been to church since the fire, and I don't know if I'll ever go back.

**LEADER:** (*Seeing that Bill is shaking his head "no"*) Bill, you seem troubled by what Sherita and Joe said.

**BILL:** (*In a tentative, gentle manner*) Well, I am troubled. I guess my faith in God has been the thing that has pulled me through this. I don't know why it happened, but I guess He had a reason. I wish Sherita and Joe could see their ways clear to go back to church.

**LEADER:** Does anyone else want to comment on that?

**JACK:** A priest gave me a book to read that helped me cope. The main point in the book was that you just have to go on and not ask "why." I guess that book really has helped, and I did sleep last week for the first time.

At this point, the leader's purpose is not to work therapeutically with the members' anger toward God but rather to facilitate interaction and let people hear how others are coping. Now the leader invites another member into the discussion.

**LEADER:** Zach, what has helped you the most?

**ZACH:** I'm staying busy. I'm back at work, and at night I've made it a point not to be alone, at least in the early evening. I've arranged to eat meals with friends and family. I've also planned weekends well, and I'm making myself do things even though they don't seem to have much meaning. A friend of mine said, "Zach, you've just gotta start living again." He was right!

**JOE:** You know, hearing you say that is helpful. I think that's what I need to start doing. I guess I haven't really thought about it, but I'm not trying to live in the present; I'm just staying in the past.

**HEIN:** Joe, I hope you'll start living now because it's true for me, too. Just a week or so ago, I started living again, and it really made all the difference. I really do believe that as long as we're here on earth we've got to focus on our life and not on why it was our husband or son or loved one who died. (*Pauses and says with pain*) But believe me, it's not easy.

**LEADER:** You know, I do have to agree with Hein and Zach that focusing on the present and future is really the way to go. Does anyone else want to comment?

The leader is doing an excellent job of leading the group by allowing members to share and learn from each other. *Notice that the leader is not overly involved in the discussion. Many leaders make the mistake of talking too much, which prevents members from sharing.*



This third session is composed of eight elderly people living in a convalescent center.

**CARL:** Nobody came to visit me this weekend.

**THREE MEMBERS**

**SIMULTANEOUSLY:** They didn't?

**CARL:** (*Dejectedly*) They called at the last minute and said something else came up and they weren't going to be able to come.

**CLAUDE:** That's too bad. I didn't check on you this weekend because I thought you were gone.

**WAYNE:** I wish you had come down to my room. I certainly would have spent time with you.

**BOB:** We oughta set up a system to check on each other during the weekends. You know, they're the hardest.

**BERTHA:** Boy, that's for sure.

**JIM:** I guess I'm beginning to count on this group more than on my family.

**CLAUDE:** I enjoy this group because you all care. It's not that my family doesn't care; it's just that it's a burden for them to come here. Yeah, I do like this group.

**LEADER:** (*Realizing that Leona hasn't talked*) How about you, Leona? Are you feeling better about the group? I know the first couple of times you weren't sure if you were going to like it.

**LEONA:** Oh, I think I like it. We just talk. I guess I was afraid people were going to tell me what to do. It feels good here.

The leader understands that the purpose of this group is to generate member-to-member interaction so that they feel cared for by other members. Because this appears to be happening, he is staying out of the discussion except to draw out comments from quiet individuals or generate discussion if the interaction starts to decline. Eventually the leader may initiate discussion of Bob's suggestion that they develop a system to check on each other during weekends.



This second session is composed of eight teenage girls who all are at least 6 months pregnant.

**LEADER:** Let's talk about two things today. First, the reaction you're getting from peers and family; second, any decisions you have

made regarding keeping the baby or giving it up for adoption.

**JULIE:** Can I start?

**LEADER:** Sure.

**JULIE:** Well, the decision is so hard. I thought I knew for sure that I was going to keep the baby, and then I saw a show on TV about a teenager giving up her baby. Did anyone see that movie?

**PAIGE, LINDA,**

**AND REBECCA:** I did.

**JULIE:** The movie got me thinking about giving up the baby.

**LINDA:** I want to give up the baby, but my mom is like the mom in the movie. She doesn't want me to give it up. She thinks giving up the baby would be a horrible thing to do. *(Turns to leader)* What do you think?

**LEADER:** No doubt the decision is a tough one, especially when your family is putting pressure on you one way or another. I hope that what we can do is take a look at all the forces that come into play in this decision and then try to help each one of you. I hope you realize that although each of you is in the same situation, you must make your own decision. I hope what we do in the group will be helpful and supportive.

**CINDY:** But what do you do when you have pressure from your mom and dad? They want me to keep the baby, but I really don't want to be reminded of this period of my life. This has been horrible for me. There are lots of people wanting to adopt babies, and I don't want a baby.

**LEADER:** *(Knowing that Cindy is a fairly strong person, she decides to spend a little time with her, believing the others will benefit.)* Cindy, what is the thing you are most afraid of if you give up the baby?

**CINDY:** I'm afraid of how mad my parents are going to be. Other than that, I see it as a good idea for me. I'm not saying you all should do this.

