

The question of the usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

- nice to have or a must ?

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Usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

- Most Balint group leaders in the world are not trained psychoanalytically
 - Which questions can raise from the experience of leadership, rather than from a particular theory ?
 - How is experience gained ?
 - Do leaders have a theoretical map ?
 - Do leaders have a navigation equipment ?

Usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

- The leader who has no theoretical frame may have to rely on experience, intuition and wisdom
- Do leaders need to have been in psychotherapy ?
 - if not:
 - How do they develop intuition ?
 - How do they develop self-awareness ?
 - How do they develop the ability to bear uncertainty ?
 - How do they develop the knowledge and the tact when to speak and when to keep silent ?
 - How do they develop the confidence and the ability to handle intense and painful feelings ?

Usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

Should there be a knowledge and acceptance of some basic assumptions ?

- Body-Mind Unity
 - Stress and mental conflicts can express themselves in body symptoms .
 - Symptoms have different mental expression in different persons
- Developmental
 - Link between childhood experiences and adult behavior

Usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

Should there be a knowledge and acceptance of some basic assumptions ?

- Psychodynamic:
 - Unconscious
 - Transference and Counter-transference
 - Ego and Super-Ego
 - Defense mechanisms – projection, repression, split, denial, conversion

Usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

Should there be a knowledge of ... Personality disorders ?

- **Cluster A (odd)**

- Paranoid
- Schizoid
- Schizotypal

- **Cluster B (dramatic)**

- Antisocial
- Borderline
- Histrionic
- Narcissistic

- **Cluster C (anxious)**

- Avoidant
- Dependent
- Obsessive-compulsive

- **Not specified**

- Depressive
- Passive-aggressive
- Sadistic
- Self-defeating

Usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

Should there be a knowledge of...

- System theory
 - Life cycle – specific conflicts of life cycle passages
- Narrative theory
 - Storytelling as the basis of experience
 - Understanding the context of suffering

Usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

Should there be a knowledge of ...

- Group theories
 - Rules
 - Boundaries
 - Roles
 - Relationships
 - Group Process
 - Awareness of blind spots, hidden agendas, coalitions, scapegoating
 - Functional and dysfunctional groups
 - Leadership
 - Style: controller, democratic, facilitator, coordinator, educational
 - Role : Achieving the task
 - Building and maintaining the group
 - Developing the individual
 - What to do when groups go wrong ?

Usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

Should there be a knowledge of ...

- Sense of Coherence (Antonovsky):
 - comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness
- Hardiness concept (Kobosa)
 - control, commitment, challenge
- Need of belonging (Adler)
- Attachment theories (Bowlby)
- Relational theories (Mitchell)
- Bion “*Experiences in Groups*” and “*Theory of thinking*” -Alpha elements, beta elements, and alpha function

Usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

Should there be a knowledge of ...

- **Karen Horney theory of neurotic needs**
 - Everyone needs these things, but the neurotics (AND DOCTORS) may need them more than the normal person
- Affection and approval, the need to please others and be liked
- Power, for control over others: a facade of omnipotence to fight feelings of impotence
- Social recognition (prestige)
- Personal admiration
- Personal achievement
- Self-sufficiency and independence
- Perfection, a desire to be perfect and a fear of being flawed

Usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

Should there be a deep knowledge of Balint's book "The doctor, the patient and the illness" ?

- The apostolic function
- Collusion of anonymity
- Doctors have feelings and that these feelings have an important influence on the consultation
- Impotence and omnipotence in the doctor-patient relationship
- The doctor as a "drug"
- Levels of diagnosis
- The "entry ticket" and the "hidden agenda"
- The psychological atmosphere of general practice

Questions on the aims of Balint groups

Educational ? Support ?

- Educational group ?
 - Promote awareness on the importance of the doctor-patient relationship in healing
 - Improves listening skills
 - Promote a non-judgmental conscious practice
 - Encourages empathy
 - Awareness of the degree of intimacy, distance and proximity needed for best therapeutic alliance
 - Consciousness and moderation of aggression
 - Learning from experience (alpha-function) must drive on **the awareness of the emotional experience**

Questions on the aims of Balint groups

Educational ? Support ?

- Support group ?
 - Sense of communion - dealing and helping each other on the same issues and difficulties that bothers one
 - Answer to natural curiosity
 - Boosting internal development
 - Prevention of burn-out
 - Sense of belonging (“Balint brotherhood”)
 - Mutual engagement in a "creative adult playground"

Questions on the usefulness of theory in Balint group leadership

- Does adherence to a specific theory carries the risk of orthodoxy and the belief that you know better ?
- Is the development of intuition and wisdom based on experience in Balint groups as a participant ?
- Is the development of intuition and wisdom based on trial and error ?
- Do a Balint group leader require personal characteristics?
- How is experience gained ?
- How much Balint group experience is needed before becoming a leader ?

THANK YOU

