

Section: PPT training

POSITIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY TOOLS IN GROUPS



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Abstract

In Positive group therapy, certain tools can be used to moderate and guide the process and interactions, directing them toward specific topics: the use of stories and proverbs as narrative tools; visualization tools like the four areas of body, achievement, contact, and fantasy application in groups; actual capacities to describe group processes and interaction pattern; the group process as a matter of treatment, connotation and contents; positive group psychotherapy moderated in a five steps process; positive group theory to understand the internal and external group dynamics will be presented; sociodynamics and psychodynamic descriptions of the upcoming dynamic in groups.

Keywords: Positive Group Therapy, group process, sociodynamics, sociogenesis, group dynamic, Positive Psychotherapy

Introduction

Group therapy can initially be emotionally challenging for therapists trained in individual psychotherapy. Facilitating a group often involves emotional vulnerability, as the therapist may feel less influential or significant. This is because the therapeutic process and impact largely arise from the group. In the one-to-one encounter, therapists can feel successful as human beings. The training period, supervision, and exchange of colleagues are predominantly about 'who I am as a therapist' and what I can do as a professional. 'In group therapy, on the other hand, it is about 'the group itself as a therapist, 'hardly about the therapist as the effective factor. A group therapist does not have a direct influence on the presented subjects, on the insights of the group members, or being responsible for the individual outcome.

"Group psychotherapy offers unique benefits such as a sense of belonging, purpose, hope, altruism, and meaning. These factors are crucial

for symptom improvement and overall well-being. Universality, or the shared understanding that group members face similar problems, is consistently identified as one of the most effective components of group therapy. ...Group psychotherapy is equivalent to individual therapy for many disorders, including anxiety, depression, grief, eating disorders, and schizophrenia (Burlingame & Strauss, 2021). In addition to effectively reducing symptoms, the group offers members a sense of belonging, purpose, hope, altruism, and meaning throughout treatment (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020)."

In groups, the members benefit from each other through the therapist's presence, style, and the moderation of the process. The style and atmosphere are shaped by the environmental conditions therapists create through their approach to attachment, differentiation, and detachment. The group works on the content and goals, forms the social microcosm where the healing interaction thrives, and offers room for

unexpected emotional experiences and changes. Therapists are like 'traffic signs' on their interactive journey, using secondary capacities to moderate, with goals, structure, and process in mind. Representing primary capacities of patience, giving time to feel and think, having confidence in the group, or believing in the group as a therapist, the moderator can create an emotionally safe environment in which the participants can feel accepted, ready to share, to have and to solve conflicts with each other.

The commitment of an outpatient group therapist to a certain weekly time over long distances, with longer-term holiday planning, may be an obstacle to the lifestyle of the therapist. Spontaneous rescheduling of the group or cancellations is much more difficult than in individual therapy. Two therapists can substitute for each other when two therapists work in tandem, as practiced in clinics. A time commitment is needed to create a safe place for a group of people so that a fruitful group atmosphere can grow. The overall satisfaction with the sustainable treatment outcome in groups outweighs these disadvantages. Healing processes are created in the 'we' identification of a group, in the attachment with each other, in sharing their multifaceted experience. The group itself provides the content and emotional commitment.

Patients with positive experiences in previous groups in classrooms, sports groups, adolescents, work, or clinic treatments certainly have the best basis for starting treatment in a therapy group, regardless of diagnosis, conflict issues, or personality. Groups are effective for addressing a variety of diagnoses, resolving conflicts, and fostering the development of personality and structural skills. Self-perception and perception of others, emotional communication skills, regulating each other, giving each other a feeling of trust, mediating secure attachment, and emotionally correcting experiences. People with depressive reactions, adjustment disorders, recurrent depression, or anxiety and panic disorders are usually quite open to the group setting. Individuals with distinctive structural personality traits are often skeptical initially and may struggle to trust enough to share their innermost thoughts and feelings with others.

However, in the long term, they can often experience an unaccustomed, unreserved acceptance in the group, through which

confrontation with difficult issues can be endured in a safe environment. At times, the group demonstrates a lasting supportive impact, facilitated by its consistency, cohesion, and unique modes of interaction. Groups with a size of about 7 to 12 participants have an amazing ability to deal with so-called 'difficult fellow human beings' and to catch each other up. Small groups of 3 to 5 people require more activity by the therapists. Initial reservations about taking patients into the group were often greater than the surprising flexibility and acceptance experienced afterward. It is a special experience for suffering people to be caught and taken seriously by the therapist and people who have affected themselves, to exchange experiences with them, and finally, to change perspectives and attitudes. There is an effect of growth in the groups that the members often find amazing.

