**Ten tips for getting the most out of group therapy**

1. Get involved and try to be as open as possible.  It’s okay to not understand.  It isn’t expected that you will come up with a brilliant interpretation for others.  Just be honest, even if it means admitting that you don’t know what is going on.
2. Find out from others what role they see you taking on in the group. What are your “blind spots”?  Ask the group for feedback about how they experience you.
3. Try out new ways of talking to people and behaving.  Take some risks.
4. Do your best to share with others what is going on in your mind, even if it isn’t very pretty. If you don’t know what is going on in your mind, tell the group that. It is okay to be “messy” and let others know about the things that you normally keep hidden from others.  We follow “group rules” not “social rules” and these rules allow for greater self-disclosure.
5. Try and notice the ways in which your actions match your intentions, and the ways they don’t.  (Hint: Much of the time they won’t!).  Explore with the group what makes it difficult for them to match.
6. Remember that *how* people talk is as important as *what* they say.  Pay attention to the non-verbal behaviors in the group—yours and those of other members. Talk about what you notice.
7. Try to be as direct as possible and be open to the responses of others.  Telling a story is sometimes a way of being known, but it can also be a way of avoiding dialogue and intimacy.  Aim for dialogue rather than monologue.
8. Avoid questions when a statement about what is going on in your mind can be offered instead. For example, you might say, "My own difficulty in getting along with my boyfriend is making me curious about what your marriage is like" rather than, "How long have you been married?".
9. Focus on the relationships you have with the group, other group members and the leader.  Put a priority on noticing what is happening inside the group.  What is going on that makes you feel closer or more distant towards others?  Try and explore with the group what you notice.
10. The expression of emotion will have far greater value than the expression of ideas or information.  Try and take the risk to let yourself be emotionally available to others.

By [Mark Sorensen, Ph.D., CGP, FAGPA](http://www.groupfind.com/leader/sorensen/index.html)

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| **Ten *more* tips for getting the most out of group therapy**     1. People are very different in the way they think about things.  People are much more similar when it comes to feelings.  Thus, when you talk about your feelings, other group members will more easily connect with you. 2. It is natural to want to protect yourself; everybody does in one way or another.  Notice the ways you want to protect yourself and, at your own pace, let the group know about them. 3. You don’t have to answer questions that other members ask you if you don’t feel ready to.  However, you might share with the group why you don’t feel ready to answer. 4. Try not to assume what other people are thinking or feeling.  Give them a chance to have their own reactions and try to be open to finding out what these reactions are. 5. Think about what it is like for you to “take up space” in the group.  Is it difficult for you to speak and, if so, do you have any idea why?  Share such difficulties with the group. 6. Take note of your first impressions of other members.  First impressions are powerful but not always accurate.  You can learn about yourself by noting and being curious about your first impressions of others. 7. Try to suspend reacting to transactions in the group as “good or bad”, right or wrong and, instead, trying to understand what is going on in you and other members of the group. 8. Don’t be reluctant to interrupt the group process when you feel that you have something to say, especially when you feel that not much work is taking place in the group. 9. Notice if your preconceptions of the group match or diverge from the way the group actually is.   What can you learn from such an observation? 10. Remember there are no innocent bystanders in a group.  If you don’t like the way things are going, you have a opportunity to make your feelings known and perhaps effect a change in the group norms and culture.   By [Jerry Gans, M.D., CGP, FAGPA](http://www.groupfind.com/leader/gans/index.html) |
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