

Appendix A – Benefits and Challenges of Group Psychotherapy (GP)

The below is an extension of Section 3 of the Agreement:

Benefits:

Effective Symptom Reduction: many studies show outcomes comparable to individual therapy for many conditions (depression, anxiety, addiction, etc.)

Cost-Effectiveness: Often more affordable per session, making it accessible within public health systems and private insurance limits

Reduced Isolation: Members realize they are not alone in their struggles, normalizing their experiences

Peer Modeling: Observing others' progress provides hope and practical examples of coping strategies

Social Skills Lab: The group acts as a safe microcosm to practice communication, boundary-setting, and receiving feedback in real-time

Shared Commitment: The collective agreement for healing and confidentiality often creates a strong sense of trust and mutual responsibility among members

Support Network: Immediate access to peer support during sessions

Diverse Perspectives: Hearing about topics and concerns from multiple viewpoints helps challenge cognitive distortions more robustly than a single therapist might

Standardized Care: Regulated by provincial colleges just like individual therapy, ensuring therapists are trained in group facilitation and ethics

Evidence-Based: groups are based on empirically supported treatments, just like individual therapy sessions

Challenges:

Variable Fit: Not suitable for everyone, for example, individuals in acute crisis

Slower Individual Focus: Less time per person compared to individual therapy

Improper Facilitation: Can lead to risks like negative group dynamics, crosstalk, trauma dumping – it is important that facilitators are specifically trained in group psychotherapy facilitation

Confidentiality: is limited to all group members present versus just one client and the therapist

Emotional Overwhelm: as there are other clients present who are also sharing, there is a potential for being triggered by what they say

For more information about GP please feel free to look up resources via the Canadian Association of Social Workers or the Canadian Psychological Association.