

CHAPTER 4

GROUP DEVELOPMENT

The Beginning, Working, and Ending Stages

Group development: Patterns of growth and change that emerge across the group's life span ...

—Forsyth (2009, p. 19)

INTRODUCTION ●

You're driving at night in hilly terrain. It's 32 degrees, foggy, with some windy turns. The speed limit is posted as 65 miles per hour, which you can do more than handily in your 6-speed roadster. Your spouse has a different idea, advising you (in no uncertain terms) to slow down and take the turns more carefully. Wisely, you comply.

It's important to keep in mind that preposted signs don't always match shifting conditions. Driving at the speed limit in harsh conditions would be inappropriate at the least and, most likely, highly dangerous. Signs always need to be considered in context.

Group development "signs" need to be considered similarly. Expecting a group that is about midway through the number of planned sessions, say, 11 of 20, to be entering a working and productive stage of functioning may be consistent with the general predictions of a group development model, yet, for any particular group, such as one that has been dealing with high member

turnover, its level of development may be much more nascent, not anywhere near what the group development sign may have predicted. As mentioned in Chapter 3, group process observation of any group you are leading is necessary, as is exercising prudence in making intervention decisions.

Understanding the evolution of groups, whether they be counseling, therapy, psychoeducational, or task in scope, is essential to effective group work. In addition, group development is dependent on leadership style and other important group dynamics, such as membership roles and levels of group activity.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

As a result of reading this chapter you will be able to

- Understand the importance of group development in group work
- Become more familiar with selected models of group development
- Become aware of how group development stages can guide leader interventions

● WHY IS GROUP DEVELOPMENT IMPORTANT?

The extent to which a group develops over time is associated with productivity and outcomes (Conyne, 2011). Brabender (2011), whose work I discussed briefly in Chapter 3, summarized a number of studies showing that members of groups that operate at progressively more mature levels tend to do better, for instance on personal outcomes (MacKenzie, Dies, Coche, Rutan, & Stone, 1987) or on grade point averages (Wheelan & Lisk, 2000).

As well, models of group development can assist group leaders in planning, delivering, and evaluating groups. These models also can provide direction for group training programs. Group development models, which are arranged linearly from beginning to ending of a group, provide sign posts along the way, much as the highway road sign that was mentioned above, suggesting direction through what might ordinarily be experienced as a maze and lending some predictive power to the group's future. But, as with the roadster driver, the group leader must exercise judgment along the way.

PERSPECTIVES ON GROUP DEVELOPMENT ●

That groups develop is not deniable, yet there is no guarantee they will do so positively. Some groups literally go nowhere; they get to a certain point and then get stuck, like a car mired hopelessly in the muck. No spinning of the wheels, revving of the engine, or rocking back and forth of the vehicle can seem to produce forward movement. Other groups may go somewhere but not in the desired direction, as if the GPS got fouled up. No measure of “recalculating,” so familiar a patiently corrective injunction, if you’ve ever used a GPS device, can serve to redirect the group from its downward spiral.

Two dominant perspectives on group development exist, the progressive stage model and the cyclical model. Additional contemporary perspectives are being developed, as well. We focus on the progressive stage model, which provides a particularly helpful roadmap for group leaders. First, let’s consider each of the perspectives.

Cyclical Models

In *cyclical* models, a group may move forward and backward over time (or within one session) with growth not necessarily being anticipated (Bales, 1950; Bion, 1961). That is, there is no progression implied in cyclical models. Beck (1997) and Mackenzie (1997) separately indicated that progressive and cyclical models can be accommodated, suggesting that groups hold the potential to both evolve sequentially over time and to cycle back and forth within stages. Beck suggested that groups cycle within stages from differentiation to integration, while Mackenzie highlighted how they can cycle between a focus on task and on personal relations within any one sequence or stage (Brabender, 2011).

Contemporary Models

A number of contemporary models also are emerging, such as the *Punctuated Equilibrium Model* (e.g., Gersick, 1988), where revolutionary and discontinuous change may suddenly appear in bursts (Brabender, 2011). For instance, a task force on the prevention of bullying was stymied for a protracted period, seemingly unable to gather any traction as it sought to produce a schoolwide plan. However, passage of a new school levy with its provision to generate additional revenues served to suddenly spur the group

forward, with its members now more confident in being able to fund any plans produced.

