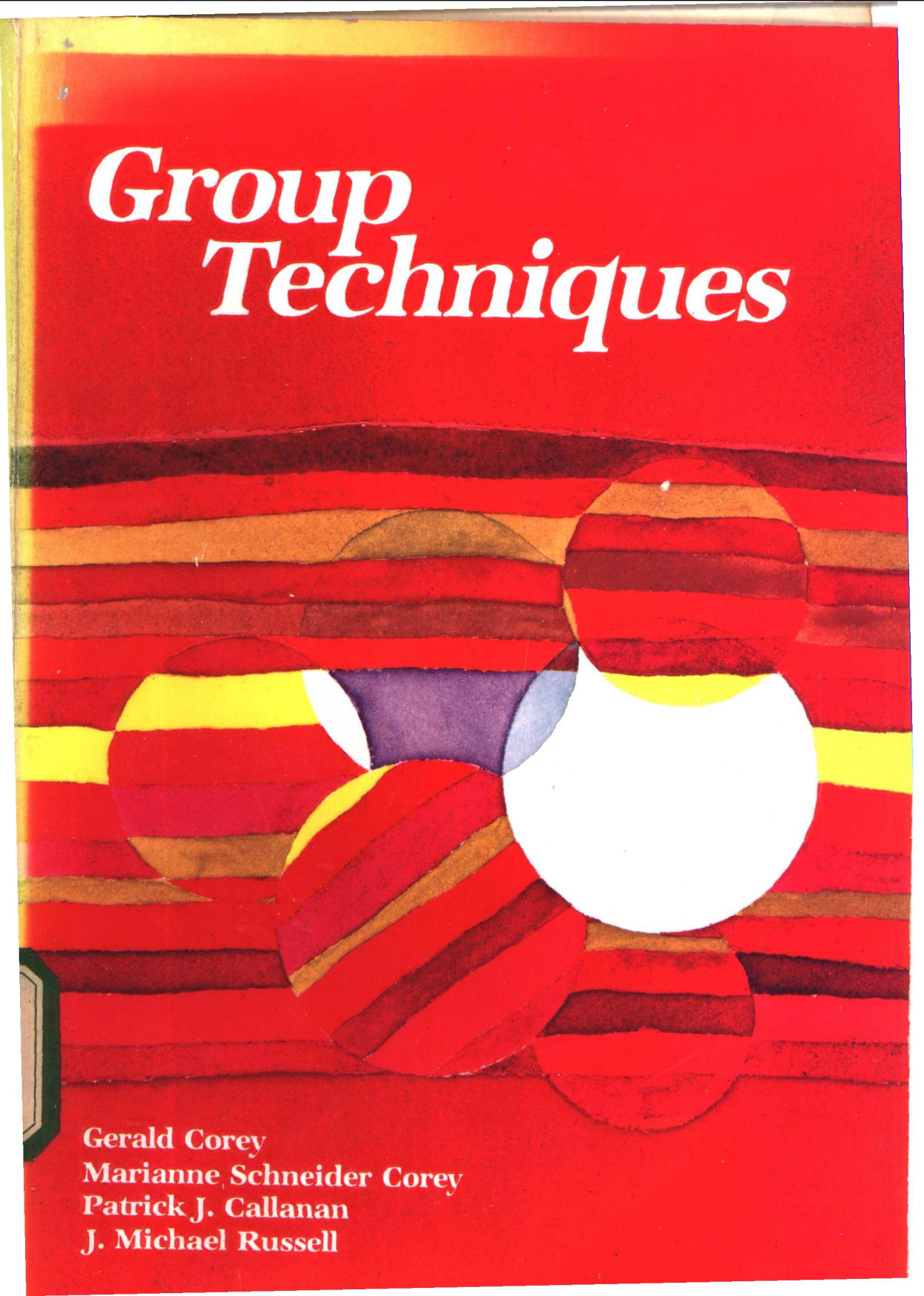


Group Techniques

The cover features a vibrant red background with horizontal stripes in shades of brown, orange, and yellow. Overlaid on these stripes are several overlapping circles in various colors, including red, white, purple, and blue. The circles are arranged in a way that they appear to be floating or overlapping each other, creating a dynamic and abstract composition.

