

Group Formation & Development

Group is SOT's Primary Modality

- Human species is social, healthy in community; dysfunctional in isolation
- Offenses are committed in isolation & result in stigmatization
- Group is the prosocial context to heal/managed antisocial offenses

Groups are separate entities each with its own culture

- Culture trumps strategy every time – power of group is in its culture
- Strategy is our treatment plans, company policies, intake paperwork, curriculum, evaluations, risk assessments and the like, including what I'm talking about today. All this is our strategy. Essential and less power than culture.
- Culture: common identity with shared language, values, beliefs, attitudes, goals and behavior. Culture is the experience of the client that shows up in the room.
- Cultures range from high to low context: we deal with low context.
- Culture happens no matter what

SOT groups have a clear purpose.

- Safer communities through lowered risk
- Contain/reduce progression to offenses
- Self-awareness, self-management, self-regulation
- Unique healing opportunity: answers a yearning in these men for social connection with positive regard

SOT groups have unique qualities and challenges.

- Involuntary: men are there under threat of incarceration and required to address a very private, secret and shameful aspect of their life.
- Dangerous to speak up: crime is one they would have been killed for talking about the month before when in prison, now being asked to talk about openly with strangers they may see in prison next week.
- Collaborative with POs so information revealed in group is shared and used by the containment team
- Use of polygraph to check on truthfulness

Unique Qualities (cont.)

- Group is continually faced with risk of clients reoffending
- Toxic material brought in: traumatic lives, traumatic crimes
- Toxicity of prison culture brought into room
- Ambiguity inherent in our work: we never really know the truth of the matter of what was done and what the impact was. Nor our impact.

Our Job

- Given all this, our job is to influence the creation and maintenance of healthy therapeutic group cultures so that the group purpose is accomplished consistently.
- Healthy culture is what accomplishes the purpose. Makes our job easy.

Qualities of a Healthy Group Culture

(From my POV)

- Accepts what is: mandated containment and all it brings: group, supervision, polygraph, conditions of release boundaries.
- Takes responsibility for starting with what they have, not focusing on what they don't have.
- Willing to put it "on the table" in order to learn and grow
- Positivity to Negativity ratio is at least 3 to 1.
- Attitude: we're in it together and willing to support each other

More Healthy Qualities (from my POV)

- Willing to do the work required by the curriculum
- Open, truthful, self-aware, expressive, connected, interactive, engaged, creative and with a sense of humor
- Willing to make and abide by agreements that create trust
- Willing to be courageous and challenge self and others to change, especially when it's difficult

Qualities of Healthy Culture (Client's POV)

- Listened to, understood and respected
- Group focuses and works on relevant topics
- Group/Therapist approach fits client's style
- Overall feeling “right” about experience

Qualities of Unhealthy Culture (My POV)

- Blame, defend, stonewall & contempt are the primary communication styles
- Denies, avoids, hides and attacks what is.
- Attitudes of entitlement, victim stance, antisocial
- Ratio of Positive to Negative interactions is less than 3 to 1
- Fear based interactions have shut learning down - lots of pretending, surface compliance and false fronts.
- Heavy or dead emotional field much of the time
- Putting it “on the table” to prove how wrongly they’ve been treated, not to learn and grow

Unhealthy Qualities (client's POV)

- Ignored, misunderstood & disrespected
- Group focus and work is irrelevant
- Therapist/Group's approach clashes with client
- Overall feeling of “wrongness” leaving the group

So How Do We Do This?

Helpful Core Beliefs

- Hold a belief that each human being has aspects that are naturally creative, resourceful and whole.
- That we as humans are always yearning for the light with some measure of goodness in our hearts and capable of healing, growing and learning to manage our lives well.

More Helpful Core Beliefs

- Our clients are human being first and always.
- “Sex offender” is a label, not who a person is.
- It’s a description of a destructive and criminal behavior.
- Who a person IS is always greater than any label put on him.
- We are not defined by our actions.
- This distinction is critical in our work.

More Helpful Core Beliefs

- We do not do this alone. We work as a team member, in community with others. Remember the team.
- Continually find and focus on your “High Ground”. What are your core values in doing this work? Your highest beliefs and purpose. The legacy you want to leave?

Accept the mess

Accept the messiness
of group treatment
and be willing to dance
with it.

