

Getting the Most Out of The Group Process: Benefits, Skills, Values, & Techniques

EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICES (EBP): Integrated System of Care; Universal Dual Diagnosis Capabilities; Principles of Empathy and Hope; Motivational Interviewing Approach; Stages of Change Model Design; Strength Based; Skill Building; Solution Focused; Neurochemistry Based Disorders of the Brain; Symptom Identification; Symptom Management; EBP Curriculum Topics, i.e. Nutrition, Stress Management, Cognitive Behavioral, and more...

Consistency in the Group Setting

The importance of *consistency* in a treatment setting can't be overstated. This is especially true when people are placed in vulnerable situations. *Inconsistency* can, at best, increase uncertainty and insecurity for the person receiving services. At worst, unpredictability can create a sense of helplessness while simultaneously decreasing a person's development of self-reliance. In fact, all human beings benefit from a dependable approach in the treatment of chronic disorders. When a person learns they can rely on consistency, they are less stressed and more relaxed. Consistency in the group setting includes the group structure, psychoeducational material, and the approach.

Each agency or facility will have different requirements – such as group receipts or paperwork – however, consistency can still include a structure similar to the following:

1. Group members pick up: a. Clip Board, b. Paper, and c. Pencil/Pen as they enter the room.
2. Group facilitator picks up the group receipts from each person in the group, and/or the group facilitator passes out the sign-in sheet for the group members to sign.
3. Group facilitator provides a Positive Group Beginning, Consistent Psychoeducational Material, Consistent Approach, and a Positive Group Closure.

Psychoeducational Groups and Crisis Event Processing (when requested)

Notes to Facilitator(s):

1. *THE BASICS, Second Edition* meets the definitions and goals of Psychoeducational Groups, Skill Building Groups, and Cognitive Behavioral Groups.
2. Group participants who have become accustomed to Interpersonal Processing Groups – as well as staff who have facilitated them – may find it a challenge to now facilitate Psychoeducational Groups.
3. Likewise, facilitators who may have followed a more lecture-style education presentation, may find it challenging to now devote at least 1/3rd of group time to specific topic discussions and interactions.
4. Both types of groups (Interpersonal Processing Groups and Psychoeducational Groups) are extremely important, yet each has different goals and structure.
5. The structure of Psychoeducational Groups, Skill Building Groups, and/or Cognitive-Behavioral Groups in no way means that there will not be *interaction* – far from it. It just means that the interactions, discussions, and exercises will be about the topic(s) of each group.
6. Facilitators *may* – or not – still want to allow time in each group for the group member(s) to discuss a crisis that may have occurred since the last group.
7. We do know, of course, that *every* person in group is typically experiencing many challenges each and every week; however, most of these incidents are often best resolved in ways other than group time where the event does not pertain to every group member.
8. Suggested responses to a challenge, problem, or crisis can also include suggesting the person contact their primary care provider; schedule a 1:1 appointment; reschedule their next 1:1 to an earlier time; or, meet with the facilitator after group to explore options and develop a plan.
9. A facilitator would, of course, not “*grade*” an event as being worthy or not for group time. If a person requests individual time in the group, then that would be accepted as valid and time allotted at the end of the group.
10. Over time, the group begins to understand the differences between a situation, a challenge, a problem, or a crisis and can make decisions to utilize group time or continue with the current psychoeducational topic.

Prepare Professionals

Suggestions for professionals to prepare themselves for group typically includes:

1. Review all content material, appendices, and/or handouts *prior* to group to avoid a lecturing style.
2. Decide beforehand the *key points* to be covered in each group to produce flexibility for group responses, discussions, or questions.
3. Gain an overall understanding of the content so summarizing is possible in order to create an interactive facilitation style.
4. Determine the group structure to achieve the essential balance between education and discussions.
5. Check group room to be sure there are enough clipboards, pencils or pens, and markers or chalk for the board.
6. Make enough copies of any handouts *before* group.
7. Write any group content on the board *prior* to the beginning of group whenever possible.

Master Guide & Master Tips to Professionals

Note: *The Master Guide* (located at the beginning of Volume I & II) and the *Master Tips to Professionals* (located at the back of Volume I) have many topics to assist in the group process like Master Tip #39: Suggestions For Managing Handouts For Groups (pages Master Tips 64-67). Other tips include:

1. Master Guide: Interactive Style (pages Master Guide 10-11)
2. Master Tip #1: Suggestions for Beginning Group (pages Master Tips 1-4)
3. Master Tip #3: Empathetic Treatment Approach (pages Master Tips 7-9)
4. Master Tip #4: Promoting Hope (page Master Tips 9)
5. Master Tip #5: Maintaining a Consistent, Nonjudgmental, and Positive Attitude (pages Master Tips 10-13)
6. Master Tip #12: Responding to Requests for Copies of APPENDICES (pages Master Tips 27-29)
7. Master Tip #13: Depth of Psychoeducational Content (pages Master Tips 29-30)
8. Master Tip #14: Group Closure Suggestions (pages Master Tips 30-31)
9. Master Tip #16: Motivational Interviewing (pages Master Tips 31-32)

