

GERALD COREY

Theory & Practice of Group Counseling

NINTH EDITION



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NINTH EDITION

Gerald Corey

California State University, Fullerton
Diplomate in Counseling Psychology,
American Board of Professional Psychology



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9th Edition
Gerald Corey

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*To Marianne Schneider Corey—my wife of
50 years, best friend, valued colleague, and
coauthor—who has contributed immensely
to the quality of my life and my work.*

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



GERALD COREY is Professor Emeritus of Human Services and Counseling at California State University at Fullerton. He received his doctorate in counseling from the University of Southern California. He is a Diplomate in Counseling Psychology, American Board of Professional Psychology; a licensed psychologist; and a National Certified Counselor. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (Division 17, Counseling Psychology; and Division 49, Group Psychotherapy); a Fellow of the American Counseling Association; and a Fellow of the Association for Specialists in Group Work.

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He also holds memberships in the American Group Psychotherapy Association; the American Mental Health Counselors Association; the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling; the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision; and the Western Association of Counselor Education and Supervision. Jerry received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Mental Health Counselors Association in 2011, the Eminent Career Award from ASGW in 2001, and the Outstanding Professor of the Year Award from California State University at Fullerton in 1991. He regularly teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in group counseling and ethics in counseling. He is the author or coauthor of 15 textbooks in counseling currently in print, along with more than 60 journal articles and book chapters. His book, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, has been translated into Arabic, Indonesian, Portuguese, Turkish, Korean, and Chinese languages. *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* has been translated into Korean, Chinese, Spanish, and Russian. *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions* has been translated into Korean, Japanese, and Chinese.

In the past 40 years Jerry and Marianne Corey have conducted group counseling training workshops for mental health professionals at many universities in the United States as well as in Canada, Mexico, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Germany, Belgium, Scotland, England, and Ireland. In his leisure time, Jerry likes to travel, hike and bicycle in the mountains, and drive his 1931 Model A Ford. Marianne and Jerry have been married since 1964. They have two adult daughters, Heidi and Cindy, two granddaughters (Kyla and Keegan), and one grandson (Corey).

Recent publications by Jerry Corey, all with Cengage Learning, include:

- *Becoming a Helper*, Seventh Edition (2016, with Marianne Schneider Corey)
- *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions*, Ninth Edition (2015, with Marianne Schneider Corey, Cindy Corey, and Patrick Callanan)
- *Group Techniques*, Fourth Edition (2015, with Marianne Schneider Corey, Patrick Callanan, and J. Michael Russell)

- *Groups: Process and Practice*, Ninth Edition (2014, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Cindy Corey)
- *I Never Knew I Had a Choice*, Tenth Edition (2014, with Marianne Schneider Corey)
- *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Ninth Edition (and *Student Manual*) (2013)
- *Case Approach to Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Eighth Edition (2013)
- *The Art of Integrative Counseling*, Third Edition (2013)

Jerry Corey is coauthor (with Barbara Herlihy) of *Boundary Issues in Counseling: Multiple Roles and Responsibilities*, Third Edition (2015) and *ACA Ethical Standards Casebook*, Seventh Edition (2015); he is coauthor (with Robert Haynes, Patrice Moulton, and Michelle Muratori) of *Clinical Supervision in the Helping Professions: A Practical Guide*, Second Edition (2010); he is the author of *Creating Your Professional Path: Lessons From My Journey* (2010). All four of these books are published by the American Counseling Association.

He has also made several educational DVD programs on various aspects of counseling practice: (1) *Ethics in Action: DVD and Workbook* (2015, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Robert Haynes); (2) *Groups in Action: Evolution and Challenges DVD and Workbook* (2014, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Robert Haynes); (3) *DVD for Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy: The Case of Stan and Lecturettes* (2013); (4) *DVD for Integrative Counseling: The Case of Ruth and Lecturettes* (2013, with Robert Haynes); and (5) *DVD for Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* (2012). All of these programs are available through Cengage Learning.

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PREFACE

Group counseling is an increasingly utilized therapeutic intervention in a variety of settings. Although many textbooks deal with groups, very few present an overview of various theoretical models and describe how these models apply to group counseling. This book outlines the basic elements of group process, deals with ethical and professional issues special to group work, and presents an overview of the key concepts and techniques of 11 approaches to group counseling. The book also attempts an integration of these approaches and encourages students to develop a framework that leads to their own synthesis.