Progressive Stage Models

As I indicated, the literature contains a vast number of group development models. These include a huge number of *progressive* step models (depicted by stages or phases), where sequential and patterned progress builds successively upon previous accomplishments (e.g., Brabender & Fallon, 2009; Conyne, Crowell, & Newmeyer, 2008; Corey, Corey, & Corey 2010; MacKenzie & Livesley, 1983; Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977; Ward, 2009). These progressive models are said to have derived from the model first described by Bennis and Shepard (1956), “establishing what has been the dominant perspective on group change over time” (as cited in Brabender, 2011, p. 185).

In the progressive stage model of Bennis and Shepard, groups are theorized to develop in four phases that build successively on each other, that is, Phase 4 evolves systematically because of what occurred in Phases 1, 2, and 3. These four phases (each of which includes important subphases) are (a) *dependence* phase, dealing with relationship and authority figures; (b) *interdependence and personal relations* phase, where members evolve from a preoccupation with authority figures, such as the group leader, to a focus on each other, their needs and interactions; (c) *consensual validation* phase, where formerly competing or conflicting positions now can be accepted; and (d) *integration of similarities and differences* phase, permitting closure and moving ahead.

General consensus and some empirical evidence supports the idea that groups develop through a common orderly sequence of stages in a way similar to the development of individuals described by developmental psychology theory (Wheelan, 2004). A five-stage model, consistent with major literature reviews by Tuckman (1965), Tuckman and Jensen (1977), and Wheelan (1994) garners much support. Although some authors identify various numbers of group development stages, ranging from 3 to 19 described by Carl Rogers (1967), with the Bennis and Shepard model consisting of four stages, most models containing more or fewer stages than five differ primarily in how they differentiate and organize similar behaviors occurring across these stages. For instance, my colleagues and I (Conyne et al., 2008) have found a three-stage model to be very useful: (a) beginning stage: *getting established and transitioning*, (b) middle stage: *connecting and producing*, and (c) ending stage: *consolidating and forecasting*.

Linking group development and psychological issues. To understand group developmental stages, it is useful to link psychological and interpersonal issues or themes that seem associated. Let's consider these linkages (Ward & Ward, 2013), without naming the stages other than to assign each a number.

Stage 1. The most salient themes representing the first stage of group development revolve around emphasizing similarities, making a personal commitment to other members and the group, and becoming included. Although a myriad of related issues are important early in the group, such as trust, security, hesitant participation, and diffuse anxiety, finding similarities to allow for the potential members to make a personal commitment to others and to be included within the parameters of the emerging social system seems to be necessary if the group is to become a cohesive, collaborative group achieving maximum productivity.

Stage 2. As fears of being left out are resolved, another set of issues arises to confront the group. These issues include how power, control, conflict, and differences will be expressed and handled. Especially in groups with psychosocial purposes, members must learn to deal with their own and others' differences and challenges, which sometimes can be volatile and potentially divisive.

After bonding and initial acceptance into the group have been established, tolerance for differences becomes more normative. Members are able to find ways to differentiate and still maintain the group integrity and respect for members. This step forward allows the members to relate more closely.

Stage 3. Critical processes of cohesiveness and collaboration are deepened and confirmed. These processes are characteristic of cooperative, productive working groups.

Stage 4. Cohesion and interdependence foster the conditions underlying this working stage. Productivity emerges through the convergence of supportive task and personal relations functions. High levels of productivity can be achieved, as members are drawn to work together and with leaders to realize goals amidst a satisfying interpersonal environment.

Stage 5. Groups that are open ended are constructed to continually allow for a flow of new members and the exiting of current members, when appropriate. Open-ended groups are common within in-patient settings. In such groups, there is no predetermined and common end point.

For those groups that do plan to end at the same time, known as closed groups, a fifth stage was identified in the second literature review of proposed group development stage models (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Many person change groups, such as counseling groups, are closed as are many task groups. Task groups, for example, typically set ending points because products are expected or required according to a preexisting time line; this might include responding to a Request for Proposal (RFP)—a process whereby a

funding institution requests bids for a project, almost always, one laments, with a very tight timeline—that is due by a specific date and time. In other cases, a task group may be continuing, such as an agency staff meeting that convenes every Tuesday at 1:30.

