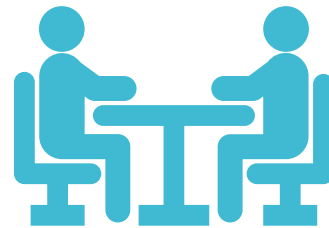


Group Counseling
Lecture 1
Historical Perspective of
Group Therapy

Lecturer: Susan Gitau (PhD)

Introduction to Lecture One

This lecture will define group counseling, explain the importance of group counseling, identify types of groups and discuss the advantages and advantages of group counseling. The purpose of this lecture is to introduce you to group counseling techniques and help you to conduct effective group therapies as well as help you to appreciate group dynamics in therapeutic counseling practice.



Lecture Learning Outcomes

Be

At the end of the lecture, you will be able to:

Define

Define group therapy.

Explain

Explain the purpose benefits of group therapy.

Identify

Identify different types of group therapy.

Differentiate

Differentiate between individual and group therapy.

Introduction

Group counselling mainly involves coming together of a small group of members with common specific goals, shared their problems or concerns where they provide empathy and support to each other.

The group members are also assisted in developing their existing skills in dealing with interpersonal problems, reducing self-harm, promoting self-care and self-esteem, and or/ changing negative behavior among others.

Why Group Therapy?

According to Corey (2004) Group counselling has preventive as well as remedial goals.

The counselling group has a specific focus which may be educational, vocational, social, or personal.

The group involves an interpersonal process that stresses conscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.

Counselling groups are often problem oriented with their content and aim determined largely by the members from the onset.

Group counselling tends to be growth oriented in that the emphasis is on discovering internal resources of strength.

Definition of Group Therapy

Group therapy or group counseling is a general term used to indicate a type of a group whose main purpose includes increasing members self-awareness in terms of their thoughts, feelings, and actions/behaviors; assists them to clarify the changes they most want to make in their lives and offers them some of the tools or life skills necessary to make the desired lifelong changes.

Group Composition

Most therapy groups consist of eight (8) to twelve (12) members for effective processing and attention to individual needs within a group.

Group therapy observes all ethical principles as applied in individual counseling and members mainly share what they are comfortable sharing within a group context.

Historical Perspective of Group Therapy

Group therapy originated in response to a shortage during World War II of personnel trained to provide individual therapy. At first, the group therapist assumed a traditional therapeutic role, frequently working with a small number of clients with a common problem.

Gradually leaders began to experiment with different roles. Many of them discovered that the group setting offered unique therapeutic possibilities (Corey, 2004, 2008).

Historical Perspective of Group Therapy

For example, groups of people struggling with addiction and those who need to feel a sense of belonging because they wish to identify with similar experiences, would work best in group context.

Such clients include those suffering from chronic illnesses like HIV/AIDS, gender identity and expression, cancer, diabetes or mood disorders like bipolar, or those going through challenging times in life like bereavement, losses and change in relationships like separation and divorce.

For children, teens and youths, group work has proven to be very effective in schools and rehabilitation centres (Yalom, 2015).