**LEADER:** Okay, can you deal with your parents being mad at you—and how mad would they be?

**CINDY:** Well, they would be real mad, and I am not sure if I could handle their anger. I feel so bad when they are mad at me.

**LEADER:** Cindy, I want to help you and everyone understand more about where feelings come from. *(Leader teaches Cindy and the rest of the group that thoughts can cause feelings.)*

This vignette is an example of how one kind of group will sometimes overlap with another kind. Even though some education and counseling is taking place, it is mainly a support group.



## Self-Help Groups

The last kind of group we want to discuss is the self-help group, which is now very popular. Laypeople with similar concerns as those at the meeting generally lead self-help groups. Millions feel that attending AA meetings, which is probably the most well-known self-help group, has changed their lives. Many other self-help groups follow the AA model, using the Twelve Steps. We realize that these groups cannot help everyone, but we do believe that all counselors should be aware of these groups, because they have been of tremendous value to so many people throughout the world. Students of ours are required to attend AA meetings as part of a course on addictions. They report that the experience was one of the best learning activities of their entire master's program.

Because these groups have no permanent, professional leader, and the purpose of this text is to improve group leadership, we will not focus on self-help groups. However, if you are not familiar with these groups, we encourage you to attend some meetings and read about them.

## Group Versus Individual Counseling

Many people ask us, “Which is better, group counseling or individual counseling?” This is difficult to answer because people and situations are so different. Sometimes one or the other is best, and sometimes the combination of individual and group counseling produces the most benefit. For most people, groups can be quite valuable. For some people, group counseling is better because members need the input from others, plus they learn more from listening than talking. In many instances with teenagers, group counseling is better than individual counseling because teenagers often will talk more readily to other teenagers than with adults. For those stuck in the grief process, groups have been found to be very valuable (Humphrey; 2009; Worden, 2009).

Although there are many advantages to group counseling, it is important to realize that group counseling is not for everyone (Corey, 2012; Yalom, 2005). Administrators often do not understand this and, consequently, force members into groups. Individuals who do not want to be or are not ready to be in a group can disrupt it or be harmed because group pressure may cause them to take some action or self-disclose before they are ready. Also, sometimes an individual's problems are not addressed adequately in a group setting due to constraints of time. When group leaders recognize that a member needs more than what group counseling can provide or that the member is going to be disruptive, they should encourage the member to consider the option of individual counseling instead of group counseling.

## Use of Theories

Many of our students have asked us if there are any specific group counseling theories. The answer is no. Although labels have been given to many groups—encounter,

T, sensory awareness, here-and-now, psychodrama—these names simply describe what takes place in the groups and are not specific group counseling theories. However, this does not mean that a leader does not use theory when working with growth, support, or counseling/therapy groups. Theories originally developed for individual counseling—such as REBT, cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), TA, client-centered, Adlerian, or reality therapy—have been successfully adapted for groups.

Throughout this text, we mention various counseling theories in many of the examples. In the chapter on counseling and therapy, we discuss how theory can be used. Also we devote an entire chapter, Chapter 13, to the use of counseling theories in groups. If you desire further information about specific theories as they apply to group work, see Corey (2012) or Gladding (2012).

We cannot stress enough the importance of being able to use counseling theory when leading counseling, therapy, or growth groups. Those who do not have a good working knowledge of at least one theoretical perspective often lead a very shallow group; that is, the group never goes below surface interaction and sharing. If the members do become more involved, the leader who does not have a theoretical base is usually overwhelmed. Ideally, group therapy leaders will have multiple theoretical models in order to provide richness and diversity for conducting groups (Gladding, 2012).

On the other hand, certain kinds of groups do not require the use of counseling theory. Discussion, education, and task groups require that the leader possess a variety of basic leadership skills to monitor and direct the flow of conversation and interaction. For human relationship-training groups, there are some organization and development theories that may apply. Johnson and Johnson (2012) discuss these and present a strong argument for the use of theory with training groups.

## Our Approach to Groups: Impact Therapy

Our approach to groups is based on the principles of *impact therapy*, which is a multisensory approach that recognizes that change or impact comes not only from verbal but also visual and kinesthetic exchanges (Jacobs & Schimmel, 2013). “Impact therapy is an approach to counseling that shows respect for the way clients learn, change, and develop. The emphasis is on making counseling clear, concrete, and thought provoking, rather than vague, abstract, and emotional” (p. 1).

Impact therapy is a theory-driven approach using primarily REBT, TA, Gestalt, Adlerian, reality therapy, and many creative techniques from *Creative Counseling Techniques: An Illustrated Guide* (Jacobs, 1992). The following are four core beliefs of impact therapy:

- People don’t mind being led when they are led well.
- Counseling should never be boring.



- Counseling should be clear and concrete.
- The counselor is primarily responsible for the therapy but not ultimately responsible for the outcome.

The impact therapy model encourages leaders to be active, creative, and multisensory.