Present Curriculum/Topic

1. It is extremely important that each group participant leave every group with more Psychoeducation than they came in with – which may also include discussing a “familiar topic” yet with a “present-day” focus. Psychoeducational Groups are designed to provide education about all areas related to the management of Substance Use Disorders and Psychiatric Disorders. Psychoeducational Groups are not Interpersonal Processing Groups – even though interaction and processing the particular *psychoeducational topic(s)* is essential to individualizing the topic(s) or skill(s) presented.
2. It is recommended that a minimum of 1/3rd of group time be devoted to interaction (therapeutic counseling *topic* discussions). This can be accomplished – depending on the individual style of the group facilitator(s) – by any “present education-interact/discuss – present education-interact/discuss” combination while still structuring the group to include the curriculum/topic education to be covered.
3. The presentation of material will, of course, be modified by the facilitator to match the functioning skills of group participants. It is important to note, however, that *THE BASICS, Second Edition* was written in a conversational language while taking into consideration a wide-range of symptom acuity and severity. Persons with co-occurring psychiatric and substance disorders benefit from learning about their disorders and how to manage them, as do all individuals with any chronic disorder(s). Each group participant will retain what is meaningful to them at the present time.

Group Beginning Suggestions

A positive group beginning (and ending) is extremely important. There are many ways to begin (and end) a group in a positive way. Suggestions to choose from can include:

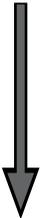
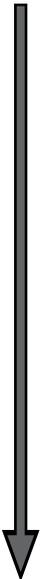
1. Reading the Thought For The Day from a meditation book. (Note: Meditation books that also contain an index at the end of the book – such as *Easy Does It* – are helpful in choosing a specific reading that matches the topic(s) presented in group like Self-Esteem.), *or*
2. Reading an inspirational or humorous curriculum handout from *THE BASICS, Second Edition*, *or*
3. Practicing a deep breathing or a stretching exercise, *or*
4. Sharing of one thing that each person is grateful for today, *or*
5. Sharing of one positive thing that he/she did that contributed to their recovery in the past few days, *or*
6. Reading an AA Slogan with a brief explanation or AA/NA/Dual Recovery inspirational reading.

* Recommended Beginning: Breathing Exercise (located on page Master Tips 3)

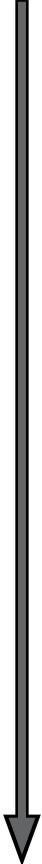
Practice Curriculum/Topic

Practicing subject material is the best way participants can internalize and personalize the curriculum content. Practice includes the group interactions, worksheets, exercises, handouts, and content discussions.

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Based on a 2-Hour group: Two 50-Minute Segments	Time-Frame
Group Beginning and Prepare Group	20 Minutes Total
Positive group beginning (suggestions are located on the previous page).	5 Minutes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brief Group Introductions: (Note: The <i>interactions</i> in a psychoeducational group are discussions about the <i>topics</i>, not interpersonal processing or case management questions which do not apply to the entire group.) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ask the group members to tell the group their name. b. Welcome any group members who are new to this group or phase. 2. Crisis Processing (when requested and optional): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ask the group if anyone has experienced a crisis since their last group, and if they need/want additional time in this group to discuss it, i.e. what happened, how they managed the crisis, and/or explore options and develop a plan. b. Let the person(s) know that you will allow time at the end of this group for them to share their experience and receive support from their fellow group members. 	10 Minutes 
<p><u>Summarize Introduction of the Group Topic and Why It's Important (page Subject 1-58 – 1-59):</u> Each person gets out of group what he or she personally puts into it. The benefit of the group process only comes about by becoming involved in it. People learn to socialize, problem solve, and develop connections with others when they practice interacting with one another, practice listening, practice taking responsibility, and practice validating each other or sharing concerns.</p> <p>In other words, they learn <i>inside</i> of the group how to be a part of a community, which is exactly what interactions are all about <i>outside</i> of the group. Interacting also allows people to learn things about themselves and have insights into their strengths, self-defeating behaviors, and areas they might wish to improve upon to enhance their relationships with others. These skills don't come naturally to anyone who has been isolated from others because of Psychiatric or Substance Disorders. If you want to have a better relationship with yourself and others without practicing the skills of respectful interaction, it simply won't happen.</p> <p>Today we will talk about trust, self-disclosure, and skill development as a group member. The <i>skills, values, and techniques</i> of skill development as a group member are each important to learn and practice in the group setting. They help each person interact and connect with people in their life <i>outside</i> of group. You may hear some areas where you excel and others where improvement is needed, and still other skills that might sound really difficult – but will not be so difficult with practice.</p>	5 Minutes 