Gerald Corey
Marianne Schneider Corey
Patrick J. Callanan
J. Michael Russell

Group Techniques

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*This book is dedicated to
the teachers who gave us the benefit of their wisdom
and to our group members,
especially those in our residential workshops,
who gave us the opportunity to learn more.*

Preface

Since the four of us began working together in 1972, we have been involved in almost every aspect of group work—as members, leaders, teachers, and workshop conductors. In the course of this long involvement we have found ourselves continually faced with questions about techniques in groups: their place, their usefulness, their abuse. In many of our training workshops we have observed beginning leaders flounder in their use of techniques. In professional workshops we have been asked about techniques in such a fashion as to imply that there is or should be a scientific body of techniques available to the practitioner to cover every eventuality in a group.

Our primary assumption in this book is that techniques are never the main course in group work. This assumption has many implications. It puts the focus on the members and the leader and on what goes on between them. Whatever obscures these relationships is not facilitative in our minds. Thus techniques are means, not ends; they are not to be hidden behind, are not to be forced on the client; they should be used to increase knowledge and awareness. They are fundamentally at the service of the client, not the therapist.

To avoid having the techniques described in this book used as the primary focus of group work, we do not attempt to provide an exhaustive catalog of techniques and exercises. Our purpose is not to outline all possible techniques for every possible population, but to teach leaders how to develop and use techniques in group work. You can best use this book by reading a chapter, putting the book down, and then asking

yourself what relevance the techniques described have for you in your situation and how they might be applied. We hope you will not borrow our techniques verbatim and use them without consideration for the members of your groups and their unique relationships with you and with each other.

In addition to our hopes for the way this book will be used, we also hope that it will stimulate your interest in the broad field of working with people in groups and in the philosophical and ethical dimensions of what you do. Such an interest could lead you to think about theories of therapy, to further your own therapy, to engage in exchanges of ideas rather than being professionally isolated, and to participate in professional workshops. It could also lead you to an interest in supervision, whether in the formal sense of teaching or in the informal sense of working with a respected colleague. If this book motivates you and other practitioners and students to broaden your interest to encompass the whole field of counseling and therapy, we believe that interest will help to diminish the abuse of techniques.

We sought to write this book in a style that fits our personal perspective and our way of leading groups. We have not included references to other authors within the body of the text. We hope you will use the selected bibliography at the end of the book to further your thinking about group work. We do not want to give the impression, however, that the techniques discussed arose in a vacuum. In addition to being direct responses to problems presented by participants in groups we have led, the techniques in this book bear the stamp of our own therapists, of leaders of groups and workshops in which we have been members, and of a great many writers with various theoretical orientations.

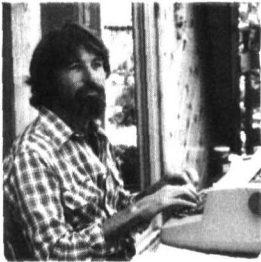
This book is for students and practitioners in any human-services field, from counseling psychology to social work, where group is an accepted modality. In the classroom it can be a valuable auxiliary text. In practice it can be used to stimulate thinking and creativity in one's approach to group work, and it can be used in conjunction with supervision. Intended readers include psychiatric nurses, social workers, psychologists, ministers, marriage and family therapists, teachers, and mental health professionals and paraprofessionals who lead groups.

We would like to thank those who read the manuscript in its developmental stages and who offered suggestions for improving the book, including Jeffrey A. Kottler, University of North Alabama; Allan Dye, Purdue University; Jerrold Shapiro, King Kalakaua Center for Humanistic Psychotherapy and University of Hawaii; Mary Moline, Loma Linda University; Beverly Palmer, California State University, Dominguez

Hills; and Donna Robbins. Several students also gave us valuable comments as they used the manuscript in their group-leadership class: Linda Boehm Callanan, Alisa Engel, Matthew Hamlin, Chris Boyd, Deborah Douglas, Gary Charleston, and Sandie Jacobs. We extend our special thanks to our manuscript editor, Pam Fischer, whose editorial expertise helped the four of us to achieve a unified style.

