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Tenth Edition

Theory & Practice of Group Counseling

Gerald Corey



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Gerald Corey

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Tenth Edition
Gerald Corey

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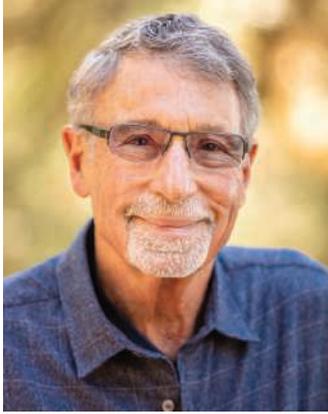
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*To Marianne Schneider Corey—my wife of 57 years,
best friend, valued colleague, and coauthor—who
has contributed immensely to the quality of my life
and my work.*

About the Author



GERALD COREY, EdD, ABPP, is professor emeritus of Human Services and Counseling at California State University at Fullerton and Distinguished Visiting Professor of Counseling at University of Holy Cross, New Orleans. He received his doctorate in counseling from the University of Southern California. He was awarded an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters in 1992 from National Louis University. He is a Diplomate in Counseling Psychology, American Board of Professional Psychology; a licensed psychologist in California; and a National Certified Counselor. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (Division 17, Counseling Psychology; and Division 49, Group Psychotherapy); a Fellow of the American Counseling Association; and a Fellow of the Association for Specialists in Group Work. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Mental Health Counselors Association in 2011; the Eminent Career Award from ASGW in 2001; the Outstanding Professor of the Year Award from California State University at Fullerton in 1991; and the Thomas Hohenshil National Publications Award, which was presented at the American Counseling Association's Virtual Conference in 2021. He is the author or coauthor of 16 textbooks in counseling currently in print, along with more than 70 journal articles and numerous book chapters. His book, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, has been translated into Arabic, Indonesian, Portuguese, Turkish, Korean, and Chinese. *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* has been translated into Korean, Chinese, Spanish, and Russian. *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions* has been translated into Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. With his colleagues, he has conducted workshops in the United States, Germany, Ireland, Belgium, Scotland, Mexico, Canada, China, and Korea—with a special focus on training in group counseling.

The following eight books, by Gerald Corey and colleagues, are published with Cengage Learning:

- *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*, Tenth Edition (and *Student Manual*) (2023)
- *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Enhanced Tenth Edition (and *Student Manual*) (2021)
- *Becoming a Helper*, Eighth Edition (2021, with Marianne Schneider Corey)
- *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions*, Tenth Edition (2019, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Cindy Corey)
- *Groups: Process and Practice*, Tenth Edition (2018, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Cindy Corey)
- *I Never Knew I Had a Choice*, Eleventh Edition (2018, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Michelle Muratori)

- *Group Techniques*, Fourth Edition (2015, with Marianne Schneider Corey, Patrick Callanan, and J. Michael Russell)
- *Case Approach to Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Eighth Edition (2013)

The following seven books are published by the American Counseling Association:

- *Clinical Supervision in the Helping Professions: A Practical Guide*, Third Edition (2021, with Robert Haynes, Patrice Moulton, and Michelle Muratori)
- *Personal Reflections on Counseling* (2020)
- *The Art of Integrative Counseling*, Fourth Edition (2019)
- *Counselor Self-Care* (2018, with Michelle Muratori, Jude T. Austin, and Julius A. Austin II)
- *ACA Ethical Standards Casebook*, Seventh Edition (2015, with Barbara Herlihy)
- *Boundary Issues in Counseling: Multiple Roles and Relationships*, Third Edition (2015, with Barbara Herlihy)
- *Creating Your Professional Path: Lessons from My Journey* (2010)

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Group counseling is an increasingly popular therapeutic intervention in a variety of settings. Although many textbooks deal with groups, very few present an overview of various theoretical models and describe how these models apply to group counseling. This book outlines the basic elements of group process, deals with ethical and professional issues special to group work, and presents an overview of the key concepts and techniques of 10 approaches to group counseling. The book also attempts an integration of these approaches and encourages students to develop a framework that leads to their own synthesis. The textbook addresses the key knowledge and skills areas for the group counseling competencies identified by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling Related Educational Programs (2016) in *CACREP Standards*.

Theory and Practice of Group Counseling is written in a clear and simple style, and you will have no difficulty understanding the theoretical concepts and their relationship to group practice. Many of you may have taken a course in counseling theories before your group counseling course, and that background will certainly be useful in understanding and applying the material in this book.

