Ten Strategies
to Intentionally Use Group Work to
Transform Hate, Facilitate Courageous Conversations, and Enhance Community Building

ASGW

Association for Specialists in Group Work
A division of the American Counseling Association

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INTRODUCTION

Given the current sociopolitical climate in the United States, it is more critical than ever for helping professionals to advocate, foster, and support the promotion of diversity, equity, inclusion, and acceptance. Group workers, in particular, have a unique opportunity to facilitate these efforts with group members, colleagues, and communities to implement culturally responsive practices, increase cultural sensitivity and humility, and enact points of activism, community organizing, and social action. The evolution of an agenda of social justice, specifically within group work, has involved a longstanding history to ultimately interrupt social conditions producing barriers, disenfranchisement, and marginalization. As Singh and Salazar (2010) described, some of the earliest group modalities were driven by social justice change such as immigrant healthcare and support groups (e.g., Hull House) and consciousness-raising groups (e.g., feminist and civil rights groups). Group work integrates an environment for praxis slanted towards both reflection and action for the goal of humanizing communities.

Group work converges upon multiple helping professions, most prominently within the realm of counseling. Opportunities for facilitating various types of groups within helping professions and other disciplines are boundless, necessitating a need for training that spans the breadth of multicultural sensitivity and competence, social justice, advocacy, and the facilitative skill set required for effectively fostering challenging conversations and culturally responsive practices. Although group work operates as a transdisciplinary practice, the established methods emanate from a strong foundation in the counseling profession. The practice of group work institutes a systematic set of principles heavily influenced by guiding documents encompassing standards and competencies. These guiding documents are steeped in best practices, contemporary critical thinking, professional values, and state-of-the-art research. Standards generate a baseline set of guidelines for practitioners to follow, and competencies fulfill the goal of best practices and aspirational ethics to ensure practitioners and group workers aim for standards of excellence. Recently, a wide body of conceptual and empirical literature has continued to broaden the implications of guiding documents to formulate points of departure for practitioners, educators, and researchers. This movement also meets the fierce urgency to revolutionize and bridge values and principles of multiculturalism and social justice with the intention of amplifying the voices of historically marginalized communities.

PURPOSE

In alignment with the development and expansion of the guiding principles, the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) offers *Ten Strategies to Intentionally Use Group Work to Transform Hate, Facilitate Courageous Conversations, and Enhance Community Building*. These ten strategies provide a platform dedicated to equity, multiculturalism, and social justice. Group workers can utilize these methods and resources as they strive to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion among group members. The ten strategies can be integrated into all facets of group work practice and customized to a specific group, member, and setting. The techniques can be applied to a single homogeneous/heterogeneous group or to a broader systemic level involving multiple groups/systems. Additionally, the ten strategies provide a roadmap for group workers to navigate the complex process of unifying diverse individuals in a way that celebrates their commonalities as well as their differences while fostering sometimes difficult conversations in group settings. To increase its accessibility, this document provides a conglomeration of fundamental influences, explanations of guiding principles, and examples to incorporate into the practice of group work.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The ten strategies for using group work to transform hate, facilitate courageous conversations, and enhance community building emerge primarily from the guiding principles set forth in the following documents: American Counseling Association *2014 ACA Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014); ACA *Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies* (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015); and ASGW *Multicultural and Social Justice Competence Principles for Group Workers* (Singh, Merchant, Skudrzyk, & Ingene, 2012). Further, the ten strategies may be most effectively utilized in clinical and academic arenas in conjunction with additional guiding documents such as the ACA *Advocacy Competencies* (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003); ACA *Competencies for Counseling the Multiracial Population* (Kenney et al., 2015); ASGW *Best Practice Guidelines 2007 Revisions* (Thomas & Pender, 2008); and ASGW *Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers* (Wilson, Rapin, & Haley-Bañez, 2000).

ACA Code of Ethics

The foundation of the ten strategies was shaped first by the *2014 ACA Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014). The *ACA Code of Ethics* provides a set of core professional values and principles for the practice of counseling and counselor education. These values are useful in helping to solve ethical dilemmas and assisting in the process of training and supervision. The *ACA Code of Ethics* addresses nine main areas: (a) the counseling relationship; (b) confidentiality and privacy; (c) professional responsibility; (d) relationships with other professionals; (e) evaluation, assessment, and interpretation; (f) supervision, training, and teaching; (g) research and publication; (h) distance counseling, technology, and social media; and (i) resolving ethical issues. Together with the *ACA Code of Ethics,* the ACA and its divisions have developed additional counseling competency guidelines that inform the practice of group work.

Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies

Other guiding principles influencing the design of the ten strategies include the ACA *Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies* (MSJCC; Ratts et al., 2015) framework. The developmental domains within this framework illustrate the various layers leading to multicultural and social justice competence: (a) counselor self-awareness, (b) client worldview, (c) counseling relationship, and (d) counseling and advocacy interventions. Within the first three are the aspirational competencies of attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action serving as the impetus for practitioners to develop and maintain cultural sensitivity across practices and work settings. The ten strategies in this document aim to simultaneously foster the self-awareness of group workers through their introspection, their consideration of the multiple worldviews present in any group setting, and their ability to consider the impact of the intersections across their own social positioning, location, and identities. More distinctly, the MSJCC centers a deeper reflection on privilege and oppression, where both statuses can simultaneously coexist across individuals and groups. Additionally, the ten strategies relate heavily to the fourth and newest domain in the MSJCC framework on counseling and advocacy interventions. Under this

domain, group workers will identify, develop, and implement interventions designed to help diverse members reflect internally on their own personal identities, connect interpersonally by identifying commonalities and celebrating differences, and apply their new understanding of diversity in their own communities.

Multicultural and Social Justice Competence Principles for Group Workers

Another guiding document that shaped the development of the ten strategies is the ASGW *Multicultural and Social Justice Competence Principles for Group Workers* (Singh et al., 2012). These principles provide foundational definitions for many of the constructs described in the ten strategies, including diversity, social justice, multiculturalism, social privilege, oppression, and taking action. Aligned closely with those published by the ACA, the principles embedded within the ASGW competencies provide a roadmap designed to help group workers to (a) increase awareness of self and their group members; (b) effectively plan, perform, and process culturally relevant approaches and skills; and (c) successfully promote and engage in social justice advocacy through their work. The ten strategies similarly offer an avenue for group workers to

consider in effectively preparing for, facilitating, and reflecting on collective experiences in which diverse groups of individual members participate.

Other Relevant Guiding Principles

Numerous entities and communities in the counseling profession have formed a variety of guiding documents synthesizing relevant practices for group work in conjunction with diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice. Recently, the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC) has instituted two new groups of standards pivotal to understanding the variability and diversity inherent in sexual, affectional, and gender identities. The ALGBTIC *Standards of Care in Assessment of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender Expansive, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTGEQ+) Persons* (Goodrich et al., 2017) and the ALGBTIC *Standards of Care for Research with Participants Who Identify as LGBTQ+* (Griffith et al., 2017) both signify the complexity of social identities bridged across a diversity of communities including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, affectional identity, social class, ability status, spirituality, and regional identity.

Additional documents developed and disseminated within the past ten years continue to incorporate the movements of multiculturalism and social justice as foundational layers to counseling and group work practice. These documents include ALGBTIC *Competencies for Counseling with Transgender Clients* (Burnes et al., 2009); ALGBTIC *Competencies for Counseling LGBQIQA* (Harper et al., 2012); American Psychological Association (APA) *Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality* (APA, 2017); Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) *Multicultural Counseling Competencies* (AMCD, 2015); Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) *Competencies for Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling* (ASERVIC, 2009); and National Career Development Association (NCDA) *Minimum Competencies for Multicultural Career Counseling and Development* (NCDA, 2009).

The history of the guiding documents continues to trace principles of practice dedicated to affirming and humanizing communities in an authentic and culturally responsive manner. Many of the guiding documents relevant to group work also emphasize the current nature of personal, political, and systemic influences integrated into the group process, while interactions between group members reflect a significant microcosm of social and political interactions. As a result, principles grounded in each of the guiding documents point towards an increasing attention to advocacy, changing policies and barriers, and considering power, privilege, and oppression in relationships. Synthesizing the values embedded within a group of guiding documents, including standards and competencies, brings significant attention to multiculturalism and social justice as ingrained movements in the practice of group work.

Group work is especially relevant within the systemic nature of community involved in a group and interactions resembling challenging dialogues, social location, and relationships organized into privilege and oppression. Similarly, framing multiculturalism and social justice into the praxis of group work does not exclusively consider the act of reflection and intercultural discourse, but rather, highlights the possibilities for action, bridging communities, and systemic change. Given the complex challenge of difficult conversations, group work transcends differences; leans into difficult dialogues; transforms individual, community, and political systems; and initiates community organizing, engagement, collaboration, and social action.

Though the structure of this ten strategies document differs from the guiding documents, each of the ten strategies builds upon the guiding principles. The ten strategies are specifically designed to foster in group workers an increased cultural awareness of self and others; an enhanced ability to attend to the cultural nuances inherent in any group experience at the planning, performing, and processing stages; and a foundation from which to intentionally use group work to transform hate, facilitate courageous conversations, and enhance community building.

Resource Links

ACA Guiding Documents

2014 ACA Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014)
https://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf

ACA Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts et al., 2015)
https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/competencies/multicultural-and-social-justice-counseling-competencies.pdf?sfvrsn=8573422c_20

ACA Advocacy Competencies (Lewis et al., 2003)
https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/competencies/aca-advocacy-competencies.pdf?sfvrsn=d177522c_4

ACA Competencies for Counseling the Multiracial Population (Kenney et al., 2015)
https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/competencies/competencies-for-counseling-the-multiracial-population-2-2-15-final.pdf?sfvrsn=c-7ba412c_14

ASGW Guiding Documents

ASGW Multicultural and Social Justice Competence Principles for Group Workers (Singh et al., 2012)
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/513c96_617884bff48f45b2827c7afc4e4e5b12.pdf

