

New Paradigm Counseling

New Ideas - New Actions - New Results

STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

(Corey & Corey, 1997)

All groups progress through a series of more or less defined stages of development from the moment that members come together for a common purpose. If the group is to be successful in accomplishing its main task (Group Task), then it must, to some extent, experience and resolve the interpersonal difficulties and pitfalls inherent in the earlier stages of group development (Group Process).

Forming a Group (Forming)

During the first stage of group development people get to know each other superficially. They are mainly concerned with finding out who is the leader and what that person expects them to do and how they should behave.

Themes:

- Dependence on the leader for direction
- Orientation to the group task: What is it and how is to be done?
- Search for safe others who have something in common
- Testing out what is the "right" way to behave
- Anxiety about how each member appears to the others

Initial Stage of a Group (Storming):

Eventually, hidden or overt disagreements emerge. These conflicts may be directed toward "others" outside of the group, towards the group leader, or may be expressed between group members.

Themes:

- Counterdependence: Resistance to doing what is expected
- Conflict and rebellion against the leader or powerful "others"
- Emotional responses between group members
- Feelings of confusion, irritation, anxiety, and uncertainty
- Ambivalence between wanting to take part and wanting to withdraw

Transition Stage of a Group (Norming):

The group starts to work out what are the implicit and explicit rules and standards of the group. Members take on functional roles related to the group task.

Themes:

- Agreement or compromise about the identity of the group
- Implicit rules about the expression and resolution of conflict
- Sense of cohesion and belonging
- Free expression of opinion; sharing of feelings
- Allocation of roles in the group

Working Stage of a Group (Performing):

The group can get to work on the task with minimal interference from interpersonal stresses and disruptions caused by preceding stages. There is a sense of communal responsibility and creativity.

Themes:

- Getting down to effective working
- Sense of shared responsibility for the task and its completion
- Ability to use disagreement and conflict creatively
- Flexibility of roles and structures as the task demands
- Recognition and acceptance of the strengths and weaknesses of group members

Ending a Group (Adjourning):

The group faces the fact of its dissolution and starts to work through any "unfinished business" between members or in relation to the task.

Themes:

- Sense of loss of the group experience
- Mixed feelings about accomplishing the task
- Difficulties in "letting go" of the group or the task
- Feeling of relief or satisfaction
- Finishing "unfinished business"