Group Dimensions or Dynamics

An Explanation of Dynamics

- Group dynamics are the internal and external forces or processes that unfold over the life of the group.

- The group leader is part of the dynamics and uses them to influence and shape the group experience.

- Group dynamics have a life of their own. The group leader cannot create them.
Group Dimensions or Dynamics

Linear and Circular Causality

- Group leaders have a powerful influence on the group dynamics.
- Each group member has his or her own reality and response patterns.
- Groups too develop a reality and response pattern that is dependent upon input of each group member. Each member affects all others.
- While groups progress in stages, groups can also advance, regress, or stagnate. Development can be both linear and circular.
Group Dimensions or Dynamics

Systems Theory

- Groups organize themselves over time and create stable patterns of behavior. When this pattern is disrupted the group may seek to return to a previous level.

- Each group member is a cause and effect agent on other members.

- Groups members may form smaller coalitions or subsystems.

- Group members play roles in the group dynamics.
People act in groups much like they have acted in their family of origin.

The interactions that play out as a result of this phenomenon can be therapeutic and provide for a corrective emotional experience.

Group members can learn new, healthier ways to respond to old triggers.
Interaction Patterns

- Interactions can be both verbal and non-verbal (e.g. facial expressions, body posture, breathing rates etc.).

- Membership interactions can give clues to a member’s internal state (e.g. keeping physical distance from another member relates to the comfort one feels toward that member).

- Some member behavior may be incongruent with their verbal responses (e.g. stating one is angry but smiling while saying it).
Group Dimensions or Dynamics

Member Roles

- Members adopt certain roles based on:
  - Past interactions.
  - Present group composition.
  - Their own unique triggers and the current dynamics of the group.

“Copyright © Allyn & Bacon 2004”
Group Dimensions or Dynamics

Member Roles

- Examples of some common group roles are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helper</td>
<td>Blocker</td>
<td>Energizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescuer</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Compromiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scapegoat</td>
<td>Blamer</td>
<td>Evaluator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monopolizer</td>
<td>Non-sharer</td>
<td>Violator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Copyright © Allyn & Bacon 2004"
Group Dimensions or Dynamics

Group Structure

- Has a influence on group dynamics.
- Group structure might include setting goals, establishing norms or the way feelings and content will be processed etc.
- Even being nondirective as a leader imposes structure and influences the group dynamics.
Group Dimensions or Dynamics

Multicultural Dynamics

- Conflicting views of reality may be due to cultural differences and these need to be explored and taken into consideration.

- Issues of racism and oppression need to be addressed and worked through.

- Some members may not feel safe because of cultural implications.
Members may make assumptions about another member based on cultural or racial stereotypes.

Respecting different cultural perspectives might enhance awareness and allow members to consider other points of view.
Group Dimensions or Dynamics

Typical Problems in Group Dynamics

- Lack of group cohesiveness.
- Negative thinking in groups.
- Lack of group member motivation.
- Silence that represents resistance.