



The Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network  
 Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# ADDICTION Messages

*Ideas for Treatment Improvement*

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## SERIES 14

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## Group Skills - Part 3

# Leadership and Group Interventions

*“The best leaders of all,  
 the people know not they exist,  
 they turn to each other and  
 say.....We did it ourselves”*

~ Zen Saying ~

**S**trong leadership skills can enhance effectiveness of group therapy -- for example, addressing resistance within the group through appropriate interventions. Understanding and adopting particular standards, ideals and intervention approaches builds a strong working foundation for group therapy.

### Group Leadership

The group leader can help get a new group off to a good start by following a few simple guidelines. Eliminate any delay in contacting the new group members after referral. Delays may make it less likely that those referred will attend. Ask new members if they have any concerns about entering a group. Keep a group agenda and group conflict resolution rules visible in the meeting room to help prevent members from getting “off track” and manage group behaviors. As a group leader you should also encourage members to be on time, participate actively, listen respectfully, and provide support and feedback to each other.

Keep in mind that group members may initially react to you, the group leader, as they have to other authority figures in their lives.

You can set group standards that can help build a solid foundation for the group, including:

- ❖ Keep your own needs separate,
- ❖ Prepare members for the group,
- ❖ Establish a climate of acceptance, caring, safety, and mutual respect,
- ❖ Model positive life skills,
- ❖ Focus on the group process, and
- ❖ Give appropriate self disclosure.

### Effective Leader Skills

Effective group leaders:

- ❖ Exhibit respect for group members,
- ❖ Show patience with group members,
- ❖ Have skills to arouse and/or allow tension in the group,
- ❖ Can be criticized by group members without becoming angry, and
- ❖ Perceive group process issues accurately.

Ineffective group leaders:

- ❖ Use warnings and threats to control group,
- ❖ Give advice excessively to group members, and
- ❖ Require members to behave in prescribed ways.

Other factors can also influence leadership styles. Group leaders should give consideration to any time pressures they need to adhere to, their own level of skill and comfort, characteristics of group members, and the current stage of the group as it develops.

### Content and Process

As a group leader you will function as both an educator and a counselor. Group con-

tent refers to the “what” of group therapy (topics and issues discussed in sessions), while group process refers to the “how” or the “style” with which you will do it. The group will benefit from a balance of three key elements: the individual member; the topics and issues discussed; and the group as a whole.

In order to strike this balance you as the group leader will need to communicate effectively with the group. A beneficial framework for giving feedback to the group is the ORAL method, as illustrated below:

- O** **Observe:** event, behavior, situation.
- R** **Report:** share observation.
- A** **Assumption:** what you think is happening or causing the situation.
- L** **Level:** honest sharing of feeling or concern.

### Group Interventions

An intervention in group therapy is an action intended to bring about a change in the group’s focus. It requires the group leader to:

- ❖ have a solid understanding of what is happening within the group at a particular stage or moment,

- ❖ make a decision regarding what to do, and
- ❖ act to encourage and facilitate the change.

An intervention can be in the form of an interpretation, question, request, or self-disclosure. A group leader may need to intervene when:

- ❖ there are difficulties in the group’s functioning,
- ❖ the group is avoiding process issues,
- ❖ members engage in an unconstructive discussion, or
- ❖ when group goals necessitate a shift in focus.

The characteristics of an effective intervention include focus, immediacy, and responsibility:

#### Focus

Refers to whether the intervention is focused on individual behavior, interpersonal behavior, or behavior of the entire group.

#### Immediacy

Refers to the process, the “here and now”, feelings and ideas being expressed in the group.

#### Responsibility

Refers to considering how the group will respond to the intervention. Will one person, two or three people, or the whole group be responding to the intervention?