As we do workshops all over the country, many participants express how relieved and thankful they are to hear that it is okay to be active when leading groups. We believe the counselor should feel in charge and actively lead most groups using theories and techniques that make the sessions interesting and productive. Also, by being creative and multisensory, the leader has a much better chance of engaging more members. Throughout the book, we use many theory-driven, multisensory examples to give you a good idea of the impact therapy model and to give you permission to use your own personality and creativity to make your groups enjoyable and beneficial.

## Group Counseling in a Multicultural Context

More counseling programs are emphasizing multicultural counseling; many are requiring courses on the subject. Certainly in today's society, understanding cultural differences is a must, especially for counselors who are leading groups with diverse populations. Corey (2012) states, "Multicultural group work involves strategies that cultivate understanding and appreciation of diversity in such areas as culture, ethnicity, race, gender, class, religion, and sexual orientation" (p. 17).

Because this book is about an active leadership approach, we want to emphasize that the leader must always consider the different cultural backgrounds of the members. For instance, counselors working with Asian students and students from many other cultures will need to be aware that these members may be quiet at first out of deference to authority figures. Using nonthreatening questions in the beginning may be very helpful (Anderson, 2007). The leader needs to be aware of issues pertaining not only to cultural matters but also to gender, age, and sexual orientation. Ethically, we have an obligation to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to work in a multicultural context (Corey, 2012; DeLucia-Waack & Doingian, 2004; Sue & Sue, 2013).

The ASGW has an approved set of guidelines—"Principles for Diversity-Competent Group Workers"—that can be found online at the ASGW Web site, <http://asgw.org/>. These guidelines outline what a group leader needs to know in regard to counseling diverse populations. If you feel you are not well versed in multicultural issues and counseling considerations, we strongly encourage you to seek out coursework, workshops, readings, and life experiences that will broaden your understanding. Two excellent books with which to start are DeLucia-Waack and Donigian's book *The Practice of Multicultural Group Work* (2004) and Salazar's *Leading Multicultural Groups* (2009). Also, several excellent

articles on multicultural counseling can be found in *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*. In Chapter 17 on special populations, we address many of the issues regarding group work with a multicultural population.

## Group Leadership Styles

Much has been written regarding leadership style (Capuzzi & Gross, 2009; Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2014; Johnson & Johnson, 2012; Posthuma, 2002). The style or role of the leader will always depend on the kind and purpose of the group. As Gladding (2012) states, “Most effective group leaders show versatility” (p. 76). However, some people are taught only one style of leadership regardless of the kind of group they are leading. Many model their group leadership style after the style of a group leader they had in graduate school. This may not be a good idea because the groups in graduate programs may differ greatly from those in a public school, rehabilitation, prison, or mental-health setting.

The major leadership debate seems to center on how active, directive, and structured the leader should be. Until recently, many group educators were hesitant to tell students to be active and directive. A similar situation existed in the 1960s regarding individual counseling, when educators debated the relative merits of directive and nondirective counseling. Now most educators encourage their students to be active and reasonably directive in their individual counseling.

For group counseling, our position is that an active style of leadership works best for most groups. We strongly believe what we stated earlier: *People don't mind being led when they are led well*. Most members of most groups need some structure, organization, and direction. In fact, most members expect and want the leader to lead. This is especially true in schools, hospitals, prisons, mental-health facilities, and rehabilitation centers and with issue-focused groups such as those concerning divorce, abuse, incest, or addiction.

### Leader-Directed Versus Group-Directed Approaches

A related question regarding leadership style is whether it should be a leader-directed or group-directed approach. Many writers express concern regarding the leader-directed approach (Capuzzi & Gross, 2009; Posthuma, 2002). One concern is that the members will have to cater to the leader. The opposite is actually true. Effective leaders who follow the leader-directed model never demand that the members follow them as if they were gurus; rather, they lead in a manner that is valuable for the members. The leader-directed style of leadership does not mean that the leader is on an ego trip or that the group has to serve the personality of the leader. It simply means that the leader has an understanding of the members' needs and structures the group to meet those needs.

Leaders using the group-directed approach often turn the group over to the members and have the members determine the direction and content.

This can be quite valuable for some groups. However, there are times when this approach wastes much time, especially for a group that is meeting only once or for only a few sessions. Often the members don't know what they need. For example, parents of teens in a drug-treatment center or victims of some kind of disaster often attend a group to find help, but they are not at all clear as to how the group can be helpful. A leader-directed style can be of great benefit by providing structure, thought-provoking questions, and group exercises.

The question is not really whether the approach is group-directed or leader-directed but rather who is primarily responsible for the group—the leader or the members? We believe the leader is responsible for the group. As Trotter (2006) states,

Leaders, because of their training and professional commitment, are remiss if they do not exercise their responsibility to prevent negative consequences in the group. Leaders can share responsibility to a very large degree, but they can never abdicate their responsibility. Doing so completely undermines the nature of the helping profession and is detrimental to positive therapeutic intervention. Leaders must be willing to divert topic and conversational trends that seem to be shaping into negative and damaging content (Blaker & Samo, 1973). They must be willing to intervene to protect members and to serve as a reality check if the group does not do so. As Lakin (1969) noted, responsibility must be consciously exercised and modeled by the leader if the group is to qualify as a professional therapeutic venture (p. 218).

