



## **Why Group Therapy Works**

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Group psychotherapy is a special form of therapy in which a small number of people meet together under the guidance of a professionally trained therapist to help themselves and one another. The therapy has been widely used and has been a standard treatment option for over 50 years.

Group works! In studies comparing group psychotherapy to individual therapy, group therapy has been shown to be as effective - and sometimes *even more* effective.

### **Top Five Reasons Why Group Therapy Works**

1. Group therapy helps children gain a feeling of acceptance with their peers that may not otherwise be present.
2. Group therapy improves a child's self-esteem
3. Children get to "role play" the lessons they learn in group with their peers.
4. Children learn techniques to help them self-regulate their emotions.
5. Children realize they are not alone. There are other kids working through emotional challenges just like them.

However, in order for group therapy to work, you have to find the right group for your child. Be careful! There are many mental health practices who offer groups who do not have the proper training.

Which groups offer the best opportunities for results in my child?

1. Groups should comprise of approximately 4-8 children, with similar emotional behavioral goals. And should be close in age. Depending on how old your child is, gender may be a consideration as well.
2. It takes time to enact long term, systemic change. Watch out for groups that advertise quick fixes. Short term groups are merely "appetizers", prepping your child for the "main course" which offers long term benefits.
3. Be aware of agencies or practices with inexperienced therapists or with high turn-over rates. They tend to offer inconsistency and incongruent training for their staff.

4. Look for a group where concrete goals can be achieved. A qualified professional will insure realistic treatment goals are set for you and your child.

5. A group program with a simultaneous parents' group is a huge plus! This group will teach you the same behavioral tools and lexicon your child is learning. That way, you're offering a continuum of care which only benefits and accelerates your child's progress.

Group therapy is a safe place to experiment with new social behaviors. The children learn to reinforce progress in each other. In this way, kids are ultimately buoyed by their peers and hopeful about future social and emotional success.