### Group Intervention Matrix

#### Developmental Stage

#### Group Issues

#### Intervention Issues

Acquaintanceship

Anxiety  
Safety  
Familiarity  
Ground rules  
Sense of belonging  
Confusion  
Dependence on leader

Provide structure to facilitate acquaintanceship  
Provide education that will lead group to groundwork  
Define guidelines for group behavior  
Establish a norm for sharing affective information  
Model how to receive feedback  
Share positive expectations for group experience  
Do “whole group” interventions

Groundwork

Attendance  
Testing ground rules  
Trust building  
Skill development  
Process focus  
Control

Make process observations  
Clarify goals for participating in group  
Increase member-member interactions  
Allow conflict to emerge and facilitate resolution  
Establish limits of appropriate behavior  
Demonstrate limit-setting in respectful-affirming style

Working

Support from/to others  
Learning about self  
Personal accountability  
Self-esteem  
Openness  
Membership

Observe process; make observations sparingly  
Provide less structure  
Encourage member-member support  
Be a resource to the group  
Follow-up absences  
Monitor progress; renegotiate treatment plans

Closure

Separation  
Loss  
Grief  
Life after group

Design activities to help with continuing care planning  
Allow expression of grief feelings  
Anticipate regression

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Ask yourself the following questions when contemplating an intervention:

*What is the issue?*

*Is an intervention necessary?*

*How will I intervene?*

*How does the intervention relate to focus, immediacy, and responsibility?*

*What are my desired outcomes from the intervention?*

The chart on page 2 highlights intervention issues to consider at different stages of group development.

### **Resistance**

Resistance can express itself in a number of ways. It can be how the client responds to doubt, fear, perceived loss of control or a felt need to change. While resistance is inevitable, you can manage it by utilizing techniques described in the motivational interviewing literature. Here are some examples:

#### **Simple Reflection**

Simply repeat or rephrase what the client has said. This lets the client know that you have heard them and that you do not intend to debate or argue with their comment.

#### **Amplified Reflection**

Amplify or exaggerate the point made by the client to a degree that the client will disagree with it.

#### **Double-sided Reflection**

Reflect both the current, resistant statement, and a previous, contradictory statement the client has made.

#### **Shifting Focus**

Simply shift to a different topic. At times counseling goals are better achieved by simply not responding to the resistant statement.

#### **Emphasizing Personal Choice and Control**

Acknowledging that the client must make the final decision about their behavior can reduce reactance.

#### **Reframing**

Invite the client to examine their perceptions in a new light or reorganized form.

*University of Washington Summer Institute*

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***Next Issue:***

**“Research and the Clinician”**

### **Sources:**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Post-Test

## Series 14

*Circle the correct answer for each question*

- #1  
In the Acquaintanceship stage of development group issues include:  
a. attendance.  
b. trust building.  
c. testing ground rules.  
d. none of the above.
- #2  
Behaviors during the Acquaintanceship stage of group development include: self-protection, defiance, compliance, victim statements, and externalizing.  
True                      False
- #3  
Which of the following are techniques used in the Stages-of-Change approach to group therapy?  
a. role clarification.  
b. goal setting.  
c. reinforcement.  
d. "a", "b", and "c".
- #4  
Effective group leaders:  
a. respect group members and show patience.  
b. ignore process issues.  
c. work to deter tension.  
d. all of the above
- #5  
Issuing advice and using warnings to keep group members on task are attributes of an effective group leader.  
True                      False
- #6  
Cohesion has little to do with group members' commitment to remaining in group therapy.  
True                      False
- #7  
Group therapy can help clients:  
a. enhance self-responsibility.  
b. increase readiness for change.  
c. build support for recovery.  
d. all of the above.
- #8  
In the Stages-of-Change approach to group therapy the counselor will change strategies when they sense resistance.  
True                      False
- #9  
Counselors can enhance group cohesion through:  
a. spending time on pre-group preparation.  
b. modeling appropriate behavior.  
c. setting group norms without being overly directive.  
d. all of the above.
- #10  
Clients have the best outcomes when both individual and Group Drug Counseling (GDC) are used together.  
True                      False

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