ASGW Best Practice Guidelines 2007 Revisions (Thomas & Pender, 2008)
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/513c96_93df-348d51134a08b789df5374b6dfb7.pdf

ASGW Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers (Wilson et al., 2000)
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/513c96_af51b0b-1fa894b19a9f62bd8826e71c3.pdf

Other Relevant Guiding Documents

ALGBTIC Standards of Care in Assessment of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender Expansive, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTGEQ+) Persons (Goodrich et al., 2017)
http://nebula.wsimg.com/25f926853dfd90

ALGBTIC Standards of Care for Research with Participants Who Identify as LGBTQ+ (Griffith et al., 2017)
http://nebula.wsimg.com/7e12d0f72824e70d-85abbc9d10ca9038?AccessKeyId=-720287C8355A159AB9E1&disposition=0&alloworigin=1

ALGBTIC Competencies for Counseling with Transgender Clients (Burnes et al., 2009)
https://www.counseling.org/Resources/Competencies/ALGBTIC_Competencies.pdf

ALGBTIC Competencies for Counseling LGBQIQA (Harper et al., 2012)
https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/competencies/algbtic-competencies-for-counseling-lgbqiqa.pdf?sfvrsn=1c9c89e_14

APA Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality (APA, 2017)
http://www.apa.org/about/policy/multicultural-guidelines.PDF

AMCD Multicultural Counseling Competencies (AMCD, 2015)
https://www.counseling.org/resources/competencies/multcultural_competencies.pdf

ASERVIC Competencies for Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling (ASERVIC, 2009)
https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/competencies/competencies-for-addressing-spiritual-and-religious-issues-in-counseling.pdf?sfvrsn=aad-7c2c_8

NCDA Minimum Competencies for Multicultural Career Counseling and Development (NCDA, 2009)
https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/competencies/multi-cultural-career-counseling-competencies-august-2009.pdf?sfvrsn=727f422c_4

1.

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CULTURE AND POWER ARE ALWAYS PRESENT

Rationale. Among the myriad of responsibilities group workers must carefully manage is the ongoing task of acknowledging that dynamics of both culture and power are inherent in any group setting. Within this responsibility lie the functions of not only identifying these dynamics, but also accepting them, exploring them, and engaging group members in interactions that feel simultaneously challenging and safe. This inclusive recognition of culture and power must attend to the dynamics existing both among and between individual group facilitators and individual group members, as well as within the group as a collective whole.

Application. Acknowledging the presence of culture and power is a process that begins during the early planning stages of a group experience. Group workers must first identify and consider the ways in which their own cultures and positions of power will impact the group experience, with regard to content, process, safety, and interpersonal dynamics. Group workers should be mindful that upon first contact they enter into a relationship with group members that is nestled within the constructs of co-mingling cultural identities and power structures. As this is characteristic of encounters between group members as well, facilitators must take care to ensure that the acknowledgement of and attention to these dynamics are established and nurtured as a consistent group norm. It is critical that facilitators engage in concerted, ongoing efforts to foster a group environment sensitive to culture and power in which members feel challenged to take appropriate risks and are protected in doing so. Below is a collection of resources designed to support group workers in their efforts to explore their own cultural identities and positions of power as well as to facilitate culturally attentive and respectful interactions among members throughout the duration of the group process.

Bemak, F., & Chung, R. C-Y. (2015). Critical issues in international group counseling. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 40*(1), 6–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2014.992507

Burnes, T. R., & Ross, K. L. (2010). Applying social justice to oppression and marginalization in group process: Interventions and strategies for group counselors. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 35*(2), 169–176. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933921003706014

Chen, E. C., Kakkad, D., & Balzano, J. (2008). Multicultural competence and evidence-based practice in group therapy. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 64*(11), 1261–1278. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20533

Cornish, M. A., Wade, N. G., Tucker, J. R., & Post, B. C. (2014). When religion enters the counseling group: Multiculturalism, group processes, and social justice. *The Counseling Psychologist, 42*(5), 578–600. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000014527001

Jones, S. R. (2016). Authenticity in leadership: Intersectionality of identities. *New Directions for Student Leadership, 2016*(152)*,* 23–34. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20206

Kivlighan, D. M., III., & Chapman, N. A. (2018). Extending the multicultural orientation (MCO) framework to group psychotherapy: A clinical illustration. *Psychotherapy, 55*(1), 39–44. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pst0000142

Ortega, C., & Barkil-Oteo, A. (2013). Introduction to culturally competent group therapy: A community mental health curriculum for medical students. Retrieved from https://www.pcpcc.org/sites/default/files/training-programs/Group%20Txt%20Curriculum.pdf

Singh, A. A., & Salazar, C. F. (2010). Process and action in social justice group work: Introduction to the Special Issue. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 35*(2), 93–96. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933921003706030

Smith, L. C., & Shin, R. Q. (2008). Social privilege, social justice, and group counseling: An inquiry. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 33*(4), 351–366. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933920802424415

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *Improving cultural competence. A treatment improvement protocol (TIP) series: TIP 59.* Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK248428/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK248428.pdf

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2015). Multicultural counseling competence for counselors and therapists of marginalized groups. In *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice* (7th ed., pp. 71–104). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 978-1-119-08430-3

2.

