

Counselling group workshops

Everything needed to design and run your first group: which format to pick, how the ninety minutes are spent, what the group does to you in week three, and who to screen out before it starts.

Prepared for Rishmita · 13 September 2026 · Revised 19 September 2026

8–12

Members in a working group. Under 6 and one absence empties the room.

90 min

Long enough for a real exercise, short enough to hold attention.

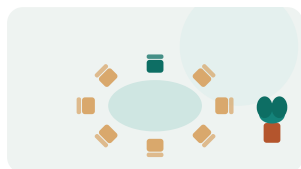
6–8

Sessions in a closed series. Fixed dates, fixed members, paid up front.

2

Facilitators once you pass ten people. One leads, one watches the room.

ON THIS PAGE. EVERY TILE IS A LINK, IN THE PDF TOO.



01

Choose the shape

Four formats, from a two hour class to a twelve week process group.



02

The session

Where ninety minutes go, block by block.



03

The arc

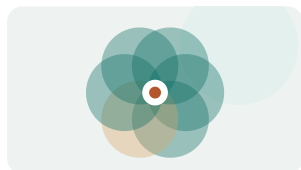
Five stages every group walks through, and your move in each.



04

Safety

Six ground rules and the fifteen minute screening call.



05

Mechanism

Why a group reaches what one to one cannot.



06

Fill the room

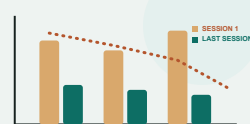
Referrals, the flyer, the price and the waiting list.



07

Hard moments

Six things that will happen, and what to do.



08

Measure it

Two forms and a sentence, at session one and the last.



09

A worked series

Six weeks on anxiety at work, week by week.



10

Two in the room

Co-facilitation, and running it online.



11

Launch

Ten things before session one. Printable.



12

Watch it done

Eighteen videos: real groups, the theory, and India.



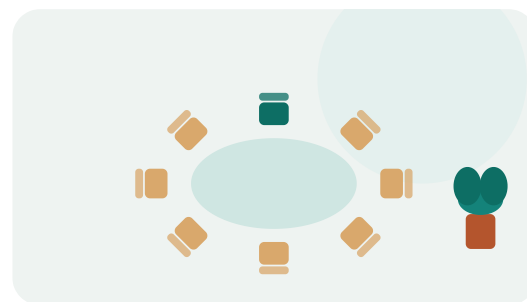
13

Where to train

Bodies and courses, worldwide and in India.

Four formats, four jobs

These are not interchangeable. The format sets the group size, the length of the series, how much clinical risk you carry, and how much of the talking you do. Start at the top and move down as your supervision and experience build.



FORMAT 1 OF 4

Psychoeducational workshop

You teach one clearly bounded topic. Exam stress, sleep, parenting a teenager, anxiety at work. Members learn material and practise a little, and personal disclosure stays shallow by design.

Best first group. Lowest risk, easiest to fill, and a good funnel into your one-to-one practice.

Group size **10 to 20**

Length **1 to 3 sessions**

You talk **60 to 70%**

Screening depth **Light**

Clinical risk 

FORMAT 2 OF 4

Skills group

One skill per week, taught then rehearsed in the room, with a task to take away. Built on CBT, DBT or ACT material. The homework matters more than the teaching does.

Pick this when you want measurable change. Score members at session one and at the end.

Group size **8 to 12**

Length **6 to 8 weeks**

You talk **40 to 50%**

Screening depth **Moderate**

Clinical risk 

FORMAT 3 OF 4

Support group

Members share one situation: bereavement, caring for a parent, a new diagnosis, first year of motherhood. You hold the frame and keep it safe. The members carry the content.

Recruit through a hospital, a school or a community centre rather than open advertising.

Group size **6 to 10**

Length **8 weeks or ongoing**

You talk **20 to 30%**

Screening depth **Moderate**

Clinical risk 

FORMAT 4 OF 4

Process group

The group itself is the material. What happens between members in the room, as it happens, is the work. Deepest format and the hardest to hold.