A group moderator uses therapeutic thinking and wording for the process and contents that show up. In group therapy, viewing the members as experienced contributors and the group as a collective therapist with multidimensional transference contrasts with individual therapy, where the interaction is solely between the therapist and the client. The group takes on many functions of a therapist. This can cause frustration for an individual therapist in the beginning and later satisfaction to see how the group is interacting, like being a therapist with many facets. When a therapist sees oneself as the interested observer and the moderator in holding and offering a structure, it will give a safe space for the group members to experience relations.

The first facet is that a group therapist will bring in their image of the human and their own experience in groups, which will influence the atmosphere and the group members' motivation. Interventions can be needed in starting groups to create an atmosphere of free emotional interaction. The group will develop its group style to feel and express like a 'We' in the group. The second facet: A group therapist will look at the group process and name it while the members bring in their subjects. The third facet is that a therapist will protect the ones who could be hurt and encourage the ones who don't dare to be active in the group. The therapist's feelings and countertransference help interpret the group dynamic and the subconscious group subjects and, finally, find narratives for the process and content verbalization. The

therapist's role involves managing time across the group's phases: facilitating warming up to encourage attachment, structuring to promote differentiation, and promoting feedback and sharing to prepare for the period following the group sessions. Within this process, different tools, interventions, and interactions can help to guide the group through their discovery and changes. Some of them will be described in this article.

Methodology

Positive group psychotherapy was practiced by Nossrat Peseschkian based on his experience with psychodrama training (J. L. Moreno), with psychoanalytic groups (R. Battegay) and applying his five-step process model and differentiation analysis as “**differential analytic group psychotherapy**” (Peseschkian, 1977). He described group scenes and conflict descriptions where the ambivalence of openness - politeness (the 'key-conflict'), punctuality, or trust involved as conflict contents could become conscious as concepts. He described how the group can differentiate secondary and primary capacities and apply that in psychodramatic sessions. The five phases of psychodrama influenced the five-step concept for the group process he described: Warming up, choosing a protagonist, playing, role feedback, and sharing (Moreno, 1980). This is similar to the five spontaneous group phases described by R. Battegay in psychoanalytic groups: “Initial contact, regression, catharsis, insight, transformation/social learning process.” (Battegay, 1969).

Out of this model, the author worked out a five-step group process with the necessary roles of the group moderator and the internal and external group dynamic. **Three phases of interaction** and several tools for group moderation were included, and, as a summary, they were first presented in the Wiesbaden group for therapeutic experience PEW⁵ in 1988. It became the basis for the 48-hour group psychotherapy seminar in the advanced training curriculum in PPT in Bulgaria (Remmers, 1994), for parent groups, training in Novosibirsk/Russia and Cluj/Romania (Remmers, 1993). The results had been discussed in 2000 (Remmers, 2000) and applied in hospitals for psychosomatic rehabilitation (Remmers, 2002). Explicit and

implicit goals of group therapy members and their environment were differentiated in 2005 (Remmers, 2005) and related to the group phases and necessary interventions. The further development of positive group therapy, like in group communication in psychiatry (Boncheva, 1999), in psychosomatic treatment (Gelera, 1999), in groups with people from the autistic spectrum (Dobiala, 2020) or in trauma-oriented group counseling (Parruca, 2022) was taken in account for this article as well as the authors experience with inpatients groups, couples and parents groups, and in group therapy training.

Discussion

3.1. Tools for the group therapy process - questions and interventions

Tools for the **process** are questions introducing the next phase in attachment, differentiation, and detachment, concerning the three phases of interaction that can be observed in all groups:

- **Attachment:** The therapist begins with an engaging and personal statement to set the tone, inviting connection, using eye contact and body language to bring the group members into an interactive and shared experience. Serving as a model for communication style, question types, and interpersonal approach, the group therapist helps them develop their skills and style. This phase means warming up, fostering openness and mutual acceptance, sharing emotions, seeking acceptance and security by presenting a topic, and introducing oneself as 'Me in the group.'
- **Differentiation:** The therapist identifies capacities, addresses sensitive and uncomfortable topics, uncovers concealed emotions, and initiates interaction. They also explore process qualities, content, abilities, and potentials, set boundaries to prevent rule violations, expand a hesitant group's defenses, limit individual influence on the group, and broaden individual experiences related to the shared topic.

