

## Group Psychotherapy

Group psychotherapy is particularly useful for people who are motivated to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their difficulties in relation to others. It offers participants the opportunity to think about their patterns of relating, as they occur in the group, and gives them the chance to practise new ways different ways of relating to themselves and others. These changes, in turn, may lead to changes in other areas of life, including self esteem, confidence, health, and family ,personal, social and intimate relationships.

### **Who is in the group?**

The therapist's first task is to assess whether a particular person is likely to benefit from a particular group. This may take a few sessions. People should not be thrown together randomly and no one should be put in a group only because it is an economical form of treatment. If the therapist or potential group member decides that the group is not likely to be of help, other forms of therapy should be considered .As with all forms of therapy the group member's progress is constantly monitored and reviewed.

**Group members may range from those struggling with longstanding, severe difficulties such as depression to those who seek to enhance personal relationships.**

Groups are small-many therapists think of 7 to 8 members as an ideal number. The group is closed, in that the same people meet every week and new members are introduced gradually. This allows members of the group to get to know each other and build up trust.

### **How does the group work?**

Groups usually meet once or twice a week with the group therapist or therapists. No specific topic is set, as group members are encouraged to talk spontaneously, about whatever is on their mind. They may talk about past and present experiences or about what is happening in the group. The group becomes a microcosm of the outside world, and members begin to interact with each other and the therapist using familiar patterns. Group members often begin to represent significant others in the person's life-particularly family members. With the therapist's help the group learns to

identify patterns of feeling, thought and behaviour in its members .Each member is given the opportunity to observe and reflect on their interactions with themselves and others ,as well as contribute to the understanding of how other participants interact. Members may learn about the source of their difficulties-often the result of unresolved internal conflicts ,difficult early relationships or painful experiences .The person is usually not aware that these earlier experiences are influencing their present way of feeling ,thinking or behaving .As people gain more insight into themselves they start to feel more free and are able to change. The group provides support and feedback as the group members practices new ways of relating. The group also helps break the feeling of isolation, of being alone with one's difficulties.

### **What can be gained from group psychotherapy?**

As with individual psychotherapy, people come to the group because they want to feel better. They want relief from symptoms such as depression, anxiety or panic. They want to raise their self esteem ,achieve more at work or study and establish better interpersonal relationships As with any psychological treatment, no guarantees can be given .However many people experience participation in a psychotherapy group as a powerful and helpful therapeutic experience

### **Some concerns people have about joining a group**

People sometimes make comments such as “There's no way I would open up to a bunch of strangers” This is true. As with all therapy, it takes time to open up .As with all relationships ,trust has to be earned and is not automatically granted.

The groups being described are based on Psychoanalytic Principles.

Contrary to some popular beliefs, there is a strong body of evidence to support the idea that such treatments can be very effective in the treatment of emotional difficulties . The belief that such treatments necessarily take years and foster a dependence that stops people from changing and getting on with their lives is also incorrect .The group can be a powerful tool for change .As with any form of treatment, its aim is to help members get on with their lives.

However, it is true to say that Group Psychotherapy as it is described here does require a longer term commitment to work at change .Change may occur surprisingly

quickly or take a while. Two of the main criteria for inclusion in a Psychotherapy group would be motivation to work at change and an openness to the idea that insight can help bring about change.

It is a requirement that anyone wishing to join Else and Marilyn's group must be prepared to commit to staying for at least 6 months. This is both to give themselves a chance to settle into the experience and out of respect to other group members.