Have (or Develop) a Sense of Humor

- Use play and laughter as your allies
- Nothing heals like a good belly laugh
- Especially about “serious matters”.
- Hold it all lightly
- Know your boundaries and stay within them
- If you aren’t having fun, quit this work today
- If you don’t love it, don’t do it

Assume a Leadership Role

- It's a dance of:
 - using your personal and professional authority & wisdom and
 - your containment & supervision team's authority & wisdom
 - to guide and empower the group culture to engage the men in treatment process

Map of the Stages of Group Development

(Tuckman 1965, Curphy 1999 – 2004)

- **Form:** identify the purpose and determine what talents in the group
- **Storm:** get buy-in, levels of commitment to the work, beginning of group identity
- **Norm:** set the rules, roles and responsibilities, how group will run, work on positivity factors especially hope, culture takes shape and is empowered
- **Perform:** doing the work that gets the results, accomplishes the purpose, culture at work, group becomes a resource for all members
- Groups always cycling thru these phases and working on the tasks

Stages of Change (Prochaska & DiClemente)

- Precontemplation: no change needed
- Contemplation: thinking about a change
- Preparation: small steps to the starting line
- Action: stepped across the line & doing it
- Maintenance: making a habit of it
- Termination: done with it

Stages of Learning

- Unconscious Incompetence
- Conscious Incompetence
- Conscious Competence
- Unconscious Competence

Group Structure Builds Trust

- Build a group structure that you follow consistently
- Set & maintain clear boundaries
- Let the group know what to expect: informed consent, all the papers they sign explained.
- Consistent responses when boundaries are crossed, rules broken, etc.
- Celebrate accomplishments

Group Structure

- **Beginning** on time: opening ritual
- **Logistics** time: money, attendance, sign in sheets, scheduling, policy, etc.
- **Check in** so each man has opportunity to put his voice into the mix and get present to the group or indicate the lack of presence
- **Middle**: central focus, presentations, the work of SOT
- **Ending** on time: You can use a ritual like quick go around: what did you learn today?

Check In Questions

- What emotions are here today? Each man describes his present time feeling in 1 to 3 words
- What are you noticing yourself thinking right now about _____?
- Which of you needs to use the group as a resource to prevent yourself from crossing a boundary that will hurt you or someone else? Or to deal with a boundary you have already crossed and need to repair or recover from?
- If you were to use the group today to improve some aspect of your personal life, how would you use it? What would you focus on?
- What are you not talking about in group? What don't you want the group to know about you?
- What was the thinking you used to commit your offense? What gave you permission to cross the boundary?
- What triggers you into a negative reaction? Risky emotional states?
- Specific questions with short answers are necessary so every man can respond in a timely way.

Ritual Possibilities

Introductions,

- Name, hometown, favorite meal, crime description, two qualities you love & appreciate about self, one contribution you bring to group, one benefit you get from group, welcome...

Completions

- What learned, what wanted more of/less of, how you plan to use it in life, advice to newer members.

Transitions (violations)

- Disclosure when abrupt departure,
- Story & learning upon return

Group Structure

You can relate everything to
RULE & RNR learning points.

“What does this have to do with
reducing the risk of you
committing a sexual offence?”

Group Agreements Build Trust

- Separate from CPC official rules
- This is generated from the group in their own words
- Weave it into the structure over time
- Example of written agreement from CDCR #2
Group follows:

- **Group Agreements**

- Work in Progress

- 12/8/2010

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- **What do I want to get from this group?**

- Insight into myself, to grow, to be aware of when I'm triggered and putting myself at risk

- Useful tools to further my career

- Know myself so I can live a fulfilled life

- Strategies how to control situations so that I can live a productive life

- Wisdom, knowledge & understanding coming from each person

- Learn effective communication: a balance of listening & speaking

- General curriculum and individualized treatment plans

- Change and better myself

- Learn patience and empathy

- Fully understand why I committed the crime and to have the comfort with myself of knowing I will not reoffend

- Stop depreciating myself

- Understanding why I did what I did

- Forgive myself

- Curriculum with weird questions that make you think

- How to make sure I never do it again

- Explore what was going through my mind at the time of the crime

- To learn how to forgive myself for what I've done

- To know what tools to use, and when, to prevent an offense

- To incorporate the learning from the group into our everyday lives to become who we want to be, who we really are, to know where we went wrong and to build on our strengths to create fulfilling lives.

