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# The Development of a Process Group

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Abstract
This article examines the principles and practice of transactional analysis process group work and five key areas for analyzing the development of the group. It is based on Eric Berne's (1966) original work on group structure and dynamics in ***Principles of Group Treatment*** and integrates the work of Minuchin (1974) and Joines (1988) on intrapersonal and interpersonal boundaries. The boundaries of five areas or aspects of the group determine its formation and development and manifest the significance of leadership, group interaction, and group process. Seven key principles in process group work are presented. These provide the foundation for process group work practice and are relevant for all areas and stages of groups.

Keywords
process group, boundaries, leadership, group development, group interaction, intimacy, authentic relating, primal wounds

## Definition and Functions of the Process Group

The function of the transactional analysis process therapy group is to provide a space in which authen- tic relating can be explored and fully experienced. When the attention of the leader and all group mem- bers is on making the experience authentic and vital, a safe place to be and to learn can be created that makes the TA process group transformational and therapeutic. A healthy experience of working through issues that arise invites the group to a new integration of thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.

The function of the leader and group members is to be alert to how they engage in the here-and- now process. There are no bystanders in a process group, so each group member functions as a fully active participant in the process and not just as a witness. The transactional analysis process therapy group becomes a significant space in which each person's intrapsychic processes can be externally realized, experienced, and therefore changed, and new ways of relating can be learned and integrated. When describing the difference between individual therapy and group work, Clarkson (1991) emphasized the significance of using the relationships among group members as a resource for exploring intrapsychic object relations:

> The analysis of transactions, games and ego states, usually conducted between the individual client and the psychotherapist, can be greatly aided, focused, and enhanced by utilizing material from relationships
>
> between group members as well as between group members and the therapist. Just as the individual externalizes his or her intrapsychic object relations in the client/psychotherapist dyad, each group mem- ber externalizes intrapsychic object relations in the matrix of the group. (p. 36)

Because we grow up in relationship and in groups, the transactional analysis process group becomes a matrix in which members can understand and enact their early family dynamics and rela- tionships and use the group to understand, challenge, and change them.

The term *process group* as I use it in my approach to transactional analysis group therapy refers to a style of working in which the therapy is mostly experienced *through* the group as opposed to redecision-style group work in which the therapy is experienced *in* the group, although there will be some combination of both in most group-work practice. The immediate "moment-by-moment experience of the group members is the basis for therapeutic change" (Stewart & Lee, 1999, p. 35). Each group member is invited to be continuously involved, proactive and reactive, transaction by transaction.

It is useful in our postmodernist era to understand life script as flexible, organic, and trans- formable. Each time we experience ourselves in an authentic, open way in a relationship with another person and allow something of his or her true self and reality to impact us, we have an invitation to change our view of self and other. We open both interpersonal and intrapersonal boundaries and permit the possibility of change in our core sense of self and our relationship to others in the world.

Developments in neuroscience have transformed our understanding of script from something based on fixed life decisions to an ongoing process of meaning making (Schore, 1994; Siegel, 1999). Our identity is viewed as a coconstructed narrative (Allen & Allen, 1997; Summers & Tudor, 2000), so we can change our sense of self and structure our self-narrative or script in a more coherent way through the experience of the attuned and responsive ways of relating encouraged in the process group (Stuthridge, 2010). Stuthridge proposed that "the ultimate goal of therapy is to foster the cli- ent's capacity for coherent flexible and dynamic self-narrative through a process of collaborative contingent attunement" (p. 75). The group leader can invite awareness of enactments of early rela- tional patterns in the group process and encourage curiosity and the courage to experiment with an authentic, here-and-now, compassionate acceptance of self and others.

