Group Therapy

Group therapy is a powerful venue for growth and change. Not only do students receive tremendous understanding, support, and encouragement from others facing similar issues, but they also gain different perspectives, ideas, and viewpoints on those issues. Most students, though somewhat apprehensive at first, report that the group experience was helpful far beyond their expectations.

We offer group therapy at CAPS because it works for students. We are convinced that therapy is one of the most effective tools for addressing issues common among college students. Every semester, our groups focus on a wide variety of topics. We have groups for women, men, and mixed groups meeting on different days of the week and times of day. In addition, there is no charge for group counseling at Gannett.

Discussion groups

In addition to offering group therapy, CAPS sponsors a number of informal discussion groups around campus dealing with issues unique to certain student populations. The groups are also free and welcome to any student who might benefit.

Frequently-asked-questions about group therapy

Have you ever wondered what happens at a therapy group and whether it could be helpful for you or someone you know? Take a closer look. If your question isn’t here, we’ll try to answer it when you call: 255-5208.

What is group therapy?

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Q. What is group therapy?
A. Group therapy is a form of counseling where a small group of people meet regularly to discuss, interact, and explore problems with each other and the group leader. Group therapy seeks to give students a safe and comfortable place on campus where they can work out problems and emotional issues. Members gain insight into their own thoughts and behavior, and offer suggestions and support to others.

In addition, people who have a difficult time with interpersonal relationships can benefit from the social interactions that are a basic part of the group therapy experience.

Most groups are composed of students of differing ages, backgrounds and experiences. This helps to provide additional perspectives.

Q. What are the goals of group therapy?
A. People who participate in counseling groups benefit in many ways. CAPS believes groups are uniquely suited to help students:

- Give and receive support
- Gain understanding of problems and explore possible solutions
- Practice interpersonal skills in a safe group setting
- Learn more about how you come across to others
- Increase observation and feedback skills
- Enhance problem-solving skills
- Improve emotional expressiveness
- Decrease social isolation
- Develop good communication skills

Q. Why group therapy?
A. Most personal problems are interpersonal in nature. Very often they stem from our relationships or from our personal patterns of relating. Group therapy offers the rare opportunity to explore and understand how you relate to others and get specific feedback on how others react to you.

For many Cornell students, groups can be more effective and produce quicker results than individual counseling. The lessons group members learn from each other and the chance to work through problems with other people who share similar concerns are what make groups special. Only in group therapy can you directly work on how you relate to others. The group environment of trust and safety can help you build the skills you need to create the same kind of trust and safety in your "real life"—in classes and work; in residence halls, fraternities and sororities, coops, and apartments; with friends, family, and intimate partners. The group experience can help you learn about your style
of relating, your ability to be close, and your personal effectiveness in relationships, and gives you the unique chance to see how others struggle with these concerns. It also offers the opportunity to explore a broad range of personal concerns.

Q. How often do groups meet?
A. Generally groups meet weekly until the end of the semester (some run throughout the academic year and occasionally into the summer). Each group is scheduled for a particular day of the week and time of the day that is set for the duration of the group.

Q. How much does it cost to attend a group?
A. You can participate in a counseling group for no charge.

Q. Is there a limit to the number of counseling group sessions I can have?
A. No. Although there is a limit on the number of individual sessions at CAPS, there is no limit on group sessions. We hope you will utilize our group program as much as you would like.

Q. How do I join a group?
A. If you're seeing a therapist at CAPS, ask about joining a group. If you're not, call the office (255-5155) and let the receptionist know that you would like to talk with someone about the possibility of joining a group.

You can discuss the various group options with the therapist. Most therapy groups require potential members to have a pre-group session with the group leader(s) in order to see if a specific group is the right one for you.

Q. What's the focus of CAPS groups this semester?
A. coming soon...to this website!

...or feel free to call us at 255-5208.