Information will be given about general existential and ethical group rules, like confidentiality, followed by the development of specific rules for this group.

⁵ PEW Psychotherapeutische Erfahrungsgruppe Wiesbaden. Training institute of Nossrat Peseschkian

The debate, exchange of views, support in problem-solving, and social role experience raise the following questions: What do you need in this group? Which experience do you want to share? Which subjects are important to you in the group? How do you feel within the group, and how do others perceive you? Which goals do you have?

- **Detachment:** Feedback on the group experience can include sharing one's own feelings and ideas. Questions can include: What was important for you today? What did you take home? What time do you need after the group meeting?

3.2. Narrative tools - stories and proverbs

Start with a story that connects to the group's theme or purpose, offering it as an association aid that opens a window beyond the present situation, allowing access to deeper, often unconscious or repressed relational experiences. Following the story's presentation, the process is opened with the question: How do you understand this story for yourself? In a second turn: Whom does this story remind you of (relationship aspect)? What is the story about from your point of view? In this way, the preferred perceived contents of concepts and conflicts come to the fore and give rise to an exchange of different conceptual perspectives. It leads to a topic- and relationship-focused task for the group, which emerges naturally from exploring emotional involvement.

Suitable stories for a start are "50 Years of Politeness" (concerning openness politeness), "The Elephant and the Spectators" (space for different points of view), "The Peacock and the Crow" (capacities and conflict contents), "The Secret of the Red Ruby" (inner conflicts) (Peseschkian, 1986).

Opening with a story as an activating element involves having a participant read a story aloud, which can open the interaction or be played by the group members. During the role feedback, questions such as the following are asked: How did you experience and feel in this role? What came to your mind? What connections can you draw between this role and your own life? Why did you choose this particular role? What

insights did you gain? The non-actors are also asked about their experience in the spectator role.

Suitable stories: "A Story on the Way" (microtrauma), "A Roof Top Garden and Two Worlds (accepting different opinions), "The Magician" (inner conflicts, 'neurotic nuts') (Peseschkian, 1986). These stories focus on a central conflict content and typical role patterns in one's life. 'Surprising stories' from other cultural backgrounds, as well as local fairy tales or short stories, are suitable for longer group processes working with basic conflicts in particular; they include the development phases of life.⁶

3.3. The four areas involving body, accomplishment, interaction, and fantasy applied within group dynamics

Opening up with each participant and sharing their personal experiences and current situation allows them to express their feelings and conscious and subconscious commitments to the group. This process activates a sense of openness and connection, encouraging individuals to reflect on their roles and intentions within the group dynamic. It also provides a foundation for understanding how each person's experiences contribute to the group as a whole.

A rhombus of the Balance model representing **Body, Activity, Relationships, and Future** can be shown or drawn on a board. Participants then share their current status within these four areas.

Culture plays an important role in groups regarding contact and the forms of closeness and distance. Western cultures, with a high value on individuality, distancing of the original family, and autonomy in everyday life, cause a great need for closeness in the therapeutic group.

Eastern cultures, which highly value closeness in family and working groups in everyday life, sometimes show a need for distancing themselves and respecting family loyalty in therapeutic groups.

3.4. Actual capacities in the group process

⁶ Further examples in Remmers A (2022): How do Traditional Stories Work in the Process of Solving Unconscious Interpersonal and Cultural Conflict? A Contribution to Narrative Ethics. *The*

Global Psychotherapist, 2(2), 2022. pp. 77-85.
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Primary capacities play a crucial role in the interactive group process for attachment, bonding, and trust, creating a safe environment where the problematic and suppressed subject will have a space to be expressed and understood. These can be seen as the group's 'motherly function' for creating cohesion through attachment and compassion. In this way, the capacity of perception of oneself and others can be developed, and a safe attachment, differentiation, and detachment can become the basis for emotional corrective experience for patients with attachment difficulties.

The therapist's secondary capacities are needed to guide the group in the process, such as punctuality, limiting interactions that hurt others, and finding a balance between being straightforward and respectful. Secondary capacities can be seen as a 'fatherly function' to find the balance between fairness and individualism, between openness and adaptation to the other, and to control one's own impulses within the group. In this way, emotional communication and impulse control can be trained as a structural personality capacity.

