



The Group Therapist Perspective

INTERDISCIPLINARY INSIGHTS FOR GROUP PRACTITIONERS

January 2004

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The Business of Independent Practice

Edward A. Dreyfus, Ph.D., CGP¹
Santa Monica, California

“Buy a Cadillac so people will think you’re successful,” was the total bit of practical advice for starting a practice that I received while in graduate school. Most graduate students do not receive even that much. Fortunately, I received my bachelor’s degree in business administration with a major in Industrial Psychology. Not only did I take classes in advertising, marketing, economics, accounting, and business administration, but I also had teachers who were independent practitioners and ran their practices as a business. My professors had full-time, independent practices and taught in the business school at night. Most of them divided their time between consulting to industry and clinical practice, in addition to their teaching. Through a combination of my academic training, my mentors, and my own experiences, I have been able to sustain a solid six figure clinical practice for most of my professional life. I work four days a week and do not participate in any managed care programs. In this column I will share some of my strategies and practical considerations with you.

Professional Identity. Most mental health practitioners in private practice define themselves as psychotherapists rather than using their professional designations, e.g., psychologist, social worker, psychiatrist or marriage and family therapist. The public does not understand the distinctions between the various disciplines. Yet each discipline offers a unique service because they each observe human behavior from a distinct vantage point. Rather than having the disciplines compete for the same market of consumer, each should emphasize its own particular understanding of human behavior and human suffering. By emphasizing *your* uniqueness, you appeal to a narrower demographic of people who believe that they can be better served by your discipline. Many times I hear clients say that they specifically sought my services because they did not want a psychiatrist who, in their opinion, would treat them from a medical vantage point.

Your job is to distinguish yourself from the multitude of practitioners. Part of your uniqueness lies in your discipline. Identify yourself as a social worker, marriage and family therapist, psychologist or psychiatrist and develop your unique services as distinct from others disciplines. If you are a psychologist, think in terms of your diagnostic skills, your understanding of research paradigms, efficacy studies, and how you apply these skills to specific populations in treating individuals or groups. If you

are a social worker, think about your training in understanding social structures and their impact on the individual. Think about how you might market your superior skills in understanding the individual in the context of society, its institutions, and family structure. If you a marriage and family therapist think about how your unique training and experience in understanding family dynamics has prepared you to offer your services to individuals in the context of a family system. If you a psychiatrist think about how your unique training has prepared you for understanding individuals as a bio-social-psychological entity. In each instance, think about the unique contributions you can make to specific populations. It is clear that there will be significant overlap in many areas. That goes without saying. The issue is not the overlap, but rather the uniqueness. *Think about what distinguishes you from other disciplines and what distinguishes you from other practitioners within your discipline.*

Thinking as a businessperson. Mental health practitioners tend to view themselves primarily, and often exclusively, as healers. They seldom think of themselves as business people and often eschew the thought of being in business. They resist seeing themselves as entrepreneurs. Collecting fees for service is business. So the question isn't whether you are a business person, but rather how good a business person shall you be? If you are going to be in business, you should become proficient at running your business as you are at being a clinician. By being an effective business person, you can prevent the business of practice from interfering with your ability to practice. Considering yourself a business person does not make you less of a clinician, less dedicated, less skillful or less caring.

As a practitioner, whether you like it or not, you are selling something to people. You are selling both your time and your expertise. How much you charge for these will be in large measure determined by market forces. That is, there is a range of fees that people will be willing to pay for your services. This range will vary by demographics. Upper income people are willing to pay more for your services than lower income people. Your fees will also vary depending upon the number of people available to provide similar services within your particular market. The fewer the number of people available to provide the service, the greater the fee that you can charge. Another variable is experience; people will pay for experience. They will also pay for reputation. If you have developed a reputation as an expert in a particular area, the fees that you charge can reflect that reputation. Accept the idea that you are in the business of selling time and expertise. Your caring, your empathy, your desire to heal are all free.

Vision and Mission Statement. Before you can begin the process of developing your business, you must have a vision of what you want your practice to look like. If you were to build the home of your dreams, you would have to have some idea of what that dream home would look like. If you went to an architect, the architect would ask you, "what did you have in mind; what is your vision?" Unfortunately, mental health practitioners do not have such a vision. They simply want to hang out their shingle and hope that some patients will find them. If you really want to be successful, just as in any other business, you must have a clear vision of where you are going and what you want to achieve. Once you have this vision, you can begin developing a business plan to help guide you toward translating that vision into a reality. The vision should include every aspect of your practice including the type of location, the type of office, the ambience, the clients you will see, the services you offer, the specialties, the colleagues, the manner and style of your carriage, and the income your intend to generate.