DEVELOP MULTICULTURAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMPETENCIES

Rationale. Group workers have the opportunity to engage in lifelong development of multicultural and social justice counseling competencies. Group workers seek to increase their awareness, knowledge, and skills of the cultural backgrounds of the people with whom they work, and they have reflected on how their own cultural background shapes their worldviews. This strong multicultural foundation is connected to a social justice framework, where group workers understand the connection of multicultural competence to social justice change.

Application. Group workers understand the history of the multicultural and social justice competency movement from the principles set forth

in the guiding documents (see Guiding Principles Resource Links). Group workers embed attention to not only the cultural worldviews of group members and themselves, but also to how their combined privilege and oppression experiences drive group cohesion, group member roles and sharing, group planning and design, and group processing. Group workers explicitly explore cultural worldviews and multiple social identities that group members have related to privilege and oppression. Group workers are familiar with and use the existing multicultural and social justice competency guiding documents as well as the resources listed below to identify how they can engage in micro-, meso-, and macro-level social justice change.

Resource Links

Counselors for Social Justice. (n.d.). *Resources.*
Retrieved from
https://counseling-csj.org/resources/

Ratts, M. J., Singh, A. A., Butler, S. K., Nassar-McMillan, S. & McCullough, J. R. (2016, January 27). Multicultural and social justice counseling competencies: Practical applications in counseling. *Counseling Today.* Retrieved from
https://ct.counseling.org/2016/01/multicultural-and-social-justice-counseling-competencies-practical-applications-in-counseling/

3.

CREATE BRAVE, AFFIRMING, AND HUMANIZING SPACES

Rationale. Group workers create environments where courageous conversations about issues of injustice, inequity, and social change are encouraged to occur and thrive. Sometimes called brave, affirming, and humanizing spaces, or intergroup and difficult dialogues, group workers facilitate needed discussions for social justice change that challenge the status quo of complicity, inaction, and silence about injustice.

Application. Group workers are familiar with the various terms that refer to the specific facilitation of courageous conversations about social justice and inequities. When selecting a dialogue model to use, group workers consider whether the courageous conversation will be a one-time brave space or a series of ongoing conversations. They understand the importance of setting group agreements specific to the type of brave space they are seeking to establish with a group and the importance of setting goals for the purpose, process, and outcome of the courageous conversation. Group workers clearly communicate the necessary boundaries of the humanizing space through integrating the group agreements throughout the dialogue and returning to them at the end of the dialogue. In any affirming space, group workers consider how to connect courageous conversations about injustice and inequity to social justice change and action. Group workers can seek ongoing training by reviewing the conflict resolution and difficult dialogue models listed below.

Resource Links

Ali, D. (2017). *NASPA policy and practice series – Safe spaces and brave spaces: Historical context and recommendations for student affairs professionals*. Retrieved from the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators website: https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/Policy_and_Practice_No_2_Safe_Brave_Spaces_DOWNLOAD.pdf

Difficult Dialogues National Resource Center https://www.difficultdialogues.org/

Gass, R. (2013). *The fabulous POP model*. Retrieved from the Social Transformation Project website: http://stproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/the-fabulous-pop-model.pdf

Rosenberg, M. (2000, April). Nonviolent communication workshop [Video]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWb2B2uPfMo

StirFry Seminars and Consulting. (2005–2011). *Innovative tools for diversity training*. Retrieved from http://www.stirfryseminars.com/resources/pdfs/FreeResources_02.24.15.pdf (Reprinted from *The art of mindful facilitation*, by Lee Mun Wah, 2004, Berkeley, CA: StirFry Seminars and Consulting)

Zúñiga, X., Nagda, B. A., Chesler, M., & Cytron-Walker, A. (2007). Intergroup dialogue in higher education: Meaningful learning about social justice. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 32*(4), 1–128. https://doi.org/10.1002/aehe.3204

4.
PROCESS GROUP EXPERIENCE WITH PURPOSE

Rationale. Groups represent a social microcosm of the larger world around them. That is, differences that exist within a society, including those related to race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, religion, and political affiliation, among many others, will be represented among members of a group. Members' social identities and their related preconceptions, stereotypes, intergroup conflicts, and other points of disagreement then play out within the group context. When not effectively attended to, they can recreate dynamics of privilege and oppression that exist in the larger society, and create barriers to the overall success of the group. However, these differences also represent an important opportunity to promote unity. When group workers notice important issues of privilege and oppression or intergroup conflict arise, they can intentionally process these experiences in the safety of the group setting in order to help members explore and learn from them. One of the major goals of all groups is for members to generalize their learning to the broader context of their lives. In this way, when members encounter those they view as different from themselves and have the opportunity to process and explore those differences, they can generalize this learning beyond the group to promote unity on a larger scale.