3.5. Group moderation

The role of the essential attitudes in psychodynamic therapy is to develop constructive interaction and fruitful group interaction (Battegay, 1976)⁷. The related actual capacities are added:

1. positive emotional attention non-judgmental - *accepting without condition, contact*
2. listening, watching - *patience, contact, time*
3. questions: a) be attentive b) recognize connections; - *accuracy, performance, fairness*
4. rarely interpret - *love, politeness, patience*; "Silence says a lot" (Battegay)
5. never give advice - *contact, time, confidence*
6. think about what is going on in the patient and the therapist – *imagination and compassion*

3.6. The group process as a matter of treatment, connotation, and contents, examples

1. Opening a new group session

Warming up with sociodrama: Stand next to a participant with whom you would like to go on a trip around the world (or with whom you could imagine establishing a joint professional existence or with whom you could enter into a shared living arrangement for one year), and explain to the participant why he/she has been chosen and what would be expected in this cooperation.

In this order, starting from the spontaneous fantasy, one communicates with other participants by sharing interests concerning social life, professional activity, and life philosophy. The sharing opens the perception of the personal abilities of the participants in a relationship and, finally, to expected conflicts that the participants consciously or unconsciously hide.

Afterward, the participants will address their feedback on what has been expressed in the circle. They add what they notice, and a round of exchange can develop. If necessary, the group leader encourages the participants to say what the expressed and the 'suppressed' abilities mean to them concerning their biographic experience. This can evolve into a central theme or the protagonist of the meeting, which the group collectively engages with and explores further.

Another opening tool is the 'flashlight': One after the other, the participants very briefly present a current feeling, situation, or thought in one word or one sentence and their wish for the group for the current meeting. What is said is left as it is. In the next round, interest in a priority topic is exchanged, and a participant is chosen based on his or her topic or a group topic. This can also be done in the style of sociodrama, where everyone stands by the participant whose topic they find most compelling and offers reasons for their choice. This creates a 'vote' by the group, helping to identify the current priority topic.

2. Assessment and clarification of the task

The group selects topics to be addressed (clarifying tasks and priorities) through a sociodrama selection process. Participants position themselves with those whose concern or topic they perceive as most urgent, important, underexplored, or simply interesting. They

⁷ Raymond Battegay (1969): Der Mensch in der Gruppe. Vol III. Huber, Bern. p. 26ff

explain their reasons for choosing a particular topic. Based on these selections, the group collectively decides on the first topic to focus on and, if necessary, any additional topics to explore.

Thematic group exercises for self-reflection and content differentiation

In the first group sessions, the actual skills of the Differentiation Analytical Inventory (DAI) can be written on, projected, or handed out. For the individual skills (such as politeness, justice, trust, patience, etc.), the participants first exchange in pairs with the question: 'What do I value most? What does my relationship partner (including past partners and parents) value most, and what situations or encounters come to mind as I reflect on this?'

Following this, the round is opened up for feedback from the individual pairings if they want to share something with the entire group. This often leads to an emotionally significant relationship episode that can be grasped in terms of content, which can then be used to illustrate the actual, basic, and inner conflict and its content. Questions to ask include 'What is this actually about?', 'Where does it come from that you attach so much importance to this?' or 'You seem to attach a lot of importance to this/to ...'.

Self-perception and perception of others - especially for trainee therapists

Everyone receives a handout with the 'typical' neurosis structures (such as obsessive-compulsive, schizoid, depressive, dependent, self-confident, histrionic...) and classifies themselves with their parts, presents this to the group, and then receives feedback from the group. Experience shows that for some of the participants, their own and others' perceptions coincide; for others, the self-perception is more negative and verbally more restrictive than the other's view, and for others, essential, repressed parts perceived by the other participants are missing from the self-perception. All three groups typically experience a rather positive reinforcement, depending on the previous group's leadership and atmosphere.

This exercise is very revealing for the participants in later stages in warmed-up groups who have been experiencing each other for a long time. The task is initially given externally to compare one's self-image with that of others. In

retrospect, however, this is usually also the initial task for participation in the group.

