

## The Healing Power of Group

“To keep our faces toward change and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate is strength undefeatable” Helen Keller

Group psychotherapy offers a safe place to experience change. Members discuss how to establish healthy relationships with loved ones and/or friends. For example, a woman with a history of codependent relationships with abusive men improved her self worth in order to find someone who treated her well. Through constructive feedback from the group and listening aloud to her own story she understood why she chose such men..

Interpersonal relationships are composed of external and internal boundaries. Although a boundary is invisible, it keeps us safe in our own space; keeps us from intruding into others' spaces and establishes a sense of who we are. External boundaries control how much distance we keep between us regarding touch or personal property. Internal boundaries protect our thinking, feelings and behavior. A healthy internal boundary allows enough detachment to choose your own thinking, feelings and reality rather than simply reacting. In her book, Facing Codependence, Pia Mellody visualizes her internal boundary as a bullet-proof vest with small doors that open only from the inside. She is in control of whether they open or are kept shut allowing a conscious protection from the thoughts, statements or feelings of others. The goal is to be flexible in one's boundaries which makes room for intimacy with friends and/or romantic interests.

Some come to group wanting to speak more comfortably in a group situation. Members are patient with the socially anxious person but will push back to help the person confront their daemons. The group experience is an opportunity for members to talk about their feelings instead of acting on them. In-group experiments challenge members to assert themselves. For example, if a member feels left out of the group process, old feelings from childhood may come up, especially if as a child she felt different or was bullied. The member is encouraged to discuss her feelings rather than stop attending the group.

Groups create powerful healing and transformative experiences by facilitating a deep level of trust and interconnectedness. Members find the resourcefulness of others as role models and renew feelings of self worth through assisting others. Participation in such a support network helps members realize that they are not alone or unique.

We can come back home to live in ourselves.