Not a first group. It needs specific group training, weekly supervision, and ideally a co-facilitator.

Group size **6 to 8**

Length **12 weeks or more**

You talk **10 to 20%**

Screening depth **Deep**

Clinical risk 

Where ninety minutes go

Write the plan before session one and keep it the same every week. The repetition is doing work. Members settle faster when they know the shape, and that leaves their attention free for the material.



0 min 45 min 90 min

0 – 10 MIN

Arrival and check-in

One round, one sentence each, no discussion yet. It moves people from the car park into the room and shows you who arrived heavy today.

“One word for how you have arrived this evening.”

10 – 15 MIN

Rules and today's aim

Thirty seconds on confidentiality, then name what this session covers. Short, and never skipped, because it is what makes the room safe enough to use.

“Same agreement as always. Tonight we are working on the thoughts that show up before sleep.”

15 – 35 MIN

Teach the idea

One idea, twenty minutes, concrete examples. No more than that. If you need a second idea, it belongs in a second session.

“This is the pattern. Watch where it starts.”

35 – 55 MIN

Exercise in pairs or threes

Members apply the idea to their own material in small groups. Move between the pairs, listen, say very little. The room gets loud and that is the sign it is working.

“In threes. Ten minutes each way. I will call the time.”

55 – 75 MIN

Back to the whole group

Take what surfaced in the pairs and work it in front of everyone. Watch airtime here. The same two people will fill it if you let them.

“Who found something they did not expect? Anyone who has not spoken yet.”

75 – 85 MIN

Takeaway and the task

One sentence each on what they are taking. Then one small task for the week, written down before they leave, not sent by message afterwards.

“Write the task on the card now. Bring the card back next week.”

85 – 90 MIN

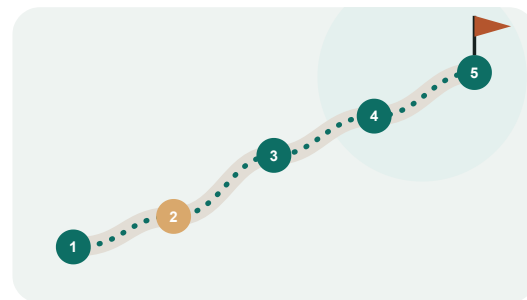
Closing round

Go round once and close the room. The point is to check nobody is walking out still opened up. If someone is, hold them back for two minutes.

“One word to close. Sameera, stay behind a moment.”

Five stages every group walks through

Tuckman mapped this in 1965 and it still holds. Week three feels like failure to new facilitators. It is not failure, it is storming, and a group that never storms never gets to the useful part.



STAGE 1

Forming

IN THE ROOM

Polite, careful, everyone watching you instead of each other. Long pauses.

YOUR MOVE

Structure hard. State the aim, set the rules, run a low-risk opening round.

STAGE 2

Storming

IN THE ROOM

Someone dominates. Someone goes quiet. Someone questions the point of it. A drop-out.

YOUR MOVE

Do not take it personally and do not smooth it over. Name what is happening and hold the frame.

STAGE 3

Norming

IN THE ROOM

They answer each other instead of routing everything through you. Private jokes start.

YOUR MOVE

Step back. Bounce questions aimed at you back to the group.

STAGE 4

Performing

IN THE ROOM

Real disclosure, honest feedback between members, visible change. The useful weeks.

YOUR MOVE

Light touch. Protect airtime so the quiet ones get their share.

STAGE 5

Adjourning

IN THE ROOM

Endings stir up old losses. Attendance slips, or someone picks a fight.

YOUR MOVE

Flag the ending two sessions ahead. Close with a proper ritual and hand out referrals.

The contract and the gate

Read the six rules aloud in session one and put them on the consent form. The screening call is fifteen minutes per person and it is the single thing standing between you and a group that falls apart in week two.



Six ground rules

Read aloud, session one. Signed on the consent form.

