

Yalom's 'Therapeutic Factors' or Beneficial Experiences related to belonging to a group

Although Irvin Yalom used these Therapeutic Factors to describe the power of *group psychotherapy*, they can be related to range of groups that we might belong to or facilitate.

Think for a moment about how these therapeutic factors might apply to: a social group of friends; a musical group of performers; an art therapy group; a community sports team; a group of adults learning a new language.

- **Installation of Hope:** hope itself is therapeutic; seeing other group members do well can lift hope within the group; facilitators can 'hold hope' for group members until they are able to build hope.
- **Universality:** Powerful sense of relief to know that we are not alone; decreases sense of shame and isolation.
- **Imparting Information:** Helps to inform and empower people with knowledge and information about their situation; groups members may give and receive advice and information within the group.
- **Altruism:** Restores meaning and purpose to be able to support and honour the inherent value and dignity in others; Group members may be more willing to receive help from each other than from group facilitators.
- **The Corrective Recapitulation of the Primary Family Group:** A group can resemble elements of family, including family relationships; all healing happens within the safety of safe, connected relationships; relationships of safety and trust within and between group members can be restorative and comforting.
- **Development of Socializing Techniques:** Group members may grow their capacity to build relationships of safety and trust; Group relationships may promote development of prosocial behaviours, acceptance of others, empathy for others and a range of interpersonal skills.
- **Imitative behavior:** Group members may learn coping strategies from each other; Group members learn to hear and appreciate the perspectives of other group members.
- **Interpersonal Learning:** Group members learn how to develop supportive interpersonal relationships; the group becomes a community within which interpersonal communication and reciprocal relationships can grow.
- **Group Cohesiveness:** As connections between group members deepen, acceptance or self and other grows; Sense of acceptance, belonging, value and security grows.

- **Catharsis:** Group can become a space to safely ventilate or express strong emotions; Experience of being accepted by the group even when struggling with strong emotions can be healing.
- **Existential Factors:** Group may become a space where people make meaning of collective experiences, including pain, death, sadness, regret, shame and joy.

Not all groups will facilitate all of these therapeutic factors.

Can you think of some examples of groups you have been part of or groups you have facilitated where some of these factors were not present?

Can you relate each of these factors to the principles of trauma responsive practice that we have explored today?