This book is for graduate or undergraduate students in any field involving human services. It is especially suitable for students enrolled in any of the courses under the general designation of “Theory and Practice of Group Counseling.” The book is also for practitioners who are involved in group work or for students and trainees who are interested in leading various types of groups. This book is also useful for psychiatric nurses, ministers, social workers, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, addiction counselors, rehabilitation counselors, community agency counselors, school counselors, licensed professional clinical counselors, and mental health professionals who lead groups as a part of their work.

Overview of the Book

The tenth edition continues to emphasize the practical applications of the theoretical models to group work. The central purpose is to help you to develop your

own synthesis of various aspects of these approaches. The book also includes two detailed chapters on the stages of a group’s development, providing a guide for leaders in the practice of counseling.

Part One (Chapters 1 through 5) treats the basic elements of group process and practice that you’ll need to know regardless of the types of groups you may lead or the theoretical orientation you may hold. Chapter 1, *Introduction to Group Work*, presents an overview of the various types of groups and discusses some general principles that can be applied in working with the reality of cultural diversity in groups. Chapter 2, *Group Leadership*, deals with basic concerns of group leadership, such as the personal characteristics of effective leaders, the problems they face, the different styles of leadership, the range of specific skills required for effective leading, and the components of an effective multicultural group counselor. An updated section on the role of research in group counseling addresses the issues of combining research with the practice of group work, evidence-based practice in group work, and the advantages of practice-based evidence as an alternative to evidence-based practice. Chapter 3, *Ethical and Professional Issues in Group Practice*, addresses important ethical issues that you will inevitably encounter as you lead groups, and it emphasizes the rights of group members and the responsibilities of group leaders. An updated and expanded section addresses spiritual and religious values in group counseling. Both the “Best Practice Guidelines,” developed by the Association for Specialists in Group Work (2008), and the “Ethical Guidelines for Group Therapists,” developed by the American Group Psychotherapy Association (2002), are presented in the *Student Manual* (available in the Online Student Resources). In Chapter 4, *Early Stages in the Development of a Group*, and Chapter 5, *Later Stages in the Development of a Group*, you are introduced to the major developmental tasks confronting a group as it goes through its various stages from the formation of a group to its termination, including evaluation and follow-up. The central characteristics of the stages that make up the life history of a group are examined,

with special attention paid to the major functions of the group leader at each stage. These chapters also focus on the functions of the members of a group and the possible problems that are associated with each stage in the group's evolution. There are many new references and suggested readings for Part One.

Part Two (Chapters 6 through 15) examines 10 theoretical approaches to group counseling. Most of the revisions for this edition are found in Part Two. Particular attention has been paid to providing the most current research available for each of the approaches discussed, and new examples illustrate key concepts. These chapters are designed to provide you with a good overview of a variety of theoretical models underlying group counseling, so that you can see the connection between theory and practice. Each of these theoretical orientations has something valid to offer you as a future group leader.

To provide a framework that will help you integrate the theoretical models, these 10 chapters have a common structure. Each chapter begins with a biographical sketch of a key figure (or figures) associated with the theory. All of the theory chapters describe the key concepts of the theory and their implications for group practice. This is followed by a discussion of the role and functions of the group leader according to the particular theory and, when applicable, the stages of development of that particular group process. Next are discussions of how each theory is applied to group practice; the major techniques employed within the framework of each theory; concepts and techniques that have applicability to group work in the school; and how the approach can be applied with diverse client populations. The necessity for flexibility and a willingness to adapt techniques to fit the cultural background of group members is emphasized in each chapter. New to the tenth edition is a section titled "Group Theories in Action," which is based on a recent video of my work with members of a group that shows how specific techniques of an approach can be woven into the group process. Each chapter also contains my evaluation of the major strengths and limitations of the theoretical approach presented. Five "Self-Reflection and Discussion Questions" designed to actively involve you in the material you have read are included at the end of each theory chapter. In addition, annotated resources are suggested to guide those who wish to pursue a more in-depth study of the approach.

Part Three (Chapter 16) focuses on the practical application of the theories and principles covered in Parts One and Two, making these applications more vivid and concrete. Chapter 16, *Comparisons, Contrasts, and Integration*, is designed to help you pull together the various methods and approaches, realizing commonalities and differences among them. The chapter concludes with a description of an "integrative model of group counseling" that combines concepts and techniques from all the approaches that have been examined; this discussion is focused on helping you attempt your own personal integration. The model I present integrates "thinking," "feeling," and "doing" perspectives, with varying emphases at each stage of a group's development. My rationale is to show which aspects of each theory I draw on at the various stages of the group, as well as to offer a basis for blending what may look like diverse approaches to the practice of group work. I strive to give you some guidance in thinking about ways to develop your own synthesis of the various group approaches.