Theory and Practice of Group Counseling is written in a clear and simple style, and you will have no difficulty understanding the theoretical concepts and their relationship to group practice. Many of you may have taken a course in counseling theories before your group counseling course, and that background will certainly be useful in understanding and applying the material in this book.

This book is for graduate or undergraduate students in any field involving human services. It is especially suitable for students enrolled in any of the courses under the general designation of "Theory and Practice of Group Counseling." The book is also for practitioners who are involved in group work or for students and trainees who are interested in leading various types of groups. This book is also useful for psychiatric nurses, ministers, social workers, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, addiction counselors, rehabilitation counselors, community agency counselors, school counselors, licensed professional clinical counselors, and mental health professionals who lead groups as a part of their work.

Overview of the Book

The ninth edition continues to emphasize the practical applications of the theoretical models to group work. The central purpose is to help you to develop your own synthesis of various aspects of these approaches. The book also includes two detailed chapters on the stages of a group's development, providing a guide for leaders in the practice of counseling.

Part One (Chapters 1 through 5) treats the basic elements of group process and practice that you'll need to know regardless of the types of groups you may lead or the theoretical orientation you may hold. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the various types of groups and discusses some general principles that can be applied in working with the reality of cultural diversity in groups. Chapter 2 deals with basic concerns of group leadership, such as the personal characteristics of effective leaders, the problems they face, the different styles of leadership, the range of specific skills required for effective leading, and the components of an effective multicultural group counselor. An expanded section on the role of research in group counseling addresses the issues of combining research with the practice of group work, evidence-based practice in group work, and the advantages of practice-based evidence as an alternative to evidence-based practice. Chapter 3 addresses important ethical issues that

you will inevitably encounter as you lead groups. The emphasis is on the rights of group members and the responsibilities of group leaders. A new section addresses spiritual and religious values in group counseling. Both the “Best Practice Guidelines,” developed by the Association for Specialists in Group Work (2008), and the “Ethical Guidelines for Group Therapists,” developed by the American Group Psychotherapy Association (2002), are presented in the *Student Manual* that accompanies this book. In Chapters 4 and 5 you are introduced to the major developmental tasks confronting a group as it goes through its various stages from the formation of a group to its termination, including evaluation and follow-up. The central characteristics of the stages that make up the life history of a group are examined, with special attention paid to the major functions of the group leader at each stage. These chapters also focus on the functions of the members of a group and the possible problems that are associated with each stage in the group’s evolution. There are many new references and suggested readings for Part One.

Part Two (Chapters 6 through 16) examines 11 theoretical approaches to group counseling. Most of the revisions for this edition are found in Part Two. Particular attention has been paid to providing the most current research available for each of the approaches discussed, and new examples illustrate key concepts. These chapters are designed to provide you with a good overview of a variety of theoretical models underlying group counseling, so that you can see the connection between theory and practice. Each of these theoretical orientations has something valid to offer you as a future group leader.

To provide a framework that will help you integrate the theoretical models, these 11 chapters have a common structure. New to this edition, each chapter begins with a biographical sketch of a key figure (or figures) associated with the theory. Each chapter describes the key concepts of the theory and their implications for group practice. This is followed by a discussion of the role and functions of the group leader according to the particular theory and, when applicable, the stages of development of that particular group process. Next are discussions of how each theory is applied to group practice; the major techniques employed within the framework of each theory; concepts and techniques that have applicability to group work in the school; and how the approach can be applied with diverse client populations. Illustrative examples make the use of these techniques more concrete. Each chapter contains my evaluation of the approach under discussion—an evaluation based on what I consider to be its major strengths and limitations. Also new to the ninth edition, each chapter ends with five Self-Reflection and Discussion Questions, which are designed to actively involve you in the material you have read.

The necessity for flexibility and a willingness to adapt techniques to fit the group member’s cultural background is emphasized in each chapter. You are given recommendations regarding where to look for further training in each of the theoretical approaches. Updated annotated lists of reading suggestions and extensive references at the end of these chapters are offered to stimulate you to expand on the material and broaden your learning through further reading.

