

# Editorial: Groupwork as a relationship-based practice

Writing my final editorial as Editor presents something of a bittersweet moment. I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as Editor with this journal starting in 2018 to work alongside the then editor Jennie Fleming, who shared so generously with me her knowledge of the Editor's role and all that it entails. At the same time, change and rejuvenation are important elements of a journal's growth and development, and now years later the end of my term as Editor heralds a positive point of transition in the life of this journal. It makes it much easier for me to step down as editor knowing that Nick Pollard who has worked with me as Co-Editor for some time will continue in that role alongside Blaine Robin, recently appointed as Co-Editor. A big welcome to Blaine. I wish you both all the best going forward and every success.

In this moment of writing my final editorial, I decided it was timely to highlight the relationship basis of groupwork, which in my view is a feature central to the story of every group's journey. The power of a group to achieve its objectives is influenced by the shared relationship base of the group and the degree to which the relationships among group members operate to support the actualisation of the group's goal(s). But group relationships do much more. When developed in a positive way, the group relationship can support and empower each member, both as an individual group member and the group as a collective. According to Brown (2017, p.5), 'the unique peer relationships aspect of the group setting creates a whole range of potential benefits'. The phrase 'all for one, and one for all' springs to mind because it captures the intricate relationship structure exhibited by cohesive groups, whereby individuals feel personally empowered through the group experience, whilst simultaneously the group derives its strength because the members operate within a supportive, collective relationship. Although, 'the power of the group' is a well-worn phrase, that power cannot be taken for granted; it exists in every group if tapped into successfully. Drawing on my own experience of working with groups, I believe group

power is a performative enactment of deeper relationship dynamics. Those dynamics often flow from significant personal commitment by each individual member and the group relationship evolves from and through those contributions and the interactions of all group members. Relationship is thus at the core of groupwork and relational dynamics deserve support and attention from all group members.

The articles that feature in this issue illustrate the breadth of groupwork and the many ways in which it is used to in different areas of service delivery. These articles highlight relationship issues that permeate groupwork in different ways. For example, Reineth Prinsloo's article, *Bridging the divide: Recognition of indigenous mutual aid groupwork practices*, examines the similarities between the Ubuntu worldview and indigenous mutual aid group practices in Africa. The author considers ways in which the collective spirit of supporting and caring for each other is reflected in both groupwork and Ubuntu perspectives.

The article by Gloria Smith Cissé, Robert E. Wubbolding and Willa J. Casstevens *Group treatment with sexual offenders: a choice theory based approach* introduces a groupwork treatment practice that is strengths-based and future-focused, supporting group members to move their lives forward in positive directions. This approach incorporates a theoretical base informed by William Glasser's (1998) theory of choice, and aims to assist participants understand how the choices they make will shape their lives.

In a very different context, in *Entry-level teamwork behaviours through a groupwork lens: findings from employer interviews and job advertisements* Salomien Hester Boshoff reports on research findings which examined how successful teamwork at the employee entry-level is shaped by behaviours related to task approach and completion, social interaction, collaboration and the issue of communication with colleagues.

The final article has a particular focus on relationships as it deals with the needs of carers. Jennifer Allen, Alyssa Rychtarik and Patrick Hartnett place a spotlight on the issues facing spousal carers of people with dementia at the point when the person with dementia transitions into long-term care. In *Carers transition group: A personalised group that reflects the changing needs of spousal dementia carers in transition* they discuss an important groupwork approach, which supported spousal

carers during times of change and loss. Their article highlights the role that groupwork can play in helping group members navigate and find support at challenging points of transition in their lives.

This issue also includes Jim Greer's book review of *Helping Skills: Facilitating exploration, insight and action* by Clara E. Hill, Harold Chui and Judith A. Gerstenblith (2025). Readers will be interested to read the review of this publication as it addresses the skills and approaches that assist therapeutic, person-centred work.

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I would like to sincerely thank all the contributors in this issue, and in every issue which I have edited over the years. I want to thank everyone involved in the production of this and every issue, including the dedicated group of reviewers who provide an essential service to this journal by reviewing articles and providing helpful feedback to authors. I wish to thank David Whiting, Jane McLaughlin and all the team at Whiting & Birch Ltd for supporting me in this role, and also all members of the Editorial Board of *Groupwork*, past and present, including co-editors, guest editors and Shirley Simon who has been the journal's Book Review Editor for many years. All of you gave sound advice and much welcome encouragement throughout my term. I feel very fortunate to have worked with everyone and have enjoyed this role very much. I want to thank you all sincerely. It has been a great honour to work as part of the journal's team, but it is time now to take a step back and to wish Nick and Blaine the very best and hope they gain as much pleasure in the editorial role as I have enjoyed.

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## References

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- Glasser, W. (1998). *Choice Theory: A new psychology of personal freedom*. New York: Harper Collins.