

## **The Group Work Model**

From the book CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY by GARY KIELHOFNER.

OT is concerned with groups, both therapeutic groups and groups such as family.

Theoretical arguments of this model address:

1. The nature and process of groups
2. How the individual contributes to group dynamics and achieves need satisfaction and change in groups.

### **1. Groups**

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Groups generate a psychological field that influences:

- The behaviour of the group as a whole
- Members to behave as a part of the group

Groups require goals related to the group as a whole.

Group structure influences the ability of the group to reach its goals and is influenced by such factors as

- Size
- Composition of members
- Group history
- Setting

The most important role of any group is that of the leader, who uses group structure to influence group process.

Successful groups require attachments to:

- People ( as a basis for group cohesion)
- Objects ( as a basis for task- oriented functions within groups)

Groups:

- Take their nature from the larger social context
- Model social behaviour patterns from the larger society
- Provide a structure that guides individual participation
- Provide a supportive milieu in which members both give and receive assistance and feedback
- Provide structure and support for individuals as they are going through change

- Groups that lack purposeful activity will threaten the health of their individual members

## **2. Individuals as Group Participants**

Persons have the following characteristics as participants in groups

- Biopsychosocial nature with interrelated emotions and behaviours
- Growth and change over the course of life
- Fundamental orientation toward doing and motivation to be competent
- Need to exist in groups ( to engage in social action and be recognized as competent)

Individual adaptation is promoted in groups when individual action within groups is:

- Purposeful (individual and the group recognize the action as congruent with needs and goals)
- Self-initiated ( individuals choose to belong to group and desire to improve skills or understanding)
- Spontaneous ( action is centered on here-and-now and emphasizes learning in the present)
- Group-centered (action is interdependent and considers needs of all group members)

## **Therapeutic Intervention**

Groups mobilize forces that shape people toward adaptive occupational behaviour. Thus, groups:

- Provide persons with choices for activity
- Encourage people to assume responsibility for meeting their needs
- Provide a sense of identity and self –worth to members
- Offer social positions ( roles) that meet individual needs
- Require persons to respond to environmental expectations
- Provide a structure that guides individual participation
- Provide socializing influences (norms and expectations) that channel learning toward socially acceptable and valued occupational behaviour

**A group can influence members in three ways:**

- **By motivating engagement in purposeful and meaningful action**
- **By providing realistic experiences in a supportive environment where skills can be learned**
- **By moving dependent and maladaptive members to independent and adaptation**

## TECHNOLOGY FOR APPLICATION

Role of the therapist as group leader:

- Use of leadership styles and strategies
- Promotion of behaviours to satisfy group needs.

Leadership involves guiding:

- Task functions that enable the group members to work together to complete tasks.

Traits and behaviours of effective group leaders:

- Genuineness and empathy
- Modelling behaviour for members
- Facilitating communication
- Giving feedback
- Knowing and using the effects of tasks and processes to facilitate group process and meet members' needs

The leader of a group influences the group process by considering and using five factors:

- Maximal involvement through group-centered action
- A maximal sense of individual and group identity
- Flow experience ( ease and pleasure in action when an individual's capacities are matched to the opportunities provided in the group)
- Spontaneous involvement of members (supported by interpersonal acceptance of behaviours that fall within group norms, values, and boundaries)
- Member support and feedback

Conducting a group involves:

- Design ( define tentative group goals, develop general plans for group, select members, initially structure group and tasks)
- Formation ( select/ facilitate purposeful, self-initiated, spontaneous, group-centered action, set group climate, clarify group norms and goals)
- Development (assess group's progress and problems, develop strategies)
- Termination (deal with members' emotions, facilitate communication, review group/individual progress, deal with unfinished business, focus on the transfer of learning)

The core of the functional group is use of directed, purposeful occupations to influence a person's well-being.

Group process (task orientation and dynamics of group interaction) has an impact on the experience and behaviour of each member. By interacting with the group and by performing occupations in the group context, each member is enabled to adapt in daily life occupations.