Application. Group facilitators can capitalize on opportunities to promote unity through intentional processing of group experiences related to differences. Processing involves helping group members to make meaning from significant events that occur in the group. Regardless of whether the content goals of a group (the "what" that gets discussed) are related to diversity, the process of a group (the "how" the group occurs) creates opportunities for exploring differences. When issues related to social identities, power, privilege, or oppression arise, group workers can use these moments as learning opportunities by highlighting them using process comments, and then facilitating a discussion that allows members to reflect on and make meaning from them. Group workers should pay careful attention to the here-and-now process of the group, make note of critical incidents such as microaggressions, and then draw members' attention to critical incidents as they occur. Sample questions that can be used to effectively process significant group experiences are as follows:

- "What did you notice about what just occurred?"
- "What were your own thoughts and feelings about it?"
- "What similarities and differences did you notice between your own reactions and the reactions of others?"
- "What might these similarities and differences mean?"
- "What impact did this have on our group?"
- "How will this impact how we work together as a group?"
- "How did this incident relate to your experiences outside the group?"
- "What, if anything, do you want to do differently as a result of this incident?"

Resource Links

Conyne, R. K. (1997). A developing framework for processing experiences and events in group work. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 22*(3)*,* 167–174*.* https://doi.org/10.1080/01933929708414378

Stockton, R., Morran, D. K., & Nitza, A. G. (2000). Processing group events: A conceptual map for leaders. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 25*(4), 343–355. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933920008411678

Ward, D. E. (2014). Effective processing in groups. In J. L. DeLucia-Waack, C. R. Kalodner, & M. T. Riva (Eds.), *Handbook of group counseling and psychotherapy* (2nd ed., pp. 84–94). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. ISBN: 978-1452217611

5.

CULTIVATE CULTURAL HUMILITY

Rationale. Group workers must continually strive to practice cultural humility by adopting an interpersonal approach that seeks to humbly understand how cultural identity shapes the worldview and experiences of others. This other-oriented concept is characterized by a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation, desire to bridge or eliminate imbalances of power, and commitment to systemically advocate for others.

Application. When practicing cultural humility, group facilitators can

- strive for an accurate understanding of themselves and their limitations;

- maintain an other-oriented stance that includes respect, openness, and humility;

- show openness towards the cultural identity and experiences of group members;

- demonstrate empathy and explore if group member(s) perceive them to be practicing cultural humility;

- demonstrate skills in welcoming diversity of thought and expression in groups;

- maintain an open mind and heart;

- allow group members to teach them;

- frame the possibilities for group members to gain useful perspectives and experiences from other members;

- acknowledge explicitly that particular relationships and interactions resemble the differences between privilege and oppression;

- recognize explicit and implicit mistakes and harm to others;

- use mistakes as teachable moments;

- appreciate difficult, enlightening, and inspiring moments shared with group members; and

- understand that practicing cultural humility is a lifelong process.

When applied to group settings, cultural humility exercises help group members learn about themselves and others through an intersectional cultural lens. Many of these activities are designed in a progressive manner, so as group members move through each one with the facilitator, the risk level of disclosure increases as does the potential for greater group cohesion and discussion of cultural identity. Several resources, such as the toolkits and workbooks listed below, are comprehensive and provide activities that can be adapted to the needs of members and to varying stages of the group. The following resources are designed to enhance cultural humility by empowering group members to openly discuss diversity and unpack culture in an authentic and relatable way.

Association of Science-Technology Centers. (2018). Resources for action: Group activities. Retrieved from http://community.astc.org/ccli/resources-for-action/group-activities

Goldbach, J. (2017, October 25). Diversity toolkit: A guide to discussing identity, power and privilege [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege/

Hays, P. A. (2013). *Your culture sketch.* Retrieved from http://division45.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CulturalPsychology.pdf
(Reprinted from *Connecting across cultures: The helper's toolkit,* pp. 15–16, by P. A. Hayes, 2013, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE)

Hook, J. N., Davis, D., Owen, J., & DeBlaere, C. (2017). *Cultural humility: Engaging diverse identities in therapy.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
ISBN: 978-1-4338-2777-8

North Carolina New Teacher Support Program. (2012). *Cultural and linguistic competence icebreakers, exercises, videos and movies: Cultural and linguistic competence community of practice.* Retrieved from https://ncntsp.northcarolina.edu/sites/lea.com/files/Establish%20Authentic%20Relationships%20Handouts.pdf

Shaw, S. (2016). Practicing cultural humility. *Counseling Today.* Retrieved from https://ct.counseling.org/2016/12/practicing-cultural-humility/

University of Houston, Center for Diversity and Inclusion. (n.d.). *Diversity activities resource guide.* Retrieved from https://www.uh.edu/cdi/diversity_education/resources/activities/pdf/diversity%20activities-resource-guide.pdf

University of Michigan, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. (2017–2018). Inclusive teaching: Sample activities and templates for exploring privilege, power, and oppression. Retrieved from https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/sample-activities-templates/

University of Michigan, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. (2017, July 10). Inclusive teaching: Sample activities and templates for exploring privilege, power, and oppression. Group development: Barnga activity. Retrieved from https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/2017/07/10/barnga/

6.

