Developing a Proposal

- **Five areas for a practical proposal for a group**
  - **Rationale** – What is the rationale for your group?
  - **Objectives** – Are your objectives specific and attainable?
  - **Practical considerations** – Have you considered all the relevant practical issues in forming your group?
  - **Procedures** – What kinds of techniques and interventions will you employ to attain the stated objectives?
  - **Evaluation** – How will you evaluate the process and outcomes of the group?

Questions for Screening of Potential Members

- The type of group determines the kind of members that are suitable or unsuitable
- The key questions are
  - Should this person be included in this group at this time with this leader?
  - Other questions - What methods of screening will you use?
  - How can you decide who may benefit from a group?
  - And who might not fit in a group?
- How might you deal with a candidate who is not accepted to your group?

Practical Considerations in Forming a Group

- Group composition
- Group size
- Open versus closed group
- Length of the group
- Frequency and duration of meetings
- Place for group sessions

Some Advantages of a Group

- Offers support for new behaviors and encourages experimentation
- Is a microcosm of the real world – allows us to see how we relate to others
- Provides an optimal arena for members to discover how they are perceived and experienced by others
- Helps members see that they are not alone in their concerns

A Few Misconceptions About Groups

- Groups are suited for everyone
- The main goal of a group is for everyone to achieve closeness
- Groups tell people how they should be
- Group pressure forces members to lose their sense of identity
- Groups are artificial and unreal
The Uses of a Pregroup Meeting

- Time for setting expectations, establishing group rules and procedures, role preparation, skill building
- An ideal time to focus on the clients’ perceptions, expectations, and concerns
- Positively associated with members’ satisfaction and comfort with the group: improves attendance, increases self-disclosure, and enhances group cohesion
- A standard practice for members of short-term therapy groups

Goals of Pregroup Preparation
Yalom (2005)

- Create an alliance with group members by providing conceptual framework
- Describe how group work helps members enhance interpersonal relationships
- Provide guidelines about how to get the most from a group

Goals of Pregroup Preparation
Yalom (2005)

- Anticipate frustrations and disappointments participants are likely to encounter
- Discuss attendance and duration of the group
- Instill faith in group work
- Discuss ground rules about confidentiality, and subgrouping

Building Evaluation into
Group Work

- Conduct evaluation research (may require use of qualitative methods):
  - Member-specific measures assess changes in attitudes and behaviors of individual clients
  - Group-specific measures assess changes common to all group members (e.g., increased self-awareness, decreased anxiety, and improved personal relationships)

Coleader Issues on Forming a Group

- Share equal responsibility in forming the group and getting it off to a strong start
- Meet in advance to clarify the group’s purpose, what you hope to accomplish with the time you have, and how you will meet your objectives
- Explore your philosophies and leadership styles and develop a strong working relationship

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Chapter 5: Initial Stage of a Group
Characteristics of Initial Stage

- Participants test the atmosphere and get acquainted
- Risk taking is relatively low – exploration is tentative
- Central issues are trust versus mistrust and inclusion versus exclusion
- There are periods of silence and awkwardness
- Members are deciding how much they will disclose and how safe the group is

Common Fears Experienced by Group Members

- Anxiety over being accepted or rejected
- Concern about the judgment of others
- Afraid of appearing stupid
- Concerns about not fitting into the group
- Not knowing what is expected
- Concern over communicating feelings and thoughts effectively

Advantages of Developing a Here-And-Now Focus

- Dealing with the here-and-now energizes the group
- Members are best known by disclosing here-and-now experiencing
- Being in the here-and-now serves as a springboard for exploring everyday life concerns

Leader Attitudes and Behaviors That Generate Trust

- Careful attending and genuine listening
- Understanding verbal and nonverbal behavior
- Empathy
- Genuineness and self-disclosure
- Respect
- Caring confrontation

Establishing Goals

- **Main task** – helping members formulate clear and specific goals
- **Absence of goals** – may lead to considerable floundering and aimless sessions
- **Identifying goals** – a collaborative process
- **Assist members in goal setting** – use contracts and homework assignments

Group Norms

- Enable a group to attain its goals and can be implicit or explicit
- **Examples of group norms** –
  - Expectation of promptness and regular attendance
  - Norm of sharing oneself in personal ways
  - Expectation of giving meaningful feedback
  - Members encouraged to offer both support and challenge to others
  - Members functioning within the here-and-now context of the group
Effective Therapeutic Relationships: Research Findings

- There is considerable evidence of the importance of a positive therapist–client relationship as a contributing factor to positive change in clients. Strive to develop a reasonably open therapeutic style with appropriate and facilitative self-disclosure.
- Three key constructs capture the essence of the therapeutic relationship in group treatment: group climate, cohesion, and alliances.
- Aggressive confrontation cited in reviews of research as the leadership style with the highest risks.

