

## **Group Counseling**

### **Lecture**

#### **Integrative Group Counseling**

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### **Introduction**

Integrative therapy employs psychodynamic, cognitive, and behavioral techniques. These techniques can be applied in a variety of formats including individual, family, and group therapy settings. An integrative therapist adapts and integrates various techniques according to the individual's needs and goals {[Integrative Therapy: Definition, Types, Techniques, and Efficacy \(verywellmind.com\)](#) by [Kendra Cherry, MSEd](#)} Integrative therapy involves techniques from multiple therapeutic orientations to treat a client's unique problem. Integrative therapists believe that tailoring the therapy to the individual achieves the most significant effects. Various theoretical approaches are applied for different issues, individuals, situations, stage of the group and sometimes the style of leadership (Corey, Theory and practice of group counseling, 2012). In this lecture we shall look into the ways in which a group counselor can integrate different theoretical approaches during group counseling.

### **Expected Learning Outcomes**

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

- i. Define the term integrative group counseling
- ii. Explain the key concepts of integrative group counseling.
- iii. Discuss the benefits and challenges of integrative group counseling.

## **Defining Integrative Group Counseling**

Integrative therapy is the art of combining different therapeutic, concepts, modalities, techniques, skills and elements from a variety of theoretical approaches into a more cohesive experience in group counseling. While integrative and eclectic therapy are sometimes used interchangeably, there are some key differences between these two approaches. Eclectic therapy is more about simply drawing on different traditions during group work while integrative is combining them into a whole piece of approach. Integrative is more structural than spontaneous (Corey, Theory and practice of group counseling, 2012).

## **What issues can be addressed Integrative Group Counseling?**

There are several issues that can be addressed in group counseling context. They include but not limited to the following: Clarifying personal goals, creating and maintaining trust • ringing living in the here-and-now, dealing with fears and anxieties, self-awareness and personal development, dealing with difficult emotions, restoring relationships, divorce, separation and loss and grief among others. For beginning counselors, it demonstrates how one can be integrative whether one is behaviorally, cognitively, or affectively oriented. For more advanced counselors, it reminds them of the wealth of information that all theories offer and how techniques or theories can be synthesized into a more effective approach. Whether you are a new counselor trying to figure out how to integrate the many theories you learned about, or a seasoned professional seeking new ways of working with clients others, always try to reflect on your practice and results you get from the integration (Corey, The art of integrative counseling, 2018).

## **Reflections of the Group Process**

How will the resistance be dealt with? The counseling process has stages that begin from pre planning to the termination stage of a group. When thinking about integrative group counseling a group counselor can think through the stages and plan what should be considered and integrated at each stage.

### ***Pre- planning stage***

Consider who will be invited, what will be the purpose of the group, the goals, ethical considerations, venue, participation cost and schedules. What needs to be considered should be well documented and followed during the process.

### ***Initial stage***

How will the members be welcomed? How will their safety be? What about first time meet anxiety? What ethical considerations and theoretical techniques can be applied to build a therapeutic relationship?

### ***Resistance stage***

The big question for the group counselor is ... how will the resistance be dealt with? Some theoretical interventions and counseling skills can be used to diffuse the resistance and lead the group to desired goals set for the group.

### ***Working stage***

In this stage the group counselor can apply a variety of chosen therapeutic relationships and techniques that can enhance cohesion and teamwork. Bringing out the best of the members abilities and potential so the group can grow them at individual and group level.

### ***Termination stage***

Strategies and techniques that can help deal with termination separation anxieties, expectant grief, plans beyond group therapy and other termination issue(s).

### ***Post Group stage.***

The group counselor reflects genuinely on the group performance from the beginning to the end. Its about testing theories, skills and techniques applied during the process. It's about evaluation and planning of other related group counseling engagements in future.

### **Theoretical Integration**

#### ***Behavioral problems***

- Use behavioral techniques and strategies such as modeling, aversive therapy, and reinforcement to change the behavior.

#### ***Psychodynamic issues***

- Strategies such as free association, restoration of broken relationships, childhood trauma, resistance, dreams analysis and interpretation, can help people gain insight and experience emotional relief.

#### ***Cognitive challenges***

- strategies such as cognitive restructuring and exposure to help change automatic negative thoughts that contribute to the behavior.

### ***Personal challenges***

- Humanistic therapies like person centered, existential therapy, reality therapy among others. The aim is to enhance self-awareness and personal development for self-actualization. Mindfulness and self-compassion are also quite helpful in anchoring people in the present rather than leaving stuck them in the past (Germer, 2009).

### **Guiding Principles for Effective Integrative Therapy**

Some factors that help a client in integrative therapy include:

- The alliance between the therapist and the participants
- The expectations that people have about being able to change in a positive way.
- The ability of the therapist to help inspire hope in the group.
- The qualities of a therapist include their ability to give attention, empathy, compassion and positive regard to their clients with cultural sensitivity.

### **Benefits of Integrative Therapy**

There are many different advantages to integrative therapy. Some of these include:

- ***Individualized:*** Because integrative therapy is highly individualized, it can be adapted depending on the individual's situation. It can be used when working with children and teens, and adults. It can also be utilized in both individual sessions and group work.
- ***Flexible:*** Where single forms of therapy are often more rigid, integrative therapy can adapt over time and based on any events, changes, or experiences that might occur throughout treatment.

- **Adaptable:** Another advantage of integrative therapy is that it can be modified depending on the disorder or psychological problem that member is facing. For example, if a person is dealing with depression, a therapist may draw on several treatment options that are effective in treating the condition.
- **Holistic:** Integrative therapy can also help group members learn to integrate and understand different aspects of themselves, including the mind, body, relationships, spirituality, thoughts, and emotions. Rather than focusing on a problem from a single perspective or in isolation, this type of therapy can encourage a broader, more holistic point of view ([Integrative Therapy: Definition, Types, Techniques, and Efficacy](#) ([verywellmind.com](#)) by Kendra Cherry, MEd, 2024)

## Conclusion

In this lecture, we have defined the term integrative therapy, explained the key concepts and techniques of integrative therapy, and described the process of applying integrative therapy, discussed the benefits and guiding principles to conducting an effective integrative group counseling session. In our follow up lecture (11), we shall review ethical considerations in group counseling.

## References

- Corey, G. (2012). *Theory and practice of group counseling* (8 ed.). Belmont,CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Corey, G. (2018). *The art of integrative counseling* (4 ed.). California: Wiley.
- Yalom , I. D. (2015). *New Directions in Group Therapy*. USA: International Psychotherapy Institute .