## The Group Structure

Berne's (1963, p. 23; 1966, p. 149) structural diagram (see adaptation in Figure 1) of the treatment group can be used to illustrate significant aspects of a group's process. He used similar diagrams (Berne, 1966, p. 152) with arrows to show the forces acting on the major group structure, and I dis- cuss these in relation to five aspects of group process and development: containment, leadership, responsiveness, interaction, and expansion. As Berne wrote, "The structural diagram emphasizes the advantages of structural simplicity if the therapist wishes to maintain a continuous grasp of the sig- nificance of the proceedings. ... The dynamics diagram helps the therapist sort out the proceedings in a

meaningful way" (p. 158). In the next section I will relate some ideas about group boundaries to Berne's concept of group structure.

## Boundaries

Using boundaries to describe the interface between self and others was introduced by Kaplan, Capace, and Clyde (1984) in their alternative to the traditional presentation of the OK Corral (Ernst, 1971). They included self-other boundaries that relate to attachment-detachment and interpersonal walls that relate to individuation-deindividuation. These give a rich bidimensional dynamic to the

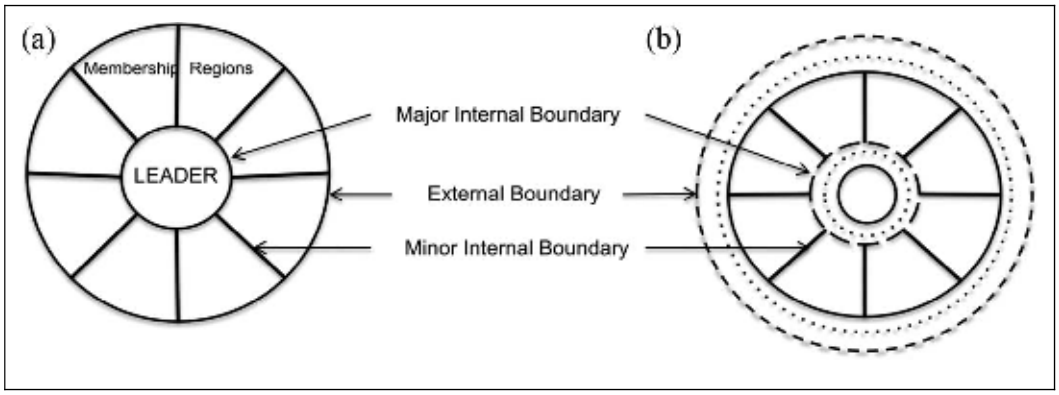


Figure 1. Structural Diagram of the Process Group (a) and Rigid, Diffuse, and Permeable Boundaries (b) (adapted from Berne, 1966, p. 149).

life position model. Joines (1988) elaborated this bidimensional model and expanded the concept of boundaries and walls by using Minuchin's (1974) classification of diffuse, clear, and rigid bound- aries to describe both intrapersonal and interpersonal boundaries. In this article, I use the concepts of *attachment* (Lee, 2008) and *boundaries* to apply to all the elements in group-work process: to self and relationships with others in the group, to self and the relationship with the group leader, to self and the relationship to other parts of the self, to self and the relationship with the world outside of the group, and particularly to self and the relationship with the group process.

Boundaries between person and person, person and others, and person and environment can be represented as follows:

- Diffuse (lax and weak) .....
- Rigid (fixed and inflexible) _____
- Permeable (flexible and open) _ _ _ _ _

If the group boundary is diffuse, there will be little or no containment and structure. This implies greater lack of protection and risk of harm, and it is more likely that such a boundary will encourage old defenses and contribute to fixations of script and old

patterns of relating. If the boundary is too rigid, there is no space to grow and change, although it could be argued that some strong boundaries are necessary initially to establish the foundations of safety and the group contracts for working together.

The types of boundaries we develop and experience influence the way we think, feel, and behave in relating to others. Ideally, boundaries need to be permeable to permit change, acknowledge dif- ference, facilitate balanced empowerment, and provide flexibility that fosters new experience and relationships.