1. **What is said here stays here.** Names and stories do not leave the room.
2. **Confidentiality has limits.** Risk to a member, a child or another person goes further, and you say so before anyone speaks.
3. **Speak from your own experience.** Sentences start with "I".
4. **No advice unless it is asked for.** Fixing each other stops the work.
5. **Arrive on time.** A late entry cuts across the check-in round.
6. **"Pass" is a complete answer.** Nobody is required to speak.

The screening call

Fifteen minutes, one to one, before anyone pays.

TAKE THEM IN

- ✓ They want the group, rather than being sent by someone else
- ✓ They tolerate hearing difficult material from others
- ✓ Their goal matches what this group is for
- ✓ They commit to the dates, all of them

REFER OUT, THEN REVISIT

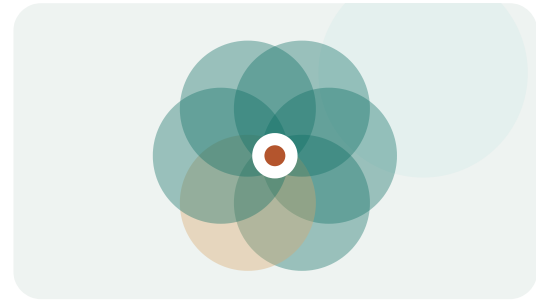
- Active suicidal risk or self-harm needing one-to-one containment
- Acute psychosis or untreated mania
- Substance dependence needing medical detox first
- Live domestic violence where safety planning comes before group work
- Anyone in crisis this week. A group is not a holding environment for acute risk
- Your own one-to-one client, into a process group. Think the dual role through with your supervisor first

BEFORE YOU ADVERTISE A PAID GROUP IN THE UAE

Confirm with your regulator that your licence covers group work and confirm which title you are allowed to use in the advert. Community and school settings sit with the Community Development Authority, clinical practice inside a health facility sits with the health authority for your emirate. Rules differ by emirate and they change, so verify it directly rather than copying what another practice does. Carry professional indemnity cover for group work specifically.

Why a group reaches what one to one cannot

Yalom named the forces doing the work. Knowing them changes how you run the room, because your job is to set these up rather than to deliver content.



Universality

"I thought it was only me." The single most common thing members report from session one.

Hope

Somebody four weeks ahead of them is visibly doing better. No explanation from you beats that.

Cohesion

Belonging to the group is itself the treatment. Protect it and attendance holds.

Altruism

Helping another member rebuilds self-worth faster than being helped does.

Interpersonal learning

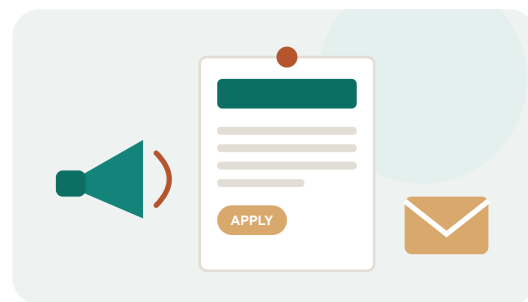
Members repeat their outside patterns in the room, where you get to work with them live.

Information

Plain teaching, delivered once, to twelve people. The most efficient hour in your week.

Recruiting the first group

A first group fails on numbers, not on skill. Fill it from people who already trust you, and set the money up so the group survives one drop-out.



Referral before advertising

Your own past clients, two GPs, a school counsellor, one HR contact. Six warm referrals beat sixty flyer views.

One flyer, one page

Who it is for in one line, the six dates, the price, how to apply. Test it on a colleague. If they cannot say who it is for in five seconds, rewrite it.

A waiting list, not a start date

Open applications first. Announce the start date only once you hold eight screened names. This is what stops you launching with four.

Price the series, not the session

Closed series, paid up front, one price. It sets the commitment, and it makes the drop-out maths work.

Find the break-even line

Room cost for the whole series plus your supervision, divided by six members. That is the floor. Price above it, so the group still stands if two people leave.

