

### TTK HOSPITAL

### Inside....

## GROUP THERAPY TECHNIQUES

### GROUP THERAPY



Group therapy 1

Problems areas in the group process 3

Introduction each topic & concluding the Group therapy session 5

Group therapy topics for families introduction & conclusion 11

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#### What is group therapy?

A process wherein a trained therapist,

- creates a suitable environment to help group members talk about their experiences and feelings in a focused manner to achieve the goals of treatment
- facilitates individual sharing to ensure that individual needs are met even though the welfare of the group remains the primary objective

#### Therapeutic Gains:

How does a patient benefit by attending group therapy?

- Experiences a sense of relief by talking about his past events and feelings
- Realizes that others too have problems with alcohol/ drugs and he is not the only one
- By talking about his own issues, listening to others sharing, asking for clarifications and providing feedback to a group of people he has not met before he learns how to interact and socialize without drugs/ alcohol
- Each member may bring with him different points of view of problems related to addiction and this helps him view his own issues in a different manner
- By trying to understand what others are saying and providing feedback, he is in a position where he can help others which strengthens his self esteem
- He learns to express disagreement and discuss issues in a socially acceptable manner
- Denial can be broken in a group setting through group interaction
- Able to develop a realistic plan to deal with his problems with the support of the group

### Guidelines: Basic requirements

- Size: 5 to 12 members.
- Duration: 60 to 90 minutes
- Frequency : At least five days a week as per the minimum standards of care
- Quiet room with privacy and comfortable seats
- Topic for the session is explained clearly with examples
- Explanation about what happens in the group, what they can hope to gain and how they can expect to profit from the sessions needs to be explained to clients before they start attending group therapy to reduce anxiety



### Ground rules

The rules are stated at the start of every group session

- Need to be punctual for all sessions
- Attend regularly
- Once the session starts, clients are not permitted to leave
- **Confidentiality : Whatever is discussed in the group should not be revealed to anybody else**
- Need to look at others while talking and maintain eye contact with others when they are talking
- Talk openly and honestly about issues
- Need to ask for clarifications, provide feedback and respond to others' sharing
- Express one's own experiences and feeling and not talk of others experiences or feelings.

### Role of the group therapist

- At the start of each session the therapist :
  - reminds the members of the ground rules and what they are expected to do
  - presents the topic for the session
- Facilitates the group process: A new comer to the group therapy sessions is hesitant, anxious and reluctant to share. Gradually he starts talking and expresses his feelings of guilt, grief, fear, aspirations etc. As the group members gradually start feeling more and more comfortable with each other they ask questions, give feedback and confront when necessary.

### The therapist guides this process by:

- Exhibiting appropriate listening and responding behavior
- Helping all members participate actively in the session
- Helping members recognize that all have similar addiction related problems
- Encouraging members to talk of their feelings rather than simply relate what happened to them or what they did
- Helping each member benefit by being sensitive to their individual issues while at the same time helping the group work together to provide the necessary support
- Helping the group members work together as a unit encouraging them to help each other rather than rely only on the therapist

## Concluding the session

- Synthesize the issues shared in the group
- Emphasize the main aspects that one needs to change
- Present simple messages to make change possible



Close group on a positive note by stating that change is possible

## PROBLEM AREAS IN THE GROUP PROCESS

- Tempo is slow and dull
- Discussions not focused
- Disorderly groups
- Formation of sub groups



### Group's Tempo Slow and Dull

- Actively encourage interaction
- Refrain from excessive control
- Encourage group to assume responsibilities
- Openly express concern about poor progress

### Groups that are not focused

- State topics clearly
- Choose topics with care
- Stress on the need to be focused
- Invite group's reaction



### Disorderly Groups

- State rules explicitly
- Be assertive
- Discuss impact on the progress of the group
- Confront and follow through with action

### Formation of Sub-Groups

- Openly discuss negative behaviour
- Avoid authoritative style
- Encourage feedback of group

