

Conflict: Strengthening Dynamics in Group

Objectives:

At the end of this lecture, students will be able to:

1. Identify their approach to conflict management.
2. Understand the benefits of conflict in group.
3. Apply conflict management skills within the group experience this week.

Content	Material/Handout/Slide #
1. Good morning everyone! I'm thankful to be a part of your intensive this week. I remember my 512 class being one of the most intense and reflective courses of my Master's degree, and I hope you all are experiencing the benefits of group work. One of the more challenging aspects of interpersonal relationships is conflict management, and this is true of group work as well. At the end of our time together, you will be able to identify your own approach to conflict management, understand the benefits of conflict in group, and apply conflict management skills within your group experience this week. Please place your questions in the group chat, and I will monitor and respond as appropriate. If there is not enough time to respond to all questions, I will send my replies to Dr. Warden to provide to you.	PowerPoint Slide #1
2. You may be wondering why I chose fire as the theme of this presentation. Fire has the remarkable power to reset natural systems, making them healthier and more resilient. Fire can be dangerous, but it is important for change. This is reflected in the aftermath of a forest fire. There is increased sunlight and dormant seeds are brought alive. Harmful undergrowth and invasive species are removed, allowing these seeds to take root. Fire often enriches the soil, encouraging these seeds to grow (Sempervirens Fund, n.d.). Keep these things in mind as we continue to reflect on conflict in group.	PowerPoint Slide #2

3. The quality of our lives depends not on whether we have conflicts, but on how we respond to them. Conflict is inevitable, but we must be aware of our own responses so we can address maladaptive thought and behavioral patterns when relating to others.	PowerPoint Slide #3
4. So I want everyone to pull out their phones, but please stay mentally present! Scan this QR code to access an assessment for your conflict management style.	PowerPoint Slide #4
5. As you are answering these questions, please think on the last six months. Submit your response via phone, and the results will populate on my screen. Keep track of your answers for each question so you can complete the scoring at the end.	Mentimeter Slides #1-17
6. Okay, now its time to score! Use the following to calculate your approach to conflict management. I will provide a few (5) minutes to calculate.	Mentimeter Slide #18
7. To normalize our experiences to conflict, please select your two highest scoring approaches to managing conflict. [Will provide reflections on graph that populates]	Mentimeter Slide #19
8. Now submit your two lowest scoring approaches to managing conflict. [Will provide reflections on graph that populates] Keep your approach in mind as we continue through the lecture and reflect on how you may respond to conflict as a group facilitator.	Mentimeter Slide #20
9. Here are the five styles of conflict management. I will be going over each of them in a little more detail. As you will see, each conflict management style can have application within the group setting (Adkins, n.d.)	PowerPoint #5
10. Individuals who are accommodating put others' needs above their own. They are typically unsatisfied in relationship and limit their goals for others' benefit. This can be helpful if the issue is minor and the outcome of the conflict is managed in group. This may be useful if you are	PowerPoint #6

wrong and need to reflect on the fallacies in your point of view. (Adkins, n.d.)	
11. Individuals who avoid will often retreat in order to process and reflect on the conflict. This could include ending relationships or personal goals in therapy. This can be helpful if you need time to think through a situation, or the situation is minor and can be settled in an ‘agree to disagree’ fashion. (Adkins, n.d.)	PowerPoint #7
12. Individuals in competition typically prioritize their own goals and needs above others, viewing their perspective as correct. This can be necessary in emergency situations, or if you are certain you are correct and it is in the best interest of the group to clarify. (Adkins, n.d.)	PowerPoint #8
13. Individuals who compromise are willing to find middle ground as a solution for conflict. This can be helpful in groups with cognitive and relational flexibility and can be a backup for collaboration if a win-win solution isn’t available. (Adkins, n.d.)	PowerPoint #9
14. Individuals who collaborate are typically cooperative and assertive in finding solutions for the conflict. This encourages relationship development and can decrease overall group tension. This can be useful if there are high levels of trust in the group and everyone’s concerns need to be addressed. Arguably, the group is the perfect place for concerns to be verbalize and confronted. (Adkins, n.d.)	PowerPoint #10
15. “Every conflict we face in life is rich with positive and negative potential. It can be a source of inspiration, enlightenment, learning,	PowerPoint #11

transformation, and growth-or rage, fear, shame, entrapment, and resistance. The choice is not up to our opponents, but to us, and our willingness to face and work through them.” As we continue through the presentation, keep this in mind. Conflict is inevitable, and we must be willing to address and manage our own internal experience as facilitators and group members.	
16. Conflict typically begins after basic group norms and trust is built (Unger, 1990). It may appear ‘negative’, and is often stressful in the moment (Kellerman, 1996). All members enter group with conflict, whether internal or external (Unger, 1990). Interpersonal relationship dynamics are highlighted through group work, encouraging self-reflection when there is safety and stability in the group dynamic (Johnson et al., 2006). Emotional expression and vulnerability can feel like conflict, creating anxiety within the group (Johnson et al., 2006). Members may easily feel attacked by direct questions, so open-ended questions and reflective statements reduce tensions. Examples of these include, “I am noticing tension building within the group. How are you experiencing this moment right now? What are you feeling as you interact with the group member? What is your ideal solution for this disagreement?” Rupture in the group relationship is common and must be addressed and repaired to encourage group cohesion (Marmarosh, 2021). Unaddressed conflict typically reduces engagement in group and encourages destructive forms of conflict, increasing dropout and leads to poorer group outcomes (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020).	PowerPoint #12
17. There are many sources of conflict in group, and a primary role of the facilitator is to monitor and address these conflicts. There is natural competition within the ‘storming and norming’ phase of group, as members are competing for space within the group dynamic. Consider the following scenario: The group has established a rule within the contract that members arrive on time and do not leave before the end of group. Sam is frequently late for group and often remains quiet and closed-off during group interactions. Martha’s father was emotionally withdrawn and did not attend to her needs as a child. Martha confronts Sam about his consistent lateness to group, and Sam does not engage in the conversation with him. The facilitator notices the	PowerPoint #13

