

## What is Group Counseling?

Students who have common concerns meet as a group with counselors who are trained and have experience leading groups. Groups typically meet for 90 minutes once a week and consist of fewer than 10 ongoing members. The first few sessions of a group usually focus on establishing trust. Members work to establish an environment that allows them to talk personally and honestly with increasing comfort.

Group members also interact by giving feedback to each other and expressing their own feelings about what someone says or does. The content of the group sessions is confidential; what members talk about or disclose is not discussed outside the group.

Confidentiality is an essential element in creating a sense of safety and trust in group. Confidentiality is discussed during the first group meeting and may be reviewed periodically. Based on our experience, group members recognize the importance of confidentiality and do not discuss personal information outside of group. Counselors adhere to professional and ethical guidelines that can be reviewed in our Confidentiality and Privacy Statements at [www.counseling.txstate.edu/services/confidentiality.html](http://www.counseling.txstate.edu/services/confidentiality.html).

TEXAS  STATE<sup>®</sup>  
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## Group Counseling



College is a time of change and adjustment, and it's common for students to feel overwhelmed by circumstances or relationships. When a student needs assistance and advice beyond what family and friends can provide, Texas State's Counseling Center can help.

Professional counselors provide free and confidential assistance to currently enrolled Texas State students. Individual counseling is available, but many students benefit from participation in group counseling. Members commit to regular attendance at sessions throughout the semester. All groups provide an opportunity for members to interact freely and receive feedback from one another.

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## Why Does Group Counseling Work?

Students often feel alone and isolated in dealing with their problems, and it can be comforting to hear that other people have similar difficulties. Under the skilled direction of group counselors, members are able to support each other and offer suggestions.

## The Benefits of Group Counseling

- An opportunity to benefit both through active participation and through observation.
- Exploring issues in an interpersonal context that more accurately reflects real life.
- An opportunity to observe and reflect on your own and others' interpersonal skills.
- An opportunity to give and receive immediate feedback.
- Working through personal issues in a supportive and confidential atmosphere.
- A chance to help others work through their concerns.

Many members find their relationships change or improve as a result of group participation.

## What Do I Talk About in Group Counseling?

Talk about what brought you to the counseling center in the first place. Tell the group members what is bothering you. If you need support, let the group know. If you think you need confrontation, let them know this also. It is important to tell people what you expect of them.

Unexpressed feelings are a major reason people experience difficulties. Revealing your feelings, called self-disclosure, is an important part of group counseling. The appropriate disclosures will be those that relate directly to your current difficulty. How much you talk about yourself depends on what you are comfortable with. If you have any questions about what might or might not be helpful, you always can ask the group.

## Common Misperceptions About Group Counseling

**I will be forced to tell all of my deepest thoughts, feelings and secrets to the group.**

You control what, how much and when you share with the group. Most people find that when they feel safe enough to share what is troubling them, a group can be very helpful and affirming. We encourage you to not share anything you are not ready to disclose. It also can help to listen to others and think about how what they are saying might apply to you.

**Group counseling will take longer than individual counseling because I will have to share the time with others.**

Actually, group counseling is often more efficient than individual counseling for two reasons. First, you can benefit from the group even during sessions when you say very little but listen carefully to others. You will find that you have much in common with other group members, and as they work on a concern, you can learn more about yourself. Second, group members often will bring up issues that strike a chord with you, but that you might not have been aware of or brought up yourself.

**I will be verbally attacked by the leaders and by other group members.**

It is very important that group members feel safe. Group leaders are there to help develop and ensure a safe environment. Feedback is often difficult to hear. As group members come to trust and accept one another, they generally experience feedback and even confrontation as positive. One of the benefits of group counseling is the opportunity to receive feedback from others in a supportive environment. It is rare to find friends who will gently point out how you might be behaving in ways that hurt yourself or others, but that is precisely what the group can offer.

**I have so much trouble talking to people, I'll never be able to share in a group.**

Most people are anxious about being able to talk in a group. Almost without exception, within a few sessions people find that they do begin to talk in the group. Group members remember what it is like to be new to the group, so you will most likely get a lot of support for beginning to talk in the group.

Group counseling is second-best to individual counseling.

Frequently group counseling is the most effective method to help you. Texas State students who have attended group counseling have made general comments about what they liked most about their group experience:

- Active communication with people who understand what I am going through.
- My group counselor was insightful, sincere, and gave straightforward feedback.
- Being able to relate to the other group members and not worry about judgment.
- Relating to others. They make me feel like I'm not alone.
- Being able to talk openly and speak my mind with others similar to myself.

## Is Group Counseling for You?

Groups offered each semester are listed online at [www.counseling.txstate.edu](http://www.counseling.txstate.edu). You can call the Counseling Center at 512.245.2208 to learn more about groups or to speak with the group counselor. We are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Groups fill quickly, so schedule a pregroup appointment to talk to the group counselor as soon as possible. This free, brief appointment will help you and the counselor verify which group will meet your needs. Prospective group members' schedules may influence the choice of meeting time.

## How Can You Get the Most Out of Group?

- Be as genuine as you can be so others can help you more directly.
- Work actively toward your goals for the group. Ask the group for help.
- Respect your needs and don't press yourself to reveal more than you are ready to reveal. On the other hand, gently challenge yourself to take more risks with self-disclosures so you get your needs met.
- Group will be most helpful to you if you can find a way to talk about yourself while also actively listening to other members.
- Be patient with yourself and the group. It will take time for you to feel comfortable in group and it will take time for the group to develop trust.
- "Try on" new behaviors in the group and ask for feedback from others when you do so. Although this means taking risks, it is usually well worth it. You've already taken the risk of being a member, right?

## The Counseling Center Staff

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