Even though the leader is responsible, the amount of leading will depend on the kind of group and the composition of its members. For certain groups, the leader may primarily want the members to direct the group; for other groups, the leader will want to assume much of the directing. It is important for the leader to remember that the amount of active leading can vary according to the stage of the group. In the middle stage of many kinds of groups, the members are fully aware of how the group should flow and, therefore, should be actively involved in choosing the topics and the direction.

## Interpersonal Versus Intrapersonal Leadership Styles

Another way to view leadership style is as a continuum; some styles focus on the group as a whole, and some styles focus on the individuals in the group. Corey (2012) states that the *interpersonal oriented* leader “emphasizes the here and now, the interactions among the members, the group as a whole, the ongoing group dynamics, and the obstacles to the development of effective interpersonal relationships within the group” (p. 82). The *intrapersonal oriented* leader focuses primarily on the needs and concerns of the individual members.

Understanding both styles of leadership is very important. Leaders must be able to adapt a style along this continuum, depending on the kind of group, the

needs of the members, and the dynamics occurring within the group. You might want to think of the continuum as a 1–10 scale:

<i>Interpersonal</i>					<i>Intrapersonal</i>				
Focus on group process					Focus on personal issues				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

When the purpose of the group is to improve relationships among members or to accomplish a task, the leader will probably use an interpersonal leadership style within the 2–5 range. For growth groups, the leadership style will depend on the purpose of the group—some growth groups benefit from a 2–5 range and others benefit from a 6–8 range.

On the continuum, for most counseling and therapy groups, leaders should use a style that falls between a 6 and an 8. The intrapersonal model (6–8 on the continuum) is better because members in most of these groups have intrapersonal conflicts (conflicts within themselves) they need to deal with. In most therapy groups, the members need to address issues such as unfinished business from the past, problems with parents or lovers, sexual abuse, abandonment, low self-esteem, fear of failure, guilt, shame, or need for approval. The intrapersonal perspective seems better suited for helping clients obtain a better understanding of these issues. The intrapersonal oriented leader will address these issues directly, whereas the interpersonally oriented leader will wait until the issues emerge and then may focus on them only as they apply to the here-and-now experience within the group. For these reasons, we find the interpersonal leadership style somewhat limited.

In using a style ranging from 6 to 8 on the continuum, the leader will primarily encourage members to share with the group their personal issues, concerns, and feelings. Once a member discloses a concern, the leader would use techniques and theories to help the disclosing member. She would involve the other members in many different ways when focusing on a member or an issue. Those leaders operating at a 9 or 10 on the continuum usually do only one-on-one counseling while other members watch (Perls, 1969). Leaders using a style in the 2–4 range focus more on what is happening in the group in the present moment and less on pressing personal issues or the past. The following would be an example of this:

**JOE:** (*angrily*) Mary, you always contradict what I say. My parents used to always do that to me! I always felt put down by them and by teachers and other kids in the school.

**LEADER:** Joe, you seem angry now here in the group.

There are times when this leadership style is helpful; however, for most counseling and therapy groups a style of 6 to 8 on the continuum is best. We say this with caution because *at all times the leader must be flexible*. There will be times when the leader will need to focus on the group dynamics and interaction rather than on an individual's personal problem.

It should also be pointed out that some experts (Carroll, 1986; Rogers, 1970; Yalom, 2005) believe strongly in the interpersonal model (1–3 on the continuum) for counseling and therapy groups. Group leaders who follow this model place strong emphasis on the stages of the group and on the members being the primary agents of change.

Another important point is that, for some groups, the leadership continuum will be of little importance. For instance, leaders of education and discussion groups will primarily use various leadership skills and techniques to generate discussion and not be concerned about the group having either an interpersonal or intrapersonal focus.

## Leadership Functions

Another way to view leadership style is to consider leadership functions. Yalom (2005) states that the leader may provide emotional stimulation, caring, praise, protection, acceptance, interpretations, and explanations. The leader also may serve as a model through self-disclosure and as a person who sets limits, enforces rules, and manages time. In other words, depending on the kind of group, the leader may perform many different roles and functions. In a middle-school group on transitioning to high school, the leader serves as the person with information and ideas on how to make the transition easier. In a crisis group after a suicide, the leader's function is to be very supportive, reassuring, and facilitative. In a group for going over rules in a residential setting, the leader is the authority on what is expected of the residents. In a group on information for cancer patients, the leader is the expert.

## What Makes an Effective Leader?

Numerous writers have described what makes an effective counselor and group leader (Brown, 2009; Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2014; Egan, 2010). Among the characteristics discussed are caring, openness, flexibility, warmth, objectivity, trustworthiness, honesty, strength, patience, and sensitivity. Each of these characteristics is important, and we suggest you refer to the works cited or to any other beginning counseling text if you desire further clarification of ideal helper characteristics.