A deposit holds the chair

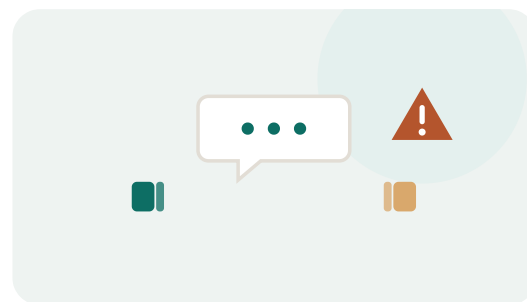
Take it at the screening call. Refund it only if you decline them.

Six weeks of lead time

Two to write and test the flyer, two to collect applications, two for screening calls. Book the room on day one.

Six things that will happen

Every one of these turns up in the first two series. None of them is a sign the group is failing. Each has a move, and the move is the same every time.



MOMENT 1

The member who fills the room

YOUR MOVE

Thank them, then turn to the room. "Who has not spoken yet?" If it repeats, name it privately after session two.

MOMENT 2

The member who never speaks

YOUR MOVE

Do not call on them in front of everyone. The pairs exercise is where the quiet ones talk. A word at the door: "Good to have you here."

MOMENT 3

Someone cries

YOUR MOVE

Let it happen. Do not rush the tissues across the circle. "Take your time. We are here." Then ask if they want to go on or pause.

MOMENT 4

A risk disclosure

YOUR MOVE

Stop the round. Say you will speak with them at the end. Hold them back, assess, and act on your limits-of-confidentiality clause. Record it the same day.

MOMENT 5

Two members fall out

YOUR MOVE

Slow it down. Ask each to say what they heard, not what they think. In a process group this is the material. In a skills group, park it and take both aside.

MOMENT 6

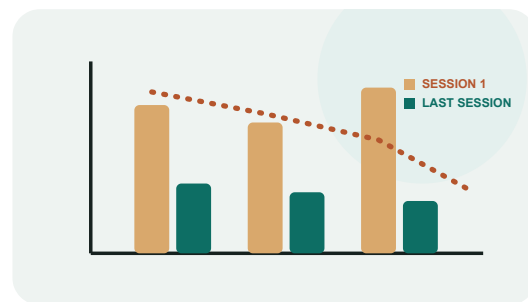
A missed second session

YOUR MOVE

Message the same day, not a week later. One line: you were missed, the door is open. Two misses in a row means a phone call.

Know whether it worked

Two forms and a sentence. Score at session one and at the last session. It takes five minutes, and it is the difference between “people seemed to like it” and a result you can show a referrer.



One symptom scale, matched to the topic

GAD-7 for anxiety, PHQ-9 for low mood. Both are free and both take two minutes. Pick one, not both.

One wellbeing scale

The short Warwick-Edinburgh scale, seven items, catches change the symptom scales miss. Check its licence terms before you print it.

One rating every week

The four-line Session Rating Scale at the door. A drop of two points tells you before the drop-out does.

One sentence at the end

“What is different now, compared with week one?”
Written, not spoken. Keep them. With permission, they become your next flyer.

Report three numbers

Average change on the symptom scale, attendance rate, and how many finished. That is your outcome letter to whoever referred.

Watch for the floor

A member who scores low at session one has nowhere to fall. Treat their wellbeing score as the measure instead.

Six weeks on anxiety at work

A sample skills group, so you can see the whole shape before you write your own. One idea a week, taught then rehearsed, with a task to carry out of the room. Swap the topic and the skeleton still holds.



W1

Map the pattern

Trigger, thought, body, action. Each member draws their own loop on one page.

Task: Log three episodes this week.

W2

The body first

Breathing at six breaths a minute, grounding, and the ninety second rule for adrenaline.

Task: Two minutes, twice a day.

W3

The thought

Catch it, write it, weigh it. The evidence table, done in pairs.

Task: One thought record a day.

W4

Avoidance

What each member has stopped doing, ranked. The first step up the ladder.

Task: Do step one. Report back.

W5

Values and the next step

What the anxiety is guarding. One value-driven action for the week.

Task: Do it, and write down what happened.

