

## What does it involve?

Group therapy involves regular meetings, which are often weekly, but may be more or less frequent. Meetings usually last for between one and one and a half hours.

Regular attendance is important to get the most out of the experience.

Some forms of group therapy are quite structured with the therapists introducing topics for discussion.

Other groups are run in a more unstructured style with the therapists responding to what the members wish to raise.

Group therapy does not involve the prescription of medication; however if you are being prescribed tablets it is best to discuss this with your therapist.

## Further information

UK Council for Psychotherapy:  
[www.psychotherapy.org.uk](http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk)  
Tel: 0207 014 9955

## Contact us

To find out more, speak to your care co-ordinator or ask to speak to the Psychological Therapies Services Manager in your area.

For information on Trust services  
[www.awp.nhs.uk](http://www.awp.nhs.uk)

## PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Tel: 01225 362900  
Free phone: 0800 073 1778  
Email: [awp.pals@nhs.net](mailto:awp.pals@nhs.net)

## Other formats and languages

If you need this information in other formats (such as large print, Braille) or in another language, please call the PALS number.

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Avon and Wiltshire  
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NHS Trust

# Group Relational and Analytic Psychotherapy

This is one of a series of information leaflets on psychological therapies. The therapy is described, what it involves, and the kinds of problem it may be helpful for.

you matter, we care

This leaflet explains what group psychotherapy (often referred to as group therapy) is, who can benefit from it and what it involves. It is designed to help you decide whether group therapy is right for you and whether it is the right time for you to engage in this particular form of talking therapy.

## **What is group psychotherapy?**

Group psychotherapy is based on the idea that we are all influenced by the groups we belong to, as well as our individual relationships.

Therefore, group psychotherapy draws on the notion that difficulties in groups (such as our family, work or social groups) can contribute to mental health problems. These can, in turn, make it difficult for us to function in family, work or social groups.

Group therapy provides an opportunity to explore our mental health problems and patterns of relating in a safe group setting. This can enable people to feel supported and less alone with their personal problems. It also gives group members a chance to use their own personal experiences to help each other.

Group members give each other a chance to learn more about themselves, offer support, feedback, validation and challenge.

Through this process of understanding and acceptance, individuals have a chance to discover who they are and gain a greater sense of belonging. Every member of a group can be a mirror for another member – the different parts of yourself that you like or dislike can at times be seen in others.

Psychotherapy groups vary in size. They will normally have somewhere between 4 to 8 members and one or two therapists. Some groups have the same membership throughout the course, whereas others will change as some members leave and others join.

The length of a course of group therapy varies from short-term groups of 8 to 10 weeks to longer term groups running over one to two years.

Groups may either be focused on a specific problem (for example, an eating disorder) or may be open to people with a range of different problems. Some may be set up for specific groups of the population, such as women only.

## **Who can benefit?**

People who benefit most are usually those who want to address their problems and who have the motivation to commit to the process, even when it may involve facing emotional pain.

Some group therapy focuses on relationships and can be effective for a range of different problems where there are relationship difficulties such as:

- Feeling different and separate
- Feeling as though you don't belong
- Having trouble with authority figures
- Feeling inadequate, sometimes with intense feelings of envy, shame or fearfulness
- A fear of losing your identity when getting involved with others.

Other group therapy may focus less on relationships and more on coping with specific difficulties such as anxiety management groups; or use an additional mode of communication such as music therapy.

If you are relying on alcohol or other substances to help you to deal with your difficulties, then you will need to consider minimising or stopping your alcohol/ substance use completely to get the most benefit.