



Oxford Health
NHS Foundation Trust

Oxfordshire Psychological Therapies

Group Analytic Psychotherapy

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What is group analytic psychotherapy?

Group analytic psychotherapy is a talking therapy which is provided in a small group setting.

The theory behind group analytic psychotherapy is that problems we might face currently arise from difficult experiences in our past, often linked to relationships that were unsatisfactory in a number of ways.

We learn how to act and feel through our relationships with those around us, both as children and as we grow up. Perhaps through relationships that ended in difficult ways, or left us feeling unvalued, angry, or diminished.

When difficulties arise from past experiences particularly if they relate to interactions with other people or groups of people group analytic psychotherapy can be the right place to explore them and learn how to change.

What can I expect in group analytic psychotherapy?

This is a relatively long-term therapy you would have a place in a group for up to two years. Therapy takes place in a small group of up to eight members, plus a therapist. Group analytic therapy is for problems that tend to be long-standing and difficult to understand, overcome or accept.

The group analytic approach involves interaction with the other group members. Whilst their problems may be similar or different to yours, there will inevitably be some common ground in your experiences and difficulties.

Unlike some other therapeutic approaches in groups, there will not be a set theme or focus to each session, and group members will talk about whatever comes to mind for them in that session.

Part of the focus of therapy may be to notice the patterns of interaction in the group. Often when people join an analytic group, they find that they interact with the other members of the group in a similar pattern to how they interact within other groups in their life, for example with their family, colleagues, friends, or neighbours.

You may find that some group members start to remind you of other important people in your life. Through the process of group analytic psychotherapy, you will have the opportunity to explore and understand different relationships within the

group and be able to choose to make changes which may improve the quality of your relationships and interactions with others. This can be a powerful agent for change and healing.

In many cases, particularly when problems relate to difficulties with relationships, you will gradually begin to see patterns and similarities with other members problems that feel familiar or suggest solutions to your own difficulties.

Sometimes this happens in big steps, but most people only notice changes after they have begun to happen.

Gradually, sharing and discussing problems in the group can change our perspective on them and enables us to communicate more flexibly.

Additionally, the companionship of meeting others in the group can reduce the sense of isolation and loneliness often associated with problems of this nature.

Group therapy of this kind moves away from the idea that an 'expert' with all the answers can in some way make difficult things go away; instead taking the approach that each person's healing comes from finding the strength inside ourselves, helped by those around us in this case the group.

What does group analytic psychotherapy require from me?

Joining a group involves commitment and requires motivation. Over the course of therapy, all participants will tell their stories and speak about their difficulties.

Through your interactions with others and the deepening relationships made within the group, you will gradually begin to establish more understanding about your own and others' problems.

There will be times when it feels difficult to do the work, or difficult to share your experiences and feelings with others, even if you are beginning to feel that they are becoming important to you and vice versa.

At these times it is particularly important to keep up your attendance, as this is when breakthroughs can occur both for you and other group members. It is through sharing and experiencing difficulties with each other that healing occurs.

The early stages of the group involve getting to know the other group members, but you will rapidly come to know each other extremely well in the context of therapy.

Usually, the people who benefit most from this therapy are those who want to address their problems and are motivated to commit to the process, even when it may involve facing emotional pain. You will be expected to commit to attending the group every week.

Practical Information

- We expect people to commit to attending the group for at least one year initially, with a maximum time of two years in the group.
- Group analytic psychotherapy groups consist of four-eight members plus one or two therapists. You will probably join a group with existing members, and over the course of your time in the group, other members will leave, and new members will join.
- Recognising and talking about your feelings about other group members leaving and joining is an important part of the therapy and may mirror other experiences in your life e.g. of loss.
- The group meets once a week for one and a half hours.
- Group members are asked to respect and maintain the confidentiality of the group by agreeing not to discuss the group outside of the room. If, when you start, you find you recognise or know any of the other group members let us know and we will find you another group (although in practice this rarely happens).
- Meetings take place at the same time each week and, where possible, in the same venue. The time of the group meeting is fixed beforehand and does not generally change.
- Group breaks are planned ahead. You will, where possible, be asked to take your own holidays during the group breaks.

- To protect the boundaries of the group, and ensure that all members are fully committed, if you miss more than four sessions the group therapist will discuss this with you.
- To help you to get the best out of therapy you will be expected to avoid actions that interfere with being able to think clearly, such as using drugs or drinking too much alcohol.

Likely results of therapy

This form of therapy is particularly helpful if you have difficulties in relationships, or symptoms that are understandable in the context of previous experiences in relationships.

Those who find it difficult to participate in groups often find this form of therapy particularly powerful, as long as they can 'stick with it' in the early stages.

Is there an end to the group?

The group itself does not 'finish', it is a continuously running group. People are able to join, stay for up to two years, and then leave. When someone leaves a spot opens up for someone else to join, meaning it is a slow open and close group.

Patient Feedback

"Group analytical therapy has been a hard road, learning about yourself and how you think about things takes a long amount of time and personal determination.

I now face life with hope looking forward to the future, and whatever life throws at me, I will be thinking "what would the group say (and of course [therapist]". I have learned so much which I hope has given me the tools to move on.

I wish that more people could benefit from groups such as this. I fully accept the expense of such long treatment and wish there was more funding to help others as I have been privileged to be helped".

How can I contact Psychological Therapies?

Email

Oxon.psychologicaltherapies@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Telephone

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Address

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

Adult Mental Health Team

Psychological Therapies

May Davidson Building,

Warneford Hospital, Warneford Lane,

Headington, Oxford OX3 7JX

Accessibility

Patient information leaflets are available on our website:
www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/leaflets

Get in touch

Address Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
Littlemore Mental Health Centre
Sandford Road, Oxford OX4 4XN

Phone 01865 901 000
Email enquiries@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk
Website www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Feedback

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides advice and support to patients, families, and carers, helping to resolve any problems, concerns, or complaints you may have.

Phone 0800 328 7971
Email PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

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