In this final group development stage, attention is given to summarizing, reviewing, and consolidating learning. In addition, separation and unresolved issues are addressed. A key purpose in this stage is to maximize transfer of learning and accomplishments from the group situation to outside of the group. *In fact, the external application of accomplishment (e.g., learning in a psychoeducation group and a new policy in a task group) is the ultimate purpose of all group work because group is a vehicle for enabling growth and change to occur “in the real world.”*

Leadership in relation to group development stages. Group development stages reflect member interactions undertaken to explore, test, norm, and resolve issues of team development. Group leaders can behave in certain ways to both fit within and to facilitate different group development stages; in turn, each developmental stage calls for certain group work leadership actions. See Learning Exercise 4–1.

Learning Exercise 4–1: How Might Leadership Promote Positive Group Development?

The **object** of this learning exercise is to help you to begin thinking about group leadership in relation to group development stages.

Group work leadership will become a center of attention in the chapters to come. But let's begin to think about it now.

As you have been reading in this chapter about group development the idea is surfacing that there is a positive correlation between issues characterizing the stages of group development and what kind of leadership might be appropriate or needed.

Here, I want you to brainstorm. What do you imagine a leader should do in each stage to promote positive group development? Follow these four steps:

1. Briefly describe each stage of development: What's going on?

Stage 1: _____

_____.

(Continued)

Stage 2: _____
 _____.

Stage 3: _____
 _____.

Stage 4: _____
 _____.

Stage 5: _____
 _____.

2. What do you think a group work leader should be doing in each stage? What actions?

Use action verbs: *direct, listen, guide, stop, protect, connect*, etc.

Write three actions for each stage:

Stage 1 actions: _____

Stage 2 actions: _____

Stage 3 actions: _____

Stage 4 actions: _____

Stage 5 actions: _____

3. What general group work leader style (circle one) do you think is suggested?

- a. Autocratic: Firm, decisive, taking control
- b. Democratic: Participative, collaborative, facilitative
- c. Laissez-faire: Permitting, distant, avoiding direction

4. Explain: _____
 _____.

In general, a democratic leader may be most appropriate for group work leadership. Of course, what is needed in any group circumstance is often a delicate question, and it requires consideration of various factors in addition to the stage of group development, such as the context, type of group, member resources, and leader ability. Yet, all things considered,

a democratic style generally is desired because it is grounded in shared decision making, collaboration with members, and the fostering of member engagement with one another and with the group—among many other factors. Effective democratic leaders provide appropriate amounts of group structure to support the members in their risk-taking normative ventures early in the group until the more relevant and risky issues emerging at each stage are addressed and become normative. As the stages are resolved the leader should be able to spend much less time addressing structural issues directly, because group members learn to work together to become a positively functioning system.

Group composition, psychological maturity, and motivation of group members. Ward and Ward (2013) indicate that an important element influencing the progressive nature of group work can be attributed to the psychological maturity of group members and their motivation to become involved in the central group purpose or task. When group development unfolds positively, members discover together how to actively share responsibility for process and outcome. But for this to occur, members need to possess the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and maturity necessary to assume the demands of group participation in the group. If they do not, either because of deficit (e.g., lacking intellectual or physical capacity), age (e.g., young child or elderly), or context (e.g., a short-term task group, or an emergency situation), a more direct style of leadership might be needed where the leader actively guides and controls the action. Such a style appropriately would tend to include the use of structure, provision of information and guidance, concrete tasks, and shorter periods.

As examples, young children can share responsibility for appropriate tasks and function as a team in some situations, whereas adults with low intelligence or with severe psychiatric dysfunction are likely to have difficulty working effectively and cooperatively on many tasks. In general, it is desirable that leaders keep group composition in mind when they have the opportunity to form groups. Selecting those who are homogeneous in psychological maturity or ego strength will assist the group to coalesce and move ahead positively, helping to ensure a successful experience for group members.