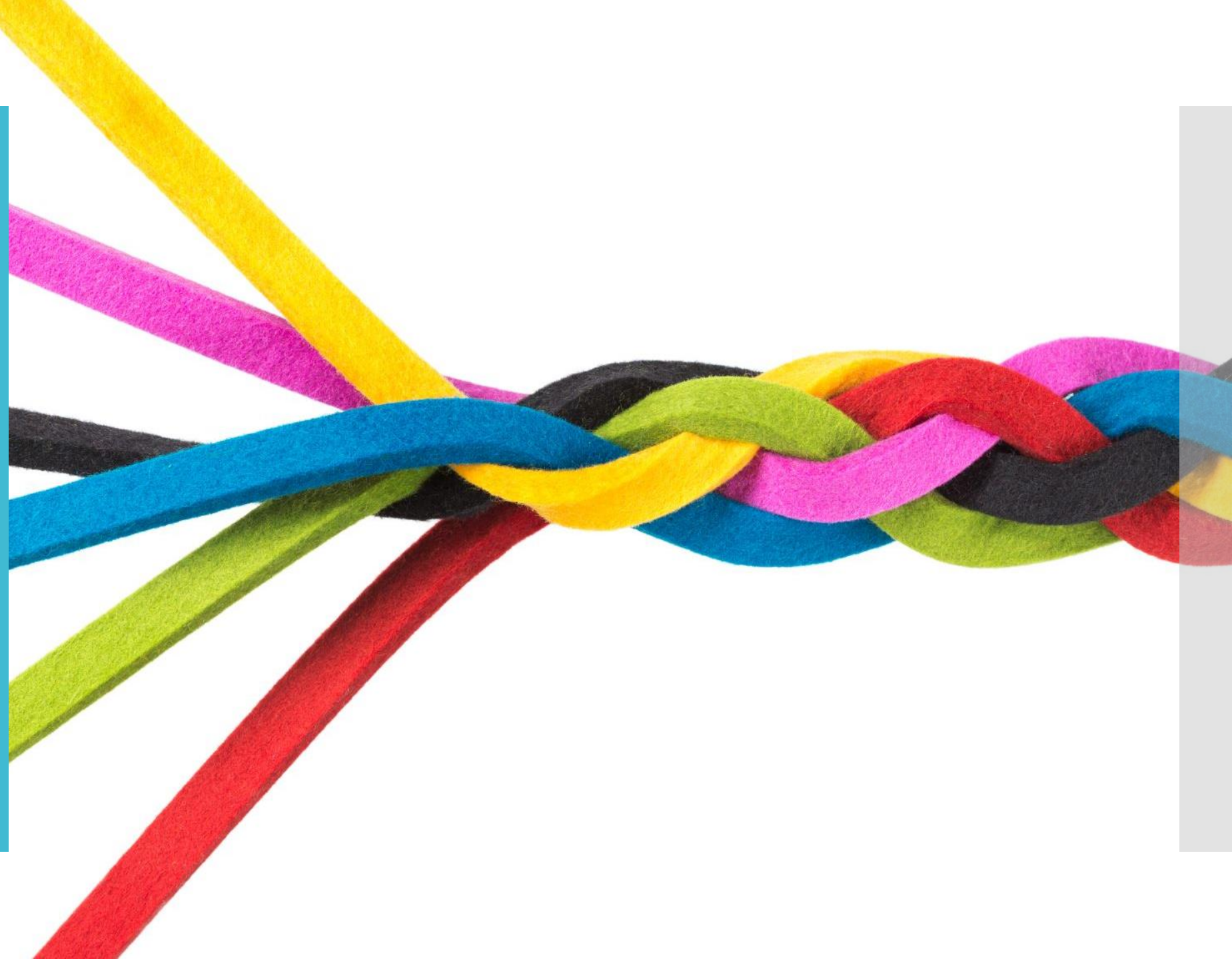
Purpose of Group Therapy

Group therapy is intended for people who would like to improve their ability to cope with difficulties and problems in their lives. It has the following functions:

- It has preventive as well as remedial goals.
- Usually has specific focus like educational, vocational, social, and personal.
- Promotes interpersonal process that stresses consciousness thoughts, feelings and behavior.
- Emphasis is on discovering internal resources of strength through trust, empathy and compassion.

Role of a Group Therapist

Basically, the role of a group counsellor is to facilitate interaction among the members to help them assist each other, establish personal development goals and acquire life skills for coping with current and /or future challenges.



Goals of Group Therapy

- Some of the common group therapy goals include helping members to:
 - learn to trust oneself and others.
 - increase awareness and self-knowledge; to develop a sense of one's unique identity.
 - recognize the commonality of members needs and problems and to develop a sense of universality.