New to the Tenth Edition

In this tenth edition, several chapters in Part Two have been significantly updated to reflect recent trends, and other chapters have received minor revisions. Relatively minor revisions were made in the chapters in Part One.

All the chapters in this tenth edition begin with a list of learning objectives, which is a new feature. Throughout this edition, careful attention has been given to updating sources to reflect the newest literature on each topic.

Revisions to Part One, *Basic Elements of Group Process: An Overview*, include updated research on the beneficial aspects of group work; an expanded treatment of confidentiality with minors; a new section on ethical issues related to online therapy groups; an expanded section on the role of religious and spiritual values in group work; additional discussion on having culturally sensitive conversations in a group; new material on the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2016) standards pertaining to group work competencies; and an added section on teaching group counseling virtually. The chapters on both the early and later stages of a group's development have been revised.

The revisions found in Part Two, *Theoretical Approaches to Group Counseling*, are based on the recommendations of expert reviewers of each of the separate theories, who provided suggestions for updating the various approaches in line with current trends, new studies, and recent developments in the practice of the approach. Each of the theory chapters has been revised to reflect contemporary trends in practice and to include the most current literature available. New to this tenth edition is the video program *Group Theories in Action*, in which I lead a group, demonstrating some techniques associated with each of the theories and illustrating how selected techniques can be applied to a therapeutic group. Segments of the group session are discussed in the chapter text, so those who have not seen the video are able to see how each approach or theory can be applied to group counseling.

Specific changes made in the theory chapters for this tenth edition are detailed here:

Chapter 6, The Psychoanalytic Approach to Groups: increased emphasis on the role of the relationship in analytic group therapy; new research on the significant role of early experiences on adult functioning; current perspectives on the concepts of resistance, transference, and countertransference as applied to group work; an expanded discussion on the contemporary relational approach to psychodynamic therapy; and a revised discussion of brief psychodynamic therapy.

Chapter 7, Adlerian Group Counseling: revised material on how goals influence behavior; many additional examples to make key concepts clearer; and sample dialogues to illustrate interventions.

Chapter 8, Psychodrama in Groups: reframing of psychodrama as a form of experiential learning; addition of several examples of participants' experiences in psychodrama; revised section on applying psychodrama in school settings; and inclusion of recent studies supporting psychodrama.

Chapter 9, The Existential Approach to Groups: increased emphasis on the role of group members as active agents of change; and inclusion of meta-analytic studies identifying the factors related to therapeutic effectiveness.

Chapter 10, The Person-Centered Approach to Groups: new material on translating the core conditions in action; expanded

discussion of the role of empathy, positive regard, and therapist congruence pertaining to effective group practice; more emphasis on diversity of styles in person-centered facilitation; and possible future developments of person-centered theory.

Chapter 11, Gestalt Therapy in Groups: increased emphasis on relational Gestalt therapy; updated discussion of how resistance is viewed in Gestalt therapy; revision of material on the evolution of various styles of practicing Gestalt therapy; and expanded discussion of working in the here-and-now.

Chapter 12, Cognitive Behavioral Approaches to Groups: identification of trends in contemporary cognitive behavioral theory; more emphasis on the role of the therapeutic relationship and collaboration; revised material on the role of homework in group practice; increased coverage on relapse prevention; updated and expanded information on mindfulness and acceptance approaches; discussion of future directions for this approach; and expanded treatment of culturally responsive aspects of current practice.

Chapter 13, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy in Groups: revised discussion on the use of some techniques; a streamlined discussion of key concepts and techniques; and more emphasis on the diverse styles of rational emotive behavior therapy in practice.

Chapter 14, Choice Theory/Reality Therapy in Groups: new material on the application of reality therapy in school counseling; and additional discussion of how the past is addressed in reality therapy.

Chapter 15, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy and Motivational Interviewing in Groups: increased emphasis on clients being actively involved in the therapeutic process; a new discussion of the role of Milton Erickson in influencing the development of solution-focused therapy; more on how SFBT differs from traditional therapies; common factors between SFBT and motivational interviewing; an expanded explanation of how questions guide therapy and ways to use these techniques flexibly in an integrative approach; the current understanding of the stages of change model; and a revised discussion on applying these therapies with multicultural populations.