- **What's the experience I want to have along the way?**

- Non judgmental
- Respectful
- Healthy relationships
- Positive atmosphere
- Effective communication
- Patience and empathy
- Experience delayed gratification
- Honesty - 100% truth telling and challenges to non-truth telling
- Good feedback
- Challenge one another to know and tell the truth
- Hold each other accountable for lateness, facts, truth
- Know the truth
- Take the risk necessary to dealing with the issues that bring us here
- Be willing to risk to get honest, real, to the bare bones of the what, how and why it happened
- Empathy for the differences and diversity of the group members' upbringing, backgrounds and crimes
- Understanding of what someone was going through that contributed to the commission of a crime
- Listening to understand
- Empathy instead of judgments – see yourself in the other person's shoes
- Listen with compassion
- Aware that we have a lot stacked against us, build up and support each other, help each other in the face of an unforgiving society
- Focus on strengths; change how we look at ourselves from negative to positive
- Get stronger with each other
- No BS rescuing - no "making it ok".
- Acknowledge the areas where we went wrong and build up where we are right as well. Prepare for what lies ahead.

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- **What are the agreements that will make this possible?**
- Full attention
- No interrupting until a person is completely finished
- Last 5 minutes for summing up by CK or others
- Let's just get along
- Strive to come out a better person, to learn
- Permission to challenge each other's untruths so that we speak the truth and stop the BS
- Challenge self-depreciation
- Manners, politeness, respect
- Everyone gets a chance to talk
- To do the work I need to do in the group, no matter what

- **Group Agreements**
- Work in Progress
- 12/22/2010
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- **Group Agreements**
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- To do the work I need to do in the group, no matter what
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- Useful tools to further my career
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- Aware that we have a lot stacked against us, build up and support each other, help each other in the face of an unforgiving society
-
- Accountability
-
- Stop rescuing and allow the process
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- Since we are all human, we understand that our agreements will be broken from time to time: when they are broken, we agree to:
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- explore the circumstances of the breach on an individual basis
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- with the intention of learning, repairing and doing what it takes to return to integrity.

Group Agreements of the 10 AM Wed/Fri Group

- I agree to:
- HOLD group confidentiality on the street - I do not talk about any other man's issues or even acknowledge his membership in the group without his permission.
- CO-CREATE a safe and courageous space so that I talk about what's important.
- BE honest – to keep it 100% truth telling and to challenge any non-truth telling.
- BE responsible and held accountable for my judgments.
- HAVE the courage to talk about difficult matters from my heart.
- TAKE full responsibility for my legal convictions and for dealing with the story in my official records.
- UNDERSTAND, to the best of my ability, why I committed the sexual offense/s and to change and better myself.
- CONTINUALLY shift my thinking and emotions from negativity into positivity.
- CULTIVATE patience and empathy within myself.
- BE held accountable for my behaviors, actions, attitudes, thoughts, words, feelings and the results they bring.
- STOP rescuing and allow the process.

Group Agreements of the 10 AM Wed/Fri Group

- ACCEPT that I am human and may sometimes break these agreements and, if I do break any of these agreements, I will:
 - Explore the circumstances of the breach,
 - Examine the magnitude of the breach,
 - Hold myself accountable,
 - Confront myself to restore integrity & harmony to the group,
 - And if I am initially unwilling to do this, I give the other group members permission to challenge and support me to do it.
- GAIN confidence in myself to know I will not reoffend.
- INCORPORATE the learning from this group into my everyday life so that I:
 - Know where I went wrong,
 - Know who I really am,
 - Gain useful tools for living,
 - Become who I want to be,
 - Live a fulfilling life.
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- My signature below indicates my commitment to abide by these agreements.

Questions for the Unwritten Agreements

- What does it take to contain sexual offending behaviors? How do you men want to do this?
- What will it take to build trust in this group?
- What do you want to get from this group?
- What is the experience you want to have along the way?
- What are the agreements that will make that possible?
- How do you want to deal with conflict? Mistakes? Broken agreements? Betrayal of trust? Confidentiality breaches?

Remember you are a team member

- Use the containment team to manage resistance and risk that is outside your scope. Design this with team and group.
- Use supervision well
- Use the containment team to support the learning and growth of the whole group.

So What Do We Have Now?

- Helpful Core Beliefs
- Accept the mess
- Sense of Humor
- Leadership
- Team
- Maps
- Structure
- Agreements

One last reminder

Excellent self-care is
essential for you to do

or

none of this will happen.