

Reviews

Solution-Focused Groupwork

John Sharry

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This second edition of John Sharry's guide to brief and effective forms of groupwork offers a concise and very practical text which is indispensable to practitioners.

Although there is an introduction to the basic theory of solution-focused groupwork in comparison with other forms of group and counselling interventions, the author sets out an agenda which is practice oriented rather than theoretical, illustrated with many examples. Every chapter answers typical problems that crop up in groupwork with approaches which are aimed at enabling participants (including therapists) to develop their own strategies.

The book has a clear organisation in three sections, dealing with basics and theory, the essentials of running solution-focused groups, and the last on maintenance, resolving difficulties in groups and supervision. The text is jargon free and accessible. The first chapters explore the origins and principles of this approach, showing in particular how a key element of solution-focused groupwork is the value gained from people learning how to help each other. This section also covers essential techniques in using questions to enable participants to access their strengths. The last chapter on the dynamics of solution-focused groups reveals the practical steps therapists can take to attend to the process and 'conduct' the interactions.

The author reveals the breadth of his experience in the next two sections which deal with the detail of managing groups. There are many examples of how to resolve the kinds of behaviours that can offer obstacles to group progress, or which can signal participants leaving groups or failing to benefit. Therapists are encouraged to recognise how their perceptions can impede the achievement of outcomes, to be creative in the way they negotiate solutions with participants and to

manage impasses by entrusting these to the group process. The chapter on managing 'difficult' groups is particularly valuable. The examples are everyday, easy to recognise and appreciate, the approaches often simple but effective.

The final chapter provides a model and practical agenda for group supervision, again geared to enabling practitioners to assist each other in realising their strengths. The entire book is shaped around the aim of revealing how solution-focused groupwork is a learning process with many practical applications, whether in therapeutic engagements, or in forms of social action and community development.

This book is a valuable resource for anyone engaged in groupwork, whether they are new to the field or an experienced practitioner. It is designed for easy reference and ease of use, the information is clearly set out and while it is not an index of group 'recipes', it gives many practical examples to enhance the reader's work. While recommending this book I suggest that it may be advisable to buy your colleagues a copy as well to prevent them borrowing yours.

Nick Pollard
Senior Lecturer in Occupational Therapy
Sheffield Hallam University