● EXPLORING FOUR GROUP DEVELOPMENT MODELS

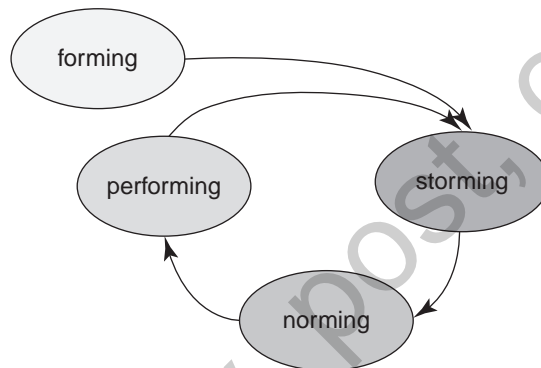
There have been over 100 different models of group development made available. In this section, you will become acquainted with four models: (a) Tuckman's; (b) American Group Psychotherapy Association's; (c) Jones's; and (d) Brabender and Fallon's. Note the similarities and differences as you read about them.

Tuckman's Model

A group development model by Tuckman (1965) and expanded by Tuckman and Jensen (1977) is one of the most frequently cited. It is a five-stage model consisting of (a) forming, (b) storming, (c) norming, (d) performing, and (e) adjourning. See Figure 4-1.

The steps of Tuckman's influential model—forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning—are incorporated in the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) model that follows.

Figure 4.1 Tuckman's Group Development Model



Source: Tuckman & Jensen (1977).

Note: Later, a fifth stage was added to capture termination. Consistent with the rhyming pattern used in this model, this stage is called adjourning. See "Stages of Small Group Development Revisited," by B. Tuckman and M. Jensen, 1977, *Group Organizational Studies*, 2, 419–427.

AGPA's Model

This is the model summarized by AGPA in its *Practice Guidelines for Group Psychotherapy: A Cross-Theoretical Guide to Developing and Leading Psychotherapy Groups* (AGPA, 2007, pp. 30–35), that I mentioned in the preceding chapter. This model is a progressive five-stage one, extending from birth to death, as it were, in the group. It hews closely to the stages suggested by Tuckman, as you will see. The AGPA guidelines point out that there is a strong consensus for a five-stage model of group development emerging.

Stage 1: *Forming* stage including issues of dependency and inclusion.

Members are unsure of what is to happen, and they are motivated by becoming accepted.

Group leaders aim to educate the members (e.g., about group purpose, rules, and roles of participants), inviting trust and highlighting commonalities.

Stage 2: *Storming* stage, focused on issues of power or status and the resolution of the associated conflicts.

Members may question leader authority, and some may test for control.

Group leaders seek to promote a safe and successful resolution of conflict, encourage group cohesion, and facilitate interpersonal learning.

Stage 3: *Norming* stage, signifying the establishment of trust and a functional group structure (norms).

Members develop a sense of greater cohesion and understandings of how to work together.

Leaders promote cohesion and a positive group working environment with interventions reflecting a balance of support and confrontation.

Stage 4: *Performing* stage is characterized by a mature, productive group process and the expression of individual differences.

Members engage with one another and come to accept their uniqueness

Leaders allow the group to function at an optimally productive level and to highlight the individuality of the members.

Stage 5: *Final or termination* stage, which Tuckman and Jensen (1977) called *adjourning*. The group experience is reviewed in this phase, and closure is reached.

Members identify their learning, say good-bye to one another, and anticipate the future.

Leaders facilitate a focus on separation issues, a review of the group experience, and help members prepare for the ending of the group. Leaders strive to encourage the expression of feelings associated with saying good-bye and to help members attend to unfinished business in the group.

Jones' Model

The group development model of Jones (1973) depicts both the progressive stages of a group's evolution and also *the relationship* that is posited to exist between *task* and *personal relations* at each stage in a group. *Because the model sets out these two dimensions and their interactions clearly, I have found it to be a very useful generic schema that is easily adaptable to both task and person change (psychoeducation, counseling, therapy) groups.* This framework suggests a method group leaders can use for planning groups, guiding interventions, and predicting general future directions. It consists of four progressive stages of development, with attention given to both task and to personal relations dimensions. A group leader's style needs to permit him or her to appropriately balance the task and personal relations dimensions associated with each stage.

Take a look at Figure 4-2, which presents the model, and then work with Learning Exercise 4-2 that follows.

