**AGPA Connect 2023 Presenter Information**

**Course Code:** 301

**Course Title:** “Ouch. I Wish I Had(n’t) Said that!”: Common Group Therapist Mistakes and How To Repair Them

**Course Times:** 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM

**Course Dates:** Thursday, March 9

**Instructors:** Aziza Belcher-Platt

Oona Metz

Jan Morris

Joseph Shay

**Course Description:** All group therapists make mistakes. Some are minor, some major; some by commission, some by omission; some in reaction to the behavior of members, some arising from the workings of our unconscious. Mistakes are inevitable as are ruptures that ensue. Therapists can be mis attuned, unknowledgeable, racially or culturally insensitive, or aggressive (micro- and macro). But, repairing these mistakes can be very beneficial for the group. Using video clips, we will explore the genesis of common mistakes and skillful ways to repair them.

**Learning Objectives**

The attendee will be able to:‎

1. ‎Detect errors made by the group leader (or group members) that may result from anxiety, ‎reactivity, aggression, misattunement, or other factors.‎
2. Identify therapist vulnerabilities that may lead to making mistakes.‎
3. Describe skillful group leader interventions to avoid errors or to address and repair them once ‎recognized..‎

**Significant Articles:**

1. Chang-Caffaro, S., & Caffaro, J. (2018). Differences that make a difference: Diversity and the process ‎group leader. International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 68, 483-497.‎
2. Lefforge, N.L., Mclaughlin, S., Goates-Jones, M., & Mejia, C. (2020) A training model for addressing ‎microaggressions in group psychotherapy. International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 70, 1-28.‎
3. Miles, J. R., Anders, C., Kivlighan III, D. M., & Belcher Platt, A. A. (2021). Cultural ruptures: Addressing ‎microaggressions in group therapy. Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 25(1), 74.‎
4. Morris, J. Cinderella, The Wicked Queen, and Glinda walk into a group: Countertransference resistance ‎and the female group leader. (2021). In Y.I. Kane, S. Masselink & A. Weiss, Women, intersectionality ‎and power in group psychotherapylLeadership. NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
5. Rutan, J. S. (2021). Rupture and repair: Using leader errors in psychodynamic group psychotherapy. ‎International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 71, 310-331.‎‎

**Agenda:**

I. Introduction (10 minutes; Obj 1,2, Shay)

A. Introduction with respect to goal and plan

II: Clips of experiences of therapists errors in groups (5 minutes: Obj 1, 2, Shay/A-V)

A. Show 5 minutes of video of group therapists making interventions that create rupture rather than progress

III. Explication of common errors made by group therapists (30 minutes: Obj 1,2,3 (Belcher-Platt, Metz, Morris)

A. Brief explication of common mistakes made by group therapists (10 minutes each)

1. Aziza Belcher-Platt--Often, group therapists' common errors start outside of the group in preparation and knowledge or lack thereof. We are often well-trained in group therapy concepts and implementation and often well-practiced in the dynamics of group therapy but less well-learned and well-versed in addressing aspects of identity and dynamics of social oppression within our groups. Similarly, while many group therapists are aware of societal inequities and subscribe to the social microcosm theory of groups, they fail to address the replication of those inequities in their groups or integrate social justice in their interventions. Additionally, group therapists may struggle to integrate social justice into their theoretical orientation. In fact, some question the integration of social justice as a value imposition while failing to recognize the lack of social justice is a value imposition, an endorsement of the status quo in fact. Thus, these errors in preparation lead to errors in implementation. That is, creating group norms and culture that ignore identity and related interactions; missing aggressions and ruptures; and struggling to respond therapeutically or failing to respond at all. Moreover, group therapists are often reluctant to address ruptures related to culture due to their own insecurities, perfectionistic tendencies, or desires for finality. However, addressing ruptures to the best of one's knowledge and ability, acknowledging one's own limitations, and supporting ongoing work in exploration and repair is not only powerful intervention but potent modeling for members in how to contribute to an anti-oppressive group culture.