Instructor Resources

Additional instructor resources for this product are available online. Instructor assets include an Instructor's Manual, PowerPoint® slides, and a test bank powered by Cognero®. Sign up or sign in at www.cengage.com to search for and access this product and its online resources.

Alignment With CACREP Standards

CACREP Core Curriculum Standards* for group counseling courses are reflected throughout this tenth edition of *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*. Chapter numbers relevant to the CACREP standards appear in parentheses following the standards listed.

After reading and studying *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge in these areas:

1. Understand, list, and discuss approaches used for various types of group work, including task groups, psychoeducational groups, focus groups, counseling groups, and therapy groups (Chapter 1)
2. Understand, list, and be able to recognize the therapeutic factors of group work (Chapters 1, 4, and 5)
3. Discuss principles of group dynamics, including group process components, developmental theories, group members' roles and behaviors, and therapeutic factors of group work (Chapters 4 and 5)
4. Understand and be able to demonstrate various types of group leadership styles and approaches (Chapter 2)
5. Understand the personal characteristics of group workers that have an impact on members: knowledge of personal strengths, weaknesses, biases, values, and their effect on others (Chapter 2)
6. Review the special skills for opening and closing group sessions (Chapter 2)
7. Review and discuss current research literature pertaining to group work (Chapter 2)
8. Understand and discuss ethical and legal considerations pertaining to group work (Chapter 3)
9. Understand the process components involved in the typical stages of a group's development (Chapters 4 and 5)
10. Understand the major facilitative and debilitating roles that group members may take (Chapters 4 and 5)
11. Understand and discuss group counseling methods, including group counselor orientations and behaviors, appropriate selection criteria and methods, and methods of evaluation of effectiveness (Chapters 3, 4, and 5)
12. Understand theories of group counseling and be able to compare and contrast the different theories studied (Chapters 6–16)
13. Understand group counseling methods and techniques (Chapters 6–16)
14. Review, understand, and discuss professional preparation standards for group leaders (Chapter 3)
15. Understand the value of participating in an experiential group (Chapter 3)
16. Understand and address issues of diversity and multiculturalism in group work (Chapters 1–3; Chapters 6–16)
17. Understand what is involved in becoming a diversity-competent group counselor (Chapter 2)

This textbook, along with a course in group counseling, will assist students in demonstrating competency in the following leadership skills:

1. Observing and identifying group process
2. Encouraging participation of group members
3. Attending to, acknowledging, confronting and responding empathically to group member behavior—actions/behaviors of the group members
4. Attending to, acknowledging, confronting and responding empathically to group member statements (paraphrase and reflection)

*Council for Accreditation of Counseling Related Educational Programs. (2016). *CACREP Standards*.

5. Attending to, acknowledging, confronting, and responding empathically to group themes (linking and summarizing)
6. Eliciting information from and imparting information to group members
7. Engaging in appropriate self-disclosure
8. Demonstrating awareness and understanding of one's own cultural values
9. Demonstrating sensitivity to diversity factors as they influence group process
10. Demonstrating understanding of multicultural factors as they influence group membership and group participation
11. Maintaining group focus; keeping a group on task
12. Giving and receiving feedback in a group
13. Using confrontation/blocking appropriately; working cooperatively with a coleader and group members
14. Engaging in ethical practice

Acknowledgments

Many of the revisions that have become a part of this textbook since its original edition in 1981 have come about in the context of discussions with students, colleagues, and professors who use the book. Those students and professionals whom I teach continue to teach me in return, and most of my ideas are stimulated by interactions with them. I especially want to recognize the influence on my life and my books of my wife and colleague, Marianne Schneider Corey, with whom I work professionally. Her critiques and feedback have been especially valuable in preparing these revisions, and many of the ideas in the book are the product of our many hours of discussions about group work. I would also like to thank the copy editor, Kay Mikel.

