

Group Therapy FAQ

Q: How many people will be there? Who will be there?

A: Each group typically includes 5-6 members and 1-2 facilitator(s) who work at Personal Counseling. We like to have a maximum of 8 members in any given group so there are enough opportunities for each person to share.

Q: What typically happens in the first session?

A: Typically, the facilitator(s) will review some group guidelines (e.g., discussing confidentiality, attendance) and have introductions. Members may be asked to say their name and their reasons/hopes for attending group. Often, a couple members will spend additional time sharing some of their recent concerns. Additionally, the first session is a good time for members to ask any remaining questions about the group process.

Q: What will I be expected to talk about? What if I don't feel like talking, or if I'm slow to open up?

A: Group is meant to be a safe space to discuss a range of concerns. For example, just because someone is in a group focused on eating disorders doesn't mean they can't talk about their relationships. Additionally, we want group members to have agency to decide whether or not they want to share. Some group members don't speak for the first several sessions, and any group member can always "pass" if they feel uncomfortable and/or do not want to speak. However, while members who are relatively quiet can receive some benefits, individuals are likely to get more out of group if they express their own concerns and get feedback from other members.

Q: How many sessions do I need to commit to?

A: We generally ask group members to commit to attending at least 4 sessions. This is to help each person discern what benefits they may get from group, and is also important for helping the group feel consistent and safe for all members. Generally, members continue in the group for an entire semester.

Q: Is group therapy effective?

A: Research shows that group therapy is *at least* as effective as individual therapy. It's also an opportunity to both give and receive support and feedback with peers who likely have similar concerns. You may even find that you actually receive more feedback (and from a larger number of people) than you do in individual therapy.

Q: I feel nervous about going to group. Should I still go?

A: Most group members are nervous before their first session, and it can be incredibly difficult to join a group and take risks in sharing with others. Often once people begin attending sessions, their anxiety around it gradually lowers and they start voicing their concerns to the group at a pace that feels comfortable. If you find that this is not the case for you, you can talk with your individual therapist or one of the group's co-facilitators about your discomfort.

Q: Do I need to come every week?

A: We ask that members commit to attending every week, though we do understand that occasionally members may have to miss a session for a variety of reasons. If this arises, just contact one or both of your group's co-facilitators to let them know ahead of time.

Q: How long does the group last?

A: The majority of groups last 1 semester. However, students are eligible for ongoing group therapy and may join another group after the semester ends if appropriate.

Q: Is group therapy confidential?

A: The group's facilitators are ethically and legally required to keep your information confidential (exceptions being when there seems to be imminent danger to yourself and/or others, or child/elder abuse). We also ask that group members keep all information discussed in the group confidential, meaning that members may not discuss identifying information or reactions of members. You can, however, talk about your own *personal* experience in the group.

Q: Will I fit in with the group? Will others have similar problems as me?

A: While it cannot be guaranteed that others will have similar problems or that you will feel you fit, often times members are surprised by how connected they become to the rest of the group. Regardless, group therapy is an opportunity to give and receive feedback, as well as better understand yourself and others.

Q: Will group therapy be like what I saw in [insert movie or TV show]?

A: Maybe, but probably not. It may be a smaller group than what you have seen in the media, and group members also tend to feel more connected with one another than what you might see on TV. Please ask your individual therapist or one of the group's co-facilitators if you have specific questions about what group will be like.