Dealing with resistance and ambivalent order changes

A situation introduced into the group regularly leads to resonance, emotional resonance in the group, which can also be described as multidimensional transference and counter-transference. As a result, an order originally defined by the group can be changed, split, or unconsciously discarded through interference with the relational issues brought in. In this case, reflection from the metalevel by the group leader is useful to compare the patterns observed within the group with the initial objectives outlined for the encounter.

Example: A group of therapists in self-discovery formulated the assignment to themselves in the previous encounter: 'We want to meet and get to know each other more personally than before.' In the current session, one participant gave the group the assignment to help in an encounter with a patient family. The participant reported a feeling of powerlessness, of no longer experiencing himself as therapeutically competent, and thus of self-doubt. This occurred in a family submission conflict of the patient's family being treated. As a result, the participants gave advice and offered help. In the group, there was an increasing ignorance of the group leader's indications about the kind of I-distant communication. The group expressed non-verbally: 'Today we reject everything that tells us what to do' - this can be understood as a consequence of the unconscious transfer of the subjugation-power conflict to the group interaction. As a result, no one reacted anymore to the interventions of the group leader, who wanted to steer towards the personal level originally desired by the group with ego expression and relationship-oriented encounter, and in doing so, placed himself in a power conflict with the group. The transfer of the encounter dynamics with the family to the group situation by the leader finally solved this situation. This tended to require the leader's personal communication to perceive his own feelings of powerlessness towards the group and to bring them into the group to understand the situation that had arisen and to come back to the original assignment of the participant.

3. Reflection, feedback and sharing

The end of the group meeting is marked by a concluding feedback round, with questions like: 'What do I, as a participant, take away for myself today?', 'What resonated with me today?' Additionally, the question 'What do I wish for our next meeting?' can be used to begin setting the assignment for the next session. This allows participants to evaluate the clarity of the current session's tasks and to reflect on and prepare for the upcoming meeting.

Sociodynamic and psychodynamic in groups

Psycho-dynamic means 'movement of the soul' and is used for the individual. In groups, the term sociodynamic describes the subjects that exist in the group as a whole, similar to families. In the development process of a group - again comparable to a family - a development of values, rules, traditions, rituals, and ethical standards can be observed. It is a process in which the specific identity of the group and the tasks, roles, and interactions are formed. It can be described as the sociogenesis of a group and means the specific cultural development of the group.

The **psychodynamic** of each individual, intertwined with the dualistic dynamics between individuals, impacts every participant. Values and conflicts deriving from one's social background are brought into focus, influencing the topics of importance for each individual. This allows others to compare their own values, perceptions, and behavioral patterns.

Through sharing personal experiences within the group, one can uncover the individual **psychogenesis**, the unique developmental process shaped by the conditions that led to becoming the specific person with their distinct structure.

Sociodynamics, as the interaction between relationship patterns among social systems and individuals, creates a new familial environment based on established value concepts and relational patterns. Group members are encouraged to engage with unfamiliar concepts and values introduced by other members, fostering interaction and growth. The group, as a whole, forms a space in which this interactive process can grow.

Sociogenesis, as the development of typical interaction patterns within a system and group tradition, forms value concepts, capabilities, and relational patterns. The basic group experiences

echo the family motto and the social environment styles from which members originate. Addressing basic needs and basic conflicts offers an opportunity to modify participants' personality structures, encouraging increased flexibility and developing better mentalization. This includes the four areas in the Balance model in which the group process works: perception of oneself and the other, emotional communication tools, empathy, impulse control, as well as attachment and detachment abilities in the group interaction.

Internal and external group dynamics

As a therapist, I can observe the dynamic of the group and formulate specific questions to reflect the subconsciously upcoming subjects. The interactions of participants show the internal group dynamic within the group, as well as an external orientation as a group in relation to the outer environment. The internal group dynamics means emotional and rational exchange within the group:

Internal group dynamic shows four dimensions:

- The participant with himself/herself as an individual aspect:

'How do I feel? Here and now? Before or after the group?'

- The participant in relation to individuals, to others in the group, pairing, and sub-groups:

'With whom do I feel comfortable? Who am I still struggling to interact with?'

- The participant in relation to the group as a whole, passive and active roles in the group process:

'In which role do I feel comfortable? Which one can I not stand?'

- The participant feels the identity, meaning and future of the group:

'What meaning does the group fulfill for me, and which importance do I have for the group?'