Gerald Corey



Part 1

Basic Elements of Group Process: An Overview

- Chapter 1** Introduction to Group Work
 - Chapter 2** Group Leadership
 - Chapter 3** Ethical and Professional Issues in Group Practice
 - Chapter 4** Early Stages in the Development of a Group
 - Chapter 5** Later Stages in the Development of a Group
- References and Suggested Readings for Part One

Chapter 1

Introduction to Group Work

Learning Objectives

1. Define these terms: group psychotherapy, psychoeducational groups, group counseling, task-facilitation groups.
2. Explain the rationale for asking group members to share their fears and concerns about being in a group at the first group meeting.
3. Understand how counselors design groups to meet the needs of specific populations over the life span.
4. Describe how psychoeducational groups can be designed to help people develop specific skills or progress through difficult life transitions.
5. Identify the key factors necessary to the success of brief group therapy.
6. Understand the rationale for orientation and preparation of members for a group.
7. Explain why it is necessary to view group counseling in a multicultural context.
8. Evaluate several basic ideas of multicultural perspectives on group work.
9. Analyze the process for becoming a culturally skilled group worker.
10. Identify some guidelines for serving multicultural populations in a group.

Today, more than ever, mental health practitioners are being challenged to develop new strategies to prevent and treat psychological problems. Although there is still a place in community agencies for individual counseling, limiting the delivery of services to this model is no longer practical. Group counseling offers real promise for meeting today's challenges. Group counseling enables practitioners to work with several clients at the same time, a decided advantage in these managed care times. In addition, the group process has unique learning advantages. Group counseling may well be the treatment of choice for many populations. If group work is to be effective, however, practitioners need a theoretical grounding along with the skill to use this knowledge creatively in practice.

Increased Interest in Group Work

In conducting workshops around the United States, and in other countries as well, my colleagues and I have found a surge of interest in group work. Professional counselors are creating an increasing variety of groups to fit the special needs of a diverse clientele in many different settings. In fact, the types of groups that can be designed are limited only by one's imagination. This expanded interest underscores the need for broad education and training in both the theory and the practice of group counseling. This book provides fundamental knowledge applicable to the many kinds of groups you will be leading.

Groups can be used for therapeutic or educational purposes or for a combination of the two. Some groups focus primarily on helping people make fundamental changes in their ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Groups with an educational focus help members learn specific coping skills. This chapter provides a brief overview of various types of groups and the differences among them.

All human services counselors will be expected to be able to use group approaches with diverse client populations and for a variety of purposes. In a psychiatric hospital, for example, you may be asked to design and lead groups for patients with specific problems, for patients who are about to leave the hospital and reenter the community, or for patients' families. Insight groups, remotivation groups, assertion training groups, bereavement groups, and recreational/vocational therapy groups are commonly found in these hospitals.

If you work in a community mental health center, a college counseling center, or a day-treatment clinic, you will be expected to provide therapeutic services in a wide range of group settings. Your client population will most likely be diverse with respect to age, ability/disability, presenting issues, socioeconomic status, level of education, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, and cultural background. Community agencies are increasing their use of groups, and it is not uncommon to find groups for women's issues and for men's issues, consciousness-raising groups, 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 older adults, 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 (Norcross & Goldfried, 2019). 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 associated with them (Norcross & Alexander, 2019; Norcross & Beutler, 2019).

Groups have particular advantages for school counseling. School-based groups are designed to deal with students' educational, vocational, social, and emotional 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 behavior-modification group, an educational group 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 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 Booker (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 school counselors with 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, Henfield, and Booker 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).

There is considerable evidence for the effectiveness of group psychotherapy with a broad range of psychological problems and populations. The efficiency of group therapy has been enhanced by brief and time-limited frameworks for various settings (Brabender, 2020). Group work is a beneficial and cost-effective approach to treatment, and meta-analyses reveal that group therapy is as effective as individual therapy (Burlingame et al., 2004). Barlow (2008) contends that groups can be used effectively for both prevention and educational purposes: “Through ever-growing research and continuing improvements in clinical application, groups remain a powerful intervention tool across the life span, positively impacting childhood, adult, and geriatric disorders” (p. 244). Group approaches are flexible and can be designed to help people with almost any need.

The group approach has become popular in part because it is frequently more effective than individual counseling. Group members not only gain insight but also 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. Group members also have the opportunity to rehearse their newly acquired skills within the group.

Even practitioners with advanced degrees in a helping profession often have had little exposure to the theory and techniques of group work. Many 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 provides practitioners with the fundamental knowledge and skills necessary to cope with the demands of effective group leadership.

Overview of the Counseling Group

A **counseling group** consists of a group facilitator and a limited number of members and has a specific focus, which may be educational, problem oriented,

or revolve around personal growth. Group work emphasizes interpersonal communication of conscious thoughts, feelings, and behavior within a here-and-now time frame. Group work may have preventive as well as remedial aims; however, 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. Counselors assist group members in developing their existing skills in dealing with interpersonal problems so members 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, *Group Leadership*, 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 want to explore in the group.

