

# GROUP THERAPY FOR CANCER PATIENTS

*A Research-Based Handbook  
of Psychosocial Care*

DAVID SPIEGEL, M.D.  
CATHERINE CLASSEN, PH.D.



A Member of the Perseus Books Group

# Contents

	<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
	Introduction	1
	<b>PART I: RATIONALE FOR INVOLVING CANCER PATIENTS IN GROUP SUPPORT</b>	
1	<b>Experiencing Cancer</b>	13
	The Diagnosis, 14	
	A Changed Self-Image, 17	
	Stress and Distress, 18	
	Social Isolation, 22	
	Social Support, 23	
	Conclusion, 26	
2	<b>Goals and Effects of Group Support</b>	27
	Goals of Supportive-Expressive Psychotherapy Groups, 28	
	Evidence for the Benefits of Psychotherapeutic Interventions, 42	
	Conclusion, 53	
	<b>PART II: STRUCTURING SUPPORT GROUPS FOR PATIENTS COPING WITH SERIOUS MEDICAL ILLNESS</b>	
3	<b>Guidelines for the Therapist in Structuring and Maintaining a Group</b>	57
	Considering Types of Cancer, 57	
	Considering Stage of Disease, 59	

	Optimal Timing for Joining a Group, 63	
	The Length and Size of the Group, 64	
	Open Versus Closed Groups, 65	
	Providing a Safe and Successful Environment for the Group, 66	
	Initial Session, 81	
	Early Sessions, 84	
	Conclusion, 90	
4	<b>Treatment Strategies and Options for the Therapist</b>	91
	The Basic Treatment Strategies, 91	
	Suggestions for the Final Sessions, 118	
	Working with a Co-leader, 122	
	Conclusion, 126	
5	<b>Building Group Support</b>	129
	Support That Occurs Naturally, 129	
	Facilitating Supportive Interactions, 131	
	Handling a Problematic Expression of Support, 132	
	Identifying Missed Opportunities for Mutual Support, 134	
	Managing Disagreements, 135	
	Building Outside Support Among Group Members, 136	
	Conclusion, 141	
6	<b>Encouraging Patients to Explore Their Experience and Express Their Emotions</b>	143
	Rationale for Open Expression, 143	
	Facilitating Emotional Expression in the Group, 146	
	Therapists' Emotions and Transparency, 160	
	Conclusion, 165	
<b>PART III: HELPING PATIENTS MANAGE THEIR EXISTENTIAL CONCERNS</b>		
7	<b>Dealing with Dying</b>	169
	The Existential Orientation, 169	
	Discussing Dying, 170	

	Exposure to Coping with Dying, 173	
	The Cost of Not Facing Death, 181	
	Bringing Concerns About Death to the Surface, 183	
	The Problem of Assisted Suicide, 186	
	Conclusion, 189	
<b>8</b>	<b>Dealing with Isolation, Meaning, and Freedom</b>	<b>191</b>
	Isolation, 191	
	Meaning, 195	
	Freedom, 200	
	Working with Existential Concerns in the Context of Religious Beliefs, 205	
	Conclusion, 206	
<b>PART IV:</b>		
<b>MANAGING GROUP PROBLEMS AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS</b>		
<b>9</b>	<b>Facilitating Family and Specialized Groups</b>	<b>209</b>
	Family Groups, 209	
	Groups for Other Illnesses, 229	
	Conclusion, 235	
<b>10</b>	<b>Group Problems</b>	<b>237</b>
	Confrontations Among Group Members, 237	
	Scapegoating, 239	
	The Monopolizer, 240	
	The Silent Member, 241	
	The "Special" Member, 243	
	The Help Rejector, 245	
	The Psychiatrically Distressed, 247	
	The Hostile Member, 248	
	When Members Leave, 249	
	Conclusion, 250	

11	<b>Methods of Pain Control</b>	253
	Reducing Muscle Tension and Diverting Attention from Pain, 254	
	Reducing Depression and Pain and Interpreting Pain, 255	
	Teaching Hypnosis in the Group Setting, 260	
	Conclusion, 269	
	<i>Afterword</i>	271
	Psychological Outcome of Supportive-Expressive Group Therapy, 271	
	Effects of Group Support on Health Outcomes, 275	
	<i>References</i>	279
	<i>Index</i>	297