Additional leadership characteristics include comfort with oneself and others; a liking for people; comfort in a position of authority; confidence in one's ability to lead; and the ability to tune in to others' feelings, reactions, moods, and words. Another very important characteristic of an effective leader is sound psychological health. Leading is so demanding that personal issues are likely to surface if they have not been resolved. Corey (2012) and Yalom (2005) both strongly suggest that leaders be actively involved in their own personal growth (outside the group they are leading).

Leading groups successfully requires a great deal from the leader. Often people lead groups when they simply do not possess the necessary leadership characteristics. Aside from those already mentioned, six other traits warrant further discussion.

**Experience with Individuals** Effective leaders have spent considerable time talking with all kinds of people, not just those like themselves. The broader the leader's range of life experiences, the greater the chances for understanding the diverse members of a group. More and more groups have a multicultural membership for which the leader should be prepared (Day, 2007; DeLucia-Waack & Donigan, 2004).

The effective counseling or therapy group leader has not only general experience with people but also considerable experience in one-to-one counseling. This is necessary because all types of situations arise while leading these groups, and the more experience the leader has working with individuals, the easier it will be to work with an individual and the group simultaneously. Without individual counseling experience, one would very likely find leading counseling and therapy groups very difficult.

**Experience with Groups** In the development of any skill, practice and experience increase one's effectiveness. Effective leaders have led many groups. Beginning leaders can learn from their mistakes with each group experience and should not be overly self-critical. When possible, it is advisable to begin by leading education, discussion, support, or task groups, restricting the number of members to four or five. Once comfortable, beginning leaders can increase the number of members or try a growth group centered on topics familiar to them. When novice leaders feel they can comfortably facilitate growth groups, they might try co-leading several counseling or therapy groups before leading one on their own.

**Planning and Organizational Skills** Effective leaders are good planners. They can plan a session or a series of sessions in such a way that the group is interesting, beneficial, and personally valuable. When leading discussion, education, task, or growth groups, effective leaders give considerable thought to relevant topics and to activities and exercises that pertain to those topics. Effective leaders organize sessions in such a way that the topics are covered and there is a flow from topic to topic.

**Knowledge of the Topic** In almost any kind of group, the leader who is well informed will naturally do a better job of leading than the one who lacks information. The leader can use information to stimulate discussion, clarify issues, and share ideas. Too often, unfortunately, leaders are asked to lead groups on topics for which they have very little knowledge or understanding.

**A Good Understanding of Basic Human Conflicts and Dilemmas** A group leader must be prepared to deal with a number of human problems and multicultural issues (Brown, 2009; Corey, 2012; Salazaar, 2009). This is especially true in growth, counseling, and therapy groups—issues such as guilt, fear of failure,

self-worth, parents, anger, love relationships, and death often emerge in such groups. Effective leaders have an understanding of these issues and know several ways to help those who are struggling with them.

**A Good Understanding of Counseling Theory** Even though we discussed this earlier, it is important enough to briefly comment again on the importance of knowing a theory. Knowledge of counseling theory is the key to understanding people and the world in which we live. Theories of therapy—such as REBT, TA, reality therapy, Adlerian, and behavioral therapy—help counselors understand why people behave the way they do in their lives and in groups. Theories offer group leaders a variety of ways to comprehend what people are saying and doing. Corey, Corey, and Corey (2014) state, “Group leaders without any theory behind their interventions will probably find that their groups never reach a productive stage” (p. 7).

## Ethical Considerations

Along with all of the above, an effective leader must be aware of ethical considerations. Over the last 20 years, much has been written about ethics in counseling and ethical behavior in group work (Corey, 2012; Gladding, 2012). Most ethical problems and situations deal with therapy and growth groups, although ethical standards apply to leaders of all kinds of groups. Unethical behavior on the part of leaders usually consists of leaders not being competent to lead the groups they are leading or leaders not caring properly for their members.

### Ethical Standards

All professional associations, such as the American Counseling Association (ACA), the National Association for Social Workers, and the American Psychological Association, have ethical standards regarding working with clients in groups. Aside from these organizations, there are special organizations that consist of professionals who do group work—the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) and the ASGW. These associations have their own codes of ethics. It is very important that you become familiar with the standards of any organization with which you affiliate. We have found that many people who lead groups are unfamiliar with these organizations and therefore do not realize that any ethical standards exist. The *Best Practice Guidelines* of the ASGW can be found at [www.asgw.org](http://www.asgw.org).

Lanning (1992) discusses ethical codes as guidelines for responsible decision making. He talks about counselors using a “systematic process of ethical reasoning” (p. 21). We agree with Lanning that many ethical situations are not so cut-and-dried as some make them out to be. In the following discussion, we try to present a realistic view of ethical behavior and situations that occur for group leaders.