2. Oona Metz— Saying Hello and saying Goodbye in group therapy provide important opportunities that can foster individual growth, group cohesion and group culture. How the therapist (and the group members) handle these moments can either promote growth or can serve as an unhealthy repetition. We will discuss some common leader errors in this process and how to avoid them.

3. Jan Morris— Therapist errors often stem from what Rosenthal (1987) termed "countertransference resistance" that is, those feelings, attitudes, and reactions that stem from the therapist's personal history, as well as from cultural attitudes and biases, incomplete training, the desire to be liked and to have a happy group-family, and over-identification with group members. All of these factors can hinder the group leader's freedom to think and feel everything and respond in the best therapeutic interests of the group and its individual members. Group leaders' errors also present opportunities for growth and deeper understanding for group members and the group as a whole.

IV. Clinical examples of difficult moments in group therapy that result in therapist errors or opportunities for error (15 minutes: Obj 1,2 Shay/A-V)

A. Provide 3 examples with videos of group interactions that lead to therapist errors

V. In-depth examination of clinical examples provided in IV (45 minutes: Obj 1,2,3 Belcher-Platt, Metz, Morris) All 3 panelists will take turns addressing the following questions related to the clinical examples and clips shown in section IV

A. What are group members or the therapist doing that might be injuring other members?

B. How might this be destructive to the group?

C. What can the therapist do to repair this situation?

D. What therapeutic opportunities lie in the identification and repair of empathic errors?

VI. Questions from audience and discussion (40 minutes)

VII. Evaluation period (5 minutes)

**Assessment Questions:**

Question 1 (include possible answers)

1. The group leader who criticizes a group member for arriving late could be said to be a) Acting on a complementary countertransference feeling b) Caught in the throes of a countertransference resistance c) Responding to subjective countertransference d) All of the above

Correct Answer 1

d

Question 2 (include possible answers)

2. A common source of countertransference resistance is a) The need to be liked b) Reactions to challenges to authority c) The need for a happy family d) All of the above

Correct Answer 2

d

Question 3 (include possible answers)

3. For optimal group functioning, group members leaving a group must a) Give no notice b) Give 6 months notice c) Allow the group to decide when they leave d) None of the above.

Correct Answer 3

d

Question 4 (include possible answers)

4. Therapists tend to make mistakes a) When they are new to practice b) When they are experienced c) When they don’t attend trainings d) All of the above

Correct Answer 4

d

Question 5 (include possible answers)

5. When a therapist makes an error in a group they should a) Ignore it and hope the group does too b) Apologize profusely c) Take responsibility and explore its impact and meaning d) All of the above

Correct Answer 5

c

Question 6 (include possible answers)

6. Group members can learn about themselves in a group a) In the first session b) In the last session c) When they experience a rupture and repair d) All of the above

Correct Answer 6

d

Question 7 (include possible answers)

Given that groups are a social microcosm, what dynamic(s) macrocosm dynamics are possible within groups? a) Recreating dynamic of privilege and social dominance b) Marginalization of members with marginalized identities c) Prejudiced (contemptuous) intergroup engagement d) Minority group social stratification

Correct Answer 7

d

Question 8 (include possible answers)

Which of these is not a fallacy about group therapists, ruptures, and repair?: a) The group therapist is an infallible expert in that issue of identity b) The group therapist always has the perfect words to facilitate the repair c) The group therapist is able to use their knowledge, own their limitations, and intervene to the best of their ability d) The group therapist serves as a flawless role model for the group on never committing a rupture

Correct Answer 8

c

Question 9 (include possible answers)

Repair of ruptures, cultural or otherwise, should be a) Initiated in the session in which they occur and left alone thereafter b) Initiated as soon possible and continue as long as necessary c) Initiated only if members bring it up and continue only as long as the group therapist can tolerate it d) all of the above

Correct Answer 9

b

Question 10 (include possible answers)

(T/F) If group therapists intervene rapidly during injurious exchanges between group members, they can protect all group members from feeling emotionally injured

Correct Answer 10

False