

## Co-Facilitation In Group Therapy with Adults Who Have Sexually Offended

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## Topics

- Define Group Therapy and Co-Facilitation
- History of the Use of Co-Facilitation
- What Research Says About Co-Facilitation
- Co-Facilitation in Sex Offender Groups
- Advantages of Co-Facilitation
- Disadvantages of Co-Facilitation
- Phases of the Co-Facilitator Relationship
- How To Improve Co-Facilitator Relationship
- Key Takeaways & Things to Consider

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## Group Counseling

Group counseling is a form of psychotherapy in which participants meet face-to-face to work through their problems and concerns under the guidance of **one or two mental health professionals**.

Group counseling is based on the premise that the social self cannot be fully recognized, understood, or affected without accounting for one's interactions with others.



(Luke & Hackney, 2007; Sills, 2023)

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### History of Co-Facilitation

- **1920's:**
  - Alfred Adler began using co-therapy with the primary purpose being to train future therapists.
  - Freud used co-therapy as an adjunct to individual treatment for a challenging client.
- **1939** - Reeve involved co-therapists with individual clients to facilitate client engagement and to promote insight.
- **1945** - In the United States, Moreno used co-leadership in psychodrama groups, using one therapist to direct and the other to assist with and to identify transference and countertransference.

(Luke & Hackney, 2007)

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## History of Co-Facilitation

- **1947** - Hadden initiated the co-leadership literature by pairing clinicians-in-training with more accomplished clinicians for firsthand experience and feedback.
- **1952** - Professionals started to implement co-leadership in group work because they saw that those of equal experience also enhanced their personal and professional development through collaboration.
- **1960's** - The literature reflected the growing appeal and potency of co-leadership with a variety of clients, including children, adolescents, couples, individuals experiencing sexual dysfunction, and clients presenting with psychosis.

(Luke & Hackney, 2007)

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## History of Co-Facilitation, Cont.

- For the past 50 years, the debate regarding the merits and drawbacks of co-leadership has endured, with most arguments grounded in theory and subjective experience alone.
- **2005** - Although the use of co-leadership in counselor preparation expanded throughout the 20th century, co-leadership has received surprisingly little empirical attention.
- The recent resurgence in theoretical and anecdotal writings on co-leadership suggests that all but a few group leaders prefer the dyadic leadership model

(Luke & Hackney, 2007)

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## What Research Says About Co-Facilitation

- Theoretical orientation agreement among co-facilitators most closely correlated with wishing to work together, but that age, professional identification, or years of experience did not predict future co-leadership dyad involvement.
- It is important that both counselors know their roles and responsibilities in the process of group counseling, in order to prevent the unproductive relations.
- Both leaders can maximize the efficiency of their cooperation by acting in a complementary and harmonious manner in the process.



(Luke & Hackney, 2007; Yalcin, 2021)

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## What Research Says About Co-Facilitation

- Group members find it beneficial to observe leader disagreement because it allows them the opportunity to observe how conflict can be resolved.
- Group members also felt some discomfort with disagreement when it was displayed but later viewed the disagreement as something that increased the level of intimacy within the group.



(Luke & Hackney, 2007; Yalcin, 2021)

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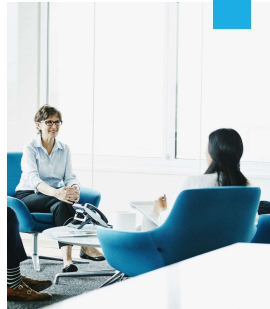
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## Co-Facilitator Relationship

- It is also widely believed that in order to be effective, co-leaders must have **highly functional interpersonal relationships** with each other.
- Effective co-leaders present a **unified stance** and discover ways to challenge group members' all-or-nothing distortions.



(Atieno Okech, 2008; Atieno Okech & Kline, 2006; Chang-Caffaro & Caffaro, 2021)

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## Co-Facilitator Relationship, cont.

- When examining facets of co-leaders' relationships that influence their effectiveness as leaders, researchers have identified co-leaders' concerns about their competence as a relationship factor.
  - Various authors suggest that when co-leaders view themselves as less competent than their co-leaders, their relationship suffers.
  - When co-leaders believe they are less competent than their partners, they become anxious about their partners' perception of them. Literature also asserts that these beliefs impede effective use of a variety of skills.