## Leader Preparation and Qualifications

The fundamental ethical principle for leading groups is found in ASGW's *Best Practice Guidelines* (2008): "Group counselors do not attempt any technique unless thoroughly trained in its use or under supervision by a counselor familiar with the intervention." Just as it is unethical to practice dentistry or surgery without training, it is unethical to practice any kind of counseling without proper preparation. Helpers must realize that it is unethical to lead groups, especially therapy groups, without proper preparation. ASGW spells out in great detail excellent standards for the training of group leaders. If every group counselor had this kind of preparation, there would be no question as to whether the person had been properly trained. Unfortunately, most group leaders are not prepared at this level; yet many feel qualified to lead groups because they have a degree in one of the helping professions.

We want to emphasize that an advanced college degree alone does not make one qualified to lead groups. We have talked with many therapists with master's or doctorate degrees who are leading groups but have no understanding of what it takes to lead an effective group. It is the ethical responsibility of any group leader to understand group dynamics, group process, group leadership skills, and group development. Also, the leader needs to have thorough knowledge of the subjects being discussed in the group. So often we have heard leaders at our workshops say they did not realize there was so much to leading groups. They thought you just "went in and did a group—just let the members take charge and go with the flow." This is unethical leadership!

Leaders in private practice should understand that they must have the necessary skills for conducting any group they establish. Although the same standard applies in agencies, this is not as clear as it may first seem. Confusion results because administrators in agencies, hospitals, schools, and prisons force their employees (the helpers) to violate the ethical standard of being properly prepared by mandating that the helpers conduct group counseling even though they lack the qualifications and knowledge to do so. Often, the helpers have never been trained in group work or have had only minimal training. Every day, counselors, nurses, social workers, and drug and alcohol therapists are required to conduct groups even though they are not qualified. This is unethical according to the standards of all the professions mentioned above.

If you are asked to lead groups and do not feel qualified, you should make sure you get training before you start. If you are currently leading groups without proper training, it is important that you seek training immediately. Also, if you are not properly trained, you need to be aware that you and your agency are at risk of being charged with an ethics violation. More and more clients are becoming aware that therapists have ethical standards by which they should abide; thus, an increasing number of clients are challenging the ethical behavior of professional helpers.

## Knowledge

It is unethical to lead a group without having a good grasp of the material being discussed. Too often, we hear of leaders who have little or no knowledge of the



subject of the group they are leading, such as groups on eating disorders, panic attacks, anger, or grief. In each of these groups, there exists the potential for members to get into some deeply emotional material. It is the leader's ethical responsibility to know how to deal with such material. The leader cannot count on the members to know how to help other members with such complex issues as these.

Another area of knowledge that is crucial is the understanding of the cultural and gender issues of the members. It is unethical for a helper to lead a group when she is not familiar with issues that may be unique to the members due to their cultural background.

## Personal Growth

Leaders should not use groups for their own personal growth. We see the need and value for therapists to experience personal growth through groups, but this should not be done in the group that the person is leading. We have heard of numerous instances of leaders drawing attention to themselves and using the group for their own therapy. This is unethical.

## Dual Relationships

Even though ACA no longer uses the term “dual relationships” in the Code of Ethics, we did want to address this since it has been a concern of group leaders. For group work, we define a dual relationship as a relationship that exists in addition to the therapeutic relationship established between the leader and the members. Dual relationships are not harmful in and of themselves; many dual relationships can be very beneficial to group members. We feel that dual relationships often cannot be avoided because helpers have more than one relationship with their clients. For instance, a group leader may also be the group members' residential house counselor or the staff person who takes residents to the movies, on hikes, or on bike trips or plays on the same sports team. There are times, especially in small towns, when group leaders find themselves at the same party as members of their group. We do not feel that the leader is being unethical if he socializes with a member of his group as long as the leader is aware that potential problems could arise. *It is the leader's responsibility to make sure that the therapeutic relationship is not being jeopardized.*

Any dual relationship should be entered into with caution, and any exploitative dual relationship is unethical and should be avoided. By *exploitative*, we mean any relationship where the group leader exploits a group member in any way. The dual relationship that creates the most concern is that of a sexual or romantic nature. Other dual relationships that can be exploitative involve social or business relationships between the leader and group members. Any time a leader enters into a dual relationship, the leader must proceed with great caution to ensure that it is not harmful to the member or the group.

A different kind of dual relationship exists when the group leader sees a member for individual counseling. Some argue that group leaders should not conduct individual counseling with members of their therapy groups. We disagree with this

position; in fact, we think it is unethical not to provide therapy if it would be in the best interest of the member. The purpose of group therapy is to help clients get better, and if individual therapy aids in the client's improvement, then it should be seen as a valuable tool in the therapeutic process. Many times groups are formed as a result of clients being in individual counseling with the leader and the leader deciding that a group would be beneficial. For a more detailed discussion of dual relationships as they relate to group work, see Herlihy and Corey (2006).

## Confidentiality

There are two issues regarding confidentiality that any group leader should understand: the leader's ethical responsibility for keeping material confidential and the leader's lack of total control regarding members keeping matters confidential.

