

# What You Can Get From Group Counseling:

**Learn to identify and communicate in the here and now**

We often live in the past or become consumed with the future. Or our thoughts are “somewhere else” perhaps tied up with some problem or worry. In group, there is an opportunity to focus our awareness on what’s going on right in this instance, so that we may regain the kind of contact we once had with ourselves and our environment.

**Make contact with and explore the world of inner feeling**

This includes such feelings as boredom, guilt, anger, hurt, joy, sexuality, playfulness, affection, resentment, sorrow, love and excitement. As children, many of us have learned to isolate ourselves from this feeling world. Through disclosing ourselves to others in the group, and expressing our feelings towards them, we have a chance to get back in touch with this creativity and experience ourselves more fully.

**Get feedback**

In daily conversation, most people give feedback that is either polite flattery or thoughtless condemnation, which does not help us to critically understand ourselves. In a group however, it’s possible to get honest feedback about how we are coming across, to find out what impressions others have of us, to see ourselves as others see us, to discover our unknown mannerisms, habits, and styles of relating and communicating, and to become aware of the unconscious messages we are transmitting.

**Rediscover a sense of self-worth and self-confidence**

Participation in group allows members to see how they can contribute to the growth and well-being of others. Members are able to provide support and encouragement which is often experienced as healing by all parties involved.

**Learn to initiate things**

To the extent allowed by the pre-established structure of the group, group members have an opportunity to learn how to get things going on their own, without depending on someone else to do it for them. Each person, with the help of the leaders, can learn to express her or his own wishes and to act on her or his own impulses instead of continually being tuned into the expectations and pressures coming from other people.

**Be honest with others**

Much of our life is spent abiding by social norms, being polite, and worrying about not hurting others’ feelings. In group there is an opportunity to be yourself, to let the submerged parts of yourself come to the surface, and to discard the masks and shields of everyday life in a way that allows you to more fully connect with yourself and others.

**Become more sensitive to the ways people communicate**

People generally communicate much more than the explicit content of the words they use. In the group it is possible to listen to “the music,” not just “the lyrics,” and to become aware of the subtle but powerful messages being transmitted by facial expressions, postures, tone of voice, gestures, etc.

**Learn about closeness and intimacy**

What often blocks people from being close is the fear of being pushed around by other people’s feelings, demands, and expectations. When they begin to get close, they get tangled up on the feeling level. In group, there is a chance to learn how to disentangle the problems that arise in relationships so that people can be close and still retain their freedom, autonomy, and self-assertiveness.

**Experiment with new ways of relating to the world**

Most of us rely on only one or two fixed relationship styles when encountering others. The group is a kind of laboratory where all kinds of experiments can be tried out, where new ways of relating and communicating can be risked, and where our failures can be accepted, embraced and valued.

*This list of opportunities is not meant to be complete. As a group progresses, you may see new possibilities and new learning goals which you may set for yourself. Your group leader can offer more specific suggestions upon request.*