Chapter 1 Pg 4

Community agencies are making increased use of groups, and it is not uncommon to find groups for women’s issues, men’s issues, consciousness raising groups for men, groups for children of alcoholics, support groups, parent education groups, groups for cancer patients, groups for individuals with eating disorders, groups for people who have experienced trauma and crisis, groups for senior citizens, HIV/AIDS support groups, and groups aimed at reducing substance abuse.Your theoretical approach may be based primarily on a single system. Increasingly, however, group practitioners are becoming more integrative as they draw on techniques from various theoretical approaches (see Norcross & Goldfried, 2005). The numerous pathways toward integration are characterized by the practitioner’s desire to increase therapeutic effectiveness and applicability by looking beyond the confines of single theories and the techniques associatedwith them (Norcross, 2005a; Norcross & Beutler, 2014).Groups have particular advantages for school counseling. Special groups in schools are designed to deal with students’ educational, vocational, personal, or social problems. If you work in a school, you may be asked to form a career exploration group, a self-esteem group, a group for children of divorce, a group for acting-out children, a group aimed at teaching interpersonal skills, or a personal growth group. Elementary school counselors are now designing therapeutic groups as well as psychoeducational groups. On the high school level, groups are aimed at helping students who are in drug rehabilitation, who have been victims of crime, or who are going through a crisis or recovering from a trauma.Counseling groups in K–12 school settings include a wide array of topics and formats. These groups are a mainstay of the psychological services offered by schools. Groups for children and adolescents occupy a major place in a comprehensive, developmental school counseling program because of their efficacy in delivering information and treatment. Steen, Henfield, and Booke(2014) state that integrating counseling with psychoeducational interventions has been successful in both personal-social and academic development groups in school settings. This combination of group counseling methods provides the opportunity to facilitate self-awareness and to present skills information. Many school counseling groups are aimed at enhancing personal and social development and at the same time have a psychoeducational purpose (such as teaching study skills, how to interact with peers, or setting goals). Steen and colleagues (2014) describe a group counseling model designed to help K–12 school counselors integrate students’ academic and personal-social development into their group work. Riva and Haub (2004) maintain that “the real benefit of school-based treatment is that it can potentially reach many students before they need remedial counseling for more serious mental health problems” (p. 318). Goodnough and Lee (2004) conclude that “providing effective group counseling experiences to students requires leadership, specialized knowledge and skills, and the ability to advocate effectively for the inclusion of a program of group counseling within schools” (pp. 179–180).There is considerable evidence of the effectiveness of group psychotherapy with a broad range of populations and problems (Brabender, 2011). Group work is a beneficial and cost-effective approach to treatment. Meta-analyses reveal that group therapy is as effective as individual therapy (Burlingame, MacKenzie, & Strauss, 2004). Barlow (2008) contends that groups can be effectively used for both prevention and education purposes: “Through ever-growing research INTRODUCTION TO GROUP WORK5and continuing improvements in clinical application, groups remain a powerful intervention tool across the life span, positively impacting childhood, adult, and geriatric disorders” (p. 244). In sum, a group approach can help people meet almost any need. One reason the group approach has become so popular is that it is frequently more effective than the individual approach. This effectiveness stems from the fact that group members not only gain insight but practice new skills both within the group and in their everyday interactions outside the group. In addition, members of the group benefit from the feedback and insights of other group members as well as those of the practitioner. Groups offer many opportunities for modeling, and members can learn how to cope with their problems by observing others with similar concerns. Even practitioners with advanced degrees in one or another of the helping professions often have very little exposure to the theory and techniques of group work. Many of these professionals find themselves thrust into the role of group leader without adequate preparation, training, or supervision. It is not surprising that some of them become anxious when faced with this challenge. Although this book is not intended to be an exclusive means of preparing competent group leaders, it is aimed at providing practitioners with the knowledge and skills necessary for coping with the demands of effective group leadership. Overview of the Counseling Group counseling has preventive as well as remedial aims. Generally, the counseling group has a specific focus, which may be educational, career, social, or personal. Group work emphasizes interpersonal communication of conscious thoughts, feelings, and behavior within a here-and-now time frame. Counseling groups are often problem oriented, and the members largely determine their content and aims. Group members typically do not require extensive personality reconstruction, and their concerns generally relate to the developmental tasks of the life span. Group counseling tends to be growth oriented in that the emphasis is on discovering internal resources of strength. The participants may be facing situational crises and temporary conflicts, struggling with personal or interpersonal problems of living, experiencing difficulties with life transitions, or trying to change self-defeating behaviors. The group provides the empathy and support necessary to create the atmosphere of trust that leads to sharing and exploring these concerns. Group members are assisted in developing their existing skills in dealing with interpersonal problems so that they will be better able to handle future problems of a similar nature. The group counselor uses verbal and nonverbal techniques as well as structured exercises. The role of the group counselor is to facilitate interaction among the members, help them learn from one another, assist them in establishing personal goals, and encourage them to translate their insights into concrete plans that involve taking action outside of the group. (Chapter 2 describes the skills competent group leaders use to accomplish these tasks.) Group counselors perform their role largely by teaching members to focus on the here-and-now and to identify the concerns they wish to explore in the group.9781337430333, Theory and Practice of Group Counseling, Ninth Edition, Corey - © Cengage Learning. All rights reserved. No distribution allowed without express authorization. Distributed by Grand Canyon University.