

Group Therapy facilitated by Spencer Overgaard

Why consider group therapy? If you have found individual therapy useful and are still intrigued about learning more about yourself, a group might be a valuable adjunct.

What's the group size and focus? There are 6 to 8 members, some of whom are returnees. Discussions concern your personal struggles and in-group relationships.

What is your approach? *"A psychodynamic based therapy explores and addresses the various 'symptoms' we bring to therapy, whether they be depression, excess anxiety, low self esteem, compulsive behaviours, and so on, when they are not the result of a sudden trauma or personal loss, but rather resulting from the long term effects of troubles in our early relational lives. Primarily this occurs within the relational matrix of the family in which we were raised. A psychodynamically based **group** continues that exploration within a group context. Unlike many families, this context is given to close self examination and encourages its members to offer their honest expression of a wide range of thoughts and feelings as they arise."*

Describe the group's atmosphere: In a way, it's like a workshop insofar as it is a space designed to try out new ways of seeing ourselves and others. Curiosity about human interaction is encouraged as is openness to the viewpoints of others. It is a dynamic, unscripted and creative environment albeit with parameters.

Sounds promising, but also a bit unusual! How does it actually work? Being frank with ourselves and others about what we think and feel is a good start. Doing so in a group context is a stretch for many people. It can make us feel vulnerable since we care what others – even strangers - think of us. To address this, we commit to confidentiality. Furthermore, interaction between members is restricted to the group context, so that we can consider our contributions together. These parameters provide a protected zone (like a workshop) to explore our relationships.

How is the group led? The group's therapeutic action (means of change) lies in the group's dynamics. Consequently, members are responsible for introducing issues of concern to them. Contributions are observed and commented upon. As members reveal thoughts and feelings, the group may reflect or 'mirror' back to the speaker aspects of themselves of which they may not be aware.

Conflicts? Conflict often provides an avenue for deeper understanding between parties, so room for airing differences is given. Strong feelings are accepted so long as they are not intentionally cruel. The therapist will intervene as necessary.

Sounds demanding. When we struggle toward a common goal, a sense of camaraderie often arises. Although this group is not a support group – it is equally true that deep bonds may arise as members become important to one another. We begin to see our fellow members as *'important allies in a difficult process of discovery and healing.'*

Group requirements and next steps? Currently in individual therapy as it lays a necessary foundation for group work. Continued individual therapy for the duration of the group as it provides a valuable and added vehicle to debrief group experience. An in-person, no-fee consultation to meet the group therapist, ask questions and gauge your compatibility. Discuss the decision with your therapist. Contact Spencer: therapy@spencerovergaard.com