Part Three (Chapters 17 and 18) focuses on the practical application of the theories and principles covered in Parts One and Two, making these applications more vivid and concrete. Chapter 17 is designed to help you pull together the various methods and approaches, realizing commonalities and differences among them. The chapter concludes with a description of an “integrative model

of group counseling,” which combines concepts and techniques from all the approaches that have been examined and which should help students attempt their own personal integration. The model I present integrates “thinking,” “feeling,” and “doing” perspectives, with varying emphases at each stage of a group’s development. My rationale is to show which aspects of each theory I draw on at the various stages of the group, as well as to offer a basis for blending what may look like diverse approaches to the practice of group work. I strive to give you some guidance in thinking about ways to develop your own synthesis of the various group approaches.

Chapter 18 follows a group in action and applies an integrative perspective, demonstrating how my coleader (Marianne Schneider Corey) and I draw from various approaches as we work with a group. This final chapter consists of our version of an integrative approach in working with certain typical themes that might emerge in a group, emphasizing the theoretical and therapeutic rationale behind our interventions with specific members. This is a case of the unfolding of a group in action, an actual 3-day residential group coled by Marianne and Jerry Corey.

To get a general overview of the basic issues and for comparisons among the 11 theories, I recommend that you read Part Three (Chapters 17 and 18) early in the course (after reading Chapters 1 through 5). Of course, this chapter will be most important as a tool for integrating and synthesizing concepts after you have studied the contemporary approaches described in Part Two.

New to the Ninth Edition

In this ninth edition several chapters in Part Two have been significantly rewritten to reflect recent trends, and other chapters have received minor revisions. Relatively minor revisions were made in the chapters in Part One and Part Three.

Revisions to Part One (Basic Elements of Group Process) include updated research on the beneficial aspects of group work; a new and expanded discussion of the role of research in group work; a new section on evidence-based practices in group work and a discussion of practice-based evidence as an alternative; a new discussion of bridging the gap between research and clinical practice; and an expanded discussion on integrating research into the practice of group work.

The revisions found in Part Two (Theoretical Approaches to Group Counseling) are based on the recommendations of expert reviewers of each of the separate theories, who provided suggestions for updating the various approaches with regard to current trends, new studies, and recent developments in the practice of the approach. Each of the theory chapters has been revised to reflect contemporary trends in practice and to include the most current references available. In addition to the two new features for each theory chapter—the biographical sketches and the Self-Reflection and Discussion Questions—the following list outlines specific changes made in the chapters in Part Two for this ninth edition.

Chapter 6 The Psychoanalytic Approach to Groups: Increased emphasis on the role of the relationship in analytic group therapy; a new perspective on resistance and interpretation; new material on countertransference, its role in psychoanalytic group therapy, and guidelines for effectively managing countertransference; cultural considerations in working with transference and countertransference; revised discussion of brief psychodynamic therapy.

Chapter 7 Adlerian Group Counseling: Revised material on how goals influence behavior; many additional examples to make key concepts clearer; sample dialogues to illustrate interventions; expanded discussion of social interest; new material on the Adlerian perspective of the therapeutic relationship; expanded discussion of the assessment phase in counseling; new illustrative dialogue in a group with children and adolescents; revised discussion of applying the Adlerian approach with diverse cultures; extensive revisions of key concepts and interventions.

Chapter 8 Psychodrama in Groups: Minor revisions of key concepts; reframing of psychodrama as a form of experiential learning; addition of several examples of participants' experiences in psychodrama; revised discussion of research and training in psychodrama.

Chapter 9 The Existential Approach to Groups: Increased emphasis on the role of group members as active agents of change; expanded discussion of the historical background of existential therapy; new material on how spiritual values can be a source of healing in groups; more emphasis on research reviews of existential and humanistic therapies.

Chapter 10 The Person-Centered Approach to Groups: Increased material on translating the core conditions in action; expanded discussion of the role of empathy in a group experience; revision and expansion of person-centered expressive arts in groups; more emphasis on diversity of styles in person-centered facilitation.

Chapter 11 Gestalt Therapy in Groups: Revision of material on the evolution of various styles of practicing Gestalt therapy; reframing working with the past, present, and future; more emphasis on using Gestalt techniques with children in groups.

Chapter 12 Transactional Analysis in Groups: Only minor revisions were made in this chapter.

Chapter 13 Cognitive Behavioral Approaches to Groups: New discussion of trends in contemporary CBT; more emphasis on the role of the therapeutic relationship and collaboration; revision of cognitive restructuring and problem-solving techniques; revision of social skills training in groups; expansion of mindfulness and acceptance approaches in CBT; more discussion on future directions of CBT; expanded treatment of research reviews of CBT.