Q. How do I make the most of group therapy?
A. • Attend regularly. In joining the group, you have made a commitment to the other group members as well as to yourself.
• Make the group part of your life. Don't think of group as something that happens once a week and then forget about it in between. Between group sessions, think about what happened in group and about how you felt during and after group, and try to figure out why you had those feelings.
• Take responsibility for your counseling and your group. It's your group, so if it is not moving in the direction you want, say so.
• Participate actively. You will make more progress if you get actively involved in the group discussions.
• Experiment with new forms of behavior. Until you begin to act differently, you won't change.
• Take some emotional risks in group. It is structured to be safe and supportive.
• Be as honest and open as you are able in group. It allows other group members to get to know who you really are.
- Speak in the first person. This makes what you say much more personal and powerful.
- Accept responsibility for your own experience and allow other to be responsible for theirs. Don't foster dependency by assuming responsibility for others in the group.
- Learn to listen to others attentively. If you are formulating your response while someone else is speaking, you are not really hearing what is being said.
- Learn to differentiate between thoughts and feelings...when you say "I feel that...", or "I feel like...", you are moving away from expressing feelings to expressing thoughts.
- Speak directly to individuals in the group rather than about them to others.
- Be honest and direct with your feelings in group in the present moment, especially your feelings toward other group members and the therapists.
- Be spontaneous. Often we wait our turn to speak, try to be polite, or think about what we want to say for so long that the moment to say it has passed.
- Be specific and direct with your feedback.
- Share both positive and negative.
- Don't give advice and suggestions.
- Don't try to solve other member's problems for them.
- Don't blame or judge others.
- Be respectful, even when you don't agree with a person's position or behavior.
- Phrase your feedback so it is about your experience of the other person, and not a judgment of how they are.
- Ask for feedback when you need it...Seek clarification and avoid becoming defensive or making excuses.

Q. Are there ground rules for participating in group therapy?

A.

The group sessions are confidential. The identity of the members of the group, and what they say in group is not to be talked about with anyone outside the group at any time. It is up to each group member to maintain this confidentiality.

Attend regularly and punctually. If you are going to miss a session or be late, please let one of the leaders of the group know.

Mutual respect is essential to maintaining the safety of the group. It is okay to disagree with others. It is not okay to treat other members disrespectfully.

Having a feeling and acting on it are two different actions. Acting out your feelings in group is not acceptable, whether you act them out upon yourself or on another member. The way we most respect ourselves and others is by experiencing our feelings and then talking about them.

It is your responsibility to talk about your reasons for being in the group as honestly as you are able.

If you decide to leave group, because you have met your
goals for treatment or because it isn't the most appropriate treatment method for you, we ask that you come to the group and say good-bye.

Q. What about confidentiality?
A. Groups are private and confidential; that is, what members disclose in sessions is not shared outside of the group. The meaning and importance of confidentiality are reviewed with group members at the first meeting and every time a new member joins the group.

Q. Isn't individual therapy better?
A. That's one of the common misunderstandings about group therapy:

"Group therapy will take longer than individual therapy, because I will have to share the time with others."

Group therapy can be more efficient than individual therapy for two reasons. First, you can benefit from the group even during sessions when you say little by listening carefully to others. You will find that you have much in common with other group members, and as they work on a concern, you can learn more about yourself. Second, group members will often bring up issues that strike a chord with you, but which you might not have been aware of or brought up yourself.

"I will be forced to tell all of my deepest thoughts, feelings and secrets to the group."

No one will force you to do anything in group counseling. You control what, how much, and when you share with the group. You do not have to share what you are not ready to disclose. You can be helped by listening to others and thinking about how what they are saying might apply to you. When you feel safe enough to share what is troubling you, a group will likely be very helpful and affirming.

"I have so much trouble talking to people, I'll never be able to share in a group."

Most people are anxious about being able to talk in group. Almost without exception, within a few sessions people find that they do begin to talk in the group. Group members remember what it is like to be new to the group, so you will get a lot of support for beginning to talk in the group.