Goals

Ideally, the group members will decide the specific goals of the group experience for themselves. Here are some possible goals for members of counseling groups:

- Increase awareness and self-knowledge and develop a sense of one’s unique identity
- Recognize the commonality of members’ needs and problems and develop a sense of connectedness
- Learn how to establish meaningful and intimate relationships
- Discover resources within their extended family and community as ways of addressing their concerns

- Increase self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-respect, and achieve a new view of oneself and others
- Learn how to express one's emotions in a healthy way
- Develop concern and compassion for the needs and feelings of others
- Find alternative ways of dealing with normal developmental issues and of resolving certain conflicts
- Increase self-direction, interdependence, and responsibility toward oneself and others
- Become aware of one's choices and make choices wisely
- Make specific plans for changing certain behaviors
- Learn more effective social skills
- Learn how to challenge others with care, concern, honesty, and directness
- Clarify one's values and decide whether and how to modify them

Advantages

The group re-creates the participants' everyday world, especially if the membership is diverse with respect to age, interests, background, socioeconomic status, and type of problem. As a microcosm of society, the group provides a sample of reality—members' struggles and conflicts in the group are similar to those they experience outside of it—and the diversity that characterizes most groups also results in unusually rich feedback for and from the participants, who can see themselves through the eyes of a wide range of people.

The group offers understanding and support, which foster the members' willingness to explore problems they have brought with them to the group. The participants achieve a sense of belonging, and through the cohesion that develops, group members learn ways of being intimate, of caring, and of challenging. In this supportive atmosphere, members can experiment with new behaviors. As they practice these behaviors in the group, members receive encouragement and learn how to bring their new insights into their life outside the group experience.

Ultimately, it is up to the members themselves to decide what changes they want to make. They can compare the perceptions they have of themselves with the perceptions others have of them and then decide

what to do with this information. Group members are able to get a picture of the kind of person they would like to become, and they come to understand what is preventing them from becoming that person.

Value for Specific Populations

Group counseling can be designed to meet the needs of specific populations such as children, adolescents, college students, or older adults. Examples of these counseling groups are described in *Groups: Process and Practice* (M. Corey et al., 2018), which offers suggestions on how to set up various groups and the techniques to use for dealing with the unique problems of each of them. A brief discussion follows that explains the value of counseling groups for some specific populations.

Counseling Groups for Children In schools, group counseling is often suggested for children who display behaviors or attributes such as excessive fighting, inability to get along with peers, violent outbursts, poor social skills, or lack of supervision at home. Small groups can provide children with the opportunity to express their feelings about these and related problems. Identifying children who are developing serious emotional and behavioral problems is extremely important. If these children can receive psychological assistance at an early age, they stand a better chance of coping effectively with the developmental tasks they must face later in life.

Counseling Groups for Adolescents Group counseling is especially suited for adolescents because it gives them a place to express conflicting feelings, to explore self-doubts, and to come to the realization that they share these concerns with their peers. Adolescents can openly question their values and modify those that need to be changed. In the group, adolescents learn to communicate with their peers, benefit from the modeling provided by the leader, and can safely experiment with reality and test their limits. Because of the opportunities for interaction available in the group situation, the participants can express their concerns and be heard, and they can help one another on the road toward self-understanding and self-acceptance.

Counseling Groups for College Students Students encounter a range of developmental tasks during their undergraduate and graduate years. Counseling groups are a valuable vehicle for meeting

the developmental needs of both traditional and non-traditional students. Today's college students have had a variety of significant life experiences, including some who are returning from military deployments in foreign countries. Those who seek services at college counseling centers are increasingly older and more diverse in their life experiences, making group work more challenging (McCeneaney & Gross, 2009).

Many college counseling centers offer groups designed for relatively healthy students who are experiencing personal and interpersonal relationship problems. The main purpose of these groups is to provide participants with an opportunity for growth and a situation in which they can deal with career decisions, intimate relationships, identity problems, educational plans, and feelings of isolation on an impersonal campus. Theme or issue groups, which are time-limited and focus on a developmental issue or address a specific problem that the participants have in common, are popular in university counseling centers. These groups promote well-being by assisting people in dealing effectively with developmental tasks (Drum & Knott, 2009).

