

## Book Review

ROY NAAR, Ph.D. *A Primer For Group Psychotherapy*

The book is appropriately titled "A Primer" since it is intended for beginning practitioners in group psychotherapy. The author states that the book "is a highly personal endeavor" growing out of his own practice and the practice of others with whom he is closely associated. He does not pretend to have accomplished a thorough or even sufficient coverage of the field. The book is quite short and focuses on common but troublesome problems in group psychotherapy. There is a brief chapter on theory, a very sensitive treatment of the role of the leader, and an anecdotal as well as theoretical treatment of clinical issues.

The major theme of the book centers around the processes of group psychotherapy as *Awareness*, *Closure*, and *Rehearsal of New Behaviors*. *Awareness* is defined as the recognition of alternatives most likely to promote growth. The information constituting the alternatives must be correct and appropriately given. Correct and appropriate are self-defining as that which facilitates growth. The rather complex problem of what constitutes choice is not dealt with at any greater depth. However, the

author addresses himself to practitioners not theoreticians. *Closure* represents a temporary departure from the "here-and-now" focus in order to release the individual from the past to cope more effectively with present problems. *Rehearsal of New Behaviors* is self-explanatory and is set forth as one of the most important advantages of group psychotherapy over individual.

The author does not claim originality for the theoretical concepts he employs and attributes most of the credit to Rogers, Perls and learning theorists. His therapeutic attitude is essentially client-centered. However, he also employs techniques from psychodrama, gestalt therapy, and other more personal sources. His approach might best be described as modified client-centered or even eclectic, but always with great concern for the right of the client to choose.

I do not think that sufficient attention is given to the natural dynamics of cohesive groups. Some of the events described in the anecdotes would be interpreted quite differently from a group dynamics viewpoint. Some of the anecdotes are probably not really necessary since the point illustrated is quite obvious without them.

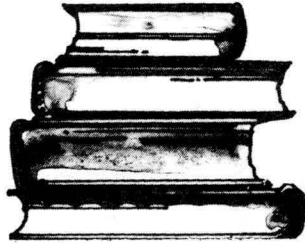
Dr. Naar employs simple, straightforward explications of concepts such as *here-and-now* and *process*. He warns against labeling and dependence on cliches rather than using common language to facilitate understanding the process of group psychotherapy as it actually occurs. He deals very well with the clients' initial expectations and lack of readiness for honest open expressions. His direct approach to some of the controversial theoretical issues (e.g., the distribution of psychic energy and transference) rather deftly puts the arguments aside as irrelevant to the process of treatment.

The addendum entitled *Elements of Psychodrama*, although very concise, appears to be essentially accurate. The author was obviously very impressed, even enthralled, with the personality of Jacob Moreno, and with the highly significant contributions of psychodrama to the entire field of group psychotherapy. Even so, he has been able to take his own view and adapt concepts and techniques from psychodrama to fit into his theoretical framework and personal style. He presents some excellent descriptions and defense of the use of psychodramatic interventions without total classical psychodrama involvement. He presents some criticisms of psychodrama as a total group therapy approach which seem quite germane but are not clearly elucidated. The author seems overly cautious in presenting such criticisms.

The book should be most helpful to beginning group psychotherapists, especially those who contemplate private practice. It also contains useful hints for more experienced professionals, and, for some, it may also

provide a fresh perspective. The author's theoretical constructions are modestly presented with sources clearly identified. There is no hint of grandiosity or the attainment of final answers. He frequently emphasizes that this is what seemed right for him and warns that it may not fit for other therapists. Through his self disclosures and intimate writing style the book comes across as a personal message.

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