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Book Review: Burnside's Working With Older Adults: Group Processes and Techniques (4th ed.)

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Book Review

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The first and second editions of this book were published by Dr. Irene Burnside, well known in nursing and gerontology for her exceptional knowledge and understanding of older adults. In the third edition, Dr. Burnside recognized the need for an expanded perspective and collaborated with Dr. Mary G. Schmidt, a social worker with expertise in aging and gerontology. Since the third edition was published in 1994, Burnside and Schmidt have passed away. The present editors of this fourth edition have carried on the tradition of collaboration between nursing and social work.

Dr. Barbara Haight is Professor Emeritus at the College of Nursing, Medical University of South Carolina. Her professional experiences include founding three separate graduate programs in gerontological nursing and eight research projects on the structured role of life review. She has led the formation of national and international organizations for Life Review and Reminiscence and is widely published in the area of life review and gerontology. Faith Gibson is an Emeritus Professor of social work at the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland. For more than 30 years, she has been involved in social work practice, policy development, research, and teaching concerned with aging and dementia. She has authored or coauthored six books concerned with reminiscence work with individuals and small groups. There are an additional 28 contributors to this book representing nursing, social work, psychotherapy and/or counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and art and/or music therapy. The collective contributions to this fourth edition provide an updated perspective of group process for application with older adults experiencing the challenges of aging in the 21st century.

The book is organized into six distinct divisions. Part One, The Context for Group Practice with Older People, is made up of five chapters and provides the reader with foundational knowledge needed for understanding the rest of the book. The demographics of the 21st century are reviewed, and issues and problems for this cohort of aging individuals are highlighted. The theoretical

premises of groupwork are addressed, including the historical progression of the art and science of groupwork as applied to older adults over time. Attention is given to the principles of group psychotherapy, with an emphasis on maintenance of stable groups, culture building, subgrouping, roles of the group leader, social reinforcement, and curative factors in groupwork.

Part Two, *Guidelines for Groups*, includes four chapters. The needs of older people are considered and how groupwork might meet these needs. The educational and experiential preparation for group leaders is discussed, given the need to promote health and well-being across three levels of prevention: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Considerations for group membership, cautions to consider when beginning groupwork, stages of group development, and the need for contracting are explained. The importance of issues that directly impact effectiveness of group leadership is stressed.

Part Three, *Therapeutic Groups*, is a collection of 10 chapters, each focusing on specific issues (groupwork with people with dementia or physical disabilities) or on a specific therapeutic modality. These modalities include reality orientation, remotivation, validation therapy, reminiscence, guided autobiography work, music and art activities, support and/or self-help strategies, group psychotherapy, and group work at the end of life. A focus on special issues provides useful insight on training for staff, use of volunteers, education for families, and grief work.

Educators, students, and practitioners will benefit from Part Four, *Settings for Group Work*, because it fosters the realization of the variety of settings that groupwork can be implemented for the benefit of older adults. This realization can expand the location for educational experiences and the application of groupwork principles. Application models for retirement communities, day care services, board-and-care homes, long-term care facilities, and acute-care settings are discussed. The potential for multidisciplinary group work becomes evident, as well as the incorporation of innovative strategies such as the use of the Internet and telehealth to expand support postdischarge from facilities. Unique examples from practice make this section particularly useful.

Having experts from diverse disciplines involved in this book is especially evident in Part Five, *A Multidisciplinary Perspective to the Work of Groups*. Specific examples are shared from the perspective of nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and social work. These examples serve to generate new ideas to infuse in group work, expanding the potential for success.

Five chapters make up the final section, *Issues in Group Work*. The first of these five chapters will be of special interest to the educator. It is about consultation for group leaders, and teaching and supervising students who

are practicing groupwork. Recognizing anxiety in new group leaders, feedback needed by students, and preventing discouragement are some of the areas addressed. The main focus of the next chapter is on the ethical principles and the foundational values that support these principles in regard to groupwork and related research. One of the significant challenges in the 21st century is awareness of cultural diversity. A chapter on cross-cultural issues in groupwork is included in this section, with emphasis on considerations for African American and Hispanic elders. The book concludes with chapters on research and evaluation issues in groupwork. If groupwork is to be used as an intervention, then knowing the outcome effect of the intervention is mandatory.

This book is intended primarily to be used as a reference book, allowing the user to pick and choose chapters of interest for expanding knowledge, consulting, or practice application. Clinicians should read the book to influence program development, as it will generate exciting and innovative ideas for practice.

It is easy reading and can benefit undergraduate and graduate students from nursing and health-related disciplines. Instructors in programs preparing individuals for advanced practice in gerontology could use the entire book in a specialty class focusing on psychosocial interventions for the elderly. The organization of the book is consistent with facilitative teaching strategies. Each chapter includes a list of keywords and learning objectives and concludes with application exercises for the student and a bibliography and/or reference section. At the back of the book is a comprehensive resource section, directing the reader to national organizations and useful Web sites.

In the 11 years since the last edition of this book, the long-forecasted change in aging demographics has become a reality. The practice environment is becoming increasingly community based, compared to previous years of largely institutional care for elders. The striking rise in health care costs further drives the need for individuals to seek ways to support elders in their homes for as long as possible. There are multiple needs, and the multicultural nature of our society is obvious. Thus this book is a timely and useful publication, affording a comprehensive overview of strategies for supporting elders through effective groupwork as a psychosocial intervention.

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