In the following sections, each of these three boundary types will be considered for each aspect of group process, and an example of effective group processing will be offered. The different lines describing the quality of the boundaries can be used to diagram the leadership style and the group process when analyzing the cohesion, development, and process of the group (Figure 1b).

There are five key aspects for analyzing the development of a group in relation to these bound- aries. They are not clear stages because they all function within a group at all times. However, they are linked sequentially and provide a means by which the group leader can monitor the focus of the group as it progresses (Figure 2).

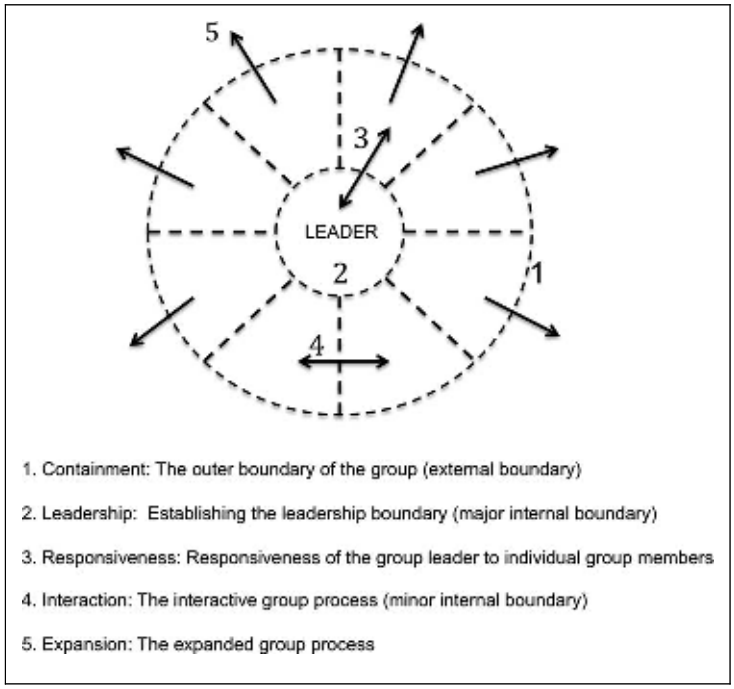


Figure 2. Five Aspects of Group Development (adapted from Berne, 1966, p. 149).

*Containment*

***The Outer Boundary of the Group.*** Containment for the group activity is the group leader's first con- cern. "The external boundary, or boundary zone, separates the external environment from the group space" (Berne, 1963, p. 56). Berne also said that the external boundary "is defined as representing those factors which meaningfully distinguish

members from nonmembers. … Membership 'in' the group is determined by the position of the individual in relation to the external boundary'' (p. 57). He saw this as a psychological position that invites feelings of inclusion and acceptance or exclusion and rejection. Berne (1966) also noted that pressure on the external boundary of the group will be met by group cohesion (p. 151). This containment phase of development in the group process includes the primary contracts for the group concerning its activity and purpose and the pragmatic elements of outer boundary formation. The three major aspects that are addressed in the containment phase are membership, venue (of the group), and time boundaries.

***Membership.*** Are all the members present? The naming of the members of the group and accounting for any empty seats will be significant here. A permeable boundary allows for a defined group mem- bership but still holds places open for members who will be absent for personal reasons. This also allows for the addition of new members should there be vacancies. It is likely that group members would be consulted about the membership contract and take responsibility with the leader for accounting for empty seats. Acceptance of difference will be encouraged in the joining process, and members will be invited to be open about their experience of themselves in relation to others in the constellation of the group.

***Venue.*** Does the group have a venue suitable for its task? For a transactional analysis process therapy group, the comfort and containment of the venue in the environment is relevant. In a therapy group, the continuity of place and the seating arrangement will probably influence attachment. If it is too rigid, however, the significance or incentive to work may be anchored inappropriately to a place or a seat rather than to the group itself. For example, specific chairs in the room may, because of their size, comfort, or proximity to the leader, endow privilege on the member who sits there. It is the group leader's responsibility to ensure reasonable continuity and a secure, contained workspace. This may include contracts about turning off mobile phones and ensuring that windows and doors do not encourage intrusion into the space. A permeable boundary might be experienced by encoura- ging change in the seating arrangements as a way to explore the impact of this on the group.

