American Group Psychotherapy Association Friday February 26, 2016
4:30-6:00 PM
Open Session 217-5  Ethical Dilemmas in Group Therapy: Leader and Member Perspectives
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Description
Group therapists are routinely faced with ethical dilemmas in their practice. These concerns are multifaceted and best viewed as an intersubjective process that involves leader countertransference, individual members, subgroups and the group as a whole. A cognitive frame for problem identification through intervention is presented and applied to participant experiences.

Objectives
1. Define ethical dilemma in context of group therapy.
2. Identify intersubjective and countertransference elements of ethical dilemmas in group therapy.
3. Create leader strategies to intervene around ethical dilemmas in group therapy.

4:30-4:40 PM INTRODUCTION – discussion
Introductions, ground rules, objectives, process and content for workshop. (10 minutes)

4:40-5:10 PM THEORETICAL DISCUSSION- discussion with handouts, Q&A
Theoretical remarks on ethical dilemmas in group therapy: When does one exist? What are guiding ethical principles? What are the intersecting and intersubjective elements, i.e., leader countertransference, members, group as a whole and subgroups. (30 minutes)

5:10-5:30 PM GROUP DISCUSSION- open discussion
Participant group discussion of ethical dilemmas in their work as a group therapist, educator, or supervisor. Ethical dilemmas in participant experiences and those found in the literature will be explored. Concerns will cover issues such as dual relationships, money, confidentiality, ending a group, informed consent, and record keeping. (20 minutes)

5:30-5:50 AM THEORETICAL APPLICATION- discussion and Q & A
Apply Bailey & Schwartzberg reasoning strategy for addressing identified ethical dilemmas in group therapy. Open discussion and application to cases discussed and participants’ work. (20 minutes)

5:50-6:00 PM PARTICIPANT EVALUATION - discussion and fill out form. (10 minutes)
What is an Ethical Dilemma?

An ethical dilemma exists when no single obvious satisfactory choice or answer is appropriate for a certain situation, or when there are only less-than-satisfactory alternatives. On the other hand, we are often faced with difficult situations involving ethical principles in which we can clearly see how we should and should not respond. At these moments, although we might struggle to respond in the “right” manner. These are not considered ethical dilemmas because there is a “right” response. In the true ethical dilemma, all responses are considered at least partly “wrong” or less than satisfactory by some of the participants.

Ethical Principles Guiding Moral Action: What Ethical Principles are Relevant to Group Therapists? (From: Bailey & Schwartzberg, 2003, p. 5) (See Professional Bodies Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Relevance)

- Principle of Beneficence: “Health professionals have the duty to act for the client’s good”
- Principle of Nonmaleficence: “Above all, do no harm”
- Principle of Utility: “Behave in ways resulting in in the greatest benefit and the least harm”
- Principle of Noncomparative Justice: “People receive that to which they are entitled”
- Principle of Comparative Justice: “The application of laws and rules to the distribution of burdens and benefits”
- Principle of Distributive Justice: “Is everyone entitled to receive healthcare benefits, and, if so, is everyone entitled to the same amount?”
- Principle of Equality: “All benefits and burdens are to be distributed equally”
- Principle of Need: “Goods are parceled out according to individual need; those with greater needs receive a larger portion”
- Principle of Contribution: “Everyone should get back goods in proportion to the amount of his or her productive labor”
• Principle of Effort: “The degree of effort made by the individual should be rewarded by a similar amount of goods”

• Principle of Autonomy: “Rational human beings have the right to be self-determining”

**Bailey and Schwartzberg Reasoning Strategy** (Bailey & Schwartzberg, 2003; Using the Kyler-Hutchison format)

1. Who are the players in the dilemma?

2. What other information is needed?

3. What actions may be taken?

4. What are the possible consequences?

5. Choose and action you can defend.

**References**


International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes (IAGP). Ethical Guidelines. [http://www.iagp.com/about/ethicalguidelines.htm](http://www.iagp.com/about/ethicalguidelines.htm)