## Individual Member's Problem Behaviour

### Poor eye contact

- Provide encouragement
- Invite group feedback

### Rude language

- Help member rephrase message
- Discuss individually outside group
- Request member to leave

### Help-rejecting complainer

- Encourage feedback to break “yes but” game

### Boring patient

- Summarise responses
- Initiate group intervention

### Questioner

- Provide brief responses
- Encourage member to use other resources

### Monopolist

- Repeat reminders for precision
- Encourage group's involvement
- Invite group feedback



### Patient who has difficulty in expressing feelings

- Invite “feeling” level responses
- Encourage reactions to others' sharing

### Silent patient

- Understand reason for silence
- Watch for non-verbal cues and encourage sharing
- Appreciate efforts at sharing

### One who believes he is always right

- Help him handle hurt and shame
- Invite group feedback

## **Other Problem Behaviours**

### **Denial**

- Paraphrase responses
- Facilitate group confrontation
- Display firmness with a caring attitude
- Encourage descriptive rather than evaluative responses
- Deal in one-to-one sessions

### **Breach of confidentiality**

- Stress the need to maintain confidentiality
- Discuss the issue in group

### **Relapsed patients**

- Deny entry under influence
- Encourage honest sharing
- Facilitate group confrontation

## **INTRODUCING EACH TOPIC AND CONCLUDING THE GROUP THERAPY SESSION**

Topics for the group therapy along with a brief outline are given below for presentation. It must be emphasized that issues specific to that particular group will need to be included without making them too lengthy.

Re-educative sessions are an important part of the addiction treatment programme. The topics for the group therapy are designed to link them to the lecture sessions on the given topic, to help the clients understand the issues better and also relate the lecture inputs at a personal level.

### **1. Symptoms of addiction**

#### **Introduction**

We have heard about the symptoms of addiction in the lecture session. Today we will talk about few of the symptoms like increased tolerance and loss of control. We can see that over the years we have increased the quantity and frequency of our alcohol/ drug intake. While previously we used just a few pegs or just a little of the drug, we had to increase the quantity because we could not experience the effect otherwise. In the same way, the time and situation in which we used also have changed. For example we started using more frequently and at earlier and earlier times of the day. We found gradually that we could not reduce the quantity we use or the number of times we use it. Even if we wanted to stay off it on a particular occasion we were not able to. This has happened to all of us. Share your experiences with examples.

## Conclusion

From what we all shared it is clear that we have lost control over our drug and alcohol use. We are unable to reduce or restrict our intake even when we knew that a lot of problems are caused by it, indicating that giving it up totally is the only possible way out. Total abstinence is the only way in which we can return to a meaningful lifestyle.

## 2. Physical damage caused by drug / alcohol

### Introduction

Today we will discuss about health problems that set in after we started drinking heavily or using drugs. Reduced sleep and energy levels are very common problems that most of us would have faced. Gastritis, ulcer, liver problems and damage to other organs may have been caused leading to pain in the abdomen, lack of appetite, poor digestion, vomiting, etc. The existing health problems like diabetes and hypertension may have become worse. Tremors and convulsions could have developed as part of the withdrawal symptoms. Psychological problems like depression, anxiety, fears or hallucinations could have developed. Concentration and memory could have been affected.

### Conclusion

We can see that addiction has definitely affected our physical and mental health. To improve health we need to give up alcohol/ drugs totally. This is the starting point for any kind of recovery. Following regular eating, sleeping and exercise pattern is also important. If the doctor has prescribed medications it is essential we take them regularly as advised. We need to remember that it is possible for us to make a remarkable recovery but this is possible only over a period of time.

## 3. Occupational damage

### Introduction

Onset of addiction affected our work pattern frequently leading to absenteeism, reduction in quality and quantity of work out put and reduced motivation and involvement. It could have affected the relationship with boss and colleagues. Some of us might have received memos/ suspensions, loss of pay / increment. Loss of jobs / unemployment might have also resulted. If we run businesses, complaints from our customers may have increased and loss of clientele or reduction in profits might have been caused. Share about aspects affected due to addiction.