Chapter 14 Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy in Groups: Revised discussion of the group leader's role; streamlined discussion of key concepts and techniques.

Chapter 15 Choice Theory/Reality Therapy in Groups: Only minor revisions were made in this chapter.

Chapter 16 Solution-Focused Brief Therapy and Motivational Interviewing in Groups: More emphasis on clients being actively involved in the therapeutic process; more on how to use SFBT techniques flexibly; revised discussion of use of questions in SFBT; more on the role of feedback to group members; revised and expanded discussion on applying SFBT with multicultural populations; updated and expanded section on motivational

interviewing (MI); more on the common ground shared by SFBT and MI approaches; more detail on techniques used in motivational interviewing.

Supplements to the Book

Theory and Practice of Group Counseling comes with MindTap, an online learning solution created to harness the power of technology to drive student success. This cloud-based platform integrates a number of learning applications (“apps”) into an easy-to-use and easy to access tool that supports a personalized learning experience. MindTap combines student learning tools-readings, multimedia, activities and assessments-into a singular Learning Path that guides you through your counseling course. This MindTap includes:

- Self-Inventories at the beginning of each chapter.
- An online video presentation of lectures by Gerald Corey, that provide an outline of the key characteristics for each chapter and their applications for group work.
- New case scenarios written specifically for MindTap that help students think through case situations and respond with both written and verbal responses.
- Review and Reflection activities from the *Student Manual for Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*
- Chapter Quizzes at the end of each chapter.

A DVD program titled *Groups in Action: Evolution and Challenges* is an integral supplement to this book. Part One of this DVD program (*Evolution of a Group*) depicts central features that illustrate the development of the group process and how coleaders facilitate a process as the group moves through the various stages: initial, transition, working, and ending. Chapters 4 and 5 of this textbook deal with all of the stages of a group. Chapter 18 provides illustrative examples and vignettes from the DVD program, *Evolution of a Group*, as a way of demonstrating how to integrate many of the theories. Central themes for each of the stages of a group are addressed in this chapter and demonstrated in the DVD. These samples of group work are intended to make the theoretical perspectives come alive, to provide some flavor of the differences and similarities among the approaches, and to show some ways of drawing on the diverse approaches in working with material that emerges from a group. The DVD also emphasizes the application of techniques in working with the material that unfolds in the here-and-now context of the group.

A ninth edition of the *Student Manual for Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* is available to help you gain maximum benefit from this book by experiencing group processes and techniques. The manual includes questions for reflection and discussion, suggested activities for the whole class and for small groups, ideas for supervised training groups, summary charts, self-inventories, study guides, comprehension checks and quizzes, self-tests, group techniques, examples of cases with open-ended alternatives for group counseling practice, questions and answers by experts on each of the theoretical approaches to group counseling, and a glossary of key terms. An ideal learning package is *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling; Student Manual for Theory and Practice of Group Counseling; and Groups in Action: Evolution and Challenges, DVD and Workbook* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2014).

An *Instructor's Resource Manual* is also available in electronic form. It has been revised to reflect the changes in both the textbook and the student manual. The Instructor's Manual contains chapter outlines, suggestions for teaching a group counseling course, test items, additional exercises and activities, online resources, a glossary of key terms for each chapter, a study guide for each chapter, and PowerPoint presentations for each chapter.

Alignment with CACREP Standards

CACREP Core Curriculum Standards* for group counseling courses are reflected throughout this ninth edition of *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*. Chapter numbers relevant to the CACREP standards appear in parentheses following the standards listed.

After reading and studying *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of:

