

WHO CAN BE HELPED BY VPA GROUP THERAPY?

At VPA we offer a wide variety of groups specifically targeted toward a variety of life's challenges. For example, our adolescent groups explore diverse aspects of identity, managing anger & stress and other common challenges faced in these years. We have other groups for children, women and men collaboratively, parents and more.

IF I AM IN INDIVIDUAL THERAPY, SHOULD I STILL JOIN A GROUP?

The right group can work as an excellent adjunct to the work of individual therapy. Our doctors welcome the chance to work with your therapist in a way that provides mutual support for your individual therapy. The leader of your group will, with your permission, work with your therapist to develop a suitable collaborative plan.

HOW WILL TALKING ABOUT MY PROBLEMS WITH OTHER PEOPLE BE HELPFUL TO ME?

All of us function in groups in one situation or another. Whether it be at work, school, family or kids just "hanging out," everyone has participated in one group or another. Remember that without even realizing it you have already been involved in a variety of groups. Even if you are uneasy at first, you will, with the help of the leader and the sharing of the group, become more comfortable after a few meetings as you get acclimated to the group experience.

Think of a therapy group as a sort of "social laboratory," but one that is specifically designed to help find support and try out new ideas and behaviors.

For example, some people are very shy in a group setting. If that's you, you might use the group to try to learn to speak up and then eventually be able to assert yourself. Or, if there's a challenging problem in your personal and/or professional life, you may find a supervised role play of the issue quite helpful in giving you ideas as to how to deal with the situation. There are many more ways in which the group can help you change. Anything is possible in a good "laboratory."

WHAT SPECIFIC SKILLS CAN I HOPE TO ACQUIRE THROUGH GROUP THERAPY?

In group therapy, we learn more about understanding our problems, overcoming challenges and becoming more empowered to deal with life's problems. With the guidance of the leader, we experience a unique opportunity to try out new skills. Soon, your group may come to feel a little like a supportive "family" to you providing you with the opportunity to practice and improve on skills that didn't have a chance to fully develop in your own family.

Depending on the focus of your group, you might improve social proficiency and enhance your problem solving. And, of course, the nurturing group environment can offer real help and practical advice, first with coping and then with healing.

VPA's groups are tailored to work with many of the issues that arise to confront people of all ages in today's challenging world. With the special sharing that takes place in group, you can get confidential comfort and compassionate support in coping with your disappointments, frustrations and fears.

Equally important is the nurturing empathy that often develops in the group.

In another type of group, the focus might be more behavioral so you can learn specific techniques to help you cope with negative feelings, anxiety, depression, etc. as you gain more confidence.

In all groups, there is much satisfaction to be gained -- not only from using the skills that you learn but from sharing your successes and triumphs with other members and having them share theirs with you.

WILL GROUP THERAPY HELP ME TO ACHIEVE MY PERSONAL GOALS? HOW?

VPA is unique in that it offers a wide variety of groups targeted to help people deal with specific problems and issues they may bring to the group. VPA and its Group Therapy program was established to provide Medfield and its surrounding communities with a center for group therapy tailored to the individual therapeutic needs of children, adolescents and adults. The various group themes are derived from the identified needs of the community.

Each group is customized to address a specific theme or age group. Members will learn how to deal with depression, relationship issues, phobias, isolation or a number of other problems. Most participants begin to feel better soon after joining. As they learn about themselves they make real changes in their quality of life by enhancing their relationships, becoming more productive at work, as well as many other ways.

ISN'T TALKING ABOUT MY PROBLEMS GOING TO MAKE ME FEEL WORSE THAN I ALREADY DO?

This is an unlikely. If this should happen, you will be able to explore this reaction in the group. We all have experienced hesitation and discomfort; the group environment is unique in that both the leader and other group members are there to support you. You'll be able to address and explore such reservations in the meeting you have with one of our staff BEFORE you join the group.

Some people worry that when they hear about something especially sad or frightening in the group they will become more depressed or blue. Again, this is a group issue and your leader will allow time to explore such feelings in the group. And, if this persists, you can always call or e-mail us.

Our experience, however, is that under the guidance of an effective leader, such feelings are usually temporary. The empathy, support and nurturance that are generated in a group will enable you to deal with such feelings in a comfortable and healthful way.

WHAT IF I DON'T GET ALONG WITH THE OTHER GROUP MEMBERS?

Because of the extensive pre-group screening process provided by VPA, this is unlikely. In group therapy, group members meet regularly (usually once a week) under the leadership of a trained psychotherapist. In the group, whose participants have been carefully screened to make sure they will "fit" with each other, members learn to help themselves and each other.

However, if such a problem does occur, as it is normal for differences to surface in everyday interactions, the group environment is the perfect setting to explore how you feel about it, why this is happening, and how you can work through it. Remember to think of the group as a sort of "social laboratory," one that is specifically designed to help you find support and try out new ideas and behaviors in the safety and comfort of the group milieu.

You'll also experience the enjoyment of being able to share your successes and triumphs, large and small with like-minded people. Most group members find great satisfaction in the support that is gained for their struggle to achieve positive goals.

The following are examples of the positive skills you might develop as a result of belonging to a VPA group:

- How to be more assertive
- Ways of speaking up for yourself
- Improving your communication skills
- Working through challenging situations
- How to be more confident
- Practical information and resources
- The satisfaction of being able to help someone else
- The fulfillment to be gained by learning how to accept help from others

IF I WAS IN INDIVIDUAL THERAPY IN THE PAST, IS GROUP THERAPY GOING TO BENEFIT ME?

Group therapy can help you build on the skills and insights you have gained from individual therapy in the setting of a "social laboratory." It is an excellent "next step" for you to take because it helps you to further improve on interpersonal skills. And, with your permission, your group leader will call the therapist you saw to gain appropriate background information. If you are currently in individual therapy, the leader will collaborate with your therapist to develop an appropriate plan for your group therapy experience.