

Reviews

The Art Activity Manual

A Groupwork resource

Marylyn Cropley

Bicester, Oxon, Speechmark Publishing, 2004, 242pp

ISBN 0 86388 431 8 (pbk) £34.95

Let's Draw

Games for talking

Bicester, Oxon, Speechmark Publishing, 2005

(Cards, instructions & ideas) £13.50

The author introduces *The Art Activity Manual*, as a manual offering skills-based activities with therapeutic outcomes. Its ultimate aim is to help people to be creative and get to know themselves and others through the medium of art. The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 gives suggestions for preparing for an art-based group programme. Part 2 gives the reader session plans covering 15 weeks. Finally, Part 3 provides 18 other art project ideas. For each art project described in the book, the author provides aims, materials needed, methods, and alternative approaches to the project.

This is an interesting collection of activities that could be used in a groupwork setting. The initial 15 session plans outline a programme that will introduce participants to the world of art, shapes, form, textures, colours and various art forms. The additional project ideas build on the planned programme and offer more creative activities that could be used in a group.

Let's Draw provides 80 cards, each measuring 74x114mm, designed to be used to promote concentration and interaction through copying, describing and drawing. The cards can be used for game based activities, whereby, for example, group members guess what one of

their fellow members is drawing, or one member describes a picture for the rest of the group to draw.

Both the book and the cards are described as groupwork resources, and certainly they both offer a collection of activities that could be used in a group. However, doing activities in a group does not necessarily mean that groupwork is occurring. Neither resource specifically addresses groupwork practice. With an inexperienced worker, they might be used for activity's sake, rather than planned purposefully to further the work of the group. On the other hand, if an experienced groupworker wishes to incorporate an art-based activity that is congruent with group purpose, both resources can provide numerous ideas.

Timothy B. Kelly
Senior Research Fellow
Glasgow Caledonian University
School of Nursing, Midwifery and Community Health

Using Groupwork

Mark Doel

London, Routledge/Community Care, London, 2006, xii+180pp

ISBN 0 415 33932 4 (pbk) £19.99

I have recently started a new job and joined a new team. In making this move, I applied groupwork principles to working with team members to tackle some of the changes that necessarily occur in such a situation. So, I was very pleased to be asked to review this book and to make the refreshing discovery that teamwork was acknowledged as involving groupwork. The book aims to provide an accessible and practical guide that will benefit people who are new to groupwork but also to provide 'further inspiration to those already involved' (back cover). *Using Groupwork* meets these aims. It is written in a clear and accessible style that engages the reader in a learning process. The structure helps readers rehearse and develop what they have read by setting chapter objectives and examining key themes that have been

covered. For those requiring 'further inspiration' there are pointers to additional reading, activities and boxes detailing particular research, themes or issues.

The book is unique in developing an evidence base whilst articulating the principles, concepts and practicalities underpinning effective groupwork. The references to groups within the book and groupworkers' portfolios used are taken from the author's research concerning a groupwork training programme. In particular, nine groups are employed to illustrate core issues and provide a 'generalist' model of groupwork transferable to a range of settings and situations. As such, the book provides an introduction to groupwork that is not disciplinarily specific, although perhaps more readily adapted to social work, youth and community work. This evidence-based approach, developed through action research, represents one of the key strengths of this work and locates it clearly in practice. It is perhaps this approach and focus that allows Doel to promote a conception of groupwork based on complexity and fluidity rather than insisting on one particular approach or typology of models.

After setting the scene and understanding of groupwork, Doel sets out the practical steps that might be involved in planning, running and evaluating groups, covering instrumental and resource issues through to the interpersonal negotiations needed to conduct groups in an ethical and inclusive manner. These sections deal with groupwork issues that are dealt with throughout the extant literature but the use of case material from his research into groupwork training offers a real and interesting portrayal that will, I'm sure, be appreciated by those readers who are new to groupwork and its processes. It is commendable to see, also, that unlike our sometimes serious and rather stuffy approaches to the literature, this book introduces the concept of creativity and playfulness, or fun, within groupwork, stressing its importance in promoting interaction, enjoyment and movement. The book doesn't just consider the many positive benefits associated with groupwork, however. The thorny issue of power dynamics and the appropriate use of authority as a leader is covered, as is a range of potential pitfalls and difficult issues to be dealt with within groups.

Using Groupwork forms a useful introductory guide to groups within the helping professions. Its unique features will make it, I

believe, the text of choice for many students and practitioners who are at the early stage of developing their groupwork practice. It adds to the compendium of literature in this area and drawing on material from the research project gives it an edge: it provides an evidence-based approach to groupwork. It should be highly recommended.

Professor Jonathan Parker
Bournemouth University, UK