As you have learned, in all group interaction—whether occurring in a task focused or in a personally focused group—involves *both* task and personal relations dimensions. However, it also is the case that emphasizes that within these two group foci typically vary.

The major concern of a *task* or *work* group, such as a committee that you could be leading or consulting with, is on accomplishing tasks and goals set out to the group; attention to personal relations usually plays a supportive role. The major concern of a *personally focused* group—such as a therapy group you could be leading or coleading—is on individual and relationship growth, development and change, which largely result from member interaction with each other, and the kind of personal relations they create and maintain; attention to task functions usually takes a supportive role. Note in

Figure 4.2 Jones' Task-Personal Relations Group Development Model

Stage	Task Dimensions	Personal Relations Dimensions
1	Orientation	Dependency
2	Organizing	Conflict
3	Data flow	Cohesion
4	Problem solving	Interdependence

Source: Jones (1973).

all cases that “supportive” does not mean unimportant; it is more like a sub-theme alongside a theme.

So, to break this out, let’s assume you have been contracted to provide group process observation of a governing body’s meeting—think of one of the divisions of a professional association, for example. Your observations will be fed back to the meeting chair at the end of the first day as he or she readies for the next day’s meeting, and at the end. Because this is a task group, you likely will give the keenest attention to task dimensions, such as those listed above in the figure. You will note the degree to which the chair assists members in becoming oriented (Stage 1) to the task (e.g., to review, rank order, and select the top three of 15 funding proposals) at the start, how members become organized (Stage 2) to work on the task, how fully and effectively data and information flow among the members (Stage 3), and their capacity to implement problem-solving strategies successfully as they seek to reach their goals (Stage 4). At the same time, you will be noting how personal relations dimensions support task accomplishment: Do members resolve dependency (Stage 1) issues commonly present in the beginning, work through disagreements and conflict (Stage 2), are they able to become connected and cohesive (Stage 3), and then work together in joining their resources to accomplish their goals (Stage 4). With a task group, success is measured by goal accomplishment, in this case, did the proposals get selected effectively, but it almost always is the case that goal accomplishment is enhanced through satisfactory personal relations.

The situation is flipped over in groups that are organized to help their members directly improve. If you are leading a counseling group, for instance, you will give primary importance to the personal relations dimensions and how the group progresses through them (or not). In the beginning (Stage 1), members typically are unsure, dependent on the leader, and looking for structure. As the group progresses, they then may turn their attention to challenging leadership and the procedures and processes being used to guide the group (Stage 2). As conflict works itself out, the group members are able to align themselves more fully with each other and the group itself, developing a sense of belonging and connection (Stage 3), which then allows them to work collaboratively in giving and getting help (Stage 4). It is through resolving issues stimulated in these personal relations stages that members learn and grow. Again, though, the task dimensions support this movement. Dependency is dealt with through becoming oriented (Stage 1), conflict gets resolved through becoming organized in joint effort (Stage 2), cohesion depends on sharing information and feelings (Stage 3), and interdependence is aided by effective interpersonal problem solving (Stage 4).

Learning Exercise 4–2: Playing With Task and Personal Relations

The **object** of this learning exercise is to sharpen your understanding of how task and personal relations fit within one group development stage.

The preceding model suggests, for instance, that early in a group's development (typically at around Stage 1), the group leader may need to pay attention to the task of orienting members to the experience to come while, at the same time, being concerned with helping members deal positively with their personal and interpersonal dependency needs. For example, the leader might provide members with a set of general group goals and then ask for their feedback before moving toward assisting them to identify one of two personal goals. By doing this, she anticipates clarifying goals will help with becoming oriented while alleviating some anxiety and uncertainty.

Now, it's time for you to take a turn playing with task and personal relations. Select any other stage in the model and suggest how the group leader might positively address both the task and the related personal relations dimensions:

Stage selected: _____

How to address task dimension: _____

How to address personal relations dimension: _____

Discuss your product with a fellow student.

