

Trans and Queer Adult Therapy Group

Tuesdays, weekly, 5:15pm-6:45pm

Virtual, ongoing group

Jen Rivers, ASW 103007

She/her/We/us

Supervised by Christina Dixon, LCSW 87870

This document is meant to provide a brief introduction to group therapy

Group

- Every person is born, raised, and socialized in a group, which is our family
- Family is our first connection with others, where we learn about ourselves and experience relationships with others
- Groups offer a unique opportunity to connect, feel supported, allow folks to learn about themselves and how they relate to others, identify and delve into their roles in their family systems, and work through relational conflict

Group vs. Individual Psychotherapy

- Research indicates that group therapy is quite effective, and in some cases even more effective than individual therapy
 - For some folks, having a combination of both is ideal
- Group can be a place where folks can practice insights gained in individual therapy in a safe setting
 - Example: a client might learn in individual therapy that they are afraid of being criticized by others when being vulnerable; group offers the opportunity to test new ways of relating to others, like practicing being vulnerable, without fear of judgment in a safe space
- Just as it takes time to form relationships in individual therapy, group relationships also take time to form
 - **Because of this reasoning, you will be asked for a commitment to attend group for 3 months (12 sessions) before deciding whether or not to be an ongoing group member**
 - **If you decide at week 12 that you have met all your group therapy goals, and you'd like to complete your time in group, you must attend 4 more sessions so the group and therapist can process your departure together**
 - It is suggested that you commit to a longer period of time in the group, as clients find that they get a lot out of the process

Goals of Group Therapy

- It is expected that each group member will relate to others in ways that are familiar and rooted in past experience (family dynamics, childhood, roles children were taught to play in their families of origin). The problems that one experiences in relationships outside group will often develop inside group as well
 - This is a GREAT thing!
- The main goal of group is to examine and work out these problems in new ways that can translate into improved relationships in one's life

Difference of Groups and Group Norms

- There are many different kinds of groups
 - Some are designed to offer support, such as grief support groups
 - Some are designed to teach skills for a specific issue, like coping skills for anxiety
 - Other groups focus on a topic, like eating disorders
 - The size of groups can vary
 - **My groups are small - 4 group members minimum and 6 maximum**
- This group focuses on our relationships to ourselves and the other members of the group, including the therapist
 - Support, skill development, and/or special topics will absolutely emerge in group
 - The central themes of this group though is examining and working with feelings and relationships within us and among group members
 - The ability to address all feelings, including so-called 'negative' ones is a cornerstone to effective interpersonal functioning

Mixed Cis and Non-Cis Group Members

- **This is a group for both cisgender folks and non-cisgender folks**
- Cis folks will encounter non-cis folks in the real world
 - It is helpful to be able to learn how to become more open to others and their experiences, which in turn allows you to be more open with yourself, and how to relate to others
 - Additionally, you will become a stronger ally for non-cis folks
- Non-cis folks will encounter cis folks in the real world
 - This is a safe space to practice building up self-advocacy skills with others, which will be helpful in navigating relationships with peers, coworkers, partners, and family members
- Additionally, each prospective group member meets with me twice so I can ensure the person is a good fit for the group, and that the group is a good fit for them
 - This includes an understanding and willingness to be present with folks who are cis and non-cis, as well as any other marginalized identities a person holds
- If a group member has questions regarding another person's identity, they must understand that it is their job to educate themselves and not the responsibility of the group member

The Group Agreement (or Contract)

Group Goals:

- Each member shares with the group their emotionally-significant story of their lives, both past and present
- Each member attempts to put into words all of their thoughts and feelings about themselves and others

Group Guidelines:

- Confidentiality:
 - Everything that members reveal in group stays in group, as does the identifying information of all the group members
- There is no socializing outside of group. If folks meet outside the group, accidentally, this will be brought back to the group to discuss and process
- Group will start and end on time
 - Please note that if you struggle with neurodivergence and executive functioning, we can create opportunities for you to work on executive functioning skills
- **Each member pays for each group, whether they are present or not**
- **Members pay the monthly fee at the beginning of every month. The cost associated with each session is \$60 total, which would amount to \$240-\$300 per month, depending on the number of weeks in a month. Payment is made via Ivy Pay, which is a secure app (further instructions will be available when committing to the group)**
- Members announce absences from group (or late arrivals) in advance, whenever possible
- There is no action in group. Impulses to act are put into words, not into action
- Each member will, over time, take up a roughly equal amount of talking time
- All thoughts and feelings are welcomed, and all content areas or topics are open for discussion
- Group members are committed to sharing their thoughts and feelings about other group members, the group itself, and the group leader
- Members stay in group until they feel they have met their treatment goals, which may change over time
 - At that time, a departing member attends 4 full groups to allow time for exploration of their motives to leave and, primarily, for a thoughtful “goodbye” process to be had with the other members and group leader
- Members are not to share personal contact information even when they leave group

Reaching Goals in Group

- Group therapy is a space where you can safely take risks and try out new ways of relating to others, getting your needs met, and supporting others
- You will have a chance to practice putting your thoughts and feelings into words

- The nature of how you participate in group determines how quickly you'll achieve your goals in the therapeutic process
 - Keep the following in mind:
 - Identify your reactions
 - Try to identify your reactions to others in the space, including the therapist
 - Notice your thoughts, feelings, bodily reactions, fantasies, urges, and anything you feel compelled to do (i.e. cast judgment, desire to give advice, protect or comfort others)
 - Also identify if what another group member says creates any discomfort, any admiration, competitiveness, hope, anger, etc
 - Express your reactions authentically
 - Once you identify your thoughts and feelings in response to others, notice what blocks you from expressing yourself
 - Notice when you are inhibited from expressing relevant reactions and share what is getting in the way with the group
 - Some common reasons that group members struggle to express themselves authentically in group are that they:
 - Feel that their thoughts and feelings are not as important as others' thoughts and feelings
 - Worry about taking more than their share of group time
 - Feel that they are being a burden to others
 - Are worried about hurting or offending others
 - Are concerned that others will judge them negatively
 - Fear generating anger in, or conflict with, one or more group members
 - Feel pressure to "please" (or fear of disappointing) the group leader
 - Be respectful at all times
 - Disagreements and conflicts are a natural aspect of all relationships, and you are encouraged to express them openly and respectfully
 - If this feels difficult for you, don't worry, it's the therapist's job to help you practice and get more comfortable and skilled with these kind of interactions

Next Steps

- **Prospective group members will meet with me virtually twice**
 - (These consultations are at no cost)
 - The first meeting will be anywhere between 40 minutes to 50 minutes

- This meeting will be a series of questions around your general interest, previous therapy experience(s), mental health journey, group specific questions, family relationships, social relationships, and roles played in childhood and adulthood
- Logistics
- If at any point, I determine that my group might not be the best fit for you (or you determine that me and/or my group is not a good fit for you), I'm happy to refer you to another group/group leader
 - The second meeting occurs after you commit to the group
 - This meeting will be around 20-30 minutes
 - In this meeting, we will create your goals for group together
- After committing, I will send you paperwork to complete, including the information on how to set up payments in our system (Ivy Pay).

Please contact me to set up a time for us to meet virtually. Additionally, always happy to jump on a phone call if you have any questions not answered in this document.

Contact Information:

Jen Rivers, ASW
jenriverstherapy@gmail.com
323-379-5969
www.jenrivers.com