W6

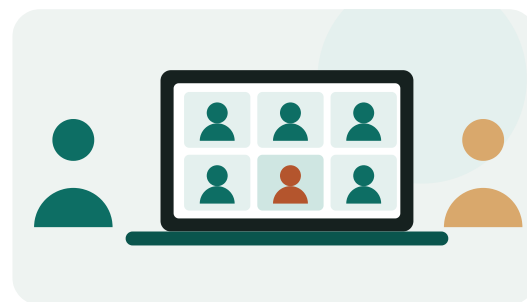
The plan and the ending

Each member writes their own relapse plan on one page. Closing round, feedback forms, referrals for anyone who needs more.

Task: Keep the plan somewhere you will see it.

Co-facilitation, and the screen

Past ten members you need a second pair of eyes. And once the group moves online, the room you were holding is now six kitchens and a car. Both need their own rules.



Running it with two

One leads the content, one watches the room.

1. **Fifteen minutes before, fifteen after.**
Every session. Before: who to watch tonight. After: what you each saw, and what goes to supervision.
2. **Agree the signals.** A hand flat on the table means slow down. A glance means you take this one.
3. **Split the fees before session one.** In writing, including what happens if one of you is ill.
4. **Swap roles on alternate weeks.**
Otherwise one of you becomes the teacher and the other the assistant, and the group reads it.

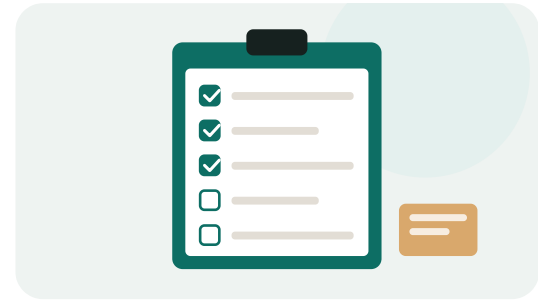
Running it online

Screens tire people faster than rooms.

1. **Cap it at eight, and seventy-five minutes.**
2. **Cameras on is a ground rule,** agreed at the screening call. A dark tile is an empty chair.
3. **Pairs become breakout rooms.** Same ten minutes, and you visit each one.
4. **Ask where each person is sitting.** A member in a shared kitchen cannot do confidentiality. Headphones, a closed door, a plan for interruptions.
5. **Hold a phone number for everyone.** If a connection drops in a heavy moment, you call. You do not message.

Ten things before session one

Work down the list. On the web page your ticks are saved in this browser, so close it and come back. On paper, tick with a pen.



0 of 10 done

☐ Pick one topic and one audience, narrow enough to name in six words

☐ Choose the format, the number of sessions and the length

☐ Confirm your licence covers a paid group and check the title you advertise

☐ Book the room. Chairs in a circle, no table in the middle

☐ Write the one-page flyer: who it is for, the dates, the price, how to apply

☐ Run a fifteen minute screening call with every applicant

☐ Consent form signed: confidentiality and its limits, cancellation, recording

☐ Write all session plans before session one, not the night before each

☐ Book your own supervision for the whole run, weekly for a process group

☐ Print the feedback form. Give it at session one and at the last session

Every session

Before

- ☐ Chairs in a circle, no table in the middle
- ☐ Plan printed, one idea only
- ☐ Forms and task cards on the seat
- ☐ Phone on silent, door closed

During

- ☐ Rules stated in thirty seconds
- ☐ Everyone speaks in the opening round
- ☐ Task written down before they leave
- ☐ Closing round done, nobody walks out opened up

After

- ☐ Notes written the same day
 - ☐ Attendance logged
 - ☐ Anything for supervision noted
 - ☐ Message anyone who missed
-

Eighteen videos worth the time

Reading about a group only gets you so far. These are free to watch, and every link was checked on 19 September 2026. Start with the filmed Yalom groups, then the skills videos, then the theory.



Real groups, skills and theory



Outpatient group psychotherapy, filmed [PSYCHOTHERAPYNET](#)

A real outpatient group with Yalom. The closest thing to sitting in the room.