interaction but does not address it due to a lack of confidence with how to address intergroup tension. Martha becomes more closed off during sessions and stops attending group. This is not uncommon in the group experience. Martha was experiencing transference to Sam about her relationship with her father. Sam tended to not emotionally engage in relationships, which was causing tension with his wife. The facilitator's anxiety about addressing conflict did not provide time for reflection to address differences and encourage awareness of parallel processes within the members. (Unger, 1990; Yalom & Leszcz, 2020)	
18. There are four identified approaches to conflict management in group therapy: emotional, intrapsychic, interpersonal, and group-as-a-whole. Emotional management includes identifying and addressing pent up emotions that are being expressed in group. Facilitators work to help members accept and verbalize emotions in a healthy manner and recognize their and others' non-verbal cues. Behavioral assertiveness training through role-play can be a component of this approach. Intrapsychic management works to address internal experiences of hostility, bitterness, and bias that are entering the group relationships. Moments of transference can be used to reflect on the internal experience and identify cognitive distortions that have been affecting intimacy in relationships. This should be monitored to prevent too much focus on one individual; involving other members' experiences can be included through the linking process. Interpersonal management identifies that conflict often is a result of differences between two individuals. There is perceived competition or imbalance of power that often encourages transference of previous experiences into the group dynamic. Member reflection on the others' perspective is encouraged. Group-as-a-whole encourages the connection of other group members within the conflict dynamic. The facilitator can link various experiences across group members to reflect on the larger group dynamic and experience in the 'here and now'.	PowerPoint Slide #14

(Kellerman, 1995; Weinberg, 2014)	
19. Group members look to the facilitator to provide safety during the expression of feelings (Unger, 1990), as emotional expression and vulnerability can feel like conflict before there is a sense of catharsis (Johnson et al., 2006). Addressing conflict doesn't mean to fix it, but to acknowledge the 'here and now' experience of the interaction. Facilitators must allow for participant's perspectives, including members who were not active participants in the conflict (Marmarosh, 2021; Weinberg, 2014). Identifying and redirecting the conflict to the specific trigger such as bias or frustration with the therapist encourages conflict resolution (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020). The facilitator cannot be passive and must remain aware of their own approach to conflict management, managing their own anxiety related to discord (Weinberg, 2014) When trust and stability are established and the group is in the working phase, the group as a whole can be seen as a supervisor for conflict. The facilitator must remain open to feedback from other group members, particularly if the facilitator is involved in the conflict (Weinberg, 2014). Reflecting on previous experiences of conflict or contracts developed, such as a members' previous request to receive feedback on unhealthy patterns can also encourage the 'here and now' processing of the group experience (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020). Active engagement through body posture (leaning forward, eye contact) and validation of emotions can be a helpful place to start during conflict. Remaining self-aware of our own contribution to the power dynamic and internal experiences of stress, biases, and transference is essential. The facilitator should encourage members to reflect on the experience of the other person by requesting that each argues from the others' perspective (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020). Assessing relationships through questionnaires such as the Curative Climate Instrument (CCI) and Group Climate Questionnaire (GCQ) can be helpful at identifying ruptures within the group dynamic (Johnson et al., 2006; Marmarosh, 2021).	PowerPoint Slide #15
20. Conflict can be a difficult experience, particularly within the group environment. There is a necessity for the facilitator to be willing to address conflict and power struggles within the group dynamic, to disturb 'comfortable' relationship dynamics that	PowerPoint #16

are unhealthy (Kellerman, 1995). Rotations between intimacy and conflict are normal, and the group leader should encourage members to deal with conflict in the ‘here and now’ (Unger, 1990). Members often identify moments of group conflict as one of the core moments in their group experience (Kellerman, 1995; Yalom & Leszcz, 2020). Group members often look to the therapist for guidance on establishing norms for managing conflict, so the facilitator needs to remain aware of personal experiences and receive supervision during the group process (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020). As conflict is managed in a healthy way, members can gain new perspectives on others’ experience, applying this to relationships outside of the group environment.	
21. I would love to hear from you regarding personal reflections or questions on the material. If I am unable to answer all questions, I will review the group chat and provide my responses to Dr. Warden for her to disseminate to you. I hope you have learned more about yourself and healthy management of group conflict during our time together. I encourage you to reflect on this process as you enter group over the next few days, paying attention to your own internal experiences and how this may reflect internal or external conflict processes.	PowerPoint #17
22. References	PowerPoint #18-19

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