

Jeremy Gillentine—October 24, 2024

COUC710-- Discussion Five: Yalom, chapters 10-12 Discussion Thread: Beginning &

Advanced Stages of Group

On page 393 the authors speak about the group dynamic often being controlled or set by one member, "...generally the one with the loudest interpersonal pathology." What are some steps you have used or believe would be beneficial to dissuade the dominance of one individual.

Please share from both setting the groups groundwork perspective and the reactionary perspective.

Response #1

Karina Blest—October 19, 2:28 PM

On page 406, Yalom provides an example of an issue that arose in the group setting between two members, Wendy and Martin. In this particular situation, Wendy and Martin were the only two attendees, and other group members were absent. Later in the session, Martin brings up some fear and shame regarding sexual dysfunction. Wendy is empathetic to his struggle, and wishes to help him by offering herself sexually to him. The group leader handled this quickly and effectively, as this could have escalated easily. How should this conversation change if other members were present? How would the leader promote group cohesion after such a crass comment?

Reference:

Yalom, I. D., & Leszcz, M. (2020). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy*, (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Basic Books.

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This would certainly make for an interesting encounter in a group setting. Yalom describes it in a way that makes it sound pretty fascinating with only the two group members present. This sounds like one of those examples that will help me to remember not to be shocked or surprised by people's responses. I must remember that not everyone shares my values and the understanding that sex is to only be enjoyed by a married man and women with their own spouse. Take Godly principles away and this is not crass at all in the eyes of the world as portrayed in so many sitcoms today. The account sounds as though Yalom was able to use the encounter to help Wendy see she can be caring, desiring to help others and help her to see she does not have to live in her "selfishness, greed, and ubiquitous hostility to others" as was indicated in her inventory. I am certain there would be some oohs & ahhs from the other group members if present. However, I would want to lean into clarifying this would not be a good idea to follow through with the act of having sex, but then discuss what a breakthrough for Wendy to being willing to give something so intimate to Martin. I would really want to help Wendy and the group members to see the breakthrough and change that was taking place and how we could

encourage the spirit of the offer while not encouraging the offer itself. With the help of Yalom, it appears that Wendy was beginning the act of making “personal meaning” and “creation and discovery of...its newness, connections with self-structure; the client's satisfaction with the process of its development; intimacy of the process; self-acceptance, and inner empowerment” (Timulák & Lietaer, 2001).

Timulák, L., Lietaer, G., (2001). Moments of empowerment: A qualitative analysis of positively experienced episodes in brief person-centered counselling. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*. doi: 10.1080/14733140112331385268.

Yalom, I. D.; Leszcz, M. (2020). *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* (p. 408). Basic Books. Kindle Edition.

Response #2

Kelley Ryals—October 21, 5:44 PM

Chapter 10 of our textbook discussed membership problems, and on page 399, the author noted that shorter-term groups tended to have lower dropout rates Yalom and Leszcz (2020b). If shorter-term groups have lower dropout rates, what are ways to reach group intimacy in such a short time?

Yalom, I. D., & Leszcz, M. (2020b). *The Theory and practice of group psychotherapy*. Hachette UK.

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This has a lot to do with where the group is and the type of group members. How the group leader sets the tone for the group and the expectations is critical. I work primarily from a Solution Focused Brief Therapy perspective. This gives me the stance of who the client[s] desire to be and what steps are needed to progress towards that destination. I help my clients consider what they anticipate being different as they move towards their hopes and expectation of their future self. I run a group at an alcohol and drug rehab facility that is supported by churches of Christ. Every man there claims a desire to live by a Christian Worldview perspective and has daily Bible as a part of their recovery efforts. At our first session I encouraged them by saying Project Rescue is not a church but a type of church and that as men who all claim a desire to live as Christians...What would happen if each man took on the idea of brothers in Christ who are seeking the betterment of each other? This seems to have helped the tone in our groups and across the campus. Vannicelli (2014) indicates setting the group up well is important and includes the physical space where the group meets, establishing meeting times, clear purpose for the group and each session, division of leader task among co-leaders, developing group leadership skills, being intentional to enhance group participation and interactions among the group members rather than being leader focused, being aware of changes in the group dynamic,

dealing with problematic behaviors (talking too much, advice giving, off task, etc.), and having good supervision. These are important for long- and short-term groups but is additionally critical for short-term groups to maximize the group cohesion.

### **References**

Vannicelli, M. (2014). Supervising the beginning group leader in inpatient and partial hospital settings. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 64(2), 144-163. <https://doi.org/10.1521/ijgp.2014.64.2.144>

Yalom, I. D.; Leszcz, M. (2020). *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* (p. 399). Basic Books. Kindle Edition.