A second, aspect of the vision is a mission. The mission is an over-arching statement of the purpose of your practice. It becomes your guiding principle. Just as we should have a guiding principle or set of principles for conducting our life, we need a mission statement to conduct our business. Why are you in practice? What is the purpose of your practice? How does this mission fit with your vision. Develop a clear statement that describes why someone should choose you when seeking a mental health consultant.

Once you have a clear vision of what you are trying to accomplish and a mission statement that represents the tenor of your practice, you can proceed to develop a strategy for building your practice. If you were building a home, you would have a vision of what you want to build, you would have a mission statement that describes the essence of the home and what it represents, and then you would develop a set of architectural drawings that could become a set of construction plans from which the building would be erected. In business these drawings emerge from the business plan which delineates what steps need to be taken to build the practice. It articulates goals, strategies, finances, budgets for advertising, marketing, stationary, etc. It also spells out the deadlines for reaching certain goals. Again, it is similar to designing your dream home; you must have a vision and a set of architectural drawings to translate your vision into a plan. It has often been said, "those who fail to plan, plan to fail." Your plan MUST be in writing with specific goals and how you intend to accomplish them.

Marketing. The only way the public will know the difference between you and someone else will be if you tell them. *Telling the public about yourself and what you do is called marketing.* While becoming the best clinician you can become is essential for a good practice, *it is not sufficient.* Many practitioners believe that if they get enough training, attend workshops, and so on, that they will then automatically develop a thriving practice. You could have the cure for cancer in your laboratory, but unless people know that you have it, and believe that it will be effective, no one will buy it. *Letting people know a well-trained, highly educated, professional is available to provide psychological services, is called marketing.*

Marketing is the process of letting target group of people know about you and what you do. You should market to both the referrals sources and the end-users, i.e., patient population. If you are seeking to develop a sex therapy practice, for example, your referrals will come from urologists, gynecologists, physicians in general, clergy, and colleagues in various disciplines. Some possibilities for contacting this target group would be: by letter, luncheons, brochures, publishing a paper and sending them a copy. Even an audio tape describing you and your specialty sent with a brief cover letter would be appropriate. Develop material that introduces you to the referral audience. Over time, send different materials to the same target group. Repeated exposure to your name will eventually bring results. Once you send the material, follow up with a phone call to make certain the material arrived and to find out whether there are any questions that you may answer. Follow up is crucial for practice development.

In order to reach the end-user, consider publishing. Publishing in professional journals reaches the referral source; publishing in magazines and newspapers reaches the end-user. Writing articles dealing with the concerns of the consumer, developing a personal newsletter. Appearing as a guest speaker at local business groups, teachers groups, YM -WCAs, and other community organizations; volunteer your services; join the local Chamber of Commerce, become active on non-profit boards, etc. In other words, make yourself visible.

Advertising. Advertising is the means by which you let people know that you have a product that they need or want. Where marketing gets to the audience, advertising is the material you use once you get there. Written material, yellow pages ads, newsletters, brochures, newspapers, magazines, audiocassettes, etc. are all forms of advertising. Whatever means you can use to let people know of your services will be to your advantage. It is imperative that you let your consumer know that you are available. You must think as a business person when outside of your office, and think as a professional when inside your office.

Networking. Most people think of networking as getting together with a group of colleagues over coffee or drinks and exchanging business cards. Think about how few patients were referred to you by colleagues as compared to the rest of your referral sources. Networking outside of your profession is more likely to produce results. *Networking refers to the process of building relationships. It is a long term process.* It is not simply handing out a business card and hoping that referrals will emerge. Networking entails several meetings or contacts over time with the same individual. Your objective is to build a relationship. Building relationships take time. People refer to people they know and with whom they feel comfortable. Your degrees and credentials are less important than your people skills.

Other strategies

- Remember you are going into business. Make commitment of time and money; the more you commit, the more likely you are to do what is necessary to recoup your investment, even when you don't feel like doing it.
- Work 40-50 hours per week even when you have only a few patients; use the rest of time to market yourself and advertise your practice.
- See patients at any time they are available, weekends and evenings included. You cannot afford to be a dilettante.
- Answer all telephone calls within the hour, if possible, of receiving the call. This is true for calls from colleagues as well. A colleague is a potential referral source.
- You are always marketing yourself; be careful how you dress, speak, and take care of yourself physically. What message does your appearance give to your public?
- It is better to have your hours filled than it is to be waiting for that full-fee patient. Remember, those who may be paying \$50 per session, have friends who can pay more. As your clientele changes, you can change your fee structure.
- Be wary of MCO contracts that do not distinguish between a doctoral level practitioner and a master's level practitioner. When you sign a contract, you are endorsing their practices. Instead of accepting a contract, consider charging patients a lower fee.