***Time.*** The time boundaries of the group are a major factor in containment. Clear contracting about the start and finish of the group as well as how time is managed in the group process create an accepted norm. Diffuse time boundaries, where timing is vague, mean a loss of security and contain- ment of the therapeutic process. This may also apply to the way time is distributed in the group for individuals to speak or work. If this is diffuse, one or two members may take up the majority of the group process time without this being addressed or managed. The psychological status of individual members is often measured in the minutes or hours they are "allowed" by the leader or the

group. A firm but permeable time boundary allows group members to know that humanistic rather than mechanistic rules apply. The time shared between group members in the internal time boundary of the group remains flexible and is attuned to the needs of the individual and the group to share experience and also to respond to what has been shared.

*Example.* The group leader checks the room before the group begins and ensures that there will not be interruptions or disturbances. She checks the arrangement of the furniture and the supply of fresh water and tissues. When the group arrives, she reminds them to turn off their mobile phones. The timings of the group are agreed on as are group rules about confidentiality, personal responsibility, and so on.

### *Leadership*

***The Leadership Boundary.*** The second aspect for attention in group work is the role of the leader. This is the major internal boundary in Berne's group structure (Figure 1). He defined this as "rep- resenting those factors which meaningfully distinguish the membership from the leadership" (Berne, 1963, p. 57). Is the leader in charge? Is she safe? Is she potent? Whatever the style of the group work, or indeed the kind of group, the effectiveness of the group leader will be quickly ascer- tained by the group members.

In the first stage of the group, the leader needs to establish the clear assumption of responsible leadership and ensure clarity about the group boundaries and group task. Issues of basic trust and safety will emerge as the leader identifies her values and clarifies her role. Her potency and position may be tested and challenged as group members replay childhood developmental struggles to take power or give up power and enact their archaic patterns of relating in the group. Pressure on the lead- ership at the major internal boundary of the group will be crucial for group cohesion and testing the relationship. Here the leader's task is to survive the testing, be open to feedback without deflecting or pretending that the conflict does not exist, and allow the group to establish its own culture without losing her robustness. If the leadership boundary is diffuse, the challenge to the leadership boundary may come in the form of passivity and loss of energy, which can become debilitating to the process. In process therapy groups, it is unlikely that the participants will risk their vulnerability if there is no clear leader in charge. When the leadership boundary is rigid, the leader usurps the power and con- trol of the group. In the storming phase (Tuckman, 1965), this may lead to criticism, judgment, or unjust sanctions on members. The task of the leader is to facilitate the group to shape its own unique norms and create a healthy group culture (Berne, 1963). She will share her own values when appro- priate and support and give recognition for the uniqueness of both each individual and the group.

As the process group develops, the leader invites group members to experiment with relationships and ways of making meaning of the experience. A permeable leadership boundary helps group mem- bers initiate, reflect on the process, and take

on leadership functions. The leader's task is to stay in charge of the boundaries while encouraging the group to make choices and experiment with authen- ticity and ways of relating. Her task is to encourage and validate group members' curiosity, vitality, autonomy, attuned responsiveness, coherent thinking, feeling, and capacity to articulate internal and interpersonal processes.

*Example.* The group leader begins by outlining the purpose and function of the process group, invit- ing group members to allow what emerges in the process to be explored, to be aware of how other people are impacting them, and to experiment safely with ways to articulate that experience and what becomes important for them moment by moment. The leader shares her own experience of the group process and models authentic relating and openness. For example, she might say, "I am noti- cing the empty chair and feeling some sadness because Tom is not able to be with us. How are others here responding to this?" She is flexible about taking leadership and giving other group members space and time to initiate work and respond to others in the group.

