APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS CONDUCTING GROWTH GROUPS

The following guidelines are presented for the information and guidance of psychologists who conduct growth or encounter groups. They are not intended to substitute for or to supplant ethical practices for psychologists specified elsewhere.

The development of these guidelines was prompted by the concern of several units within the American Psychological Association that there be a set of operating principles for the use of psychologists active in such groups. The guidelines do not presume to specify or endorse any professional procedure or technique used in a group, but only to aid psychologists who conduct growth groups to present themselves in a manner that is ethically sound and protective of the participant.

The present statement attempts to accommodate those suggestions from various psychologists in response to the draft statement published by the Board of Professional Affairs in the APA Monitor of December 1971 (Vol. 2, No. 12, p. 3). It is to be expected that these guidelines will be subject to modification as they are put to use, and also in the light of the evolution of new knowledge and practices in the utilization of growth groups.

1. Entering into a growth group experience should be on a voluntary basis; any form of coercion to participate is to be avoided.

2. The following information should be made available in writing to all prospective participants:
   (a) an explicit statement of the purpose of the group;
   (b) types of techniques that may be employed;
   (c) the education, training, and experience of the leader or leaders;
   (d) the fee and any additional expense that may be incurred;
   (e) a statement as to whether or not a follow-up service is included in the fee;
   (f) goals of the group experience and techniques to be used;
   (g) amounts and kinds of responsibility to be assumed by the leader and by the participant, for example, (i) the degree to which a participant is free not to follow suggestions and prescriptions of the group leader and other group members, (ii) any restrictions on a participant's freedom to leave the group at any time; and
   (h) issues of confidentiality.

3. A screening interview should be conducted by the group leader prior to the acceptance of any participant. It is the responsibility of the leader to screen out those individuals for whom she or he judges the group experience to be inappropriate. Should an interview not be possible, then other measures should be used to achieve the same results.

   At the time of the screening interview, or at some other time prior to the beginning of the group, opportunity should be provided for leader-participant exploration of the terms of the contract as described in the information statement. This is to assure mutual understanding of the contract.

4. It is recognized that growth groups may be used for both educational and psychotherapeutic purposes. If the purpose is primarily educational, the leader assumes the usual professional and ethical obligations of an educator. If the purpose is therapeutic, the leader assumes the same professional and ethical responsibilities he or she would assume in individual or group psychotherapy, including before and after consultation with any other therapist who may be professionally involved with the participant. In both cases, the leader's own education, training, and experience should be commensurate with these responsibilities.

5. It is recognized that growth groups may be used for responsible research or exploration of human potential and may therefore involve the use of innovative and unusual techniques. While such professional exploration must be protected and encouraged, the welfare of the participant is of paramount importance. Therefore, when an experience is clearly identified as "experimental," the leader should (a) make full disclosure of techniques to be used, (b) delineate the respective responsibilities of the leader and participant during the contract discussion phase prior to the official beginning of the group experience, and (c) evaluate and make public his or her findings.

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