Gerald Corey
Marianne Schneider Corey
Patrick J. Callanan
J. Michael Russell

The Authors



I am Gerald Corey, currently a professor of human services at California State University at Fullerton. I teach courses in counseling theory and practice, group counseling, and group process. I am also a licensed psychologist in California and a diplomate in counseling psychology, American Board of Professional Psychology. I received my doctorate in counseling from the University of Southern California in 1967. I have worked as a counseling psychologist in two universities, and have taught at several universities and colleges and a high school.

Recently, I've been teaching graduate courses and offering workshops in group counseling in England, Germany, and Mexico, as well as in the United States. It is exciting and challenging to me to work with professionals who have a variety of backgrounds and interests. Not only have I learned about the practical applications of group techniques from those who have participated in my workshops, but I've also come increasingly to appreciate the value of group work with many different populations. Along with Marianne and Mike, I conducted a weeklong personal-growth group in Germany and another weeklong training and supervision group for counselors in the U.S. Army drug and alcohol rehabilitation program. Along with Marianne and Patrick, I regularly offer in-service training workshops for group workers at a state facility for the rehabilitation of sex offenders. And, with Patrick, Mike, and Marianne, I look forward to the weeklong residential personal-growth groups we offer in Idyllwild, California each summer.

Working with Mike, Marianne, and Patrick on this book has been fun as well as work. They do their best to challenge me and keep me honest, and I continue to value the personal relationship that enhances our professional relationship. This book is an outgrowth of the time we have spent together and of the various workshops we've led as a team.

My preferred modality for therapeutic work is groups. Groups provide an outlet for creative expression as well as an opportunity to work with my friends and colleagues. My experiences as a client in groups have been significant in my development.

Because I work hard, I realize the necessity of recreation. I find walking in the mountains, bicycling, and traveling truly replenishing. Attending professional conferences and conventions and meeting with professionals who share similar interests is a source of renewal for both Marianne and myself. Talking with my two teenage daughters, Heidi and Cindy, continues to be a nourishing experience.

Fortunately, I find a great deal of meaning in my work as a professor, a consultant, a practitioner, and an author. I have found that writing textbooks is a natural extension of working closely with students as a teacher. I have authored or co-authored the following books, all of which have been published by Brooks/Cole: *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Second Edition (and *Manual*) (1982), *Case Approach to Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1982), *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* (and *Manual*) (1981), *Professional and Ethical Issues in Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1979, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Patrick J. Callanan), *I Never Knew I Had a Choice* (1978, with Marianne Schneider Corey), and *Groups: Process and Practice* (1977, with Marianne Schneider Corey).



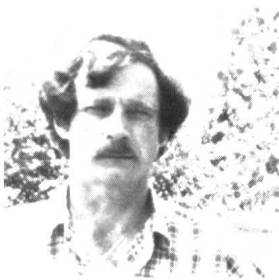
I am Marianne Schneider Corey, a licensed marriage, family, and child therapist in California. I am in private practice, doing individual and group counseling. I regularly lead training workshops for professional staff at a state hospital and for students in human services at California State University at Fullerton. In addition, I have conducted with Jerry and Mike a training workshop near my home town in Germany for German and American counselors. I am

also involved in coleading couples' groups and weeklong residential groups. Over the past ten years, I have worked with the elderly, adolescents, children, and institutionalized persons. My present practice involves working with a relatively well-functioning, middle-aged population. Jerry and I are the current chairpersons of the Professional Standards and Ethics Committee of the Association for Specialists in Group Work, and along with Jerry and Patrick I am writing *Casebook on Ethical Standards for Group Counseling and Psychotherapy* for that association. I have co-authored *I Never Knew I Had a Choice* (1978, with Gerald Corey), *Groups: Process and Practice* (1977, with Gerald Corey), and *Professional and Ethical Issues in Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1977, with Gerald Corey and Patrick J. Callanan). My preference is group work. I see it as the most effective format in which to work with clients and the most rewarding for me personally.

I believe that my education and training as a therapist are never finished. I attend workshops for personal and professional growth. I am an avid reader and seek to keep an open mind about many different aspects of life. My edu-

cation and personal therapy, my colleagues and friends have been important in my development as a therapist. In addition, many of the ways I approach clients and counseling are the result of my values and my upbringing in a small country village in Germany. I married Jerry 17 years ago, and we have two children. I struggle to effectively combine my role as a parent and my role as a therapist. I see my nuclear and extended family as my primary group.