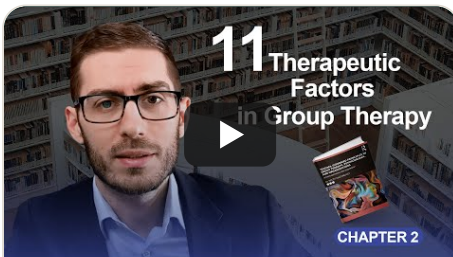
Inpatient group psychotherapy, filmed [PSYCHOTHERAPYNET](#)

The inpatient version, where the membership changes every day.



Understanding group therapy: interview with Irvin Yalom [PSYCHOTHERAPYNET](#)

Yalom on why a group reaches what one to one cannot. Pairs with section 05.



11 therapeutic factors in group therapy [DR SCOTT GIACOMUCCI](#)

The factors in section 05, taken one at a time.



Ten therapeutic factors, from Yalom and Leszcz [SEAN WATERS](#)

A walk through the book every training list puts first.



Introduction to group counseling and Impact Therapy [IMPACT THERAPY](#)

Ed Jacobs and Chris Schimmel, authors of the standard group skills text.



Group counseling: leadership skills

IMPACT THERAPY

Cutting off, drawing out, holding the focus. The moves section 07 asks for.



Group counselling demonstration

ELIZABETH THOMPSON

A training demonstration group. Watch one before you run one.

Group Therapy in Addiction Counseling

Substance Use Disorder Counseling Techniques



Group counseling in addiction treatment

DR JEN JOYCE

What changes when members are sent rather than choosing to come.



Tuckman's five stages of group development

LEARN MEDICINE

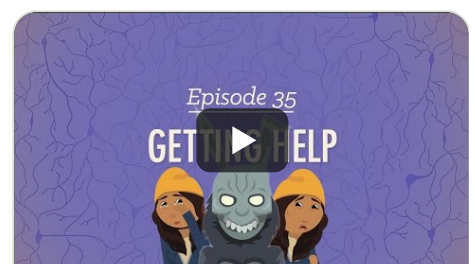
Section 03 in a few minutes.



Forming, storming, norming, performing

THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

The same model, aimed at anyone leading a group.

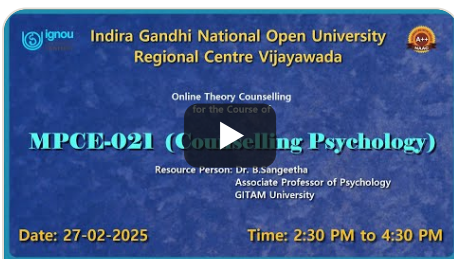


Getting help: psychotherapy

CRASHCOURSE

Where group and family therapy sit among the rest. Good for students.

India: university lectures and Hindi explainers



MPCE-021 counselling psychology, live session

IGNOU RC VIJAYAWADA

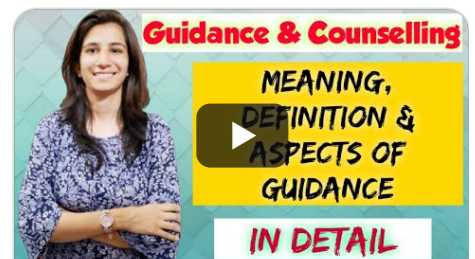
A full university counselling session, free to watch.



MPCE-023: insight as a counselling method

PSYCHOLOGIST PRIYA BHARGAVA

Follows the IGNOU MAPC syllabus. Useful for UGC NET too.



Guidance and counselling: meaning and aspects

INCULCATE LEARNING

Aimed at B.Ed, M.Ed and UGC NET Education candidates.



Guidance and counselling: types and objectives

R2 STUDY POINT

Where group guidance sits inside the B.Ed syllabus.



The counselling process, explained in Hindi

RUCHIKA GARG

The process end to end, in Hindi.



