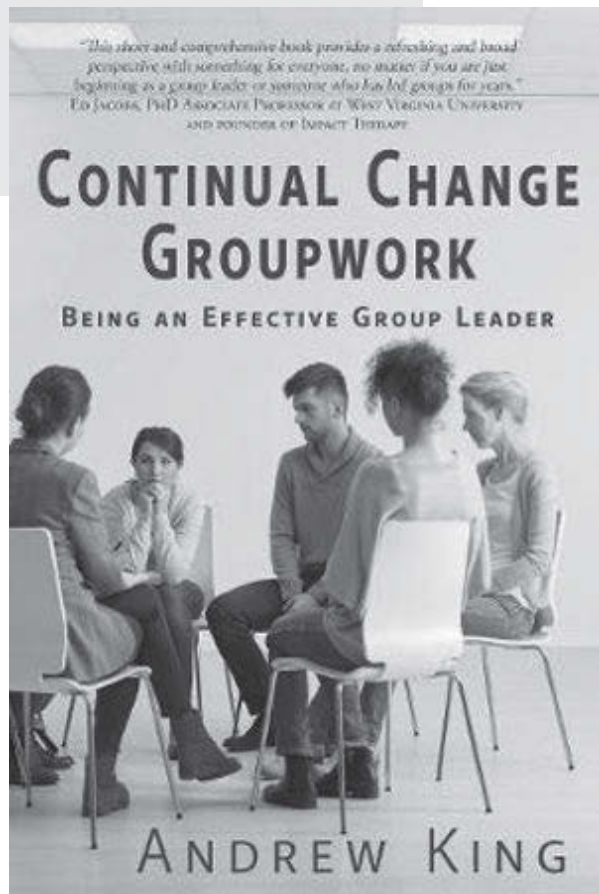


CONTINUAL CHANGE GROUPWORK: BEING AN EFFECTIVE GROUP LEADER

**ANDREW KING (2018)
GROUPWORK SOLUTIONS**



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Groupwork holds an important place in service delivery across a range of disciplines and contexts. The opportunity for shared experiences and interpersonal connections has significant potential for encouraging individual and group learning, while also encouraging meaningful change and personal development. In *Continual Change Groupwork*, Andrew King discusses a range of theoretical and practical issues related to being an effective group leader in a clear and accessible format.

Chapter 1 provides a broad introduction to groupwork, including its historical influences, from several theoretical perspectives. While efficacy has proved difficult to measure, King outlines evidence that attests to the benefits of groupwork. This chapter introduces the Continual Change Framework, which is elaborated throughout the following chapters. Chapter 2 describes the “Central Core” component of the model, outlining stages of group development from before the group commences through to its termination. As a basis of the central components of groupwork, this chapter provides a practical checklist for group leaders, outlining

necessary tasks through each stage of group development.

The next section deals with the “Developmental Issues” aspect of the Continual Change Framework. In Chapter 3, King addresses program development, drawing on different historical approaches and theoretical perspectives to provide practical guidance and justification for steps in developing and establishing groupwork programs. Chapter 4 describes the basic building blocks of groupwork and gives an accessible outline of concepts as they relate to groupwork practice, including group cohesion, the importance of values and rules within a group, the necessity of feedback, and considerations around group structure. Chapter 5 outlines some clinical and therapeutic tools that may be utilised in groupwork practice, providing clear examples of how different theoretical approaches inform specific activities within groups. Chapter 6 deals with the concept of group leadership, providing a comprehensive list of characteristics and roles for group leaders to strive towards. While it is acknowledged that no single person could demonstrate each characteristic listed, this chapter is an encouragement for readers to reflect

on their own strengths and limitations as a group leader, as well as a reminder to strive for continued professional development. The section concludes with Chapter 7 describing basic concepts of Systems Theory and how these concepts are commonly applied within groupwork settings. Rather than being an abstract presentation of theory, this chapter is framed in such a way as to encourage readers to ask questions of themselves and reflect on their own practice.

The following section works through the “Diagnostic Issues” section of the Continual Change Framework with a focus on encouraging group leaders to reflect on the operation and functioning of groups. Chapter 8 discusses group leaders’ mental maps, breaking down thought processes and considerations in assessing the quality of group functioning. Chapter 9 deals with group dynamics, including underlying individual and group influences. Importantly, this chapter discusses both positive and negative forms of group dynamics and provides guidance for dealing with these through describing the history and application of the Focal Conflict Model. Chapter 10 concludes this section by addressing directions for change within groups. It emphasises the importance of thoughtfully considering how to select and apply specific intervention strategies and provides extensive guidance for negotiating problematic individuals within a group.

The final section of the book addresses professional practice and emerging issues for groupwork. Chapter 11 provides detailed understanding of learning processes from a theoretical and practical point of view, which contextualises a group leader’s role in

facilitating learning within the group setting. Chapter 12 raises the issue of co-leadership within groupwork. By providing a frank account of potential advantages and disadvantages to this approach, readers will be suitably informed about the reality of co-leadership prior to making their own decision as to whether it is appropriate for their own practice and setting. Chapter 13 addresses ethical issues and supervision arrangements. Drawing on existing guidelines and requirements from industry bodies, this chapter provides justification and guidance for ensuring that groupwork and supervision in their various forms are always conducted in an appropriate and ethical manner. Finally, the book concludes with a chapter that acknowledges the place that technology has, and will continue to have, in groupwork practice. While groupwork has been relatively slow in embracing technological advances, this chapter outlines some existing opportunities for how technology can facilitate groupwork processes and raises potential avenues for future development.

Overall, *Continual Change Groupwork* is a very practical book. Through dealing with various issues and concepts related to groupwork, King provides clear guidelines for practice. Theoretical approaches that underpin various aspects of groupwork are explored thoroughly, and these are presented alongside examples of what theory-informed practice could look like in a real-world situation, enabling abstract theoretical concepts to have practical relevance. While there are some references to empirical research throughout the book, these are at times limited. Regardless, King presents a compelling case for the Continual Change Framework with strong

justification based on theory and extensive experience. A notable strength of the book is that each chapter specifically and purposefully addresses cultural considerations. Raising awareness of how culture may influence the experience of individual group members and their interactions with others in the group is an important dimension of the framework that will no doubt benefit readers working in any form of groupwork.

This book maintains a clear focus on groupwork practice and implementation. It provides strong theoretical background to some of the more abstract ideas informing the Continual Change Framework, but these are always clearly related back to examples of groupwork practice and how to best engage with group members. It is a thought-provoking and practical guide that encourages self-reflection for group leaders of any level of experience.