

GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR GROUP THERAPY

GOALS:

1. To share our feelings in the here-and-now. This goal concerns the ability to share our emotions in the present. "Here-and-now" means the present, today, this minute. Our hope is to better learn how to be open and honest with others. By showing feelings, communication grows as we learn how to share and trust. Feelings are emotions such as mad, sad, glad, scared or ashamed (See feeling's list in your packet for more feeling words). Learning to share feelings spontaneously is the primary goal of group therapy because substance abuse teaches both the addict and the people who are closely involved with him to withdraw emotionally. Everyone involved in this disease has a tendency to pull within themselves and not to share.
2. To understand why we cannot share our feelings in the here-and-now. This goal concerns the way we keep others from knowing us. "Defense mechanism" is a psychological term for the walls people build to keep others from knowing them. Defense mechanisms are also walls we build within ourselves. We all have things about ourselves we are not aware of and of which our defense mechanisms prevent us from acknowledging about ourselves.

GUIDELINES

Guidelines are the "rules" that we use to help group therapy work. These guidelines help group members feel safe, thus more capable of sharing and helping each other.

1. Punctuality. It is a matter of common courtesy to be on time for group and by being punctual you do not cheat yourself. The time you spend here is very small compared to the number of years you have been using abusively. Don't waste time being late.
2. Confidentiality. Confidentiality means that what is said in group stays in the group. One way to feel safe and secure is to make sure that anything shared in group is not mentioned outside group. Don't discuss what happens in group in places or situations where non-group members might overhear one's conversation. Also, save feedback and comments for group members not present for when they are. Therefore, don't gossip!
3. Responsible-for-self. "Responsible-for-self" simply means that while you are here, it is up to you to learn for yourself. No one can make you learn or make you change, you make that choice for yourself. Our experience shows that those who do not participate in group grow very little. Group therapy is an activity in which participation is essential for learning. In other words, you get out of group therapy what you are willing to put into it.
4. Risk-taking. "Risk-taking" is taking the chance with something new. It is trying new behavior or experimenting with new ways of acting. You can experiment with disclosing material to other people that you have hidden inside yourself. You can try learning how to stand up for yourself and show anger to others without running away or fighting. You

can experiment and show tenderness and concern for other people. Behaviors will be a risk if they involve doing something never tried before. This is often uncomfortable, yet, the way people learn is to take risks.

5. Active listening. “Active listening” is listening not only to what a person says but how they say it. Remember that over 80% of a message is sent without words. Therefore, listening to someone’s tone of voice, facial expressions, body language, pauses, and even the things that are left out of the statement are important.
6. Direct communication. “Direct communication” is speaking directly to others. That means not only asking directly for what you want, but also speaking to the person in the room. Learn to look at a person when addressing them and use the pronouns “I” rather than “He” or “She”. Don’t make eye contact or turn toward a third party in the group when addressing a person. Look and talk directly to them. Those actions are basic aspects of good communication. Since poor communication frequently exists in addicted marriages or families, using group therapy to work on your communication skills can benefit you outside of group as well as in group.
7. Empathy. “Empathy” is putting yourself in another’s shoes. When a person is empathic he is able to understand and feel what someone else is feeling. Through active listening, you are able to get a good sense of what the other person is feeling. Empathy does not mean sympathy, however. Sympathy is feeling sorry for somebody. Empathy is learning how to feel the emotion a person is expressing at that moment. Experiencing similar emotions as the person who is talking is empathy. Remember, the common bond that unites people in group therapy is their emotions. Although different ages, races, and background experiences exist in a group, everyone has felt anger, sorrow, or happiness. Therefore, it is very important to practice empathy in group, thus recognizing all humans have something in common, that is their emotions.
8. Feedback. “Feedback” is sharing your impressions of someone in the group. In other words, feedback is my impression of you right now. Feedback is one of the most important functions of a group. It is important to not only be willing to give someone feedback so they can grow, but be willing to receive feedback so that you can learn too. Feedback can come in the form of simply stating your feelings to another group member. You can also give feedback by talking about what you saw a person say or do. Please remember that feedback is used in a group to help another person recognize the impressions they are giving to others. In this way, feedback provides a reality testing device for each group member by allowing them to experience how their action(s) affect others. With that knowledge, they can then decide whether they like the way they are or whether they want to change.
9. Tough love. “Tough love” is defined as caring enough about a person to tell them exactly what you see or feel rather than what they want to hear. Tough love is caring enough to risk speaking frankly and honestly. Tough love is not an excuse to hurt someone. It is only caring enough to let them learn how they are hurting themselves. Tough love is essential for penetrating someone’s defense mechanisms.

GUIDELINES TO GIVING FEEDBACK

1. Talk about behavior you can see.
2. Make it specific.
3. Make sure it's relevant.
4. It does not necessarily have to be given on the spot—but as soon as possible.
5. It should be given directly, not hinted at or filtered through a third party.
6. Give the other person a chance to explain.
7. Give it carefully.
8. Feedback is not feedback when it's meant to hurt—then it's just attack.
9. Don't nag or hound a person about his behavior unless he has told you that he wants your help.
10. Avoid being judgmental (Watch for "right" or "wrong").
11. Describe what you see—remember, feedback is an observation, not criticism.
12. The way we feel is authentic and genuine. Tell how you feel.
13. Be direct.
14. Avoid sarcasm or condescending manner when giving feedback.
15. Do not give advice—just reactions.

GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

1. Ask for it.
2. Receive it openly.
3. Do not make excuses (this is a defense).
4. Acknowledge its value.
5. Don't just sit there with a blank stare.
6. Express appreciation that they cared enough to give you feedback.
7. Discuss it. Don't just say "Thank you", and let it drop.
8. View feedback as a continuing exploration.
9. Indicate what you intend to do with it.
10. Watch out for becoming defensive.
11. Try to avoid getting angry, seeking revenge, ignoring what's said or the person saying it.
12. Don't look for motive or hidden meanings.
13. Seek clarification.
14. Think about it and try to build upon it.

FEELINGS VOCABULARY

ANGER

Enraged
Hostile
Offended
Aggravated
Hassled
Resentful

HURT

Devastated
Forsaken
Disappointed
Rejected
Troubled
Neglected

HAPPY

Joyful
Delighted
Flattered
Jolly
Safe

CONFUSED

Bewildered
Trapped
Troubled
Disorganized
Uncomfortable

HOPEFUL

Sure
Determined
Confident
Encouraged
Wishful
Relieved

GUILTY

Humiliated
Shamed
Degraded
Exposed
Regretful
Ashamed
Sorry

SAD

Hopeless
Depressed
Sorrowful
Dejected
Distressed
Down
Lost

LOVE

Amorous
Devoted
Trusting
Affectionate
Belonging
Warm
Touched

UNCERTAIN

Lost
Bewildered
Confused
Mixed-up
Unsure
Puzzled

INADEQUATE

Helpless
Powerless
Insufficient
Incomplete
Weak
Incapable
Dumb

FEARFUL

Terrified
Shocked
Afraid
Scared
Suspicious
Uneasy
Uptight

ANXIETY

Apprehensive
Uneasy
Nervous
Troubled
Worried
Edgy
Eager