

How To Get the Most Out of Group Therapy

1. Confidentiality is mandatory; it is extremely important in order to help you feel safe discussing personal issues in group. You may talk about your *own* feelings and growth experiences with someone outside of the group, but you may *not* discuss other people or reveal the identity of any group members.
2. You are encouraged to talk about your feelings and experiences. You will make the most progress if you allow yourself to experience and discuss your true feelings and reactions to others. Try to move into areas that are emotionally uncomfortable for you.
3. When you have reactions to something another member says, it is helpful to share those feelings in group *directly* with the person. A good way to do this is to use “I-statements.” Some examples are “I am feeling angry because...,” “I can relate to what you are saying because I am also afraid...,” etc. Use these I-messages rather than giving advice, labeling someone, or criticizing.
4. You will be encouraged and challenged to relate to each other without superficial conversation, social amenities, and other forms of social distancing in order to be as direct, frank, and spontaneous with your thoughts as possible. Questions should be rare, but the thoughts and feelings behind your question will be more important to explore.
5. It is normal to feel some anxiety as you talk about your personal feelings, thoughts, and experiences with others. Share these difficulties or concerns at a pace that is comfortable for you rather than forcing yourself to disclose too quickly in group. You will feel more comfortable as you let the group get to know you.
6. You will develop personal goals with your group leaders about what you want to work on in group, which may be revised over time. If the group is not moving in the direction you would like it to move, please let people know how you would like it to change.
7. We make every effort to begin and end on time. We also ask that you be on time to the sessions, and if you have to be late or miss a session due to an emergency, please call and leave a message ahead of time for one of the leaders.
8. We ask that you do not have social relationships outside of the group with other group members. All members are encouraged to discuss observations made of other members while in other settings, or to let the group know if you have had a significant conversation outside of group. This helps to keep the group relationships therapeutic.
9. You are making a commitment to participant for the entire length of the group when you join. Attendance is mandatory in order to keep the group feeling safe and cohesive. If you decide you need to leave the group before it ends, please inform the group and give a minimum of one week’s notice. It will be important for you to come and say goodbye to the other group members.