

FOUNDATIONS OF GROUP THERAPY FOR SEX ADDICTION

By Chris Simon, LPC, CSAT-S, CMAT-S



[This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY](#)



Chris Simon, MA, LPC, CSAT-S, CMAT-S

- 15 Years of counseling experience, LPC
- Started CSAT in 2012, Supervisor 2017
- 95% of clinical experience surrounding sex addiction (Addict, Partner, Family)
- ½ time clinician, ½ time CSAT supervisor, coach, consultant

- **Restorations Therapy Center**, now Valiant Living, founder in Denver, CO
 - Sexual Addiction, Sexual Abuse, and Affair Recovery Outpatient Treatment Center.
- **Family Recovery Programs**, co-owner
- **John Brown University**, adjunct professor
- **Fresh Roots Family Counseling**, Director of Addictions
- **C4 Consulting**, Senior Consultant
- **Clinician** focused on sex addiction
- **Advocate** for sexual health
- **Educator** of clinicians
- **Businessmen** for mental health organizations
- **Coach** for leaders
- **Creator** of treatment centers

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the foundational principles of group therapy as applied to sex addiction recovery
2. Recognize the similarities and differences between addict and partner groups
3. Identify if groups would benefit your practice

Main Topics

1. Impact of group therapy validated by research
2. Basic principles of group therapy
3. Similarities and differences between individual and group therapy
4. Creating a group purpose and formulating a format that supports that purpose
5. Challenges to SA groups
6. How to determine if adding groups to your practice would be beneficial



RESEARCH ON GROUP EFFECTIVENESS

Sex Addiction Research



- Sex addiction field is relatively new
- Gaining momentum in key research
- Lacking research on sex addiction groups
- Plethora of research on drug and alcohol group effectiveness
- Many of the principles are similar

Group Research

- Difficult to find an article supporting the use of group therapy in recovery
- Research sees the impact of groups as an assumed fact
- Research looks to specific uses of group therapy, such as on recovering opioid addicts using methadone impact of process groups
- Most research looks at psychoeducational groups in residential context



GROUP RESEARCH

- Wendt DC, Gone JP. Group Therapy for Substance Use Disorders: A Survey of Clinician Practices. *J Groups Addict Recover*. 2017;12(4):243-259. doi: 10.1080/1556035X.2017.1348280. Epub 2017 Dec 8. PMID: 30546274; PMCID: PMC6289265.
- Crits-Christoph P, Johnson JE, Connolly Gibbons MB, Gallop R. Process predictors of the outcome of group drug counseling. *J Consult Clin Psychol*. 2013 Feb;81(1):23-34. doi: 10.1037/a0030101. Epub 2012 Oct 29. PMID: 23106760; PMCID: PMC3565014.



FOUNDATIONS OF GROUP THERAPY

Groups Need a Strong, Clear Foundation to Thrive

What Makes Group Therapy Powerful?

Key Themes

- Normalization
- Shared experience
- Social learning
- Peer relatability

Audience Additions...

Important Ideas

- Stages of Group
- Creating norms and expectations
- Training group members
- Healthy confrontation
- Smooth transitions

Residential vs. Outpatient

Residential

- Set curriculum
- Psycho-educational
- Set number of sessions
- Early recovery
- Partial client engagement
- Focus on basic recovery skills

Outpatient

- Process groups
- Blend psycho-ed and processing life experiences
- Set number or continual group
- Range from early to late stage recovery
- High client engagement
- Cover broad range of skills and topics

Group Stages

Forming

Orientation phase addressing expectations and norm

Storming

Breaking through the passive, polite, and social acceptance; Moving towards using the group for their benefit, which will involve conflict.