What is therapy and counselling? In Hindi

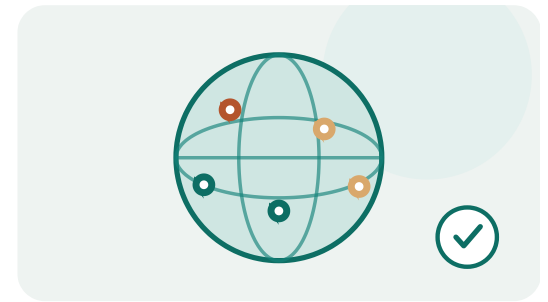
MANSA MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

Short and plain. Good to send members before session one.

YouTube links open in a new tab. In the PDF, tap the title.

Where this is taught, and to whom

Training bodies, university routes and free courses. The first list takes you from an introductory weekend to a qualification. The second is India, where several of the best options cost nothing. Every link was checked on 19 September 2026.



Worldwide

USA

American Group Psychotherapy Association

Runs the Principles of Group Psychotherapy course and the CGP credential. The main route in North America.

USA

Association for Specialists in Group Work

Sets the training standards and best practice guidelines most US counselling programmes follow.

UK

Institute of Group Analysis

Introductory weekend, Foundation Course, Diploma in Groupwork Practice, then the Qualifying Course.

UK

Group Analysis North

The same IGA pathway delivered in the north of England.

UK

Tavistock and Portman

Group and organisational courses, from short CPD to masters level.

UK

Anna Freud

Child and adolescent training. The right door if your groups are in schools.

GLOBAL

International Association for Group Psychotherapy

Congresses and member bodies across the world. Use it to find your nearest society.

USA

APA Division 49

Society of Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy. Research, journals and student resources.

SCHOOLS

ASCA: the school counsellor and group counselling

The position statement that says what a school should expect of you.

SCHOOLS

ASCA On Air: the art of group counseling in schools

Members only, but the outline alone tells you what a school group must cover.

TEACHING

University at Buffalo: group counselling on video

A librarian's list of the training films used on counsellor education courses.

TEACHING

Psychotherapy.net

Where the filmed Yalom groups come from. Widely licensed by universities.

TEACHING

Impact Therapy

Ed Jacobs' free video page, plus workshop handouts and slides.

India

BENGALURU

NIMHANS, Clinical Psychology

Group psychotherapy training sits inside the RCI recognised clinical psychology programme, Bengaluru.

BENGALURU

NIMHANS, Psychiatric Social Work

Group work in hospital and community settings, plus short training programmes.

ONLINE

NIMHANS Digital Academy

Online certificates, including lay counselling. Open to people who are not clinicians.

ONLINE, FREE

SWAYAM: counselling psychology

A free UGC course on the counselling process and its methods. Certificate exam optional.

ONLINE, FREE

NPTEL: mental health and wellbeing

IIT Kanpur, free, written for students. A good first course for a teacher.

ONLINE, FREE

IGNOU Gyandhara

Live audio counselling sessions with IGNOU faculty. Free to join.

REGULATOR

Rehabilitation Council of India

Check your qualification is registrable before you advertise a paid clinical group.

NATIONAL

Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists

Conferences, workshops and the professional network.

GOA, DELHI, BIHAR

Sangath

School and community group programmes in Goa, Delhi and Bihar, with published evidence.

REFERRAL

Tele-MANAS

The national mental health helpline. Your referral route when a member needs more than a group.

ONE CHECK BEFORE YOU ENROL

A certificate is not a licence. Whatever you train in, confirm separately with the regulator in your own emirate, state or country that your qualification lets you advertise and charge for a group, and that you may use the title you plan to print on the flyer.

Sources. Stage model from Tuckman, developmental sequence in small groups (1965). Therapeutic factors from Yalom and Leszcz, *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*. Session structure, screening criteria and group sizes reflect standard group-work practice rather than any single published protocol. Licensing note is a prompt to check, not legal advice.

Use. Guidance for a trained practitioner working under supervision. It does not replace your own training, your supervisor, or the rules of the body that licenses you.