1. the four major group work specializations (task groups, psychoeducational groups, counseling groups, psychotherapy groups) and the appropriate instances for use (Chapter 1)
2. the therapeutic factors of group work (Chapters 1 and 5)
3. group members' roles and behaviors (Chapters 4 and 5)
4. group leadership or facilitation styles (Chapter 2)
5. the personal characteristics of group workers that have an impact on members: knowledge of personal strengths, weaknesses, biases, values, and their effect on others (Chapter 2)
6. special skills for opening and closing group sessions (Chapter 2)
7. the role of research in the practice of group work (Chapter 2)
8. specific ethical issues unique to group work/group counseling (Chapter 3)
9. the process components involved in the typical stages of a group's development (Chapters 4 and 5)
10. major facilitative and debilitative roles that group members may take (Chapters 4 and 5)
11. recruiting and screening prospective members (Chapter 4)
12. group and member evaluation (Chapter 5)
13. major theoretical approaches to group counseling and the distinguishing characteristics of each and the commonalities shared by all (Chapters 6–15 and Chapter 17)
14. group counseling methods and techniques (Chapters 6–16)
15. professional preparation and training standards (Chapter 3)
16. multicultural and diversity issues in group counseling (Chapters 1–3; Chapters 6–16)
17. becoming a diversity-competent group counselor (Chapter 2)

*Council for Accreditation of Counseling Related Educational Programs (CACREP). (2009). *CACREP standards*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

This textbook, along with a course in group counseling, will assist students in demonstrating competency in the following leadership skills:

1. observing and identifying group process
2. encouraging participation of group members
3. attending to, acknowledging, confronting &/or responding empathically to group member behavior—actions/behaviors of the group members.
4. attending to, acknowledging, confronting &/or responding empathically to group member statements (paraphrase and reflection)
5. attending to, acknowledging, confronting &/or responding empathically to group themes (linking and summarizing)
6. eliciting information from and imparting information to group members
7. providing appropriate self-disclosure
8. demonstrating awareness and understanding of one's own cultural values
9. demonstrating sensitivity to diversity factors as they influence group process
10. demonstrating understanding of multicultural factors as they influence group membership and group participation
11. maintaining group focus; keeping a group on task
12. giving and receiving feedback in a group
13. using confrontation/blocking appropriately, working cooperatively with a coleader and/or group members
14. engaging in ethical practice

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Gerald Corey

Theory & Practice of Group Counseling

PART

1

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Group Work

Today, more than ever, mental health practitioners are being challenged to develop new strategies for both preventing and treating psychological problems. Although there is still a place in community agencies for individual counseling, limiting the delivery of services to this model is no longer practical. Group counseling offers real promise in meeting today's challenges. Group counseling enables practitioners to work with more clients, a decided advantage in these managed care times. In addition, the group process has unique learning advantages. Group counseling may well be the treatment of choice for many populations. If group work is to be effective, however, practitioners need a theoretical grounding along with the skill to use this knowledge creatively in practice.

The Increasing Use of Groups

In conducting workshops around the United States, and in other countries as well, I have found a surge of interest in group work. Professional counselors are creating an increasing variety of groups to fit the special needs of a diverse clientele in many different settings. In fact, the types of groups that can be designed are limited only by one's imagination. This expanded interest underscores the need for broad education and training in both the theory and the practice of group counseling. This book provides a fundamental knowledge base applicable to the many kinds of groups you will be leading.

Groups can be used for therapeutic or educational purposes or for a combination of the two. Some groups focus primarily on helping people make fundamental changes in their ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Groups with an educational focus help members learn specific coping skills. This chapter provides a brief overview of various types of groups and the differences among them.

In every human services field, you will be expected to be able to use group approaches with a variety of clients for a variety of purposes. In a psychiatric hospital, for example, you may be asked to design and lead groups for patients with specific problems, for patients who are about to leave the hospital and reenter the community, or for patients' families. Insight groups, remotivation groups, assertion training groups, bereavement groups, and recreational/vocational therapy groups are commonly found in these hospitals.

If you work in a community mental health center, a college counseling center, or a day-treatment clinic, you will be expected to provide therapeutic services in a wide range of group settings. Your client population will most likely be diverse with respect to age, ability/disability, problems, socioeconomic status, level of education, race or ethnicity, sexual identity, and cultural

background. Community agencies are making increased use of groups, and it is not uncommon to find groups for women's issues, men's issues, consciousness-raising groups for men, groups for children of alcoholics, support groups, parent education groups, groups for cancer patients, groups for individuals with eating disorders, groups for people who have experienced trauma and crisis, groups for senior citizens, HIV/AIDS support groups, and groups aimed at reducing substance abuse.

Your theoretical approach may be based primarily on a single system. Increasingly, however, group practitioners are becoming more integrative as they draw on techniques from various theoretical approaches (see Norcross & Goldfried, 2005). The numerous pathways toward integration are characterized by the practitioner's desire to increase therapeutic effectiveness and applicability by looking beyond the confines of single theories and the techniques associated with them (Norcross, 2005a; Norcross & Beutler, 2014).