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Psychoeducation Part I: Topics & Focus	Pages & Location	Presentation Suggestions	Time- Frame							
Self-Disclosure Defined	Subject 1-42	1. Summarize three paragraphs. 2. Discuss information in the table:	30 Minutes 							
<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 400px;">What Self-Disclosure Is <i>Not</i></td> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 200px;">What Self-Disclosure <i>Is</i></td> </tr> </table>		1		What Self-Disclosure Is <i>Not</i>	2	What Self-Disclosure <i>Is</i>				
1	What Self-Disclosure Is <i>Not</i>	2		What Self-Disclosure <i>Is</i>						
Feedback Defined	Subject 1-43 – 1-44	1. Summarize one paragraph. 2. Discuss information found in the table:								
<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 400px;">What Feedback Is <i>Not</i></td> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 200px;">What Feedback <i>Is</i></td> </tr> </table>		1		What Feedback Is <i>Not</i>	2	What Feedback <i>Is</i>				
1	What Feedback Is <i>Not</i>	2		What Feedback <i>Is</i>						
Difficulty Trusting Self and Others	Subject 1-44 – 1-45	Discuss the main points of the table:								
<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 750px;">Unhealthy family systems and sexual abuse affects trust levels.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 750px;">“Family secrets” can lead to distrusting personal perceptions & not trusting others.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 750px;">Breaking promises to self leads to self-doubt & lack of trust.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 750px;">Untrustworthy behavior & unhealthy relationships contribute to lack of trust in self & others.</td> </tr> </table>		1		Unhealthy family systems and sexual abuse affects trust levels.	2	“Family secrets” can lead to distrusting personal perceptions & not trusting others.	3	Breaking promises to self leads to self-doubt & lack of trust.	4	Untrustworthy behavior & unhealthy relationships contribute to lack of trust in self & others.
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4	Untrustworthy behavior & unhealthy relationships contribute to lack of trust in self & others.									
Developing Trust Through Self-Disclosure	Subject 1-45 – 1-46	1. Summarize paragraph. 2. Discuss information found in the table:								
<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 400px;">Risks of Self-Disclosure</td> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 200px;">Benefits of Self-Disclosure</td> </tr> </table>		1	Risks of Self-Disclosure	2	Benefits of Self-Disclosure					
1	Risks of Self-Disclosure	2	Benefits of Self-Disclosure							
Benefits of the Group Process	Subject 1-46	Briefly summarize the eight benefits of the group process located in the table.								
Break			10 Minutes							

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Psychoeducation Part II: Topics & Focus	Presentation Suggestions	Time-Frame with Crisis Processing	Time-Frame without Crisis Processing
<p>Review Group Guidelines</p> <p>Facilitator(s): You may choose to discuss the guidelines and rules of your facility, or you can review the general guidelines on the right.</p>	<p>To the Group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group Guidelines and Rules are designed to create an environment of <i>recovery</i> in the treatment setting. 2. Guidelines and rules are found everywhere in our society – from speed limits <i>to</i> housing <i>to</i> jobs <i>to</i> even the way we act around our family and friends. 3. Guidelines and rules are what steers human behavior. 4. Today we will talk about some of the very basic guidelines of behavior in the treatment setting so each person can benefit from the group. <hr/> <p align="center"><i>“Our main concern is to create a safe and supportive atmosphere for all group participants.”</i></p> <p>The following group guidelines/rules have been proven to create a therapeutic group experience where <u>learning</u> and <u>support</u> and <u>practice</u> can take place. Skills learned in group can then be transferred into relationships outside of group.</p> <p>ACT AS IF...Groups offer an opportunity to “act as if” by “practicing” recovery skills like communicating and connecting with other people in recovery. These include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ATTENDANCE: Regular attendance is the only way to get the most out of group. 2. TIME AND PUNCTUALITY: Punctuality increases the value of the group for each group member. 3. CONFIDENTIALITY: Confidentiality is a top priority and ensures the privacy of group members. 4. ATTENTIVE: Distractions of any kind can take people out of the group experience and block a group participant from their emotions. 5. RESPECT FOR YOURSELF, GROUP MEMBERS, AND STAFF: Treatment is the place to develop self-esteem and practice esteem and respect for others. 6. PHYSICAL SAFETY: A physically safe place where each person’s physical space is respected is a requirement in order to develop a healthy treatment environment. 7. EMOTIONAL SAFETY: Creating an environment where it is safe to share feelings and experiences is essential to the group process and helps people gain self-awareness. 8. PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT: Being actively involved in group and supporting others in doing the same is the very best way to benefit from the group process. 9. SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT: Personal growth takes place in a supportive – rather than a confrontational – environment. <i>Each</i> person’s remarks are important to the whole group. 	<p align="center">10 Minutes</p> 	<p align="center">15 Minutes</p> 

