

GROUP THERAPY



Many people are familiar with individual therapy (also referred to as counseling or psychotherapy) which takes place between one therapist and one client. Less people have an understanding of what takes place in a group therapy setting which is one therapist and about 8–10 clients. The American Psychological Association offers some insight into Groups.

WHAT IS GROUP THERAPY?

Joining a group of strangers may sound intimidating at first, but group therapy provides benefits that individual therapy may not. Psychologists say, in fact, that group members are almost always surprised by how rewarding the group experience can be.

Groups can act as a support network and a sounding board. Other members of the group often help you come up with specific ideas for improving a difficult situation or life challenge, and hold you accountable along the way.

Regularly talking and listening to others also helps you put your own problems in perspective. Many people experience mental health difficulties, but few speak openly about them to people they don't know well. Oftentimes, you may feel like you are the only one struggling — but you're not. It can be a relief to hear others discuss what they're going through, and realize you're not alone.

Diversity is another important benefit of group therapy. People have different personalities and backgrounds, and they look at situations in different ways. By seeing how other people tackle problems and make positive changes, you can discover a whole range of strategies for facing your own concerns.



WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY?

Confidentiality is an important part of the ground rules for group therapy. However, there's no absolute guarantee of privacy when sharing with others, so use common sense when divulging personal information. That said, remember that you're not the only one sharing your personal story. Groups work best where there is open and honest communication between members.

Group members will start out as strangers, but in a short amount of time, you'll most likely view them as a valuable and trusted source of support.



PARTICIPATE IN BOTH: INDIVIDUAL & GROUP THERAPY

Many people find it's helpful to participate in both group and individual counseling. Participating in both types of psychotherapy can boost your chances of making valuable, lasting changes. If you've been involved in individual psychotherapy and your progress has stalled, joining a group may jump-start your personal growth.