## Conclusion

It is clear from your sharing that addiction has affected our work performance to a greater or lesser degree. To overcome these damage we need to identify areas that need to change and put in efforts consistently. Abstinence of course is the starting point of change. Developing work plan with emphasis on regularity and making a decision to give one's best is important. We cannot expect immediate rewards but work on consistently to bring about a change.

## 4. Financial damage

### Introduction

Let us now talk about how our ability to earn and handle money was affected after addiction set in. We in the past have spent large amount of money on alcohol / drugs and due to this were sometimes unable to meet legitimate expenses like routine family expenses or medical expenditure. We might have lost money / articles under the influence of drugs/ alcohol. We tend to spend extravagantly by buying gifts, holding parties or spending impulsively on things that could have been avoided. We may have had to pawn / sell articles to meet expenses. Some might have borrowed on high interest rates. As a result, our savings and assets have reduced dramatically.

### Conclusion

To handle all the set backs that we have shared we need to make changes in our lifestyle. Drawing up a budget and living by it is essential. Making a list of the loans and making a plan to consolidate loans with a lower rate of interest and paying back debts with higher rates of interest as soon as possible are important. Restricting expenses by avoiding use of credit cards and living within the budget is necessary to avoid taking more loans. Saving at least a small amount regularly is also essential to bring in financial discipline.

## 5. Family damage

### Introduction

Addiction can damage all our relationships. Parents, wife, brothers and sisters and other relatives all are affected as we are unable to function well and carry out our responsibilities. We fail to do things we should have done like providing adequate money, spending time with them, expressing our affection etc. We might have been drunk or too doped to be there for them when they needed us. We may have hurt them by saying many unpleasant things. As a result our relationships would have become weak or even lost leading to separation or divorce. Share about how your relationship with the family members has been affected



## Conclusion

If these relationships need to be re-built, we need to give up drugs and alcohol totally. We then need to make efforts to establish strong relationships. Doing things that we need to do, spending time and making efforts to show that we care and we need them are important. Apologizing for the past hurts we have caused, will also help.

## 6. Damage caused to children

### Introduction

Addiction affects the children the most. Even if food and a comfortable bed were available they were unable to enjoy them due to the conflicts, anxiety, worry and embarrassment caused. The children do not receive adequate love and affection either from us or from the others in the family. We may have hurt them a lot emotionally or even physically due to our misplaced anger when we unnecessarily displayed our anger, frustration on them and sometimes even turned violent. As a result they may have been unable to concentrate on studies, invite friends home or even celebrate and enjoy special days and festivals. Share about how the children in your family have been affected with examples.



### Conclusion

Addiction has definitely affected our children. Maintaining sobriety is the first requirement to bring about a change. We then need to demonstrate that we care by spending time with them and doing things with them and for them. Learning to express our criticism in a manner that does not hurt them is also important. By living as we want them to live, we can be the right role models for them.

## 7. Worst drinking episode

### Introduction

Addiction has caused many painful incidents. Yet amongst them, there will be at least one that we can never forget and consider it as being the worst. Share about the incident which you consider to be the worst incident that happened due to your drinking or drug taking. Describe the incident and how you felt about it when it happened. Tell us about how you feel about it when you think of it now.



### Conclusion

These incidents show how addiction has been the cause of anguish. Remembering these incidents helps us to remember the negative aspects of addiction and strengthens our decision to stay off alcohol/ drugs. If craving sets in, memories of such incidents help us resist alcohol / drugs. Going back to alcohol / drugs will only lead to more such incidents.

## 8. Ethical breakdown

### Introduction

We live according to some values that we consider as being important. When addiction set in we were not able to live according to these values we followed earlier and felt uncomfortable within us. Let us talk about some of the changes that had happened in our lives. Our honesty may have been affected as we had to lie or give excuses to buy alcohol or drugs, to cover up the effects or explain whatever we failed to do due to addiction. Though previously we took pride in working well, we were just unable to do our best as alcohol/drugs became the priority. We were not responsible and dependable as we failed to keep our word. Instead of following rules and regulations that we used to earlier, we started breaking rules.