It is unethical for the leader to divulge information to anyone about any member of the group except in the cases of child and adolescent group members. Leaders must be very careful not to give a member's friends, family members, or business associates any information, including whether or not the person is a member of the group. There are exceptions to this rule. Breaching confidentiality is required by law when a member is threatening harm to himself or others. Also, in certain institutional settings, the leader may be required to write notes in a file that is open to other staff members. The best way to deal with such a situation is to inform the members of what is required of you by the law and the administration so that the members understand from the beginning what your requirements are regarding confidentiality. Corey (2012) states, "Generally speaking, you will find that you have a better chance of gaining the cooperation of group members if you are candid about your situation than if you hide your disclosures and thereby put yourself in the position of violating their confidences" (p. 58).

Regarding members keeping what is said confidential, it must be understood that leaders cannot guarantee complete confidentiality because they have no control over what members say once they leave the session. The best way to prevent any breach of confidentiality is to stress its importance and discuss the subject whenever it seems necessary (Corey, 2012). In cases where one member is found to repeatedly discuss group material outside of the group setting, it will be necessary to ask that member to leave the group if possible.

## Informing Members About the Group

Prospective members have the right to know the purpose of the group and how it will be conducted. The *Best Practice Guidelines* (ASGW, 2008) clearly state that members should be informed of any possible risks they might encounter, such as a heightened awareness of unpleasant events from their past or the desire to make decisions that could lead to stressful consequences, such as getting a divorce. For voluntary groups, informing the potential members will give them a chance to decide if they want to join a group where such activities and explorations will occur. It is best, whenever possible, for the leader to use a screening interview to

determine if a person should be a member of the group and to have an open exchange about the risks involved. For nonvolunteers, explaining what is going to happen and what is minimally expected prevents any disgruntled member from saying he was never told how the group was going to be conducted or what was expected of him.

During the first session of therapy groups or any groups where emotional material is going to be discussed, leaders should discuss the various potential risks. Members should be warned about the danger of disclosing too much too soon and the tendency to feel pressure to disclose. Members should be reassured that they do not have to disclose anything that they are uncomfortable talking about. Members should also be warned about the danger of demanding that significant people in their world act like the group members who may be warm, accepting, caring, open, or attentive. In other words, it is unethical not to inform the members about how the group will affect them both during the session and in their daily lives. Any concerns about these matters should be thoroughly discussed during the early sessions.

## **The Ethical Use of Exercises**

Leaders should keep several ethical considerations in mind when using structured activities or exercises during a group session. Most ethical problems involving exercises result from a lack of expertise or sensitivity on the part of the leader. Leaders may use exercises that generate reactions they are unable to handle because of their lack of experience and theoretical background. Any leader who goes beyond his skill level in this respect is operating unethically.

The following are examples of operating without adequate skills:

- Conducting an exercise on death, such as writing your own epitaph, and then not being able to deal with the pain and other emotions that arise
- Conducting an exercise on guilt and shame and then not being able to deal with the material that surfaces, such as incest, child abuse, or affairs
- Conducting a feedback exercise and allowing one member to be viciously attacked by the rest of the group

Additional leader behavior that is considered unethical includes the following:

- Not informing members of what they are about to experience if they participate in any group exercise. Any potential risk must be pointed out.
- Forcing a member to participate in any exercise. If, for whatever reason, a member states she does not want to take part in a given activity, the leader must allow the member this right. (It is not unethical to encourage participation.)
- Demanding continued participation. Members must be allowed to stop participation at any time. For agencies that require members be present in the room, it should be recognized that these members should not be forced to participate.

- Tricking a member into revealing something personal that the member might not want to reveal. For example, an exercise called “Secrets” involves members anonymously writing on an index card a secret that might be hard for them to tell others. These cards are then shuffled, and the leader or each member picks a card and presents the issue as if it were her own. If the leader lets members identify their secrets, by elimination, everyone can figure out a member’s secret.
- Using exercises that lead to heavy emotional material without leaving adequate time for processing. It is unethical to “unzip” members and leave them “unzipped.”

## **The Leader’s Role in Making Referrals**

It is the ethical responsibility of the group leader to make sure members are made aware of proper follow-up treatment possibilities. The leader may see members for follow-up counseling or refer members to other therapists. Follow-up is important because very often in therapy groups, members need additional individual, group, or family counseling. Too often, this ethical standard is violated in that no follow-up treatment is outlined.

## **Closing Comment on Ethics**

We close this section by saying that, without a doubt, the most frequent unethical practice in group counseling occurs when untrained or ill-trained leaders conduct groups. We often hear from workshop participants and from our students who are observing groups in their internship sites about very poorly run groups. We hope this book is helpful in giving you the skills you need to lead groups, and we strongly suggest that you do not lead groups unless you feel you have the skills and knowledge to do so.

