



The Institute of Group Leaders (IGL) ethical standards for group leaders

The Institute of Group Leaders (IGL) is a standards setting body for the development of quality group work practice in NSW and Australia. Its focus is to develop psychoeducational and group counselling skills.

The operation of IGL serves three functions:

- training centre for the preparation and accreditation of group leaders
- learned society for practitioners eager to advance their knowledge and competence
- service organisation providing leaders of community groups

For more information about the Institute of Group Leaders and membership details visit: www.igl.org.au

Group work values

All professional codes of conduct have a clear set of values that refer to a basic respect for personhood and a belief in self-determination. There is the further extension to good mental health attitudes – self-acceptance, authenticity, integrity and positive coping skills.

The Institute of Group Leaders (IGL) is concerned with the nature and process of group life. However, leadership of groups, because of their importance in influencing the way groups function and the consequences for individual members, demands more of our attention than most other features of groups. IGL views leadership as ultimately non-directive with the group adopting corporate responsibility for its direction and mode of operation. Group members are free to withdraw from a group at any time.

The goals of training

The goals of group leading are to:

- maximise the group's awareness of its own resources and the problems inherent in its tasks; and to facilitate appropriate actions and interventions
- maintain the effective functioning of the group
- foster individual growth through group membership

These are to heighten trainee's self awareness and their understanding of group process and dynamics, with an emphasis on the leadership role.

Leadership skills are based on the development of the qualities listed in the next section. Leadership techniques are developed through observation and experience over a long period of time and will only prove effective if they are congruent with the values and personality of the person concerned.

A particular developmental goal for leaders is to acquire the kind of flexibility that will enable them and the group to move from the structured to the unstructured when the group and individual need arises.

Ideally people in the helping professions, because of the nature of their work, are likely to exhibit sensitivity, empathy, flexibility, open-mindedness, tolerance, level headedness, and a concern for people. Group leaders are expected to do likewise.

The leader's role

- The role performed by the leader needs to be congruent with his/her personality.
- Leaders should reveal enough of themselves to be seen as 'real', but subordinate their own personal needs.
- A leader's self-disclosure should be circumspect and appropriate to the group's intended purpose.
- Leaders will need to know enough about the task and content to distinguish between the relative importance of issues under discussion. In fact, their knowledge of the topic will normally be greater than that of most participants. However, their primary role is that of facilitator rather than expert on content.
- A leader needs to respect the values of the client group, even though they differ from his/her own. To the extent that leaders convey values, attitudes and beliefs to the group members, these should be consistent with the prevailing social – scientific orthodoxy.

Institute of Group Leaders (IGL) Code of Ethics

Group leaders agree to:

1. keep and protect the confidentiality of group members by clearly defining what it means, why it is important and the risks and difficulties involved in its enforcement
2. only self-disclose information about themselves that develops the purpose of the group further rather than addressing any personal need of the leader
3. respect and encourage the voluntary participation of group members so as to promote and not delay their independence
4. behave professionally at all times and not become personally involved with any individual group member for the duration of the group
5. refrain from imposing their personal agendas and values on group members
6. only record or observe group sessions with permission of the group members and the leader's organisation where applicable
7. only use a special technique or intervention if sufficiently trained or experienced in its use
8. provide information to group members about special techniques or activities in which they are expected to participate
9. respect the aims, values and methods of organisations for which they lead groups
10. access and participate in regular supervision as required for the type of groups they facilitate