ENGAGE IN INTENTIONAL UNITY BUILDING

Rationale. Groups can be designed and implemented with the explicit goal of promoting unity across differences. As described in strategy 3 (i.e., Create brave, affirming, and humanizing spaces), group workers can create spaces in which to facilitate the often difficult dialogues that are necessary to promote genuine understanding. Several good models exist for promoting unity by engaging in group dialogues regarding difficult issues that often divide people along social identity lines. These models are purposeful attempts to create opportunities for sustained face-to-face interactions across different social identity groups. While the models vary, they each use small groups as the format in which a trained leader facilitates an intentional dialogue process that examines the impact of power, privilege, and inequality on intergroup relations. These groups offer opportunities for sustained communication and involvement while focusing on relationships at both individual and group levels.

Application. As an example, Intergroup Dialogue is one model that promotes engagement across cultural and social divides. The goal is for group members to understand each other's perspectives

and to develop shared meaning, but not necessarily to come to agreement. It is acknowledged that, in an effort to engage in honest dialogue, there will be moments of conflict and discomfort. Group facilitators thus begin by working with members to develop norms regarding how they are going to work together as a group and stay engaged when the dialogue becomes difficult. Facilitators then slowly guide the discussion from lower risk to higher risk topics, and from individual to social or systemic conflicts. The last stage of the Intergroup Dialogue model involves assisting group members in developing a social action plan:

- How do they move forward?

- What is next?

- What if anything, do they want to do as a result of their experiences in the dialogue?

Group workers who want to facilitate a group dialogue process are encouraged to carefully review available models and seek training in one that is of interest. The links below offer helpful resources on several prominent models.

Resource Links

American Psychological Association: Facing the Divide
https://www.apa.org/education/undergrad/diversity/default.aspx

Essential Partners: The Public Conversation Project
https://www.whatisessential.org/resources

Everyday Democracy: Ideas & Tools for Community Change
https://www.everyday-democracy.org/resources

Intergroup Resources
http://www.intergroupresources.com/

Sustained Dialogue Institute
http://sustaineddialogue.org/

University of Michigan Program on Intergroup Relations
https://igr.umich.edu/

7.
PRACTICE MINDFUL AND REFLEXIVE GROUP FACILITATION

Rationale. Kabat-Zinn (2005) defined mindfulness as follows: "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (p. 4). Mindfulness has gained popularity recently in the West, though it is an ancient practice from Eastern contemplative traditions. Group work closely aligns with the practice of mindfulness since group work involves engagement and interaction among people in the present moment, with full awareness and intention. The group process, like mindfulness, focuses in the here and now. Current research by group workers has made a concerted effort to integrate multicultural competence with mindfulness in the course of conducting group work studies. Several resource links are listed below for the application of culturally responsive group knowledge and skills.

Application. One of the most effective and impactful ways to engage in mindful and reflexive group facilitation is to use experiential group activities. By inviting group members to explore difficult topics, emotions, and beliefs, nonjudgmentally (toward self and others), group

workers can create and guide experiences that elicit safe yet deep exploration of challenging topics. Group workers can model moment-to-moment, mindful presence in such a way that members feel they too can take risks within the group process. Being authentic and congruent are critical aspects of facilitating difficult conversations in culturally competent, responsive, and mindful ways. Suspending judgment of another person, even when in disagreement with the person, can help build connection where divisions exist. Focusing on salient feelings, thoughts, and behaviors in the moment helps to clarify communication among group members. Group workers can invite members to explore whatever emerges with mindful awareness before group discussions begin. Guiding members in select experiential meditation practices can help set the stage for meaningful and reflexive dialogue; even challenging and seemingly divisive topics can be broached and bridges among members built. Group workers and members can explore the resources below to find out how.

Resource Links

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Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. New York, NY: Hachette Books.
ISBN: 9781401307783

Masuda, A. (Ed.). (2014). *Mindfulness & acceptance in multicultural competency: A contextual approach to sociocultural diversity in theory & practice*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.
ISBN: 9781608827466

Mindfulness4u. (2017, December 9). Fun mindfulness exercises for groups. Retrieved from
http://mindfulness4u.org/fun-mindfulness-exercises-groups/

Newsome, S., Waldo, M., & Gruszka, C. (2012). Mindfulness group work: Preventing stress and increasing self-compassion among helping professional in training. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 37*(4), 297–311.
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TEN STRATEGIES TO INTENTIONALLY USE GROUP WORK TO TRANSFORM HATE, FACILITATE COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS, AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY BUILDING

21

8.