The group self or 'We-feeling' in terms of integration, differentiation, and identity as a group can be described as **External group dynamics**:

- Individual people or contents (looking at oneself as a person):

'Who is part of our group, and who is not? What models do we consider right, and what do we reject?'

- Our group: (as seen from the outside).
‘How do we see the group's past, present and future? How do we name our group? How do we want to change our group? What do we like? What did we not like?’

- Other groups (families, professional groups, etc.)
‘How do we relate to other groups? What connects us? Which groups are we different from?’

- Group goals related to the outside world and the perspective of identity, past and present (group philosophy)

‘Who are we as a unique group? How do we see our tasks for the future, and with whom can we achieve them?’

In the ongoing long-term therapy process, reflecting on the internal and external group dynamic helps clarify roles, expectations, misunderstandings, limitations, attachment qualities, and tasks.

3.7. Positive group psychotherapy in a five steps process

Story: The Spectators and the Elephant

An elephant had been brought into a dark room for exhibition at night. People flocked to see it. Visitors could not see the elephant as it was dark, so they tried to grasp its shape by touching it. As the elephant was large, each visitor could only grasp a part of the animal and describe it by touch. One of the visitors, who caught one of the elephant's legs, declared that the elephant was like a strong pillar; a second, who touched the tusks, described the elephant as a pointed object; a third, who grasped the animal's ear, said it was not unlike a fan; the fourth, who stroked the elephant's back, claimed that the elephant was as straight and flat as a couch (according to Mowlana).⁸

1. Observation - distancing - *‘The parts of the elephant are palpated.’*

Personal classification, seating arrangement (distance), and sensitive attention involve reflecting on your concepts and comparing them with those of others. This includes observing physical behavior, performance, social interactions, and worldly behaviors in yourself and others. It encourages mindfulness of how

space, perception, and social dynamics shape the group experience.

2. Inventory - *‘The elephant is described and completed.’*

The problem statement outlines the central issue to be addressed. The task defines the objective or goal for the group to focus on. Questioning (past and present) helps explore the origins and current relevance of the issue. Classification involves categorizing the elements at play, while the organization of the group procedure sets the structure for how the session will unfold. Leadership refers to the facilitator's role in guiding the process, and content encompasses the specific themes, topics, or discussions that will be explored during the meeting.

3. Situational encouragement - *‘The elephant is cared for and loaded.’*

The exchange of concepts and experiences (from a transcultural approach) involves sharing diverse perspectives and insights and acknowledging and respecting cultural differences. This process can lead to relief by validating participants' feelings and experiences and encouraging a sense of understanding. It also contributes to the strengthening of existing conceptual content by reinforcing ideas and frameworks that participants already hold while offering support through collective knowledge and shared experiences. This approach promotes growth, empathy, and empowerment within the group.

4. Verbalisation - *‘Sorting out the load on the elephant according to criteria of usefulness’*

Conflict management involves addressing and resolving disagreements or tensions within the group, facilitating a constructive environment for discussion. Concept expansion allows participants to broaden their understanding by integrating new perspectives and ideas. The trial and targeted application of changed behavior in the "protected" group setting provides a safe space for experimenting with new ways of interacting or responding. Testing situations help participants practice and refine their behaviors in real-world scenarios, offering opportunities to evaluate and adjust

⁸ Peseschkian N. (1986): Oriental Stories as Tools in Psychotherapy. Springer, Berlin

their approaches before applying them outside the group.

5. Goal extension - *'The elephant goes to new goals'*

Feedback involves reflecting on the group experience to gain insights and identify areas for improvement. Application in everyday life outside the group encourages participants to integrate what they've learned into their daily interactions and behaviors. Independent concept expansion supports participants in further developing their understanding independently, outside the group context. Reorganizations refer to adjustments in the group's structure or focus, while reorientation involves shifting the group's content and methods to better address emerging needs or goals. These processes help ensure continuous growth and adaptability within and beyond the group setting.

The stage of observation and distancing is typically seen at the first meeting. This observation area also includes closeness and distance, which are initially established at the beginning, in the original state of the group. Another characteristic is the physical sensitivity of the group, which is very pronounced in the beginning. One becomes very attentive to the other group members and oneself. On the one hand, this refers to the way one makes contact. The physical observation, body language, appearance, and aesthetic appeal at the first meeting all influence the group further. On the other hand, one feels one's physical condition. This also applies to the group leader. He can either sit on a chair ready to jump or relax, take a seat distanced or in the center, or instead of observing, he can talk to his neighbor. All this influences the group. A feeling of warmth, security, and acceptance is conveyed in this phase.