(Atieno Okech, 2008; Atieno Okech & Kline, 2006; Chang-Caffaro & Caffaro, 2021)

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### Personal Characteristics of a Group Counselor

#### Effective Group Counselor

- Open
- Caring
- Genuine
- Courageous
- Willingness to model
- Being present in the moment
- Belief in the group process
- Non-defensiveness in coping with criticism
- Aware of subtle culture issues
- Able to identify with client's pain
- Commitment to self-care
- Self-awareness
- Sense of humor
- Inventive/creative
- Personal dedication and commitment

#### Ineffective Group Counselor

- Closed
- Cold
- Disingenuous
- Timid
- Unwilling to demonstrate appropriate behaviors
- Distracted
- Disregard for the group process
- Defensive when confronted with criticism
- Oblivious to cultural issues
- Incapable of identifying individual client issues
- Burned out / compassion fatigued
- Lack of personal insight
- Resigned
- Rigid
- Inconsistent

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### Co-facilitation Relationship Strategies

- Seek supervision
- Speak to your co-facilitator
- Case conceptualize together to highlight similarities and differences
- Suggest a mediation between supervisors
- Share specific examples of when bias occurs in the group session

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### Attachment Theory and Coleader Relationships

- Research suggests that a **secure attachment style** promotes a strong therapeutic alliance between clients and therapists.
- Group co-leaders with secure attachment styles may be more likely to self-disclose, demonstrate pro-group behavior, and have greater empathy toward others.
- Co-leaders with lower attachment security may find it harder to trust, engage, and disclose because of fear of rejection, which may, in turn, contribute to diminished self-efficacy.
- Secure attachment in the co-leader alliance can promote intercultural dialogue and enhance a group leader's capacity to have a more accurate and accepting view of their co-leader.

(Chang-Caffaro &amp; Caffaro, 2021)

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### Diversity and the Coleader Alliance

- Female leaders tend to be more emotion-focused and male leaders are more direct and problem-focused.
- Cultural forces operate at largely unconscious levels and can contribute to polarization; they decrease our willingness to talk openly about such matters while simultaneously increasing their clinical relevance in group interactions.



(Chang-Caffaro & Caffaro, 2021)

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### Diversity and the Coleader Alliance, cont.

- To provide competent, culturally sensitive group leadership, co-leaders must be able to conceptualize diversity issues, become aware of personal issues activated by the co-leader alliance and group, and generate diversity-competent interventions at multiple levels of group interactions.
- This ability is especially crucial when cultural differences exist between co-leaders or with group members.



(Chang-Caffaro & Caffaro, 2021)

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### Co-Facilitation in Sexual Offender Treatment Groups

There is **no** research that shows there is an added advantage to using a male-female, male-male, female-female pairing of group co-facilitators with sexual abusers.

(Cramer, et al., 2024; Sawyer & Jennings, 2016)

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## Co-Facilitation in Sexual Offender Groups, cont.

- A critical factor in effective co-facilitation is giving a consistent message; in other words, the co-facilitators need to have **close collaboration**.
- If two co-facilitators have very different leadership styles or conflicting perspectives, those differences can be expressed as tension and incompatible messages that can cause confusion, mistrust, and other potential harm to the group.
- It is important these differences be discussed before or after group sessions.

(Sawyer & Jennings, 2016)

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## Case example: Institution Co-Facilitator Conflict

- Female and male, long term group, she in group for several years, he is new to group
- She felt unsafe as he did not back her in a during a conflicted group session

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## Communication is Essential

- Co-facilitation is a relationship.
- Once paired, co-facilitators are encouraged to have **frank and open discussions** about any differences.
- Co-facilitators should have an **ongoing dialogue** to identify conflicts, to sort out what is occurring in the group, and to achieve a common understanding of how to manage their differences during the group.
- Mutual discussions** can help co-facilitators understand the strategy behind each other's interventions and they can adjust their approach in ways that compliment their strengths.
- Co-facilitators need to **regularly communicate** with each other about the group and to proactively talk about any incongruities in their approach that could be problematic.