Brabender and Fallon's model

Brabender (2011) points out that group development "is one of the core concepts by which groups are understood" (p. 182), reinforcing a theme you have probably been noticing. The practical value of understanding about

group development is that it affects what leaders know and can do in their groups. Again, referring to Brabender,

When group development is the centerpiece of the therapist's conceptualization of, and intervention in, the group, it informs all of the therapist's activities such as the creation of a group design, the selection of members, and the ongoing manner in which the therapist intervenes with the group. (p. 196)

Take a look at Case Illustration 4-1.

Case Illustration 4-1: Group Development Begins Early

The **object** of this case illustration is to exemplify one aspect of group development, starting before a group ever gets into the first meeting.

About half the day was gone now, Sgt. Lopez realized, as she glanced angrily—once again—at her watch. “What a waste of time,” she muttered to herself. “Why in the world do we have to attend these deployment reunions is way beyond me!”

The reunion leader, Capt. Tomlinson, was wondering too. “Why isn’t this going better?” he ruminated to himself.

Just then he saw the military consultant, Lisa Black, walk by. Tomlinson caught Lisa’s attention and asked her if they could spend a moment.

Reaching out, the captain asked Lisa if she had any idea why the event was slogging along, at best. After some discussion, it now seems pretty clear to him of at least one problem: The event had been organized too close to the deadline, and its purpose was never made clear to attendees.

“Well,” Tomlinson decided, “Guess we’ll have to press on through this one and then in the future be sure to do much better due diligence in getting the retreats organized earlier and with more clarity. Maybe before people get out of here today, I’ll check in with some of them informally to get their ideas of what they might need down the road . . .”

Group development starts before a group ever gets in the room, by following necessary planning steps that allow people to get oriented to the task and find ways to become involved.

In this final model description, I provide a group interaction sample for each stage. Observe how the group leader behaves.

Stage 1: Formation and engagement. Brabender draws from Agazarian's (1997) systems view of group by pointing out that the first stage in group development can be characterized as a struggle between opposing forces. Doubts and attractions compete for the potential value of participating in the group. Resistances against revealing oneself battle with the realization that this will be necessary. Wanting to be an independent person butts up against the strong forces of being dependent on the leader for guidance, structure, and orientation.

What does the leader do in this stage to assist? An overriding contribution is to begin creating a safe and welcoming environment. Leaders listen to members, provide information about general group goals and procedures, and encourage and support members becoming involved. They seek to help members realize they are not alone and, in fact, may have much in common with the others. They help members introduce themselves to each other and to the group. They try to ensure that everyone in the group has an opportunity to talk, leaving no one out, attempting to avoid monopolization. As Conyne et al. (2008) put it, "the group leader functions as a new social system 'host or hostess,' who helps members get oriented to the group's surroundings and to what is available" (p. 74).

Consider the following interaction from a counseling group (we will follow this group over the next three stages and come back to end at the termination stage):

- Hank: "I'm not sure about being here. I mean, I think sometimes I do and sometimes I don't want to be here right now."
- Scilla: "I was in a group like this once before, and it took me quite a while to get comfortable. I can sure remember that . . ."
- Betsy: "Oh, come on, let's get off it and get goin'!"
- Leader, Felicity: "You know, this is often how it is at the start. It's okay. We'll get there. Anyone else want to comment?"

In this example, the leader in just a few words conveys that "all is well." This reassurance can be comforting to members and helps to begin a climate of safety. The leader also encourages others to enter the discussion.

Stage 2: Conflict and rebellion. The group members are getting involved within an environment that seems welcoming. Yet, they are in no way as yet

self-initiating. They have been largely looking to the group leader for direction. A sign of Stage 2 emerging is that members begin to question, to “stick their heads out,” to make some of their own ideas and needs known. A key aspect of this increasing self-expression is that leadership gets questioned subtly and sometimes strongly and directly. This can be a very trying time for group leaders, but it helps greatly to know—and this is one of the palpable values of a group development model—that expressions of conflict and rebellion at this point are entirely normative and to be expected. Importantly, a leader should not take such challenges personally. It really is a systemic response, and healthy, too, where members begin to assert themselves as they seek to contribute to creating a system of which they are a part.

Take a look at the following:

- Tommy: “Yeah, and I’m right now feeling kind of angry at how [he looks at the leader, Felicity] you’ve been controlling us, making us do what *you* want!”
- Betsy: “Like it’s all *her* show, or somethin’ . . .”
- Miguel: “Hey, man, no way . . . she’s been cool, helping us move.”
- Leader, Felicity: “I’m really interested in what each of you thinks about this. Let’s see what we have and then take a look at next steps, okay?”