Groups have particular advantages for school counseling. Special groups in schools are designed to deal with students' educational, vocational, personal, or social problems. If you work in a school, you may be asked to form a career exploration group, a self-esteem group, a group for children of divorce, a group for acting-out children, a group aimed at teaching interpersonal skills, or a personal growth group. Elementary school counselors are now designing therapeutic groups as well as psychoeducational groups. On the high school level, groups are aimed at helping students who are in drug rehabilitation, who have been victims of crime, or who are going through a crisis or recovering from a trauma.

Counseling groups in K–12 school settings include a wide array of topics and formats. These groups are a mainstay of the psychological services offered by schools. Groups for children and adolescents occupy a major place in a comprehensive, developmental school counseling program because of their efficacy in delivering information and treatment. Steen, Henfield, and Booker (2014) state that integrating counseling with psychoeducational interventions has been successful in both personal-social and academic development groups in school settings. This combination of group counseling methods provides the opportunity to facilitate self-awareness and to present skills information. Many school counseling groups are aimed at enhancing personal and social development and at the same time have a psychoeducational purpose (such as teaching study skills, how to interact with peers, or setting goals). Steen and colleagues (2014) describe a group counseling model designed to help K–12 school counselors integrate students' academic and personal-social development into their group work. Riva and Haub (2004) maintain that "the real benefit of school-based treatment is that it can potentially reach many students before they need remedial counseling for more serious mental health problems" (p. 318). Goodnough and Lee (2004) conclude that "providing effective group counseling experiences to students requires leadership, specialized knowledge and skills, and the ability to advocate effectively for the inclusion of a program of group counseling within schools" (pp. 179–180).

There is considerable evidence of the effectiveness of group psychotherapy with a broad range of populations and problems (Brabender, 2011). Group work is a beneficial and cost-effective approach to treatment. Meta-analyses reveal that group therapy is as effective as individual therapy (Burlingame, MacKenzie, & Strauss, 2004). Barlow (2008) contends that groups can be effectively used for both prevention and education purposes: "Through ever-growing research

and continuing improvements in clinical application, groups remain a powerful intervention tool across the life span, positively impacting childhood, adult, and geriatric disorders” (p. 244). In sum, a group approach can help people meet almost any need.

One reason the group approach has become so popular is that it is frequently more effective than the individual approach. This effectiveness stems from the fact that group members not only gain insight but practice new skills both within the group and in their everyday interactions outside the group. In addition, members of the group benefit from the feedback and insights of other group members as well as those of the practitioner. Groups offer many opportunities for modeling, and members can learn how to cope with their problems by observing others with similar concerns.

Even practitioners with advanced degrees in one or another of the helping professions often have very little exposure to the theory and techniques of group work. Many of these professionals find themselves thrust into the role of group leader without adequate preparation, training, or supervision. It is not surprising that some of them become anxious when faced with this challenge. Although this book is not intended to be an exclusive means of preparing competent group leaders, it is aimed at providing practitioners with the knowledge and skills necessary for coping with the demands of effective group leadership.

Overview of the Counseling Group

Group counseling has preventive as well as remedial aims. Generally, the counseling group has a specific focus, which may be educational, career, social, or personal. Group work emphasizes interpersonal communication of conscious thoughts, feelings, and behavior within a here-and-now time frame. Counseling groups are often problem oriented, and the members largely determine their content and aims. Group members typically do not require extensive personality reconstruction, and their concerns generally relate to the developmental tasks of the life span. Group counseling tends to be growth oriented in that the emphasis is on discovering internal resources of strength. The participants may be facing situational crises and temporary conflicts, struggling with personal or interpersonal problems of living, experiencing difficulties with life transitions, or trying to change self-defeating behaviors. The group provides the empathy and support necessary to create the atmosphere of trust that leads to sharing and exploring these concerns. Group members are assisted in developing their existing skills in dealing with interpersonal problems so that they will be better able to handle future problems of a similar nature.

The group counselor uses verbal and nonverbal techniques as well as structured exercises. The role of the group counselor is to facilitate interaction among the members, help them learn from one another, assist them in establishing personal goals, and encourage them to translate their insights into concrete plans that involve taking action outside of the group. (Chapter 2 describes the skills competent group leaders use to accomplish these tasks.) Group counselors perform their role largely by teaching members to focus on the here-and-now and to identify the concerns they wish to explore in the group.