Member Guidelines to Benefit from a Group

- Help to establish trust
- Express persistent reactions
- Come prepared to group sessions
- Decide for yourself what and how much to disclose
- Be an active participant
- Be open to feedback and consider what you hear

Summary of Leader Functions: Initial Stage

- Division of responsibility – How to achieve a balance of sharing responsibility with members?
- Degree of structuring – Creating a structure that will enable members to make maximum use of group process
- Opening group sessions – How to best open a group and help members gain a focus?
- Closing group sessions – How to best bring a session to closure without closing down further work later on?

Summary of Member Functions: Initial Stage

Members:
- Actively create a trusting climate and express fears, hopes, concerns, reservations, and expectations regarding the group.
- Make themselves known to others in the group and are involved in the creation of group norms.
- Establish personal and specific goals that will govern group participation.
- Learn the basics of group process, especially how to be involved in group interactions.

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Chapter 6: Transition Stage of a Group

Member Guidelines to Benefit from a Group

- Help to establish trust
- Express persistent reactions
- Come prepared to group sessions
- Decide for yourself what and how much to disclose
- Be an active participant
- Be open to feedback and consider what you hear
Characteristics of Transition Stage

- Anxiety and defensiveness are common
- Members:
  - test the leader and other members to determine how safe the environment is
  - struggle between wanting to play it safe and risk getting involved
  - observe the leader to determine his/her trustworthiness
  - learn how to express themselves so that others will listen

Barometer of Trust in a Group

- When there is a low level of trust, members may:
  - show up late, leave early, or miss sessions
  - not express what they are thinking and feeling
  - be unwilling to initiate personally meaningful work
  - deny that they have any problems or concerns
  - hide behind global statements and intellectualizations
  - be unwilling to deal with conflict in the group

Common Fears Emerging at the Transition Stage

- Making a fool of oneself
- Emptiness
- Losing control
- Being too emotional
- Self-disclosure
- Taking too much of the group’s time
- Being judged, challenged, or singled out
- Being rejected

Some Guidelines for Effective Confrontation

- Have a rationale for confronting a person
- Confront if you care about the other
- Talk more about yourself than the other person
- Avoid dogmatic statements and judgments about the other
- Give others space to reflect on what you say to them

Dealing with Difficult Behaviors of Group Members

- Avoid responding with sarcasm
- State your observations and hunches in a tentative way
- Demonstrate sensitivity to a member’s culture
- Avoid taking member’s behavior in an overtly personal way
- Encourage members to explore resistance – don’t demand they give up a particular “resistive” behavior

Examples of Problematic Styles of Behaving in a Group

- Silence
- Monopolistic behavior
- Storytelling
- Giving advice
- Questioning
- Dependency
- Intellectualizing
- Hostility
- Acting superior
- Avoiding their own work by adopting role of “assistant leader”
- Subgrouping
- Offering pseudosupport
### Dealing with Resistance Therapeutically
- Don’t label all hesitations as a sign of resistance
- Respect resistance – it may serve a valuable function
- Invite members to explore the meaning of what appears to be resistance
- Describe behavior of members – avoid making too many interpretations
- View resistance with interest, understanding, and compassion

### Dealing with Avoidance by the Whole Group
- When an entire group chooses not to work and is unwilling to deal with several hidden agendas, it is important to:
  - □ commit to face what is going on
  - □ bring to the surface the hidden agendas
  - □ refuse to give up
  - □ not indulge in feelings of frustration and annoyance

### Dealing with Transference and Countertransference
- **Transference**: feelings clients project onto the counselor, which are rooted in the clients’ past relationships.
- **Countertransference**: feelings aroused in the counselor by clients, which are related more to unresolved conflict from other past or present relationships than to any feature of the therapeutic relationship.
- A group context has the potential for multiple transferences. Feelings can be productively explored so members become aware of how they are keeping these old patterns functional in present relationships.

### Coleader Issues at the Transition Stage
- Negative reactions toward one leader
- Challenges to both leaders
- Dealing with problem behaviors
- Dealing with countertransference

### Summary of Leader Functions: Transition Stage
- Show members the value of dealing fully with conflict
- Help members to recognize their own defensive patterns
- Teach members to respect resistance and to work constructively with the many forms it takes
- Model for members dealing directly and tactfully with any challenge
- Encourage members to express reactions that pertain to here-and-now happenings in the group

### Summary of Member Functions: Transition Stage
- **Members**: express persistent reactions.
  - respect their own defenses but work with them.
  - move from dependence to independence.
  - learn how to confront others constructively.
  - deal with reactions toward what is occurring in the group.
  - work through conflicts rather than remain silent or form subgroups outside of sessions.