You can see in this interchange that Felicity does not defend herself and her position. Rather, she takes the opposite tack, sailing with the wind, so to speak. She sanctions the expression of viewpoints about leadership, encouraging members to share, while suggesting an end result of coming to some sort of collaborative resolution. This approach demonstrates a “trust in the process,” in which the leader conveys a sense of openness and optimism that they will be able to work this conflict out positively.

Stage 3: Intimacy and unity. This stage is marked by a sense of satisfaction resulting from the recasting of control from leader centered to leader *and* member centered. This stage is a transitional one, in which the group is lurching from getting established to becoming productive.

A kind of “high” infuses the group at this point where members feel more connected, positive, and sometimes playful. Boundaries can become porous during this stage due to the exuberance members feel. Brabender points out two examples, where sexual attraction may get activated outside the group and refreshments may be brought to the group by some members. Such boundary infringements need to be guarded against through examining them.

The kind of feedback occurring during this transitional phase tends to be uniformly positive. Group leaders can help members to make their

feedback more effective through teaching them simple guidelines, such as describing and not evaluating, being immediate and not delayed, and being concrete rather than vague.

Here is an excerpt from this stage:

James: "I really think you're great, Scilla. Really, I must say, I like everything about you."

Scilla: "Hmm, it's nice to be liked. Better than the reverse, by a long shot! Thanks for saying that, James."

Leader, Felicity: "Let's see if we might work some on trying to sharpen up the kind of feedback we can give to each other so it is as useful and meaningful as possible. Are you game?"

Members nod.

Felicity: "Okay, good. Let's go back to James's first comment to Scilla . . . what was that, James?"

James: "Oh, I said something like I think she's great."

Felicity: "Oh, yes, thanks. Okay, let's see if you might try being more concrete and specific. Can you identify what it is about Scilla that you find to be 'great'?"

Here, you see the group leader encouraging feedback while beginning to help members learn how to provide it in a more effective way.

Stage 4: Integration and work. During this period, members begin to realize, in a sense, that "life is more than a bowl of cherries." That is, they recognize that they are not all alike, that all is not always absolutely wonderful, and that differences among them exist. Further, their deepening connection allows them to want to explore some of these variations. Brabender (2011) concludes, "how they affect others is precisely what they came into the group for" (p. 199). Thus, members become involved with integrating positives and negatives in a constructive way, which can then promote productive work.

Productive work is the essence of group work. In a task group, this term refers to an open flow of communication among members that is on task and supported by good group skills—listening, clarifying, offering suggestions, giving effective feedback, and pooling resources. This combination of task and personal relations functions allows a task group to problem-solve and reach its goals. These goals can range from mastering learning, as in a seminar, or creating a product, such as a report or program plan. Productive

work in a group aimed at personal improvement—such as a psychoeducation, counseling, or psychotherapy group—means that members get to the point where they can take interpersonal risks to self-disclose and to give and get feedback, all leading to accomplishing goals that can be generalized and applied outside the group.

Let's examine the following transaction, this time switching to a *task* group aimed at producing a community safety plan:

Leader, Carlos: "So, let's see if we can together develop a list of possible strategies that the community could apply to become safer."

Christina: "Sounds good, I'm ready for it. How should we get started on this?"

Carlos: "Good question, Christina. How about each of us listing three possible strategies on a note card, and then we can round-robin it to give us a kind of master list that we can gradually winnow down? What do you think?"

Felipe: "Yeah, like we did before; that worked well."

You can see how the group was ready to move ahead. The leader, when asked, provided a possible way to develop the needed information, which involved a structured activity. He checks it out and gets support, and it appears this task group is about to move ahead.

Stage 5: Termination. As I've pointed out, this final stage is part of any group that has a predetermined ending point. There are several goals for the final group stage.

In a task or work group the main one is to consolidate the work and to apply it outside the group. In the previous stage example, the task group has been charged with producing a safety plan for the community, for instance. What members learned about themselves along the way in a task group typically is secondary—except in a learning group, such as a seminar or a book discussion group, examples of task groups where what members learn is paramount.