(Sawyer & Jennings, 2016)

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### Common Mistakes in Co-Facilitation

- Not sitting across from one another or not making continuous eye contact with coleader.
- Having a plan or goal for the group but not communicating that to coleader.
- Taking too much space or being competitive with their coleader.
- Asserting power over their coleader in both covert and overt ways.

(Corey et al., 2014)

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### Common Mistakes in Co-Facilitation, cont.

- Trying to be "right" as a leader at the expense of making their coleader wrong.
- Taking turns leading rather than co-facilitating or adding to one another's interventions.
- Remaining quiet and letting the coleader do most of the work.

(Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2014)

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### Advantages of Co-Facilitation

- Reduced risk of burnout
- Co-therapists can support each other when a group is difficult
- Ongoing process of learning from one another and challenging one another, not working in isolation, and utilizing built-in live consultation
- Group members feel safer and more secure

(Alieno Okach & Kline, 2005; Corey et al., 2014; Foll & Wejnert, 2005; Luke & Hackney, 2007; Sawyer & Jennings, 2016)

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### Advantages of Co-Facilitation, cont.

- Increases ability to recognize significant clinical events
- Better able to monitor the abundant direct and indirect communication
- Offer more than one perspective and model different styles of communication
- Co-therapists have a chance to share in the rewards of groups, but also the annoyance or strain of a "bad" group session

(Atieno Okech & Kline, 2005; Corey et al., 2014; Fall & Wejnert, 2005; Luke & Hackney, 2007; Sawyer & Jennings, 2016)

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### Advantages of Co-Facilitation, cont.

Can discuss plans for the group before the session begins:

- Is there a particular curriculum topic or lesson to be presented?
- Are there any unresolved issues from the prior session?
- Is anyone in crisis?
- Are any members engaging in problematic behavior that needs to be addressed?
- Is either of you having a difficult day and needing the other to be aware and take a stronger role during the session?

(Sawyer & Jennings, 2016)

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### Case example: Outpatient Program Synergy After Conflict

- He was a long-term facilitator, she was new to this group, early on he told her, this was "his group", she felt left out and not recognized.
- She raised the issue, her perspective was more collaborating and relationship oriented
- Resolved differences, good male/female synergy

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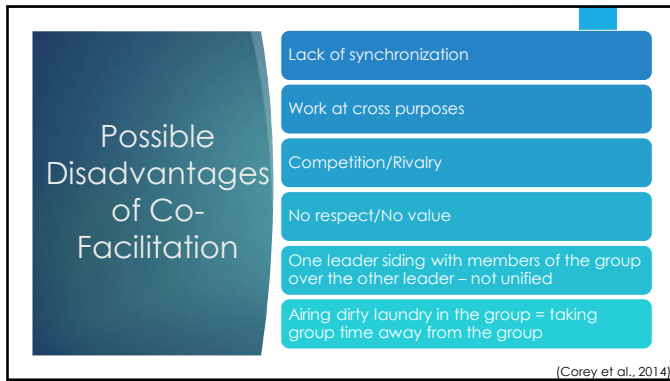
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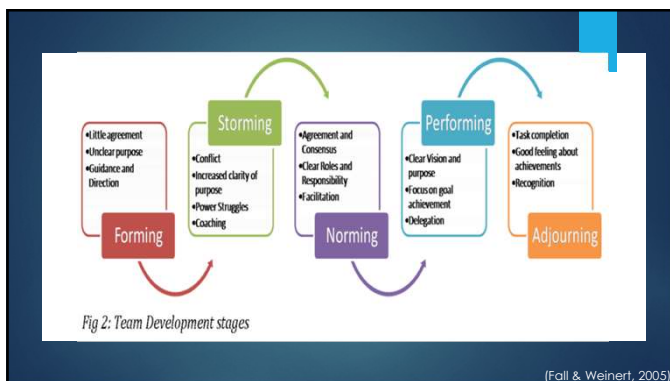
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**Strengthening The Co-Leader Alliance**

- Understanding coleader attachment styles for important clues about how the coleader is likely to respond.
- Developing an understanding, intimate, and cohesive relationship that allows for challenging conversations to occur.
- Becoming aware of personal issues activated by the coleader alliance and by the group.