### *Responsiveness*

*Responsiveness of the Group Leader to Individual Group Members.* The third aspect for attention is the boundary and the interaction between the leader and the group members (Figure 2). Members of the group may wonder whether or not they are individuated for the group leader and may relate this to their position in their family of origin. How important am I really? Do I matter here? The group members assesses how the group leader attaches to and makes contact with each person in the group and are alert to authenticity, fairness, competence, safety, and respect. In short, each member is eval- uating the principles that guide the leader in terms of not what the leader says but how she demon- strates these principles in practice. Some form of checking in may be included at each meeting of the group as the group re-forms and explores the emergence of new experiences. Issues may emerge during this check-in process that will become significant later. Sometimes they involve themes or images or thoughts that reveal unconscious longings or old survival patterns. The way the leader listens, attends, and empathically responds to the group members will be significant to each person as he or she determines his or her individual uniqueness and importance and whether his or her rela- tional needs (Erskine & Trautmann, 1996) will be met in the group. Even more significantly, it will provide modeling for group interaction. It is at this stage that individual contracts for the therapy group session will be shared and refined.

The leader's behavior at this stage can make the boundary between leadership and membership diffuse or rigid rather than permeable. If the group leader is haphazard and inconsistent in her responses to individual group members, the boundary becomes diffuse, and members may resort to archaic defenses to manage the inconsistency of the perceived Parent in the leader. Archaic experiences in which

children had to compete for limited supplies are thus stimulated and potentially reinforced. If the boundary is too rigid, the leader will allot each person a set amount of time and perhaps give formulaic responses. Spontaneity, individuation, and the growth available in dynamic relationship may be crushed.

***Example.*** The group leader asks each member to check in with something that is important to him or her. She is curious about how each thing shared may be significant for the person and invites others to be curious too. She inquires with genuine interest, "And why is this important to you now?" She shares her thinking about the significance of what each person says, perhaps in relation to transac- tional analysis theory and the individual's script story. Sometimes she shares what is evoked in her, perhaps in relation to how this connects with what another group member has presented. She invites other group members to respond with what has impacted them and how they are making sense and meaning of the member's contribution. She may elicit the contract by saying, "What will be impor- tant for you to experience in this group now?" and follow this up to ensure that the outcome will be truly therapeutic and achievable.

### *Interaction*

***The Interactive Group Process.*** Once the group has experienced the responsive process between the leader and individual group members, the emphasis becomes the interaction among group members (Figure 2). The leader encourages this by inviting participants to respond to what someone has said and encourages dialogue that is meaningful and contactful. The group is alert to how the leader facil- itates this process and responds to old sibling or family hierarchies that emerge. Members watch to see how the leader works with these archaic issues to enable individuals to understand what it means in the present and to find new, open, flexible experiences in the group process.

When the boundary is permeable, the leader models and facilitates group members in articulating their feelings and thoughts. This gives permission for intimacy and open relationships. With the focus on authentically responding to how someone's story is impacting individuals in the group, the leader can become less vocal and, while remaining watchful of the process, ensure that all transac- tions are completed and that individuals experience being truly heard and responded to by others. The group leader may invite others in the group to respond to an individual and encourage dialogue that increases the empathic resonance between two members. When group members witness intimacy in the dialogue between individuals and reflect on what they see being cocreated between them, the entire group experiences an expansion of personal awareness and a sense of *group self.* When this is experienced in the group process, there is a collective engagement and cohesive group identity. The intensity of others' experiences is shared and accepted. The impact and significance of

someone else's full presence opens doorways for insight, new narratives, and new integration that might not be opened so readily in individual psychotherapy. The group becomes a space in which experience and meaning are cocreated. As the group reflects on its shared experience, new narratives and relationship patterns can emerge, be integrated, and given language and coherence.

