Practice Alerts & Guidelines

Couples and Group Therapy Confidentiality

When working with couples and in doing group therapy, or in any other situation where there is more than one individual present, psychologists should be aware of the nature and limits of confidentiality and privileged communication as it applies in these settings. The legal and practice concepts of confidentiality are subject to change, depending on decisions in the courts, regulatory changes and practice determinations in case law. Psychologists can remain familiar with decisions about confidentiality by reading professional journals, or by consulting with their attorney if a situation is unclear.

- Confidentiality exists when providing couples or group therapy, but there are differences from the confidentiality that exists in individual evaluation and treatment settings.
- The information that is revealed within a setting where there is more than one individual present is usually available to all the individuals who were present.
- Any one of the individuals present may seek copies of the records of these couples or group sessions or may release all of the records of these sessions to an outside party.
- When individuals in group or couples therapy are seen on a one-to-one basis, apart from the joint sessions, these communications are commonly treated as typical one-to-one evaluation or treatment sessions, unless there is a prior agreement that the content of such sessions should be available to the group.
- To protect the patients/clients of group and couples evaluation or treatment, psychologists should inform their patients/clients of the limits of confidentiality and make a note of this in the record of the group or couple session.

http://www.op.nysed.gov/psychcouples.htm
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