



GROUP LEADERSHIP

COLE'S SEVEN STEPS

Initially, students often learn best by experience. They are anxious to know how to “do” occupational therapy. They are both eager and afraid to begin working with clients. To the beginning student, occupational therapy is just a label. Only when students are put in the role of a professional do they become aware of what needs to be learned. Acting like a professional is often difficult for students, whose only experience in group leadership is often with groups of their peers. Part of making the transition to a professional role is learning that it is different from a social role. Professionalism carries with it an authority and a directness of purpose that will need to be practiced by students before they begin interacting with clients.

This book begins with a technique that is a concrete form of group leadership training. This allows students to practice the role of a professional. It is as generic as any technique can be and is intended as a beginning experience for students entering the profession. As the educational process continues, it is expected that the technique will be modified many times over to match the needs of each unique group. It is changed in content to meet new goals and address different age groups and health conditions. It is changed in process and structure to align with different professional models and frames of reference.

Depending on the goals and contexts, these seven steps may occur in different sequence from the one presented here. Aside from introduction, activity, and summary,

the experienced leader allows the group to flow naturally and self-organize, making sure the necessary elements of processing, sharing, generalization, and application are appropriately addressed. The seven-step model is holistic and incorporates the basic dynamic occupation and client-centered process of the American Occupational Therapy Association’s (AOTA) *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process, Third Edition*, “achieving health, well-being and participation in life through engagement in occupation” (AOTA, 2014, p. S4). All seven-step group interventions described in this text are client centered. The primary purpose for which this method of group facilitation was designed is to enable the participation of members in doing a shared task or activity and to reflect upon its meaning for each of them. Every step in the process calls for the group leader’s therapeutic use of self to enact the principles of client-centered practice. While the seven steps can be adapted for use with different frames of reference and occupation-based models, their basic approach remains client centered. Chapter 3 reviews some basic principles of client-centered occupational therapy practice as they relate to group interventions.

But, learning has to begin somewhere. Therefore, it is recommended that students practice the seven steps in their original sequence, even though it may seem somewhat stilted. Just as motor development precedes cognitive awareness in the infant, a concrete experience in group leadership