*Example.* The group leader listens to what a group member shares, and because she sees this as rel- evant in some way, or because there is some connection, she asks that member to speak directly to another group member. She then asks that person to respond and facilitates the dialogue if necessary: "I notice that you seemed very sad when he talked about going to school. Are you willing to tell him how that impacts you?" Process contracting (Lee, 1997) is integrated unobtrusively into the group as each member engages with the dialogue, and the group leader remains alert to the relevance of the experience for each individual. She continues checking this out with group members until they learn to do this spontaneously. As the group process develops, the leader speaks less, and group members are empowered more to manage their transactions therapeutically. The watchful presence of the group leader becomes benign and supportive, although it is important for the leader to challenge and confront overadapted responses and to invite articulation of feelings that are considered negative (e.g., jealousy or envy). She may also give harder-edged feedback at times to ensure that the group does not become so cozy that the darker side of human nature remains hidden.

### *Expansion*

*The Empowerment Phase of Group Process.* The focus in the fifth aspect of group work is on how the experience in the group is taken outside the group into other group processes (Figure 2). At this stage, the containment that was necessary for group formation and safe exploration can be dissolved. The experience of authentic ways of relating and new integration of learning and relationship seeks to extend beyond the membership, time, and space of the group. When all the group members person- ally value the relevance of this specific group experience, they are ready to dissolve the psychological outer boundary of the group and expand its relevance to other relationships and parts of their lives. They become aware of all the other groups of which they are a part and the roles they have as leader or member in their family, workplace, local community, and so on. As the outer boundary of the group becomes more permeable, and the group prepares to end and move outside the external container of the process, group members can experience their availability to the world outside the group. The experi- ence of authenticity and intimacy and the acceptance of self and new ways of relating to others are ready to be transferred beyond the

external boundary of the group. This expansion of the boundary is necessary for the group leader too as she prepares to become a group member of the next group she enters. The ending of the group may raise issues of loss and mourning, and these will need to be accounted for and responded to so that this process becomes a learning experience for the future.

This fifth area of group process can become a new, energetic direction for the experience of the group members. If this fifth boundary is too diffuse, individuals may experience being somewhat cast adrift after the group experience and, in a protective adaptation, may return to old patterns. If the leader has not prepared the group for closure, it may end abruptly. If the external boundary is too rigid in this aspect of the group's development, the leader may misuse the group confidenti- ality contract. Respect for what individuals have shared needs to be honored, but the impact of the group process on each individual and the cocreated learning from it need to be articulated in other relationships. Each member of the group needs to think about how he or she will transfer this learn- ing to other areas of his or her life. Otherwise, the group experience becomes a "sacred" space that cannot be generalized to the members' life experience.

When this boundary is permeable, the group leader and group members will account for the meaning and significance the group experience has had for them and how they will integrate it into their lives. The relaxing of the boundary as the group approaches closure must be acknowledged. This emphasis in group work encourages a responsibility to the wider community and becomes a means of impacting it. However, the boundaries between this group and the rest of life do not totally disappear, especially if the group has become a significant change or transformational experience.

*Example.* As the group draws to a close, the leader may invite participants to share what has been important for them in that experience and how they will take this outside the group into their lives. Group members may reflect on the significance of the group process for them in relation to both their archaic experiences and the opportunity for new responses in their future lives.

Although the five aspects of process group work have been presented here as possible stages in a group's development, and there are links to Tuckman's (1965) stages of group development (i.e., forming, storming, norming, and performing) and Berne's (1963) work on the adjustment of the group imago, it is likely in a process group that these will become organic and cyclical rather than a linear process.