In other types of groups aimed at personal and interpersonal change, consolidation of learning and application outside the group also is critically important. How, for instance, newly found communication skills might be used appropriately in one's work setting or family. In addition, in such groups it also is important to help members to say good-bye to each other, to reach some form of genuine interpersonal closure. Likewise, helping members to resolve any lingering issues—so-called unfinished business—is also at issue

during termination, such as when a member feels incomplete and has more to say about his or her anxiety when around others, or when a member continues to feel a strong need to close off an interaction with another that feels lingering and unsettled.

In general, one of the key elements of termination is providing a guided opportunity for members to reflect and process their experience. Doing so will assist them in making sense of what has occurred and facilitate application elsewhere.

After all, it is *application elsewhere* that really is the central reason for doing group work. See Learning Exercise 4-3.

Learning Exercise 4-3: Getting a Handle on Group Work's Ultimate Purpose

The **object** of this learning exercise is to underscore the ultimate purpose of group work.

1. *Context:* Imagine you're at lunch with friends that haven't seen each other for a couple years. You're all talking about what you've been doing during that time. Your turn comes up, and you mention you've been excited about learning group work in your graduate program.

One of your friends, Jake, known for being a provocateur, jokes, "Hey, I've always thought this group work thing is for 'weak knees' and 'the forlorn.' Tell us, what's it all about, anyway?"

Not wanting to fall into a trap of joshing around with this question or blowing it off, you decide to answer it straight. You remember your professor using the shorthand phrase "application elsewhere" when emphasizing group work's fundamental purpose, and that always has stuck with you.

2. *Explain this phrase*—or another of your choosing—as you respond to Jake and your other friends:

Consider the following interaction, back to the counseling group of Stages 1–3:

Leader, Felicity: “Now that we’re closing in on finishing our group, it’s important that we take some time to reflect on what happened and what it meant, and to see what you might use in the future. I’ll just leave it open here, for anyone to jump in. What have you gotten out of this?”

James: “I think I’m learning how to connect with other people in a more direct way. I recall way back to when you helped me do that with Scilla. I’ve been trying being more, what is it, concrete [his voice rises in question] with some of my friends. Well, sometimes they kind of don’t know what I’m doing, but I think it works usually.”

Tommy: “I’m still chewing on stuff for me. I know I need to not jump so fast on people, to calm down some, to listen . . . I’m workin’ on that.”

Felicity: “Good to hear what you both are working with! We can come back, if you’d like, but let’s give others a chance to jump in . . . also, consider if any of you have any “unfinished business” with anyone else in here you’d like to clear up before getting away tonight. Still open to us is our follow-up session in 4 weeks, just a reminder . . . anyway, back to anyone else now.”

Here, you see the group leader guiding members to reflect on some important topics for a group’s termination—what has been learned, what can be applied, any unfinished business. Also, note that this group has scheduled a 1-month follow up meeting, which can provide a timely opportunity to check in and to identify how postgroup life has been going.

● GROUP WORK KEYSTONES

- Group development models can assist group leaders in planning, delivering, and evaluating groups. They also can provide direction for group training programs. Examples of group development models were provided.
- Some experts suggest that a group development model can be a central organizing feature to guide practice.

- Group is a vehicle for change. The ultimate value of group work is to help members become more fulfilled outside the group (personally oriented groups) and to enable accomplishments developed in the group to be transferred to the external environment (task groups).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- American Group Psychotherapy Association. (2007). *Practice guidelines for group psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Author. Retrieved from <http://agpa.org/guidelines/AGPA%20Practice%20Guidelines%202007-PDF.pdf>
- Brabender, V. (2011). Group development. In R. Conyne (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of group counseling* (pp. 182–204). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Wheelan, S. (2004). Groups in the workplace. In J. DeLucia-Waack, D. Gerrity, C. Kalodner, & M. Riva (Eds.), *Group handbook of group counseling and psychotherapy* (pp. 401–413). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wheelan, S. (2005). The developmental perspective. In S. Wheelan (Ed.), *The handbook of group research and practice* (pp. 119–132). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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- Corey, G., Corey, M. S., & Haynes, R. (2000). *Evolution of a group*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.