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## Working with the Elderly: Group Process and Techniques, 2nd ed.

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**Working with the Elderly: Group Process and Techniques, 2nd ed.**, by Irene Burnside, Monterey, CA: Wadsworth Health Sciences Division, 1984, 700 pp., \$17.25 paper.

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The second edition of *Working with the Elderly: Group Process and Techniques* is written primarily for persons skilled in the techniques of group dynamics and for group facilitators and leaders who work with the elderly, either in an institutional or other structured group setting. Titles of the sections are: Overview; Theoretical Frameworks; Basics of Group Work; Practice of Group Work; Reminiscing Therapy; Multidiscipline Perspectives on Group Work with the Elderly; and Instruction for Group Workers and Epilogue. The second edition has been expanded over the first by 19 new chapters for a total of 38. Burnside (Department of Nursing at San Jose State University) has written approximately 40% of the book's content with the remainder of the material by contributors from a variety of disciplines.

As with most texts on aging, the book begins with a profile of the contemporary elderly population, with demographic studies to support the fact that the elderly as a group are increasing in number. The author then presents four theoretical frameworks which are recommended for group work with the elderly: Maurice Linden's Dual Leadership Approach; Life-Review Therapy, which is associated with Robert Butler and Myrna Lewis; extrapolations of Irvin Yalom's psychiatric theory related to the maintenance of groups; and William Schutz's Fundamental Interpersonal Orientation. Part Three is a collection of topics related to group work in general and presents a rationale for leaders or therapists to utilize the group setting when working with the elderly. In the author's words, Part Four is the "how to" section of the book, with most of the remaining sections addressing the application of theories and processes. There is, however, a concentration on reminiscing and life-review therapy, with the justification that reminiscing therapy is so popular among therapists who work with older clients.

The text is designed with learning aids such as learning objectives and key works which preface each chapter. At the end of chapters are several exercises which can be used to reinforce and test the knowledge and skills presented in the material. Also, each chapter is supplemented by a list of resources available on the topics covered. These include films, audiovisuals, tapes and organizations. The large number of references cited, especially by Burnside, lend credibility to the work as well as furnish excellent additional resource materials for the student.

**The Theoretical Frameworks.** Principles of Maurice Linden, a 1950s pioneer in group work with the elderly, are presented. A study utilizing Linden's principles and techniques was conducted by Burnside. With the exception of the use of the term "senile," Linden's model was found to be as appropriate in today's setting as it was when first introduced.

Life-review therapy is explained in an article by Myrna Lewis and Robert Butler. Life-review is a technique frequently used to improve reality orientation for the elderly client. Whether it is more effective than other techniques is debatable in many cases. That the elderly client is responsive may be due simply to the fact that recalling the past is a pleasant experience. Long-range effectiveness may also be questioned. The technique's popularity and wide use may be due to the ease with which it can be learned and applied.

Yalom did not formulate his principles of group work with the elderly specifically in mind. However, Burnside believes that "students, health care workers and administrators, and instructors can profitably adapt his ideas for group work with older people" (p. 61). The major problem with presenting Yalom's theory and practice, especially in a book designed for "beginner group leaders" (p. iii) is that Yalom's work is extremely technical and, as pointed out by Burnside, uses psychiatric jargon freely (p. 61). Unless the leader or therapist is familiar with Yalom's work and comfortable with the application of the techniques, he or she may have no effective measurement of change related to the use of the therapy. For example, 12 general categories of "curative factors" are presented, but application would be extremely difficult unless the group leader were familiar with Yalom's model.

William Schutz's theory of fundamental interpersonal orientation is also presented. However, since Schutz's theory and techniques are not tied to medical jargon they are more easily understood. Although the material is presented in a brief six pages, it would appear that the beginning group leader could easily grasp the concepts and adequately resolve the theory-application dilemma.

**The Group.** While the author states that it is not her intention to teach group dynamics, when viewed collectively, Chapters 7-13 are filled with excellent "how-to" material in a group dynamics setting. The chapters are especially beneficial since the applications are specific to the elderly. Wise beginning leaders will incorporate the concepts discussed into their own styles to the extent that they become adept in the facilitator's approach to groups. Bravo to Burnside, Baumler, Weaverdyck, and Szafranski, the chapters' authors, for a compilation of excellent, easily understood material. The material is "down-to-earth," leaving no doubt that the authors are writing from hard-earned experience.

Other chapters which are practical and easily adaptable for beginning leaders not having specific training in psychotherapeutic techniques and jargon are those dealing with reality orientation and remotivation therapy. While the student should become more familiar with these frameworks or theories, the concepts

related to applications covered in the text could certainly be more easily mastered than others that could have been selected by Burnside.

Music and dance therapy are also discussed. Leaders who are not technically trained in either area are assured that, with limited skills or interest, they can become effective in their applications.

Self-help groups are also addressed and recommended, but while the purpose of such groups are clearly identified, the "how-to" is somewhat weak. However, the references given at the end of the chapter are extensive so the inspired reader could be guided toward excellent sources for further study.

The section on multidisciplinary perspectives on group work with the elderly should provide a sense of support for potential group leaders from among the fields of nursing, clinical sociology, social work, psychology, psychiatry, and counselors from other general areas. Each discipline has a somewhat different but common focus in working with the aged. Even bibliotherapy, in which literature is used as a tool in the therapeutic process, is explored.

The use of volunteers is addressed. While Burnside points out that the use of nonprofessionals as facilitators needs to be researched, their use is very necessary and important in specific areas of psychosocial care (p. 262). Excellent suggestions for selection and training are given.

**Reviewer's Notes.** If there is a fault with the text it is its ultra-comprehensive approach to dealing with the elderly in groups. Yet, with the increasing demand being placed on all types of counselors and therapists to address the physical and emotional needs of the elderly, it is doubtful that too much information and encouragement can be given. It would appear that this sentiment is shared by Burnside; the last section of the book, "Instruction for Group Workers and Epilogue," is one more, final effort to furnish yet a few more guidelines which could be useful. The material is worthwhile, even if somewhat repetitious. Although the organization of the massive amount of material presented in the book is cumbersome, the content is well worth the effort on the part of the reader. Burnside's text is a valuable contribution to those who do group work with the elderly.

**The Disabled State**, by Deborah A. Stone, in the Health, Society and Policy Series edited by Sheryl Ruzek and Irving K. Zola. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1984, 241 pp., \$24.95 cloth.

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In *The Disabled State*, Deborah A. Stone, a political scientist, offers a theory of how the state uses medical certification to reconcile two seemingly incom-