### Conclusion

From our sharing we can see that the addiction has changed the way we function. We failed to live by the very same qualities that we valued earlier. Looking back, we feel ashamed and unhappy. Though these changes happened due to our drinking the return to value based lifestyle does not automatically happen. Though giving up drugs and alcohol is essential, we need to consciously make efforts to live by our values.

## 9. Negative traits that need to be changed

### Introduction



Over the years we have developed many negative traits that have to be changed. For instance, we would have been selfish. We always focused on what we needed, and wanted everybody to show care and concern for us but were just unable to do the same for others. Due to impulsiveness, we often said or did things without thinking. We might have been critical by looking for real or imagined faults of others and failed to appreciate others. We sometimes were defiant and did things that others don't want us to do. Identify and share about two negative traits which you would like to change.

### Conclusion

As addiction progressed, the negative traits that we already had may have become stronger and we may have developed a few more negative qualities. If these continue to be part of our personality, they will continue to affect our behavior and can also threaten our sobriety. So to make our lives more meaningful, we need to identify negative traits we have and make a commitment to change them.

## 10. Expressing anger

### Introduction

We often expressed anger inappropriately by shouting at others with harsh words sometimes even in others' presence. We at times may hit others, throwing or breaking articles to express our displeasure. Some expressed their anger by trying to punish others by not eating or going away without informing the family members. Some stayed silent and refused to talk.



Many times we directed our anger at the wrong person- problem at the office is expressed as anger at home etc. Share about ways you generally expressed anger and the effect it had on you and others.

### Conclusion

Many of us mentioned that we became angrier people after addiction set in and that most often the anger was not expressed properly. Inappropriately expressed anger hurt us and others. To express it in the right way we need to think about what makes us angry, learn to talk about it and deal with it. We all carry a lot of anger from our addiction days. We need to be able to let go of the resentments we carry so that it does not interfere with the future. Anger management is very important as the negative energy it creates can affect our physical and mental health and trigger relapses.

## 11. High risk situations

### Introduction

We have decided to give up alcohol/ drugs by participating in a treatment programme. Yet there are situations in which the risk of us drinking or taking drugs is high. For each of us the situation in which the relapse can happen can be different. Identify at least two such situations. Being invited to drinking parties, happy occasions, celebrations, sickness, stress related to work, arguments with friends, boredom etc.- anything could be difficult. Talk about what aspects will be difficult to handle and what can be done to deal with them.

### Conclusion

Identifying risk situations helps us to be aware of circumstances in which a relapse can happen and make plans to deal with it. There are some time-tested ways of dealing on a daily basis to remain cautious and alert even while strengthening our motivation to stay sober. Avoiding situations and people who are drinking, remembering the HALT and avoiding issues (hunger, anger, loneliness and tiredness) and learning to say "No" firmly will help. Maintaining regular follow-up and attending self help groups will provide you the necessary support.

## 12. Incidents that made us feel the presence of God

### Introduction

There may have been incidents wherein we felt totally helpless and something unexpected happened to help you. You or others may have attributed it to God's help. Share about one such situation.

### Conclusion

The incidents we shared were quite unique. What was common was that the unexpected turn of events led to a happy ending. This is often seen as intervention from the Higher Power. Addiction has also brought with it many problems. Sometimes we worry about whether we will be able to overcome all these problems. Just as how efforts from your side and unexpected help from somebody helped you overcome the problems in the past, you will be able to handle these too.

## GROUP THERAPY TOPICS FOR THE FAMILIES INTRODUCTION & CONCLUSION

Group therapy sessions are conducted separately for the families of addicted individuals. The topics focus on their needs and following are a few ways of introducing each topic and concluding that particular session.