## The Principles of Process Group Work

It is likely that each group leader and each process group will develop their own principles and values for working effectively, and these will vary depending on the

preferred style of group work and the group culture (Berne, 1963). However, it is necessary for any group leader to be aware of the ethical principles and codes of her professional associations and to integrate these into the group process and practice. It is the duty of the responsible transactional analysis group leader to ensure that whatever develops in the group culture is integrated with clear, transparent ethical principles that are also congruent with the existential and philosophical perspective of transactional analysis. The following seven principles of process group work are the foundation for my process group- work practice and are relevant for all of the aspects and stages of the group. They are significant beyond the concept and analysis of boundaries and become guidelines for the group leader in her awareness of what emerges in the group process. These principles enable the leader to develop a vocabulary for responding, a set of values to ensure that she responds appropriately, and a way to relate her responses to relevant transactional analysis theory and professional ethics. The principles become robust basic assumptions in process group work and the formation of the group culture (Berne, 1963) and enhance the development of the leader's confidence, insight, and skills.

### *Healing Primal Wounds*

In a 1982 conference presentation, Mary Goulding noted the early deficits or relational disruptions that precede scripting. These are abandonment, engulfment, hurt, and nonrelationship.

These have been called the "primal wounds" (Lee, 1998, p. 93) because they seem so entrenched in the psyche, are evident in early patterns of relating, and form the primary protocol of script (Berne, 1966). In process group work, attention to the primal wounds is essential for the experience to be therapeutic. The emphasis is on ***being*** in the group rather than ***doing*** something in the group. Unconditional acceptance is established when the therapist, together with other group members, offers clear, potent statements and relational attunement in an environment in which there will be:

- Real contact instead of abandonment: Even at the level of simple transactions, individuals will not be left on their own with a feeling, experience, sharing of their story, and so on.
- Space instead of engulfment: The emphasis is on the contracting and a process that allows plenty of psychological and actual space for people to experiment and grow and do things their own way without an imposed procedure.
- Protection when feeling pain: This does not just apply to the obvious group rules of no violence and no sexual relations between group members but also to protection when the pain of archaic experience is brought into the present.
- Relationship rather than nonrelationship: The emphasis is on the authentic here-and-now dynamics of attunement, empathy, and relationship rather than on the content of what the client presents or on formulaic therapeutic interventions.

*Intimacy*

It almost goes without saying that the process group, like other kinds of therapy groups, will focus on intimacy as a form of time structuring (Berne, 1964) rather than on pastiming and games. There is significant emphasis on staying moment by moment in the intimacy relationship rather than moving into outcome, contract-type structures. The intrapsychic and interpersonal changes that take place when the emphasis is on intimacy rather than on doing a piece of work in a group setting are inte- grated at an unconscious rather than a conscious level. The activity of the process group is the expe- rience of intimacy. The therapist will, therefore, tend to be nondirective once the group members have learned how to be contactful and responsive with each other. The climate for intimacy develops when the emphasis is on how the work evolves in the group and its impact on others rather than on the content or contracted outcome of the work.

*Ensuring Closure*

One of the basic rules of process group work is that all transactions must be completed (Ruppert, 1986). The stimulus needs a specific response for closure to be experienced. Sometimes things are said in a group and the response is silence; sometimes a transaction is interrupted by another transaction. But in a process group, attention is paid to the completion of one transaction before the next one arises. If a group member does not complete the transaction in the present, he or she may move into archaic ego states and old script narratives. If there is a gap or an incomplete transaction, people tend to close the gestalt (Perls, 1973) with old script reactions. The process group creates a moment-by-moment orientation to being an out-of-script experience by attending to enactments in relating at points when the script intrudes.

The principle of *no loose ends!* characterizes this model of the process group. The therapist mod- els for group members how to complete transactions and invites closure by comments such as, "And what is your response to what Jane has just said to you?" The therapist will also ask directly if a transaction is closed or if the person has experienced completion before the group's attention moves to someone else (e.g., "Is there any more you wish to say or is that complete now?").