Goals

Ideally, the group members will decide the specific goals of the group experience for themselves. Here are some possible goals for members of counseling groups:

- To increase awareness and self-knowledge; to develop a sense of one's unique identity
- To recognize the commonality of members' needs and problems and to develop a sense of connectedness
- To help members learn how to establish meaningful and intimate relationships
- To assist members in discovering resources within their extended family and community as ways of addressing their concerns
- To increase self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-respect, and to achieve a new view of oneself and others
- To learn how to express one's emotions in a healthy way
- To develop concern and compassion for the needs and feelings of others
- To find alternative ways of dealing with normal developmental issues and of resolving certain conflicts
- To increase self-direction, interdependence, and responsibility toward oneself and others
- To become aware of one's choices and to make choices wisely
- To make specific plans for changing certain behaviors
- To learn more effective social skills
- To learn how to challenge others with care, concern, honesty, and directness
- To clarify one's values and decide whether and how to modify them

Advantages

In addition to the member advantages of achieving the goals just listed, group counseling provides a re-creation of the participants' everyday world, especially if the membership is diverse with respect to age, interests, background, socioeconomic status, and type of problem. As a microcosm of society, the group provides a sample of reality—members' struggles and conflicts in the group are similar to those they experience outside of it—and the diversity that characterizes most groups also results in unusually rich feedback for and from the participants, who can see themselves through the eyes of a wide range of people.

The group offers understanding and support, which foster the members' willingness to explore problems they have brought with them to the group. The participants achieve a sense of belonging, and through the cohesion that develops, group members learn ways of being intimate, of caring, and of challenging. In this supportive atmosphere, members can experiment with new behaviors. As they practice these behaviors in the group, members receive encouragement and learn how to bring their new insights into their life outside the group experience.

Ultimately, it is up to the members themselves to decide what changes they want to make. They can compare the perceptions they have of themselves

with the perceptions others have of them and then decide what to do with this information. Group members are able to get a picture of the kind of person they would like to become, and they come to understand what is preventing them from becoming that person.

Value for Specific Populations

Group counseling can be designed to meet the needs of specific populations such as children, adolescents, college students, or the elderly. Examples of these counseling groups are described in *Groups: Process and Practice* (M. Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2014), which offers suggestions on how to set up these groups and the techniques to use for dealing with the unique problems of each of them. Following is a brief discussion of the value of counseling groups for several specific populations.

Counseling Groups for Children In schools, group counseling is often suggested for children who display behaviors or attributes such as excessive fighting, inability to get along with peers, violent outbursts, poor social skills, and lack of supervision at home. Small groups can provide children with the opportunity to express their feelings about these and related problems. Identifying children who are developing serious emotional and behavioral problems is extremely important. If these children can receive psychological assistance at an early age, they stand a better chance of coping effectively with the developmental tasks they must face later in life.

Counseling Groups for Adolescents Group counseling is especially suited for adolescents because it gives them a place to express conflicting feelings, to explore self-doubts, and to come to the realization that they share these concerns with their peers. Adolescents can openly question their values and modify those that need to be changed. In the group, adolescents learn to communicate with their peers, benefit from the modeling provided by the leader, and can safely experiment with reality and test their limits. Because of the opportunities for interaction available in the group situation, the participants can express their concerns and be heard, and they can help one another on the road toward self-understanding and self-acceptance.

Counseling Groups for College Students Students encounter a range of developmental tasks during their undergraduate and graduate years. They experiment with defining themselves, and they seek to discover who they are in relationships with others (Johnson, 2009). Counseling groups are a valuable vehicle for meeting the developmental needs of both traditional and nontraditional students. Today's college students have had a variety of significant life experiences, including some who are returning from military deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those who seek services at college counseling centers are increasingly older and more diverse in their life experiences, making group work more challenging (McCeneaney & Gross, 2009).

Many college counseling centers offer groups designed for relatively healthy students who are experiencing personal and interpersonal relationship problems. The main purpose of these groups is to provide participants with an opportunity for growth and a situation in which they can deal with career decisions, intimate

relationships, identity problems, educational plans, and feelings of isolation on an impersonal campus. Theme or issue groups, which are time-limited and focus on a developmental issue or address a specific problem that the participants have in common, are popular in university counseling centers. These groups promote well-being by assisting people in dealing effectively with developmental tasks (Drum & Knott, 2009).