### 1. Accepting alcoholism as a disease

#### Introduction

Before we came in for treatment, we did not know that alcoholism is a disease. We instead thought he is drinking excessively because he does not care enough for us or that he does not have adequate will power. Drinking was causing health problems like tremors and sleeplessness, problems at the work spot, financial problems and so on. Instead of looking at these problems as the result of his drinking, we mistakenly reasoned that he was drinking heavily because of these problems. During the lecture session, the symptoms of the disease were listed. Are you able to accept the fact that alcoholism is a disease? Are you able to see him as a person with a different kind of a disease?

#### Conclusion

We can see that many of us thought that particular situations or problems were the cause for his heavy drinking. We need to understand neither he nor you nor the situation was responsible for his heavy drinking. 20% of all drinkers turn into alcoholics. The disease of addiction developed and he started drinking heavily. As it is a disease we cannot change him by telling him to have self control. We also need to remember that this disease is progressive and cannot be cured and that he will never be able to go back to controlled or restricted use of alcohol/drugs in the future. Even if it is difficult, when we accept that addiction is a disease and that we can not change it, it becomes easier for us to handle the situation.

## 2. Codependency traits

### Introduction

Just as the addict's life became dysfunctional due to drinking, our own lives became miserable due to our family member's addiction. We were continuously preoccupied about what the addict was thinking, doing or will do in the future. We could not even eat or sleep as we were thinking about him all the time. We would not cook or clean the house or even work well at the work spot as we were worried and depressed. We were trying to take care of him and had no energy to take care of ourselves or carry out our responsibilities at home. We felt so tired and drained all the time. Even though we knew that giving advise, lecturing or threatening do not work, we continued to waste our energy in these activities. We kept postponing doing things waiting for him to change. Even things like visiting the doctor, taking the children out or buying things for the house were postponed. We were not able to recognise issues which were important for us and as a result, our lives were focused only on his drinking. Let us try to identify these negative codependency traits that we developed.

### Conclusion

We can see how we unknowingly allowed our own lives to become unproductive and dysfunctional. Accepting that we have codependency traits and there is a need to change is the first step in recovery. Secondly, we need to remember to take care of our own needs. Eating on time and enjoying it, sleeping well, seeking medical help whenever necessary, meeting friends and relatives and trying to get the best you can are important. Thirdly we need to recognise the responsibilities we have towards our children and other family members and focus on the present rather than keep thinking about the past, anxiously hovering over him all the time or worrying about the future. Irrespective of whether he goes back to drinking or not, we should be able to overcome our codependency traits and attempt to work towards a more meaningful future.

## 3. Home Remedies

**Introduction** Today, we will talk about how we tried to deal with his addiction with a lot of home remedies. We tried to give suggestions and asked him to drink lesser or drink at a particular time or day or drink at home only. We poured out his alcohol and filled it with water. We cried, pleaded and begged him to stop. We sometimes threatened to leave the house or even commit suicide. We invited other people to talk to him about stopping drinking. We tried to keep a strict watch over his movements or the way he handled money. We even tried shouting and punishing him. What kind of methods did you try and how did they work? How did he react and how did you feel at the end of it?



## Conclusion

We can see that all of us have tried a variety of ways to control their drinking and drug taking pattern. But nothing has really worked. At best we have managed to keep him off alcohol or drugs for just a few hours or a few days. We need to understand that none of our efforts can get him to stop drinking. Getting him professional help is necessary. Just as these efforts did not bring the desired results in the past, they cannot keep him sober in the future too. We must accept that we are powerless over his drinking and that we cannot change him by exercising control in any way.

## 4. Fear about relapse

### Introduction

During the morning lecture, the symptoms of relapse were described. Let us talk about what we understand by the word relapse. How do we feel about the issue of relapse? What do you think we can do about it? How do you think we will react if a relapse does take place? In case of a relapse, would we react in the old dysfunctional ways of getting angry, crying, pleading, advising etc.



### Conclusion

The word relapse seems to make many of us fearful and anxious. We need to prioritize and concentrate on things that need to be taken care of in the family - education for children, taking care of our own as well as other family members' health etc. We need to be able to look at the future with some positive thinking and do everything possible to make it happen rather than living in fear of relapse. If we do see the relapse signs, we can bring them to his notice, and discuss it with the counsellor too. Staying in touch with the treatment centre and attending al-anon meetings help. We need to remember that addiction is a disease in which relapses do occur and that relapse does not necessarily mean that treatment has failed. We need to be able to come back and take help to address the problem of addiction and move on.