The writing of this book has been exciting, fun, and rewarding. It has given me the opportunity to share my enthusiasm and ideas about group techniques. I have been forced to examine and question my ideas before putting them on paper. I have spent many hours with my co-authors, who are my good friends and colleagues. While undertaking a serious task, we have had many good times together and have enjoyed the project immensely.



I am Patrick J. Callanan, a licensed marriage, family, and child therapist in California. I maintain a private practice in the Santa Ana and Tustin areas of Orange County. My first contact with formal therapy was in a group in the fall of 1971. I have been associated with group therapy, in one form or another, ever since; it is my modality of choice. Each year I participate as a leader in a weeklong residential workshop through California State University at Fullerton. I have been a panel member at professional conventions and workshops. I conduct training workshops for professional staff at a state hospital and for students in human services at California State University at Fullerton. With the Coreys I have co-authored *Professional and Ethical Issues in Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1979), and also with the Coreys I am writing *Casebook on Ethical Standards for Group Counseling and Psychotherapy* for the Association for Specialists in Group Work. All these experiences challenge my thinking and influence my behavior both as a person and as a professional. The most rewarding of my experiences have been the many conversations, discussions, arguments with my friends and colleagues, including particularly my co-authors in this project.

I am deeply committed to my work and to learning all that I can about doing it effectively. This I see as an unfinishable task; there is always something new to learn. My contributions to this book are based on what I was taught and what I have observed. I pass it on and continue to learn and observe. I am grateful for the friends and colleagues who were sent my way and delighted with myself for pursuing a relationship with them.



I am J. Michael Russell, a professor of human services and professor of philosophy at California State University at Fullerton. In my doctoral dissertation in philosophy (University of California at Santa Barbara, 1971) and in my subsequent research I have sought to blend an exploration of philosophical psychology with a concern about concrete existential struggles. I have published articles on "Psychotherapy and Quasi-Performative Speech" (*Behaviorism*, 1973), "Saying, Feeling, and Self-Deception" (*Behaviorism*, 1979), "Sartre, Therapy, and Expanding the Concept of Responsibility" (*American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 1979), "Sartre's Theory of Sexuality" (*Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 1979), "How to Think about Thinking" (*Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 1980), "A Weeklong Residential Workshop" (*Journal of Specialists in Group Work*, 1980), and "Reflection and Self-Deception" (*Research in Phenomenology*, 1981). I have been involved in leading personal-growth workshops and teaching personal-growth courses since 1971 and have presented numerous lectures, papers, and panel discussions on group work to various professional organizations of psychologists and counselors. The existentialist philosopher Sartre has had the greatest impact on my thinking, but I have also been very much influenced by Freud and by Fritz Perls.

Jerry and Marianne Corey, Patrick Callanan, and I have been lecturing together, coleading groups, and having an impact on one another's lives since 1972, and that interaction has been enormously fulfilling for me. Most of this book was written as the four of us collaborated around a table in the Corey home, and, solely on the grounds that I was the fastest typist, it typically fell to me to piece together what we each had to say. It was a joy to discover how often we spoke as if with one voice.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Role of Techniques

At the outset, we need to be clear about what we mean by the word *technique*. This task is not as easy as it may sound. How does one look at the therapeutic journey and decide which parts of it can be described as techniques and which parts belong to the person of the counselor? Freud's couch is surely a technique as is free association. But were Freud's position behind the couch and the manner in which he spoke with his patients techniques? Is Carl Rogers's warm, empathetic style a technique? Is his selective reflection of a client's utterances a technique? Was Fritz Perls's demeanor a technique? One could answer yes to all these questions and in a sense we do. Virtually anything a leader does can be viewed as a technique, including being silent, maintaining eye contact, arranging seating, and presenting interpretations.