Norming

Cohesiveness develops with norms established by the group and they begin to moderate each other

Adjourning

Closure for individuals or the group which involves reviewing growth, impact of the group and grieving

Performing

Personal and group growth occur through honesty, vulnerability, challenges, and engaging new ideas

Group Stages

- Know the stages of groups
- Early stages → facilitator takes a stronger role in the group
- Later stages, → facilitator leads less and sits back more
- You cannot push the stages, they must evolve naturally



THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CREATING A GROUP

Core Concepts

- Group Stages
- Fab Five
- Informed Consent and Group Rules
- Stages of Recovery
- Best Times for Group

This or That

- Psyche-Educational vs. Process
- Closed vs. Open
- Virtual vs. In Person
- Set Length vs. Continuous
- 60 vs. 90 Minutes
- Result: Structured Process Groups

Learn all these concepts in the October 18th Groups Training through IITAP

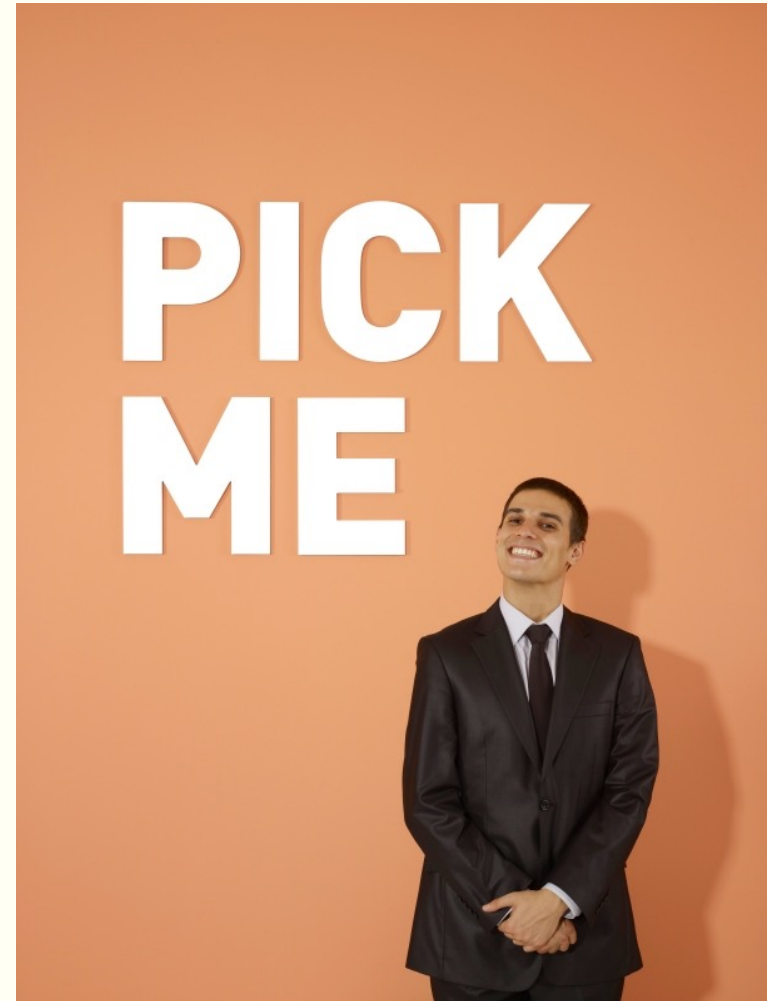


INDIVIDUAL VS GROUP THERAPY

What's the difference?

Similar and Different Purposes

- The goal of therapy – increased self awareness
- Conversations focuses on addiction recovery
- Greater issue of intimacy disorder considered in both
- Beneficial for addiction recovery



Individual Therapy



- Highly specific and personalized
- Importance of therapeutic alliance
- Safe place for deeper work
- Very helpful at start of recovery to create recovery path
- Conversation limited
- Therapeutic relationships differs from a peer

Group Therapy

- Conversations focuses on addiction recovery
- Opportunity to develop relational skills
- Model healthy relationships
- Broad range of issues, topics, and situations discussed
- Limited availability to go deep with individual clients in group setting
- Cost - benefit and challenges



