

## **Participation and Guidelines for Participation in Group Therapy**

(adapted from Yalom, 2005)

Please read this information carefully so you can make an informed decision about our working together.

Group therapy has a long, proven record as a highly effective and useful form of psychotherapy. It is a helpful as, and in some cases, more helpful than individual therapy, particularly when social support and learning about interpersonal relationships are important objectives of treatment. Most individuals who participate in group therapy benefit from it substantially. Although group therapy is generally supportive, you may at times find it stressful.

### **Some goals of Group Therapy**

The main advantage of the Process-Oriented Group is its “social laboratory” quality. To make the most of this group, you will be invited to self-disclose and give honest feedback to other participants. You will be encouraged to share your “here-and-now” experiences and impressions with others.

Online setting offers us a precious opportunity to create a mixed group; we will all need to work towards this shared space to be open and inclusive.

Group Therapy offers an opportunity to:

- Receive and offer support and feedback
- Improve interpersonal relationships and communication
- Experiment with new interpersonal behaviors
- Talk honestly and directly about feelings

- Gain insight and understanding into one's own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors by looking at relationship patterns both inside and outside of the group
- Gain a better grasp of other people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Improve self-confidence, self-image, and self-esteem
- Undergo personal change inside the group with the expectation of carrying this learning over into your 'real' life
- And also, to re-evaluate your relationship with research, reaffirm or question your choice of academic career and ultimately, to become a better researcher

### **Confidentiality**

**All statements by participants in psychotherapy must be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality. It is an essential part of ethical conduct.**

- Group Therapists pledged to maintain complete confidentiality except in the situation, in which there is an immediate risk of serious harm to a group member or somebody else.
- Group Members are also expected to maintain strict confidentiality to create a safe environment for the work of therapy and to develop trust within the group. Most individuals in therapy prefer to keep therapy a private place and refrain from any discussions about it with others. If, however, in conversations with friends and family you should speak only about your own experience, not about any other member's experience. Never mention any member's name or say anything that might inadvertently identify any group member.

### **What do we do in the group therapy?**

There will not be a prescribed agenda for each session. Participants are encouraged to talk about any personal, professional or relationship issues relevant to the goals that led them to therapy.

Participants are expected to offer support, to ask questions, to wonder about things said or not said, to share associations and thoughts. Much emphasis will be placed on

examining the relations between members – that is, the ‘here-and-now’. Members will often be asked to share their impressions of the another – their thoughts, fears, and positive feelings. The more we work in the here-and-now of the group, the more effective we will be.

Disclosure about oneself is necessary for one to profit from group therapy, but members should choose to disclose at their own pace. You will never be pressured for confessions.

In order to build a therapeutic group environment, we ask that members always try to say things to other members in a way that is constructive. Helpful feedback focuses on what is happening in the here-and-now, does not blame, is relevant, and connects the participant receiving the feedback with the member offering the feedback. This kind of direct feedback and engagement can be unfamiliar to you – rarely in our culture do individuals speak so honestly and openly. Hence, it may at first feel risky, but it may also feel deeply engaging and meaningful.

Direct advice-giving from group members or therapists is not generally useful. Neither are general discussions of such topic as politics helpful unless there is something about a current event that has particular relevance to your personal issue.

The therapy group is not a place to make friends. Rather it is social laboratory – a place in which one acquires the skills to develop meaningful and satisfying relationships. Therapy groups do not encourage social contact with other members outside the group. Why? Because an outside relationship with another member generally impedes therapy: your primary task in the therapy group is to explore fully the way you relate to other members of the group. At first this can seem puzzling and unrelated to the reasons you sought therapy. Yet it begins to make sense when you consider the fact that the group is a social microcosm – the problems you experience in your social life and work emerge also in your relationships and behavior within the group. Therefore, by exploring and understanding all aspects of these relationships and behaviors and then transferring this knowledge to your outside life you begin the process of change.

If, however, you develop a close relationship with another member outside of the group, you may be disinclined to share all your feelings about that relationship within the group as that friend may mean so much that you may be reluctant to say anything that might

jeopardize it in any way. As result you will be less honest and open in the group, which will harm everybody's therapy.

It is best practice that members who communicate outside of the group share all relevant information with the group. Any type of secrecy about the relationships between members slows down the work of group's therapy.

At times members develop strong feelings towards other members. We encourage that these feelings be discussed, both positive and negative such as irritation or disappointment. Participants are expected to talk about feelings without acting on them.

### **Therapist's role**

Your group therapist will not "run the show". Her role is more that of a participant/facilitator rather than of an instructor. Therapy is most productive as a collaborative enterprise.

The therapist may make observations about group dynamics, or about what a particular member say or do in the group.

When you have something to say to the therapist, please, say it in the group session. However, if there is something urgent you must discuss with the group therapist, this can be arranged. But it is always useful to bring up in the next meeting what was discussed with the therapist. I hope that there will be no issues you will not be able to share within the group at some point. At the same time, trust develops over time and that some personal disclosures can only be made when you feel sufficiently safe in the group.

### **Commitment**

Group therapy does not usually show immediate positive benefits. Participants sometimes want to leave therapy early on if it becomes stressful to them. I would ask you to suspend your judgment of the group's possible benefits and continue to attend and to talk about your doubts and stresses – giving the group (and yourself) another chance.

I would ask all participants to make an initial commitment to attend and participate in your therapy group for at least 12 sessions. By then you will have a clearer sense of the potential helpfulness of the group.

### **Attendance and Group Cohesion**

The group works most effectively if it is cohesive, reliable, and predictable. Regular attendance is a key part of that, so we expect that you make it a priority in your schedule. We are all dealing with various amounts of stress and anxiety. The group will hopefully help you to better deal with challenges that your life currently presents you with.

Group therapy progresses best when each member values and respects the commitment and work of each participant. Regular attendance and active participation in the meetings is an important way to demonstrate that respect. Arriving on time is also important. If you know that you are going to be late or absent, I will ask you to let me know as far ahead as possible so that I can let the group know at the beginning of the session.

There may be times when the group will be the least place you want to be, because of uncomfortable feelings triggered in the process. These times may be in fact particularly productive opportunities for you to do the work of psychotherapy. In the same vein, you can anticipate that some of the difficulties that you have experienced in your life will express themselves in the group. Don't be discouraged, because it means that you and other group members are tackling the important issues that concern you and if not addressed can make your life more difficult.

I also hope that you will grow to enjoy our sessions and maybe to look forward to the days of our meetings!

I am looking forward to the opportunity of working with you in this unique group.

### **Practicalities**

Sessions are ninety minutes in length. You will need access to a computer with high-speed Internet access and a webcam. Sessions will take place via Zoom or similar video

conferencing system adapted for groups. Payment for sessions can be made via PayPal or direct debit.

I offer a free introductory session to each participant to ensure the diversity and cohesion of the group.

Breaks for main holidays will be organized in advance.

Cancellations can disrupt the functioning of the group and have to be kept to the strict minimum. Online setting allows flexibility as you can connect for the group from any location that is equipped with good quality Internet connection and reasonable privacy.

The cost of the group session for each participant is **50€**.

I don't accept to be paid by a different party than my client (such as health insurance or a relative).

### **Contact Outside of Sessions**

You are free to send me emails between sessions, although I do not encourage this form of communication.

No communication between members of the group is possible outside of the sessions until the end of therapy.

### **Ending**

You have the right to leave the group at any time, but I will ask you to present your reasons to the group and allow everybody to process your decision in at least one ending session.

*I have read and understand the above.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Anastasia Piatakhina Giré

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