LEAN IN AND KEEP GOING

Rationale. The crossroads of group work, multiculturalism, and social justice reflect the complexities in framing intersectional approaches, interactions, and difficulties within the group process. Group work invites particular complications and challenges within groups due to the sheer number of individuals involved in a group, thereby increasing the number of interactions, differences in values and worldviews, and social positioning (i.e., privilege and oppression, advantaged and disadvantaged). Similarly, values and approaches integrated into multiculturalism and social justice bridge the connection between the personal and the political. Although these differences can create complex divisions, once group members with marginalized identities begin to interact, they often become more aware of their similarities rather than their differences. Consequently, dialogues and interactions in group work, given the social identities of group members and sparked discussions on issues of marginalization, may breed an emotionality for group members, especially when discussion of painful or conflicting experiences becomes intensely personal. For group facilitators and members, navigating these issues necessitates resilience and grit to stay in the midst of group conflict and differences. Group conflict creates a possibility of chaos and differences, which is, sometimes, most frightening to enter into a group format, especially about divisive political issues surrounding multiculturalism, equity, and social justice. Group facilitators and members may sometimes attempt to avoid dialogues in fear of creating significant conflict with other individuals in a group. Although divisions, dynamics, and conflicts in groups often resemble the storming stage of the group process, such interactions represent opportunities for individual, group, community, and systemic change. Leaning into a conflict, discomfort, and vulnerability in a group represent launching points for group members to discuss their areas for growth while transcending difficulties to ultimately gain a better understanding of other group members.

Application. Broaching politically divisive topics, uncomfortable conversations, and explicit discussion on social identities, privilege, and oppression elicits possibilities for growth. Developing an increased ability to stay immersed in group conflict, particularly concerning differences in political and inclusion issues, requires resilience, courage, and empathy. Empathy is especially challenging in the scope of difficult dialogues that challenge ingrained belief systems, vulnerability, and lack of awareness about social conditions, disenfranchisement, and marginalization. Leaning in also requires cultural humility to appreciate the challenging moments often connected to the group process. This process of leaning into a group conflict invites more discussion to consider and understand perspectives of other group members.

Group workers and members can use the following action items as methods to continue immersing in challenging group moments to initiate growth:

- Present an open-ended question to inflect the perspective of another person(s) in the disagreement, conflict, or difference.

- Initiate the action of pausing to invite more reflection and intentionality.

- Indicate what was uncomfortable or painful in the moment.

Group workers and members can also invite each other to speak specifically about factors influencing interactions and relationships (e.g., social identities, personal histories, and experiences). Reflecting on these factors can allow for group members to speak more openly about where their differences originate and how the members are positioned in spaces of privilege and oppression. As a result, group workers can provide a holding environment for emotions and critical thinking while highlighting how these interactions symbolize relationships within society.

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Burton, S., & Furr, S. (2014). Conflict in multicultural classes: Approaches to resolving difficult dialogues. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 53*(2), 97–110. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2014.00051.x

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Chung, R. C., Bemak, F., Talleyrand, R. M., & Williams, J. M. (2018). Challenges in promoting race dialogues in psychology training: Race and gender perspectives. *The Counseling Psychologist, 46*(2), 213–240. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000018758262

Davis, D. E., DeBlaere, C., Brubaker, K., Owen, J., Jordan, T. A., Hook, J. N., & Van Tongeren, D. R. (2016). Microaggressions and perceptions of cultural humility in counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 94*(4), 483–493. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12107

Day-Vines, N. L., Ammah, B. B., Steen, S., & Arnold, K. M. (2018). Getting comfortable with discomfort: Preparing counselor trainees to broach racial, ethnic, and cultural factors with clients during counseling. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 40*(2), 89–104. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-017-9308-9

García, J. D. (2016). A review of race talk and the conspiracy of silence: Understanding and facilitating difficult dialogues on race. *Multicultural Perspectives, 18*(1), 48–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2016.1125273

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Indiana University, Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning. (2018). Managing difficult classroom discussions. Retrieved from https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/diversity-inclusion/managing-difficult-classroom-discussions/

Love, J. M., Gaynor, T. S., & Blessett, B. (2016). Facilitating difficult dialogues in the classroom: A pedagogical imperative. *Administrative Theory & Praxis, 38*(4), 227–233. https://doi.org/10.1080/10841806.2016.1237839

The Ohio State University, Office of Human Resources. (n.d.). *Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most – A high-level summary of the book by Stone, Patton and Heen*. Retrieved from http://www.fscanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Difficult-Conversations-Summary.pdf

Ramasubramanian, S., Sousa, A. N., & Gonlin, V. (2017). Facilitated difficult dialogues on racism: A goal-based approach. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 45*(5), 537–556. https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2017.1382706

Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday Life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 9780470491409

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Tupper, J. A. (2014). The possibilities for reconciliation through difficult dialogues: Treaty education as peacebuilding. *Curriculum Inquiry, 44*(4), 469–488. https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12060

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9.
CONSIDER POSSIBILITIES OF ACTION

Rationale. Steeped in the multiculturalism and social justice movements, group work has been driven notably by action leading to systematic and strategized efforts. Group work has a longstanding history intertwined with advocacy and activism. Noting the guiding documents utilized in group work (e.g., MSJCC), group work has become increasingly concerned not only with reflection and awareness, but also with social action. It also centers a primacy on action-oriented methods to empower group members to create change across communities and bridge differences through community organizing. Although group work characteristically emphasizes individual and group change within a single group, groups also carry the capacity to create impactful possibilities external to the group. Reflecting on systemic change outside of the group, groups mirror a microcosm of society as considerable moments to increase critical consciousness and institute opportunities for group members to take part in movements of advocacy and activism. As a result, group work institutes an emphasis to break inequitable systems of power within and outside group membership. Additionally, group work is concerned with what group members can gain from the group in association with how they implement reflections from the group.