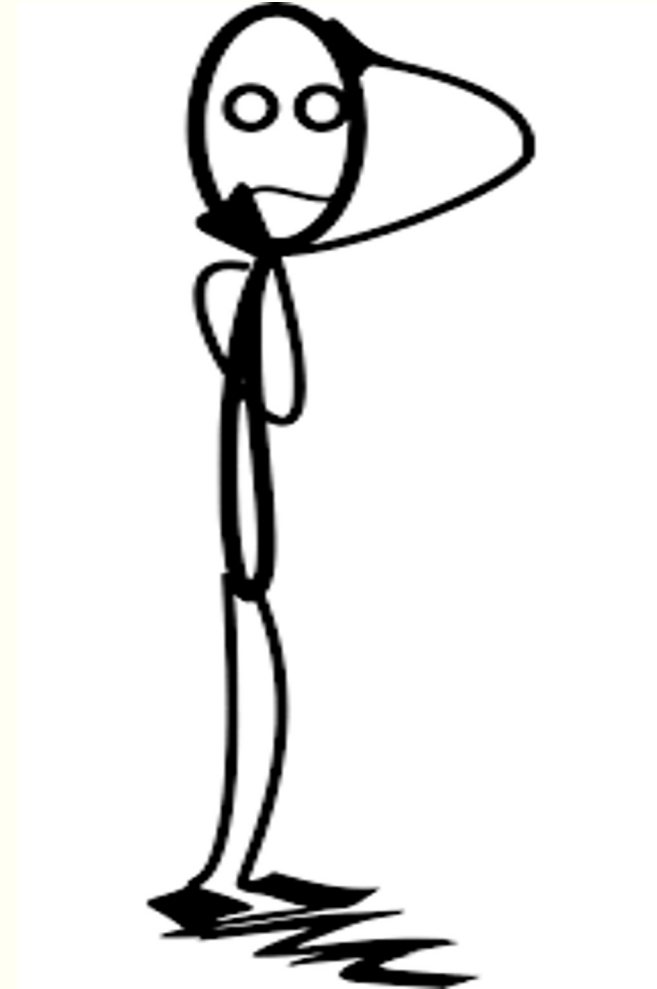


CREATING A GROUP PURPOSE

What's the goal of the group?

PURPOSE

- What is the purpose of the group?
- How is success defined?
 - By therapist
 - By Client
- When is a member ready to graduate group?



PURPOSE

- Define your WHY!
- Potential Goals:
 - Safety
 - Vulnerability
 - Develop empathy and relationships skills
 - Establish sobriety

Audience Additions...





CHALLENGES TO SEX ADDICTION GROUPS

If it was so easy, everyone would do it!

STIMA

- Culture's high shame towards maladaptive sexual behaviors
 - Obsession and repulsion
- Many addicts feel shame for their behaviors, thoughts and struggles
- Received poor support from family/friends
- Given terrible advice from good intended people
- Drawn to isolation – I don't want anyone else to know!



Sex Addiction Group Challenges

- Finding group members!
- A group of emotionally stunted people
- “Competition” with 12-Step/CR/SMART groups
- FTS/RZ group vs. SA group
- Cost-reimbursement
- Commitment to group



Partners Group Challenges



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

- Immense shame of being “cheated on” and not wanting anyone to know
- It’s the addicts problem, not mine
- Given terrible advice from good intended people
- Judged for staying or leaving
- Don’t want to face the reality of the betrayal and other feelings
- Forced into therapy

Partners Group Challenges Part 2

- Different feel than SA groups
- High emotionality, can be difficult to focus
- Smaller group
- Roughly 30% of partners pursue therapy
- Attend hesitant, withdrawn, or biased
- Dismiss other's stories because of differences





WHEN/IF TO START SA GROUPS IN YOUR PRACTICE

Would Groups Benefit Your SA Practice

- YES!
- Groups add a powerfully unique experience for those in recovery
 - Three legged stool
- Practice needs to be large enough to sustain a core group
- Small groups are powerful groups
- Need to earn enough financially



How To Start a Group?

- *Field of Dreams* philosophy
- Clients more likely to join an existing group
- Network with fellow CSATs and colleagues
- Hold low expectations and *provide great therapy*
- Word of mouth from clients is the best form of advertising

If you build it, they will come!



MY ENCOURAGEMENT...

JUST DO IT!

Wrapping Up

CSAT Supervision

- Opportunity for group, dyad, and/or individual supervision
- To register:
[Calendly.com/chrissimoncsat](https://calendly.com/chrissimoncsat)

Future Trainings

- October 18th, day training on running Sex Addiction Groups by IITAP
- Visit ChrisSimon.com for additional trainings

Questions?