Goals of Group Therapy

- **increase self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-respect, and to achieve a new view oneself and others.**
- **develop concern and compassion for others.**
- **find alternative ways of dealing with more normal developmental issues and of resolving certain conflicts.**
- **make specific plans for changing certain self-defeating behaviors and to commit oneself to follow through with these plans.**

Types of Groups

***Group Counselling* which usually focuses on a particular type of problem, which may be personal, educational, social, or vocational. It is often carried out in institutional settings, such as schools, college counselling centres, and community mental health clinics.**

Personal- Growth Groups

Offers an intensive experience intended to help relatively healthy people function better on an interpersonal level. Personal growth groups range from those with an open structure, in which participants shape the direction of the group, to those characterized by a specific focus.

Types of Group

T-Groups or Laboratory-Training Groups: They tend to emphasize the human relation skills required for successful functioning in a business organization.

- *Structured Groups:* These focus on one theme mainly by agencies, schools and college counselling centres.

Self- Help Groups

Serve a critical need for certain populations that are not met by professional mental health workers. Such groups are composed of people with a common interest, provide a support system that helps reduce psychological stress and give members the incentive to begin challenging their life.

Classification of Groups

Groups are mainly classified as follows:

- Open verse closed groups.
- Voluntary verses involuntary groups
- Heterogeneous verses homogeneous groups

Open verses Closed Group.

An open group is one where members are allowed to join the group at any time at any stage while a closed group is one where members are not allowed to join once the group has started.

So, at times the groups operate as cohorts in terms of formation time, membership criteria and other group formation norms. Disadvantages of open group include threat to confidentiality and lack of trust among members.

Involuntary Group

This is where members are mandated by institutions, parents or teachers, and it can either be closed or open. This is common in behavior change settings

Voluntary Group

Depending on the end goal or group agenda, the choice of groups will differ but when a client volunteers to join group process, the outcome is likely to be positive because they take personal responsibility over their choice and most likely to remain committed to the process.

*Homogeneous
verses
Heterogeneous*

A Homogeneous group is a group where all members have common issues while a heterogeneous group is a group where members are with diverse issues but with a common goal which is getting help and growth.

Homogenous groups are easy to process where issues are very sensitive and need specialized attention. e.g AA groups, SOGIE groups

Differences Between Individual and Group Therapy

Group therapy is characterized by the following:

- Careful selection and recruitment of members
- A high level of interaction.
- Good structures group norms.
- Clear purpose and goals
- Dynamic interdependency.
- Group dynamics
- Facilitators working together with group members.
- Defined life span depending on the number of sessions and goals set

Individual Therapy

Individual therapy is characterized by the following:

- **It is simply one on one (the counselor and the client).**
- **It does not have a common goal to be achieved like in a group, goals are client led.**
- **Rapport is created between a therapist and client to build trust that is necessary for a therapeutic relationship and therapy outcomes.**
- **Does not have norms but clear roles and responsibilities of the client and the counselor.**

Advantages of Group Therapy



Group therapy has a variety of advantages but adequate training in group work is essential to ensure effective and successful counseling outcomes.



The effort involved in setting up and leading groups is important because groups have immense power to move people in creative and more life-giving directions if well designed, processed and evaluated from the initial stage to termination.

Advantages



Some of the advantages include empathy from multiple sources:



Vicarious identification and understanding of members' situation from others



Constructive feedback from multiple points of view is shared by group members,



Hope is instilled from other group members who may have gone through and coped with a similar situation

Advantages

- **Mutual aid because members give and receive aid and help,**
- **Normalization (stigma, isolation)**
- **Practice of new behaviors (safety, support)**
- **Role modeling**
- **Enhanced interpersonal socialization (sense of belonging, safety)**
- **Advocacy**
- **Networking**
- **Personal development**

Disadvantages

- **Safety**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Conformity or dependence,**
- **Creating scapegoats (blame, attacks)**
- **Bias (assertive or talkative members)**
- **Financial implications,**
- **Leadership**

Conclusion

In this lecture, we have defined group therapy, given the rationale behind conducting group therapies, explained the importance of group therapy, identified different types of groups and evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of group therapy. In our follow up lecture, we shall learn more about dynamics in groups or in other words group dynamics

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Thank you

