Cohesion and Climate in the Small Group

Chapter 12

The Importance of Cohesion

Definition

Cohesion is when a member reaches an acceptable level of desire to stay in the group and is a behavior that can change over the course of a group's existence

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The Importance of Cohesion

Two types of cohesion

Task cohesion refers to the degree to which group members work toward a common goal

Social cohesion reflects the level of positive affect among group members

The Importance of Cohesion

Benefits of social cohesion

1. When a group member feels successful, she contributes to the group's task accomplishment

2. When a group member feels connected, he communicates with his group members and participates in group interaction

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The Importance of Cohesion

Benefits of social cohesion

3. When a group member feels valued, she appreciates her group members

4. When a group member feels supported, he expresses caring, empathy, and concern about his group members

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The Importance of Climate

Definition

Communication climate is the relative acceptance or rejection a group member feels based on the social and psychological tone of the relationships established among group members

The Importance of Climate

Two types of climate

1. In a supportive communication climate, group members feel their contributions are welcomed and valued

2. In a defensive communication climate, group members feel their contributions are neither welcomed nor valued

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How Communication Climate is Established

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How Communication Climate is Established

For a group to establish a supportive communication climate, group members essentially must maximize their use of the six dimensions that promote a supportive communication climate and minimize their use of the six dimensions that promote a defensive communication climate

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Six Dimensions of Communication Climate

1. Description and evaluation focus on how group members take ownership of their verbal and nonverbal expressions

Supportive: <u>Description</u> describes her feelings and presents her viewpoints as her own

Defensive: <u>Evaluation</u> passes judgment, assigns blame, and interrogates group members

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Six Dimensions of Communication Climate

2. Problem orientation and control deal with how group members approach task accomplishment

Supportive: <u>Problem orientation</u> focuses on collaborating with group members by seeking a mutually defined and acceptable solution

Defensive: <u>Control</u> imposes a point of view on group members

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Six Dimensions of Communication Climate

3. Spontaneity and strategy center on the degree of openness that exists among group members

Supportive: <u>Spontaneity</u> openly expresses thoughts, feelings, or emotions upfront

Defensive: <u>Strategy</u> shares thoughts, feelings, or emotions less than honestly

Six Dimensions of Communication Climate

4. Empathy and neutrality focus on how group members demonstrate concern or indifference toward one another

Supportive: Empathy identifies with the group members and attempts to understand their feelings, needs, and interests

Defensive: Neutrality indicates an indifference toward the other group members and their feelings, needs, and interests

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Six Dimensions of Communication Climate

5. Equality and superiority deal with how group members minimize or maximize their individual differences

Supportive: Equality treats all group members the same and believes the contributions of all group members are equal

Defensive: Superiority treats all group members differently because members are not considered as equals

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Six Dimensions of Communication Climate

6. Provisionalism and certainty center on group members' degree of inflexibility or rigidity when communicating with each other

Supportive: Provisionalism makes tentative judgments about the task and the group members

Defensive: Certainty sees only one way to approach a task.

Turning a Defensive Climate into a Supportive Climate

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Four guidelines

1. Monitor relational communication by reviewing the negative messages associated with each dimension of a defensive communication climate and actively working toward replacing the negative message with a positive message

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Turning a Defensive Climate into a Supportive Climate

2. Use confirming messages and avoid the use of disconfirming messages

   A confirming message recognizes the value and importance of a relational partner

   A disconfirming message makes a relational partner feel devalued

Turning a Defensive Climate into a Supportive Climate

Seven disconfirming messages

1. An impersonal message is nonimmediate and cliché-ridden

2. An impervious message is not acknowledged by the receiver

3. An incoherent message is difficult to follow

Turning a Defensive Climate into a Supportive Climate

3. Reduce the use of discounting messages, which disparage or fail to affirm a new idea that emerges in either a verbal or nonverbal form

4. Engage in feedback.

A Final Note

The social-emotional aspect of group members' communication becomes more important as the group matures and works together

Cohesion occurs over the life span of a group, which means that at any given time, cohesion will affect how group members communicate with each other