(Chang-Caffaro & Caffaro, 2021)

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**Strengthening The Co-Leader Alliance, cont.**

- Generating diversity-competent interventions at multiple levels of group interaction.
- Ruptures, if not identified and managed, can damage the coleader alliance. Successfully addressing ruptures can bring therapeutic benefit for the coleaders and for the group as a whole.

(Chang-Caffaro & Caffaro, 2021)

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## Steps to Make a Productive Co-Facilitator Relationship

-  Identify the specific characteristics or behaviors that bother you about your coleader and examine why these are problematic for you.
-  Seek supervision and consultation to enable you to work through these issues.
-  Communicate your feelings to your coleader in an open and nonjudgmental way and discuss what you each need to develop a more effective working relationship.
-  Increase the amount of time you spend preparing for and debriefing group sessions with your coleader.
-  If you, your coleader, or your supervisor determine that these conflicts are likely to cause harm to the group members, consider changing coleaders.

(Corey et al., 2014)

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## A structure to use as a template for talking about how to conceptualize groups and group process.

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## Conceptualizing Group Functioning Across Nine Key Dimensions ©

1. Adherence to structure
2. Engagement and participation
3. Ability of the group to remain focused
4. Emotional climate
5. The presence of therapeutic factors
6. Developmental stage
7. Co-facilitation relationship
8. Evidence of individual client progress in treatment
9. The occurrence of pivotal or significant therapeutic moments for the group or individual members in the group

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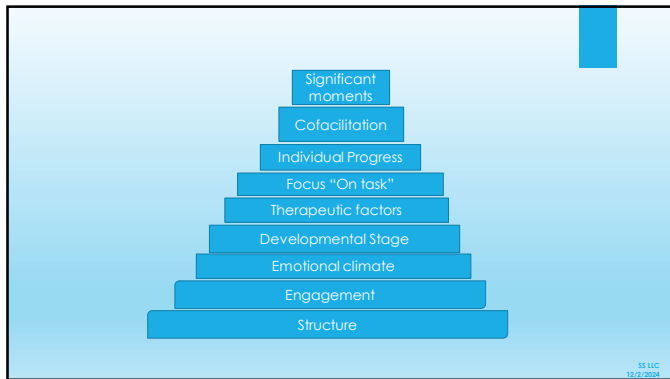
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Name _____	Date _____		Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I discuss issues with others to try to find solutions that meet everyone's needs.		1	2	3	4	
2. I try to negotiate and use a give-and-take approach to problem situations.		1	2	3	4	
3. I try to meet the needs of others.		1	2	3	4	
4. I would argue my case and insist on the advantages of my point of view.		1	2	3	4	
5. When I am in a conflict, I usually say very little and try to leave as soon as possible.		1	2	3	4	
6. When I find myself in an argument, I usually say very little and try to leave as soon as possible.		1	2	3	4	
7. I try to see conflicts from both sides. What do I need? What does the other person need? What are the issues involved?		1	2	3	4	
8. I transfer to someone else when solving problems and just move on.		1	2	3	4	

**Conflict Management Styles Assessment**

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Conflict Management Styles Assessment Na (1).pdf

Self assessment exercise

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## Key Takeaways & Ideas to Consider

- Co-facilitation can have productive results for group members as long as they work as a collaborative team.
- Communicate with your co-facilitator on a regular and consistent basis.
- Like any relationship, there will be times of disagreement and conflict, which are opportunities to talk through the differences and find common understanding.
- In terms of group composition, consistency is what is best for residents and facilitators.
- Be mindful of a resident trying to "split" facilitators and circumvent their attempts by not meeting with any one-on-one and communicating with your co-facilitator regularly.
- If you and your co-facilitator have different supervisors, consider having meetings with everyone in the room for case consultation and supervision. Otherwise, cases may be presented at supervisory meetings to reach a consensus.

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## Contact

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