Counseling Groups for Older People Counseling groups can be valuable for older persons in many of the same ways they are of value to adolescents. As people grow older, they often experience isolation. Like adolescents, older people often feel unproductive, unneeded, and unwanted. Many older people accept myths about aging, which then become self-fulfilling prophecies. An example is the misconception that older people cannot change or that once they retire they will most likely be depressed. Counseling groups can do a lot to help older people challenge these myths and deal with the developmental tasks that they face while retaining their integrity and self-respect. The group format can assist people in breaking out of their isolation and offer older people the encouragement necessary to find meaning in their lives so that they can live fully and not merely exist.

Other Types of Groups

Although the focus of this book is on counseling groups, the practice of group work has broadened to encompass psychotherapy groups, psychoeducational groups, support groups, and task groups as well as counseling groups. Many of these groups share some of the procedures, techniques, and processes of counseling groups. They differ, however, with respect to specific aims, the role of the leader, the kind of people in the group, and the emphasis given to issues such as prevention, remediation, treatment, and development. Let's take a brief look at how psychotherapy groups, psychoeducational (structured) groups, and task groups differ from counseling groups.

Group Psychotherapy

A major difference between group *therapy* and group *counseling* lies in the group's goals. Counseling groups focus on growth, development, enhancement, prevention, self-awareness, and releasing blocks to growth, whereas therapy groups focus on issues such as remediation, treatment, and personality reconstruction. **Group psychotherapy** is a process of reeducation that includes both conscious and unconscious awareness and both the present and the past. Some therapy groups are primarily designed to correct emotional and behavioral disorders that impede one's functioning or to remediate in-depth psychological problems. The goal may be either a minor or a major transformation of personality structure, depending on the theoretical orientation of the group therapist. Because of this goal, therapy groups tend to be longer term than other kinds of groups. The people who make up the group may be suffering from severe emotional problems, deep personal conflicts, effects of trauma, or psychotic states. Many of these individuals are in need of remedial treatment rather than developmental and preventive work.

Group therapists are typically clinical or counseling psychologists, licensed professional counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, and clinical

social workers. They use a wide range of verbal modalities (which group counselors also use), and some employ techniques to induce regression to earlier experiences, to tap unconscious dynamics, and to help members reexperience traumatic situations so that catharsis can occur. As these experiences are relived in the group, members become aware of and gain insight into past decisions that interfere with current functioning. The group therapist assists members in developing a corrective emotional experience and in making new decisions about the world, others, and themselves.

Psychoeducational Groups

Psychoeducational groups, or groups structured by some central theme, are gaining in popularity. These groups feature the presentation and discussion of factual information and skill building through the use of planned skill-building exercises. Psychoeducational groups serve a number of purposes: imparting information, sharing common experiences, teaching people how to solve problems, teaching social skills, offering support, and helping people learn how to create their own support systems outside of the group setting. These groups can be thought of as educational and therapeutic groups in that they are structured along the lines of certain content themes. It is clear that psychoeducational groups are finding a place in many settings, and they appear to be increasingly used in community agencies and in schools.

Psychoeducational groups are designed to help people develop specific skills, understand certain themes, or progress through difficult life transitions. Although the topics do vary according to the interests of the group leader and the clientele, such groups have a common denominator of providing members with increased awareness of some life problems and tools to better cope with them. The intervention strategies used in psychoeducational groups are largely based on the transmission of information basic to making changes and teaching a process for bringing about these changes. The leader's main tasks are to provide instruction and to create a positive climate that fosters learning (Drum, Becker, & Hess, 2011). The goal is to prevent an array of educational and psychological disturbances.

Many psychoeducational groups are based on a learning theory model and use behavioral procedures. Chapter 13 provides detailed descriptions of such groups, including social skills training groups, stress management groups, and cognitive therapy groups. Psychoeducational groups are well suited to populations of all ages. Here are a few examples of such groups for various developmental levels; they are described in detail in *Groups: Process and Practice* (M. Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2014):

- A group for elementary school children of divorce and an anger management group for children
- An HIV/AIDS support group
- A women's group and a men's group
- A domestic violence group
- A women's support group for survivors of incest
- A successful aging group
- A bereavement group for older persons