Contracts are made in response to the here-and-now process, so they can be completed immedi- ately in the context of that process. In process contracting (Lee, 1997), the completion of these con- tracts is emphasized to enable the client to experience the satisfaction of closure. This means that clients may make many small contracts in the group that have the possibility of immediate resolution instead of contracts that are outside the group's external boundary.

Before the end of group, the therapist will invite group members to do an internal process check to ensure that there are no unfinished transactions or loose ends and also to bring some closure to the present experience, even if it is not yet satisfactory.

### *Empowerment*

The power in a process group is shared equally among all group members. Even members who choose to be silent will have that accounted for in the process. Although the group leader may, in the initial stages of the group, need to facilitate the process, this role soon diminishes so that individuals become freer to experiment with their power and to share responsibility for the group process.

The therapist initially attracts an idealized transference simply because she is seen as the contact- ful, present parent figure who was absent in childhood. However, both sibling transference and a distinctive idealized family transference are attached to all or some of the other group members who similarly become the holding, responsive family that may have been absent in childhood. New "brothers," "sisters," and "parent figures" are available and constantly changing. Many relation- ship dynamics ensue, and because the therapist becomes secondary to the process that is going on among the group members, transference toward the therapist is reduced. Each person in a process group is important and actively responsible for the therapeutic process. The emphasis on group empowerment means that each group member is responsible for confrontation, feedback, empathy, and attunement in relation to other group members. The experience of having and using this respon- sibility effectively is an invitation to autonomy.

### *Change via Authentic Experience*

In transactional analysis process groups, therapeutic change is focused on the creation of a new authentic interpersonal experience that can be integrated into new internal narratives. Early pat- terns of relating are enacted in the present to foster updating and transformation. Moves in and out of transference become apparent and need attention. As the process group matures, archaic experience can be felt, recognized, and integrated, and new ways of relating and articulating experience can be integrated fully into the resources of the Adult. Each group member has the chance to recognize his or her unique importance in the group dynamic. The permissions to exist, to be you, to be important, to feel what you are feeling, to think and share your thinking, and so on (Goulding & Goulding, 1978) are therefore given, not as part of a verbal permission transaction, but in the basic assumptions of the process group. Hence, they have the therapeutic power to impact the person at the visceral, somatic level of the Child ego state and not just at the cognitive level of the Adult ego state.

### *Therapy of Relationship*

The process group offers members an opportunity to experiment with relationship. Instead of respond- ing to others in familiar, script-bound ways, new interpersonal options are discovered, and the expe- rience is open and available for feedback from the therapist and other group members. It is here that the individual can learn empathy and responsive engagement with others, not just by his or her own expe- rience, but also by being involved in the transactions among group members. The process group, then, is a place to practice relationship in an environment that is protected, boundaried, and real.

### *The Experience of Plenty*

The emphasis on being rather than doing and on authentic attachment in the process group will also impact the use of time. It is unlikely that there will be designated periods of time for each individual group member, and it is probable that each member will experience an amount of focused attention that is congruent with what he or she is sharing. This is because the emphasis on relationship, closure, and corrective experience takes precedence. The process therapist will establish the important permis- sion that there is plenty of time while simultaneously holding the boundary of the group. Group mem- bers learn that they do not need to wait for their turn before they can do therapy in the group because whatever is going on is their work in terms of how they allow it to impact them and how they share this response in the group. It is also accepted in process group work that no one speaks only for himself or herself. Rather, it is as if the whole group, with all its individual members, has a new group ego state, so one member expresses what is intensely felt by others in the group. This is a phenomenon of group cohesiveness, and it creates an environment in which everything experienced in the group is relevant.

## Conclusion

Studying the process group in transactional analysis psychotherapy includes attending to the stages of group development and to the significance of intrapersonal and interpersonal boundaries at each stage. Learning occurs through experiencing intimacy, finding words to articulate the impact that different people have on one another, and understanding and integrating the significance of this experience. The power is in the process.

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