Because it would be difficult to write a book with such a broad conception, we generally use the term *technique* to refer to cases where the leader makes an explicit and directive request of a member for the purpose of focusing on material, augmenting or exaggerating affect, practicing behavior, or solidifying insight. This definition encompasses, for instance, the following procedures: conducting initial interviews in which members are asked to focus on their reasons for wanting to join a group, asking a nonproductive group to clarify the direction it wants to take, asking a member to role-play a specific situation, asking a member to practice a behavior, encouraging a person to repeat certain words or to complete a sentence, helping members summarize what they got out of a group session, challenging a member's belief system, and working with the cognitions of a member that influence behavior. We also

consider as techniques procedures aimed at helping group leaders get focused for group sessions—techniques leaders can use to give them a sense of the direction they might pursue with a group.

Avoiding the misuse of techniques

Misconceptions about the use of techniques abound. When we give workshops about groups, participants often ask for techniques for working with specific clients. The implication seems to be that to lead a group effectively one should have the “right” technical tools to employ at the “right” moment, as if there were a precise scientific procedure for each and every situation and as if such procedures were all that needed to be imparted in a training session. We think this attitude indicates an unwillingness to learn about how groups evolve and function. Perhaps for some models of group counseling, such as behavior modification, specific methods are appropriate to secure well-defined behavioral outcomes. However, although the people who attend our workshops are apparently, like us, more interested in insight therapy than in behavior modification, they nevertheless seem eager to obtain gimmicks and quick solutions—short cuts that protect them from full involvement with their groups.

Given our assumption that techniques are means and not ends, we naturally have some concerns about how this book will be used: Will the book contribute to the problem of group leaders being too technique oriented? Will readers memorize specific devices and use them insensitively, rather than treating the book as a means to deepen their own therapeutic inventiveness and judgment? We would like instead to inspire leaders’ own creativity, to have the book be a jumping-off place that encourages leaders to take risks in trying out and spontaneously inventing techniques.

It is impossible to predict, except in a general way, what the nature of a group will be. Thus a recipe-book approach to therapy and techniques, while providing opportunities to try different things, surely does not replace the main function of a group leader. The analogy to recipes and cooking is helpful here. Many an excellent cook—and this would be our recommendation for the therapist—creates a different dish each time: even though working from a basic recipe, one has to follow one’s taste, use foods available at the market that day, and trust one’s own sensitivity.

Paying attention to the obvious. It is our assumption that techniques can further and deepen feelings that are already present and

that they should preferably grow out of what is already taking place. When a person says "I'm feeling lonely," for example, it is appropriate to introduce a technique to help move this feeling further. For this reason, we generally prefer to include the members in the selection of group themes rather than to arbitrarily select a theme. This is not a hard and fast rule; many group practitioners work effectively with preselected techniques, exercises, and themes. Indeed, for certain populations, this approach is indicated. We sometimes use techniques to initiate material at the beginning of a group and often use them to summarize material at the end. But generally we use techniques for elaborating on what is already present. We are distrustful of having too much of a preset agenda for group process; we prefer to take our clues from what the members provide.

Many groups have moments of stagnation, periods of resistance or hesitation. It is easy in these situations—and often quite unwise—to hasten to employ a technique to get things moving rather than to pay attention to the important material being presented. Seeming lack of movement is important in itself, and anxiety should not lead therapists to introduce a gimmick in order to avoid a period in which nothing seems to be happening. By looking around the room, for example, you may notice that members are disengaged—they appear bored, they are fidgeting, they are falling asleep. We think the best technique at such times is for you to initiate a check-out process: "I'm aware of working hard to bring some life to this group, and I'm aware that many of you don't appear involved in what's going on. I'd like to find out from each of you what is happening." You can then share your feelings at the moment or you can save them until the members have expressed what they are feeling. What we see as a mistake is to try technique after technique to generate movement in a situation such as this. We'd prefer to deal with what is actually occurring within the group.

In addition, when considering whether to introduce a technique, you should take into account the stage the group is in. For instance, you can expect trust to be an issue in the initial stages of a group. A group may be somewhat silent and cautious at this point in its existence. To introduce a technique to get things moving is to ignore the obvious and to impose a dynamic that is either premature for the group or alien to the character of the group. Doing so radically interferes with the natural development of the group. By introducing instead a technique that stresses and clarifies what is happening, you augment rather than intrude on the process. Then the technique completes the process and does not ignore it.