Application. Group facilitators and members may likely consider multiple points of the group process to formulate changes to critical thinking while substantiating platforms for advocacy and social action. Although reflection and considering take-aways from groups are frequently a function of group work, it is important for group workers and members to determine launching points and systematic courses of action to initiate policy-based, community, and political change. Such direction initiates activism and community organizing, where groups and communities angle towards disrupting social inequities and problematic relationships of power. Group workers and members can consider the following sample questions to begin a foundational discussion on action-oriented methods:

- "Now that we have reflected on your experience with the group, what might you do with this information?"

- "How can you implement some of the reflections discussed in this group?"

- "What might you change about your approach as you have involved yourself in this group?"

- "How might you change inequities in your communities and institutions?"

- "How might you use your privilege to take action against marginalization?"

Resource Links

Bemak, F. (2005). Reflections on multiculturalism, social justice, and empowerment groups for academic success: A critical discourse for contemporary schools. *Professional School Counseling, 8*(5), 401–406. https://www.jstor.org/stable/42732481

Bemak, F., & Chung, R. C. (2011). Applications in social justice counselor training: Classroom without walls. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, 50*(2), 204–219. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1939.2011.tb00119.x

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Malott, K. M., Schaefle, S., Conwill, W., Cates, J., Daniels, J. A., & D'Andrea, M. (2010). Using group work strategies to continue the national discussion on race, justice, and peace. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 35*(3), 299–307. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2010.492902

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Singh, A. A., & Salazar, C. F. (2010a). Six considerations for social justice group work. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 35*(3), 308–319. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2010.492908

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10.

ASSESS THE IMPACT

Rationale. Although acknowledging culture and power within group dynamics should begin prior to the initial stages of the group, assessing the impact of a group experience on individual members, the collective whole, and surrounding communities is a process that extends long beyond the group's termination. Group work represents a microcosm of individual and communities embedded within interactions and connections in a group. Inherent in the ongoing cycle of preparing for, facilitating, and evaluating group experiences situated in various multicultural contexts is a responsibility to critically assess the nuances of the group process, including both successes and challenges. Group work also provides a foundation for individuals, groups, communities, and programs to initiate methods for action, community engagement, and the praxis of multiculturalism and social justice. Contingent with community engagement and collaboration in

association with aspects of program evaluation, assessing, and evaluating, the impact of groups more closely targets the needs of communities and produces systemic change (e.g., policy). As a result, engaging in assessment of this type not only provides the opportunity for group facilitators and members to reflect on personal and collective experiences and observations, but also to dialogue about and further refine elements designed to foster the liberating and affirming group spaces as described in the previous nine strategies.

Application. Engaging in assessment requires that group workers facilitate continued personal reflection at the individual level, as well as shared dialogue among relevant members. Evaluation may range from informal conversations to formal assessments among group facilitators, members, consultants, and/or supervisors. It is important for group facilitators and members to include an

evaluation of what worked for the group and how it worked for the group. Consequently, group facilitators and members emphasize praxis, components of groups, approaches used in the group, and the group process. Elements to be considered for assessment may include the overall perceived climate of the group experience; the reported cultural experiences of members both independently and collectively; measures enacted by facilitators to both acknowledge and address elements of culture, power, and privilege within the group setting; issues of both abstract and literal accessibility; opportunities provided for vulnerability and growth; and growth edges identified for planning subsequent group experiences. Group facilitators and members can also consider the following sample questions as part of their reflections:

- "What processes and interactions helped to deepen reflections within the group?"

- "How did the group achieve more empathy and a better understanding of other group members' cultural worldviews and social identities?"

- "Which interactions silenced group members? Which interactions gave voice to group members?"

- "What were barriers to the group moving forward?"

- "How did the group transcend barriers, difficulties, and differences in worldviews and social identities within the group?"

- "What action items and approaches will each member take away from the group?"

Beyond the group experience itself, group workers should also assess the transferability and contextualization of the personal and collective growth of group members and attend carefully to the process for transferring relevant lessons and experiences within the group microcosm to external communities on a more global scale. In this way, group workers can intentionally assess the value of efforts driven by attention to and respect for cultural group processes and can help to ensure that successes and instances of growth manifest beyond the confines of the group setting.

Resource Links

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Barrio Minton, C. A., Gibson, D. M., & Wachter Morris, C. A. (2016). *Evaluating student learning outcomes in counselor education*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association. ISBN: 9781556203374

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CONCLUSION

This ASGW publication *Ten Strategies to Intentionally Use Group Work to Transform Hate, Facilitate Courageous Conversations, and Enhance Community Building* aims to provide a series of guidelines that can be used by group workers in a myriad of settings. It is hoped that these strategies serve to encourage meaningful dialogue among diverse individuals with differing perspectives. ASGW welcomes feedback.

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