Counseling Groups for Older People

Counseling groups can be valuable for older adults in many of the same ways they are of value to adolescents. As people grow older, they often experience isolation. Like adolescents, older people often feel unproductive, unneeded, and unwanted. Many older people accept myths about aging that become self-fulfilling prophecies. An example is the misconception that older people cannot change or that once they retire they will most likely be depressed. Counseling groups can do a lot to help older people challenge these myths and deal with the developmental tasks that they face while retaining their integrity and self-respect. The group format can assist people in breaking out of their isolation and offer older people the encouragement necessary to find meaning in their life so that they can live fully and not merely exist.

Other Types of Groups

Although this book focuses on counseling groups, the practice of group work has broadened to encompass psychotherapy groups, psychoeducational groups, support groups, and task groups as well as counseling

groups. Many of these groups share some of the procedures, techniques, and processes of counseling groups. They differ, however, with respect to specific aims, the role of the leader, the kind of people in the group, and the emphasis given to issues such as prevention, remediation, treatment, and development. Let's take a brief look at how psychotherapy groups, psychoeducational (structured) groups, and task groups differ from counseling groups.

Group Psychotherapy

A major difference between group *therapy* and group *counseling* lies in the group's goals. Counseling groups focus on growth, development, enhancement, prevention, self-awareness, and releasing blocks to growth, whereas therapy groups focus on issues such as remediation, treatment, and personality reconstruction. **Group psychotherapy** is a process of reeducation that includes both conscious and unconscious awareness and both the present and the past. Some therapy groups are primarily designed to correct emotional and behavioral disorders that impede one's functioning or to remediate in-depth psychological problems. The goal may be either a minor or a major transformation of personality structure, depending on the theoretical orientation of the group therapist. Because of this goal, therapy groups tend to be longer term than other kinds of groups. The people who make up the group may be suffering from severe emotional problems, deep personal conflicts, effects of trauma, or psychotic states. Many of these individuals are in need of remedial treatment rather than developmental or preventive work.

Group therapists are typically clinical or counseling psychologists, licensed professional counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, or clinical social workers. They use a wide range of verbal modalities (which group counselors also use), and some employ techniques to induce regression to earlier experiences, to tap unconscious dynamics, and to help members reexperience traumatic situations so that catharsis can occur. As these experiences are relived in the group, members become aware of and gain insight into past decisions that interfere with current functioning. The group therapist assists members in developing a corrective emotional experience and in making new decisions about the world, others, and themselves.

Psychoeducational Groups

Psychoeducational groups, or groups structured by some central theme, are gaining in popularity. **Psychoeducational groups** feature the presentation and discussion of factual information and skill building through the use of planned skill-building exercises. Psychoeducational groups serve a number of purposes: imparting information, sharing common experiences, teaching people how to solve problems, teaching social skills, offering support, and helping people learn how to create their own support systems outside of the group setting. These groups can be thought of as educational and therapeutic groups in that they are structured along the lines of specific content themes. Psychoeducational groups are finding a place in many settings, and they appear to be increasingly used in community agencies and in schools.

Psychoeducational groups are designed to help people develop specific skills, understand certain themes, or progress through difficult life transitions. Although the topics do vary according to the interests of the group leader and the participants, these groups have a common denominator of providing members with increased awareness of some life problems and tools to better cope with them. The intervention strategies used in psychoeducational groups are largely based on the transmission of information basic to making changes and teaching a process for bringing about these changes. The goal is to prevent an array of educational deficits and psychological disturbances.

Many psychoeducational groups are based on a learning theory model and use behavioral procedures. Chapter 12, *Cognitive Behavioral Approaches to Groups*, provides detailed descriptions of these groups, including social skills training groups, stress management groups, and cognitive therapy groups. Psychoeducational groups are well suited to populations of all ages, and they are described in detail in *Groups: Process and Practice* (M. Corey et al., 2018). Here are a few examples of psychoeducational groups for various developmental levels:

- A group for elementary school children of divorce
- An anger management group for children
- A substance abuse group
- A women's group and a men's group
- A domestic violence group
- A women's support group for survivors of incest

- A successful aging group
- A bereavement group for older adults

All of these groups contain certain content themes that provide structure for the sessions, encourage sharing and feedback among the members, are designed to increase self-awareness, and are aimed at facilitating change in members' daily lives. These groups can be designed for just about every client group and can be tailored to the specific needs of the individuals represented.