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Skill Building Exercise and Discussion Suggestions

Time-Frame with Crisis Processing **Time-Frame without Crisis Processing**

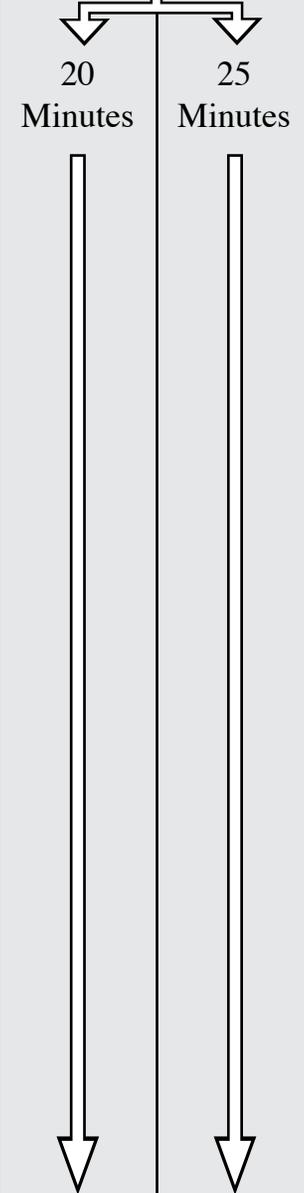
To Facilitator(s):

1. It is recommended that any group content for this particular group be written on the board *prior* to the beginning of group whenever possible.
2. You may choose to pick only one or two skills, values, and techniques for group discussion.
3. It is very easy to see how people with untreated Substance Use Disorders and/or Psychiatric Disorders may find it's been difficult to develop some of these skills, values, and techniques. The symptoms of these disorders often get in the way or may even prevent their development.
4. Illustrate the skills, values, & techniques of group member skill development in the table on pages Subject 1-59 – 1-62 under each main column heading:

SKILLS		VALUES		TECHNIQUES			
1	Listening	6	Openness	12	Awareness of Own Behavior	18	Making the Group a Part of Life
2	Clarifying	7	Taking Responsibility	13	Applying Insight of Own Behavior	19	Contribute to Others Sharing
3	Saying	8	Trust	14	Experiment With Own Behavior	20	Contribute to the Progress of Group
4	Feedback	9	Involvement	15	Contribute to the Group's Awareness of Itself	21	Group Diagnostic Ability
5	Direct Communication	10	Staying in the Here & Now	16	Problem Solving Effectiveness	22	Overall Effectiveness as a Group Member
		11	Give & Take	17	Helping Group Maintenance		

5. Put three additional columns on the board to help guide the group discussions:

STRENGTHS	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	DIFFICULT – POSSIBLE WITH PRACTICE
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Skill Building Exercise and Discussion Suggestions		Time-Frame with Crisis Processing	Time-Frame without Crisis Processing
<p><u>To the Group:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> It is easy to see how important the group process is. The skills, values, and techniques listed on the board help a person gain the many excellent benefits of interacting with others <i>in</i> and <i>out</i> of the group. Take a look at the <u>skills</u> and ask yourself how you are doing in each skill (For example, <u>Listening Skills</u>: Ask yourself – Do I listen to others?): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What skill(s) do you have strengths or excel in? What skill(s) do you need to make improvement in? What skill(s) might sound really difficult – yet with practice the skill(s) will become not so difficult? Take a look at the <u>values</u> and ask yourself how you are doing in each of the values that you personally hold in high regard and want to develop more in yourself (For example, <u>Taking Responsibility Value</u>: Ask yourself – Do I take responsibility for what I am thinking and feeling?): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What value(s) do you have strengths or excel in? What value(s) do you need to make improvement in? What value(s) might sound really difficult – yet with practice the value(s) will become not so difficult? Take a look at the <u>techniques</u> and ask yourself how you are doing in each of these techniques (Example, <u>Awareness of Own Behavior</u>: Ask yourself – Do I show that I am aware of how others are reacting to my behaviors?): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What technique(s) do you have strengths or excel in? What technique(s) do you need to make improvement in? What technique(s) might sound really difficult – yet with practice the technique will become not so difficult? 			
Crisis Processing		Time-Frame	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the group member(s) to tell the group what happened. Explore options and/or develop an immediate plan for coping. Allow the group to offer support. 		10 Minutes	
Group “Paper Work”			Time-Frame
Group participants fill out Group Evaluations.			5 Minutes
Group Closure			Time-Frame
Use the Handout “ <i>You May Be Strong</i> ” located at the back of Subject One. Presentation suggestions can include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Read the handout to the group, or Give a copy of the handout to each group member, or Hand a copy to a group member and ask he or she to read it aloud to the group. 			5 Minutes