## 5. Handling Anger

### Introduction



All of us may be very angry with the alcoholic for his continued drinking. In spite of our efforts he did not listen to us and created a lot of problems. Over a period of time our anger became widespread and we are angry not only with him but also with his friends who drink with him, our relatives, with the Government for opening the wine shop, with fate, with God etc. We were angry about everything around us. We tried every method - refusing to talk to him, hurting ourselves by banging or hitting ourselves, screaming loudly etc. How did we express our anger and how did we feel afterwards about it? Let us talk about how we dealt with our anger. Share

## Conclusion

We can see that our anger has grown over a period of time just like his alcoholism. Our anger has mostly affected us but has not made him or the situation different. We need to remember that addiction is a disease and that arguments are useless. By saying things in haste and anger we only made the situation worse and wasted time and energy. It has led to serious health problems like headaches, ulcers, B.P. etc.

We need to remember that uncontrolled anger leads to bitterness and makes our own life miserable. Based on the guidelines given in the class, we need to be able to handle our anger appropriately

## 6. Impact of alcoholism on Children

### Introduction

Children often suffer a lot due to alcoholism. We used all our energy to focus on the alcoholic and failed to take care of the basic needs of our children - like giving them food or permitting them to sleep on time. We often diverted our anger towards them and sometimes unnecessarily punished them. We had no time to listen or show interest in their activities. We sometimes overburdened them with our problems by telling them about it or by making them take up responsibilities like cleaning, looking after their father because we were too tired or too angry to do it.



### Conclusion

We need to rearrange our priorities and make children our first concern. We need to show more love, care and concern to them and get involved in their activities. With older children we can give sensible explanations about the father's drinking. The key issue is that we need to be consistent in the way we behave towards our children. Reducing our preoccupation with the alcoholic and giving them attention is most important. Do not share your troubles with them and draw them into the conflicts that you have with the alcoholic. We cannot say things which would turn them against the father. By providing a lot of encouragement, not expecting perfection and providing support we can help them live well in spite of father's alcoholism.

## 7. Enabling Behaviour

### Introduction

In the past we often "enabled" him to drink or take drugs. Initially we were unwilling to accept that problems were caused by his drinking and denied the problem. We told others that he was drinking but not much and pointed towards people who seem to be drinking more than him. We sometimes justified his drinking by saying that he was drinking because of his friends.

Even though we repeatedly stressed that he should not drink or take drugs, in our actions we functioned as if we were willing to do things to help him drink. We paid back his debts that he had got into because of drinking, made excuses on his behalf to others and even fed him when he was too drunk to eat. We tried to make as many adjustments as possible feeling that if the situation was different he will not drink. Let us identify a few of our enabling behaviour and talk about it.

## Conclusion

We can see how we have protected him from the consequences of his drinking and actually helped him to continue. It is only after a period of time that we have permitted him to face the consequences of his drinking. In the future too we may unconsciously continue to enable him. We need to recognize that he has the disease of alcoholism and making efforts to come out of it is totally in his hands. We can provide support and encouragement and nothing more. By giving excuses on his behalf, justifying his drinking, blaming others for his problems and continuing with our enabling behaviour we only complicate his recovery.

## 8. Recovery for the family

### Introduction

In today's class, we talked about the changes we have to make, to make our life meaningful. Some of the changes suggested are sharing responsibilities with the addict, trusting him, communicating openly, and dealing with defects of character. I would like you to share some of these problems you had while he was abusing alcohol. Will you be able to make changes in these areas and what kind of problems do you envisage?



### Conclusion

Just as it is difficult for the alcoholic to give up alcohol and make changes in his life style, it is also difficult for us to make changes over night. We have also clearly understood that there is a need to change some of our own negative behaviour through consistent effort and with the support of the treatment center and Al-anon.

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