

Levels of Focus in Group Counseling

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When considering what you as the leader should focus on in group, there are three dimensions of focus usually referred to in the literature:

*Personal focus

*Dyadic focus, meaning an exchange between two persons

*Group-level focus

Personal focus. If you are trained in individual counseling techniques, you will know how to focus on the personal dimension. You will ask questions such as "What are you feeling?" "What is going on inside you right now?" and similar introspective questions. Counselors who are trained in individual, but not group, will typically focus a lot on the personal dimension.

Dyadic focus. This dimension involves interactions between two members, or between the leader and a member. You will ask questions, such as "What would like to say to Jane right now?" And you will make statements such as, "Tell me what you would like me to do differently," or "Let Jack know what you want from him." This dimension is under-utilized by many group leaders, because it brings a lot of feelings and tensions to the surface. It takes courage to facilitate this kind of encounter between members, but the payoff is considerable.

Group level focus. This dimension concerns the overall functioning of the group. We all have heard, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." At this level of focus, you need to ask questions such as, "What is happening in our group right now?" or "What kind of agreement do you all think we need to have about that?" Such questions invite responses from any member, and are not directed at anyone in particular. Statements such as, "I believe our group is getting too comfortable." or "What are you all willing to do about this?" challenges the group to see itself as a unit, and to work together as one.