

Group Relations Consultant Competencies

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AKRI and GRI have jointly identified a set of core competencies that constitute the foundational learning for a group relations consultant.

Self-Awareness and Internal Management

- Reflective Practice: The ability to be reflective and self-examining.
- Vulnerability for Learning: The capacity to be vulnerable in the service of one's own learning and the learning of the group.
- Authority and Resilience: An understanding that taking up authority may include tolerating loneliness, derision, or being misunderstood.
- Internal Expression: The ability to reflect on and express one's internal experience rather than acting on it in ways that do not further group members' learning.

Relational and Contextual Awareness

- Curiosity and Respect: A respectful and curious stance toward others' learning and experience, embodying genuine curiosity about what is happening in the group as a whole.
- Identity and Projection: An understanding of how elements of one's own identity and history affect one's work and call forth particular fantasies and projections from others.
- Socio-Political Context: An understanding of how group and organizational dynamics reflect the larger socio-political context.

Group Dynamics

- Unconscious Activity: An appreciation of the range and complexity of unconscious activity.
- Valuing Experience: An acceptance that the experience of others is as valid as one's own.
- Individual as "Carrier": The ability to recognize that individuals "carry" or express aspects of the experience of the group as a whole (e.g., scapegoating or rescuing).
- Shifting Perspective: The ability to shift attention between intrapsychic, interpersonal, group, and intergroup perspectives.
- Representation: An understanding that representation (or its lack) is a significant factor influencing both the behavior of groups and the learning of individual group members.

Consultant Roles & Tasks

- Primary Task: An understanding that the consultant's task is to further the study of group psychodynamics through the lens of Group Relations theory, focusing on authority, leadership, and power.
- Role Boundaries: The capacity to maintain task and role boundaries in the face of positive or negative responses from others.
- Regaining Role: The ability to be receptive in role, own mistakes in front of members/staff, and regain the consultant role after it has been lost.
- Self-Containment: The ability to "hold still" emotionally long enough to identify the boundary between what resides in the group/environment and what resides in oneself.
- Formulating Interpretations: The ability to formulate perceptions of group-level unconscious processes using words, images, analogies, and metaphors.

Managerial and Systemic Intervention

- Group-Level Interpretation: The ability to make group-level interpretations and intervene managerially based on how individuals represent the group experience.
- Leadership Dynamics: An understanding that the exercise of leadership and representation affects, and is affected by, group and intergroup dynamics.
- Systemic Speech: The capacity to examine and speak to the dynamics of the system as a whole.
- Subgroup Interrelatedness: The ability to consult to the interrelatedness of subgroups in the organization as a whole.

Teamwork and Professionalism

- Collaboration: The ability to work effectively within and across task team boundaries, recognizing the interrelatedness of subgroups to the system as a whole.
- Supporting Colleagues: The ability to report on events and express differences in a manner that supports colleagues' work and the leadership's task.
- Methodological Commitment: A commitment to examine conference methods as technology and theory evolve.
- Application of Learning: An ability to facilitate members' application of conference learning to other contexts.
- Ethical Considerations: A commitment to upholding professional integrity.