## **Legal Issues**

Group leaders can become involved in lawsuits if they do not use due care and act in good faith. Therefore, as a leader, you will want to be sure to practice within your limits of expertise and not be negligent in performing your duties as a group leader. A leader who uses techniques and practices that are very different from those commonly accepted by others in the profession may be considered negligent. It is your obligation to make sure members are not harmed by you, the other members, or the group experience. Paradise and Kirby (1990) list the obligation to protect the client and other members as one of the main legal issues in group work. The most important point to remember regarding legal issues is to know the laws in your state regarding counseling, clients’ rights, and the rights of parents and minors. Also, it is important that you do not practice outside your level of training and that you at

all times demonstrate care and compassion for your group members (Corey, Williams, & Moline, 1995).

## Potential Group Problems

So far, we have discussed basic issues that pertain to the general field of group work. Groups offer complex dynamics: you saw some in the first video. Also, we have compiled a partial list of challenges. Some of these challenges occur in certain kinds of groups; others, in all kinds of groups. This list of problematic member behaviors and situations further illustrates the need for learning effective leadership skills. Group members might do any of the following:

- Skip from topic to topic
- Dominate the discussion
- Be “chit-chatty” rather than personal and focused
- Attend sporadically
- Be shy and withdrawn
- Get angry at the leader
- Get angry at one another
- Pressure (force) others to speak
- Preach their personal morality
- Be resistant because forced to attend
- Dislike other members
- Stop attending the group

As you can see, leaders must be able to deal with all kinds of members and situations. In the remainder of this book, we teach ways of approaching not only these situations but many more.

## Concluding Comments

Counselors, psychologists, social workers, ministers, teachers, and others who work with people should learn to lead groups. The advantages of group work include efficiency, viewpoint variety, belonging, feedback, vicarious learning, and practicing in a setting that is close to real life. There are seven kinds of groups: education, discussion, task, support, growth, counseling/therapy, and self-help. It is important for leaders to identify what kind of group they are leading so that the purpose is clear. There are many approaches to leading groups but no actual group theories. Understanding leadership style is very important. It is essential to understand the difference between an interpersonal and intrapersonal group leadership style. A leader should be flexible because different kinds of

groups have different purposes and require leaders to adjust their style accordingly. Our approach to group counseling is very much in line with the impact therapy approach to counseling, which is an active, multisensory, theory-driven approach. Throughout the book, many of the topics covered in this chapter will be elaborated on, so if you are feeling overwhelmed by the material, relax and enjoy the rest of the book. By the end, you will have a good understanding of kinds of groups, leadership styles, and group leadership skills and techniques.

## ■ ACTIVITIES

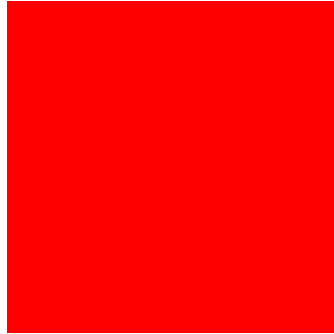
1. Think of a setting in which you plan to work. List the different kinds of groups you might lead in that setting.
2. Within the different kinds of groups generated from Activity 1, list names of groups that would fall under each kind, such as an anger-management group, which could be education or therapy or both. A group for children of divorce could be supportive or counseling. Compare your list with those of fellow students. You'll find that the lists can be almost endless.
3. On pages 26–27 there are six skills listed. On a 1–10 scale, rate yourself on these skills (10 being excellent at the skill). If you are not an 8, 9, or 10, what is your plan for improving on the given skill? (You may want to skip the skill of knowledge of the topic because that will depend on the topic.)



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## GROUP COUNSELING SKILLS

1. Review videos 1.1 and 1.2.
    - a. List the mistakes that the “bad” leader made.
    - b. What skills did the second leader use to make the group go much better?
    - c. What differences did you notice between the groups? How were the body language and energy of the group different?
  2. Although the videos were created for you to view as you read through the chapters, you may want to watch them in their entirety now, and then view the different videos as they are mentioned in subsequent chapters.
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## Chapter 2

# Stages of Groups, Group Process, and Therapeutic Forces

The literature on group counseling frequently addresses three aspects: stages of group, group dynamics or group process, and therapeutic forces. In this text, the terms *group process* and *group dynamics* refer to the attitudes and interaction of group members and leaders. Writers sometimes define these terms differently, but all agree that they are similar. We agree with Posthuma (2002) who states, “Because of this concurrent, intimate, and ongoing relationship between the two, the two terms can be used interchangeably to mean the same thing” (p. 7). *Therapeutic forces* are the factors that influence the group dynamics. In this chapter, we discuss the importance of understanding each of these aspects of group counseling and how they are interrelated.

## Stages of Groups

Much has been written regarding the stages of groups, the characteristics of each stage, and how much time each stage takes (Corey, 2012; Gladding, 2012; Yalom, 2005). However, some of the literature can become confusing when the more detailed description of stages is applied to certain groups, such as discussion, education, or task groups. Our description of stages applies to any kind of group.

All groups go through three stages, regardless of the type of group or style of leadership: the *beginning* stage; the *middle*, or *working*, stage; and the *ending*, or