

1. GROUP STAGES

- A. **Initial Stage-** Anxiety is a major characteristic of this stage. This is the stage where the norms of the group are formed. Leaders are concerned about how the group will proceed and whether or not they can handle the issues that come up effectively. The leaders also wonder if they can facilitate the trust needed to do good group work. The new members are worried about being rejected, about revealing themselves, about meeting new people, and about being in a new situation. Safety is also another concern for the new members. They can be anxious about their role in group, what issues may come up, and about how much they are willing to share. New members can also worry about whether or not group participation will be effective for them. There is also the fear of the unknown for both leaders and members.

- B. **Transition Stage-** This is the most difficult stage in group. Members are learning to recognize and deal with anxiety, resistance, and conflict. In this stage, it is the members' responsibility to learn a more effective way of first being aware of, and then expressing their feelings. This is also the stage where group members will be faced with having to confront other members in a constructive way, as well as with being able to receive constructive criticism or feedback while remaining nondefensive. The leaders may also be tested and challenged by other group members.

- C. **Working Stage-** This is the stage in which the leaders focus on "linking" members with each other by looking for common themes within the group. During this stage, group members are usually eager to initiate work or to bring up themes to explore. The here-and-now focus is also a characterization of this stage. If the group is productive, members will discuss the thoughts and feelings that they are experiencing in the moment. The members will also feel less inhibited about confronting other members and conflict is dealt with more openly. I think it is important to reiterate here, that the group leaders should be modeling these behaviors throughout this process. In this stage the members are able to better identify their goals and they will also be more in touch with themselves. The group will have a better sense of cohesiveness, or "community" at this point. This is my favorite stage!

- D. **Final Stage-** This is the stage where termination should be discussed with the group members. They can share their feelings of loss and separation and dealing with unfinished business with other members. The leaders may teach the members how to implement the lessons learned in group into their daily lives, and to set the goals to get to there. The last session should also focus on a review of what happened in group, as well as allowing members to summarize their experience in the group.

2. Initial Stage Challenges

- A. Building trust. B. Dealing with initial resistance.

Transition Stage Challenges

- A. Dealing with conflict between members. B. Leaders being challenged by group members.

Working Stage Challenges

- A. Monitoring reasons for using specific intervention techniques. B. Facilitating and exploring the issues that emerge from the interactions between members.

Final Stage Challenges

- A. Dealing with unfinished work between members. B. Dealing with separation.