The first stage of observation focuses on physical characteristics and the rational transmission of content, where the group emphasizes emotions more than rational aspects. It involves observing social and worldly behavior, which manifests in how individuals behave and the kind of attention they give to others. In this stage, distancing means stepping back to view the situation from a different perspective, whether through the lens of a story,

another cultural form, a saying, or an example. This allows for a broader understanding and fosters openness to diverse viewpoints.

In the second stage of inventorying, the contents of criteria, values, differences, and conflicts become clear. Inventorying involves identifying and organizing the parts that were spontaneously introduced. This step also includes assessing the participants' abilities and recognizing the areas where their challenges lie. Additionally, it involves discussing how to plan the next steps and group methods moving forward. Adler's individual psychology would favor the third stage, which focuses on strengthening individual self-awareness. This stage encourages participants to reflect on their personal growth and develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the group.

The third stage of situational encouragement involves mirroring or identification in transference, where the conflict-bearing member's experiences are reflected or projected onto others. This process serves as a form of encouragement. Existing content and forms are reinforced through this approach. Stories, as carriers of transcultural concepts, are used along with encouraging techniques to promote self-awareness and group awareness. Techniques like relaxation methods and the spectator situation within the group also contribute to the encouraging nature of this stage.

Encouragement in this stage includes the group's reinforcement of areas where the participant was previously deficient, supporting behaviors that have proven useful, and providing backing for real-life situations outside the group. Additionally, highlighting tensions or discomforts is an important step, signaling that these feelings are necessary transitional phases before resolving conflicts. This overall process fosters growth, development, and strengthening of individual and group dynamics.

In the fourth stage of verbalization, problematic and conflict-prone areas are openly discussed, emphasizing openness and politeness. Verbalization is particularly important in therapeutic approaches such as talk therapy, where emotional conflicts are directly addressed and revealed, as seen in analysis and the Rogers method. However, verbalization doesn't always mean speaking out loud. As

psychodrama demonstrates, verbalization can involve body language, emotions, and rehearsal situations, all contributing to expressing and processing conflicts.

The fourth stage also includes trying out new behaviors, similar to classical behavioral therapy, where participants experiment with anxiety-provoking situations in a controlled group setting after undergoing desensitization. This process allows for the testing and integrating new ways of responding or behaving in real-life contexts, facilitating growth and healing.

The fifth stage of goal extension involves applying what has been tried out in the group to real-life situations outside the group and engaging in independent concept extension. Concepts and strategies developed within the group can become valuable tools for resolving conflicts and addressing challenges outside the group context. Another key aspect of goal extension is the group's ability to reorganize and shape the future independently, as they take ownership of their growth and apply what they've learned to future scenarios, individually and collectively. This stage emphasizes empowerment and the practical application of insights gained during the group process.

No one touches the whole elephant, highlighting that no individual can fully understand or experience the entire situation or the complete perspective of another. In the first stage of **observation and distancing**, each group member contributes their unique perspective, offering a piece of the whole picture. In the second inventory stage, one puts together different aspects, like the elephant, and determines the methodical procedure. In the third stage, the elephant is "fed" with **encouragement** from the group and strengthened and loaded with suggestions. In the fourth stage of **verbalization**, his load is checked according to the needs of the path ahead and equipped with what is usable. The elephant's carrying capacity is tested. In the fifth stage of **widening the goals**, the elephant metaphorically moves towards new goals, symbolizing progress and growth. This stage marks a shift towards independence, where individuals begin to apply the insights and skills they've gained within the group to navigate challenges and pursue objectives on their own without relying on the group.

Conclusions

Group therapy requires an understanding of the group process's psychodynamic and sociodynamic aspects, alongside support for the healing interactions within the group. Guiding the interaction in five steps while accompanying the process and providing tools tailored to different phases can enhance the dynamics among group members. This approach facilitates conflict resolution, strengthens especially primary actual capacities as structural capacities, and creates safety and manageability in conflict-oriented, personality-related, or trauma-focused treatment. Psychotherapeutic skills and competencies are essential for understanding individual dynamics and adapting flexibly to the group's evolving journey.

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