Task-Facilitation Groups

Task-facilitation groups assist task forces, committees, planning groups, community organizations, discussion groups, study circles, learning groups, team building, program development consultation, and other similar groups to correct or develop their functioning. These groups address the application of principles and processes of group dynamics that can foster accomplishment of identified work goals. Increasingly, human services workers are being asked to help improve program planning and evaluation within organizations.

Oftentimes those involved in task groups want to get down to business quickly, yet focusing exclusively on the task at hand (content) can create problems for the group. A leader's failure to attend to here-and-now factors is likely to result in a group that becomes overly focused on content concerns, with process issues relegated to a minor role. If interpersonal issues within the group are ignored, cooperation and collaboration will not develop, and it is likely that group goals will not be met. It is essential that group leaders recognize that process and relationships are central to achieving the goals of a task group.

It is the leader's role to assist task group participants in understanding how attention to this interpersonal climate directly relates to achieving the purpose and goals of the group (Hulse-Killacky et al., 2001). The balance between content and process in task groups is best achieved by attending to the guiding principles of warm-up, action, and closure. When this is done effectively, task groups are likely to be more successful and productive.

Task groups are commonly used by school counselors who assemble a group of school personnel to develop a plan to assist students. The team works together to determine how services can best be implemented. Rather than focusing on individual

growth, task groups in school settings are concerned with accomplishing common goals to assist a range of students (Falls & Furr, 2009).

Task groups have many uses in community intervention. Many of the problems people face are the result of being disenfranchised as individuals or as members of the community. One of the tasks of professionals engaged in community work is to assist individuals and the community in acquiring access to valued resources in moving toward a greater degree of empowerment. Group workers need to understand how sociopolitical influences impinge on the experiences of individuals from diverse racial and ethnic groups.

Working with the community usually means working with a specific group or in a situation in which competing or collaborating groups are dealing with an issue or set of issues in a community. Most of the work in community change is done in a small group context, and skills in organizing task groups are essential.

Brief Group Work

Strictly speaking, brief groups are not a type of group. Many of the groups already described are characterized by a time-limited format. Brief groups tend to have a preset time for termination and a process orientation. In the era of managed care, brief interventions and short-term groups have become a necessity. Economic pressures and a shortage of resources have resulted in major changes in the way mental health services are delivered. Managed care also has influenced the trend toward developing all forms of briefer treatment, including group treatment. Brief group therapy is well suited to the needs of both clients and managed care, and these treatments can be effective as well as economical (Hoyt, 2011). In **brief group work**, the group therapist sets clear and realistic treatment goals with members, establishes a clear focus within the group structure, maintains an active therapist role, and works within a limited time frame. Brief group work is popular in both community agencies and school settings because of the realistic time constraints and the ability of a brief format to be incorporated in educational or therapeutic programs.

Most of the empirical evidence on the effectiveness of group counseling has been based on studies of time-limited, closed groups; evidence from meta-analytic studies strongly supports the value of these

groups. In general, the evidence for the efficacy of brief group therapy is quite positive (Shapiro, 2010). Brief interventions and time limitations are especially relevant for a variety of counseling groups, structured groups, and psychoeducational groups. The realistic time constraints in most settings demand that practitioners employ briefer approaches with demonstrated effectiveness. Because brief group work makes unique demands on group practitioners, it is essential that those who lead these groups have had training and supervision in brief group interventions. Shapiro believes the future of brief group treatment rests with the training group leaders receive: “We need to reestablish group training programs and more adequate supervision in brief groups and include personal group participation in our clinical and counseling training programs” (p. 506).

Group Counseling in a Multicultural Context

In a pluralistic society, the reality of cultural diversity is recognized, respected, and encouraged. Within groups, the worldviews of both the group leader and the members also vary, and this is a natural place to acknowledge and promote pluralism. Multicultural group work involves attitudes and strategies that cultivate understanding and appreciation of diversity in culture, ethnicity, race, gender, class, ability/disability, language, religion, sexual orientation, and age. We each have a unique multicultural identity, but as members of a group, we share a common goal—the success of the group. To that end, we want to learn more about ourselves as individuals and as members of diverse cultural groups.

DeLucia-Waack (1996) states that the multicultural context of group work requires attention to two tasks: (1) the application and modification of theories and techniques of group work to different cultures in ways that are congruent with cultural beliefs and behaviors, and (2) the development of the theory and practice of group work that makes full use of the diversity among members as a way to facilitate change and growth. Multiculturalism is inherent in all group work, and our uniqueness as individuals is a key factor in how groups operate.

In addition to understanding the range of clients’ cultural similarities and differences, group counselors