

BOOK REVIEW

Group Counseling (3rd ed.), by E. E. Jacobs, R. L. Masson, R. L. Harvill.
Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1998.

This well-written and well-organized group counseling manual strongly bespeaks its academic nascence. Each of the carefully developed 17 chapters could be used, and quite possibly has already seen application, as a classroom lecture in a course on group counseling. The stated object is to enhance the ability of the reader to lead all kinds of groups, training sessions, and meetings. To implement that end, the authors expended effort on the learning of skills, techniques, and the art of leading.

Common sense solutions to problems are offered. For example, if a group leader dislikes certain group members, assigning a coleader to help or structure activities may divert the participants from whatever the difficulty was. Although the credentials of the authors point to considerable sophistication, they wisely stop at that level. The opportunity for growth on the part of the leader to enable transcending whatever personality characteristics were making for the difficulty in relationship was not touched. There are probably several valid reasons for limiting the focus. The idea that a student group leader might have some personality flaws flies in the face of a sense of superiority, which only time and maturation changes. Self-examination might well lead to the feeling that Noel Coward expressed when in the early stages of his own therapy, he exclaimed, "This is the most expensive sort of insult there is." Class enrollment and readership would certainly be affected if this were not very carefully handled. Practicums and participation in therapeutic groups would be most helpful to the leader-in-training.

Meticulous attention is paid the myriad problems that do arise within every group that is oriented to change and growth. One of the invaluable features of this book is the helpful presentation of those problems and an effective solution to each. The structure and organization is such that they invite the potential leader to try group counseling, knowing that when the inevitable problems arise, help is just a few pages away.

I personally found *Group Counseling* very worthwhile. It was engaging and down-to-earth in style. I hope the authors write a sequel with emphasis on the integration and characteristics of the leader. Toward that end, there is much that cognitive behavioral management and psychodramatic role training can offer to a pragmatic and impatient society that wants results and wants them fast.

HOWARD M. NEWBURGER
Rye, New York

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