Summary. Building a clinical practice in the years ahead requires that you think as a business person outside the office and a clinician inside. Thinking as a business person isn't evil; you need to let people know that you exist, provide a valuable service, and are available. As a doctor, you need to provide and market services that sub-doctoral practitioners cannot. And you must become politically active. You must get rid of the notion that you can build a successful practice by being highly trained but passive, sitting ensconced in your office, and believing that somehow, patients will find you.

¹ Dr. Dreyfus has been in private practice in Santa Monica for almost forty years practicing as a clinical psychologist, sex therapist and life coach. He offers individual consultation to those interested in developing, expanding, and maintaining an independent practice outside of managed care.

GPASC Mastering Group Therapy Series

**Marvin Kaphan, LCSW, CGP, Felice Miller, Ph.D., and
Edward Dreyfus, Ph.D.**

Will be featured on January 11, 2004, from 1:00-4:00 p.m.
meeting will be held at the
Encino Hospital
16237 Ventura Blvd.
Encino

The Nuts and Bolts of Group Psychotherapy
*Everything You Need to Know About Starting, Maintaining, and Running Groups In
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These presenters are offering you the benefit of over a century of
combined experience.

As usual, the presentation cost is \$25.00 for GPASC members and \$50.00 for non-members
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Save \$\$\$ by purchasing entire 2004 series now. Call for details.

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Six 3-hour workshops are scheduled for 2004, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM on the second Sunday of January, March, May (the third Sunday), July, September, and November.

January 11, 2004

The Nuts and Bolts of Group Psychotherapy

Encino

Marvin Kaphan, LCSW, CGP., Felice Miller, Ph.D., and Edward Dreyfus, Ph.D., CGP

March 14, 2004

An Exploration of Co-Therapy

Santa Monica

Father-son Co-therapists: Bruce Gordon, Ph.D. and David Gordon, Ph.D.

May 16, 2004

Improvisational Approaches In Psychodynamic Group Therapy

Encino

Norman Tabachnick, M.D., Evelyn Tabachnick, Ph.D, and Elinor Grayor, Ph.D.

July 11, 2004

The Anatomy of Anger In Group Psychotherapy

Santa Monica

Andrea Brandt, Ph.D.

September 12, 2004

Use of the Here and Now in Yalom-model Groups

Encino

Presenter to be announced

November 14, 2004

The Narcissistic and Borderline Patient in Group Psychotherapy and Optimum Group Placement

Santa Monica

Irene N.H. Harwood, M.S.W., Ph.D.

Fees: Individual workshops (including CE certificates) cost \$25.00 for members and \$50.00 for non-members. Save \$\$ by purchasing the entire series of six workshops for \$125.00 (for GPASC members) and \$250.00 (for non-members). **STUDENT MEMBERS PAY ½PRICE (\$62.50 for the series and \$12.50 per workshop).**

Each of these six courses is approved for 3.0 CE hours for Psychologists, MFT's and LCSWs. The Group Psychotherapy Association of Southern California (GPASC) is approved by the American Psychological Association to offer continuing education for psychologists. GPASC maintains responsibility for the program. GPASC is approved by the Board of Behavioral Sciences (#PCE 528) as a provider of Continuing Education Credits for MFTs and LCSWs. Certificates for BBS or APA EC credit will be issued upon completion of each course.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Those who attend the workshop & complete the evaluation will receive continuing education credits. Note that APA CE Rules require that we only give credit to those who attend the entire workshop. Those who arrive more than 15 minutes after the scheduled start time or leave before the workshop is complete will not receive CE credits.

To reserve a seat (space is limited), or for additional information contact Bonnie Ray Kennan, M.A., MFT, at (310) 265-6644 or (email) Marabon@cox.net. You may also register online at www.gpasc.org

Workshops are held at:

**The Encino Hospital at 16237 Ventura Blvd., Encino and at
The Wellness Center at 2716 Ocean Park Blvd., Suite 1040, Santa Monica**

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

[Please send anything that you wish to share with your colleagues, e.g., awards/honors received, licenses, publications, speaking engagements, etc.]

GPASC President-Elect and Membership Chair, **Mimi Davis** (professionally known as Miriam Davis) had a few minutes of fame as she was interviewed on KCAL-9's 10 PM News show on Wednesday, November 12th. The subject was divorce and Mimi discussed the positive potential of redefining oneself and one's needs once it is clear that a marriage is not going to work out. Based on her work with dozens of couples and their children, she described the negative long-term effect on children when their parents "stay together because of the children"; and the possible benefit to children of observing their parents "restart" their lives, finding new meaning and new happiness after divorce...as long as neither parent undermines the other.

Newsletter Editor, **Edward Dreyfus, Ph.D.**, has recently published two new editions of his books, **Someone Right for You: 21st Century Strategies for Finding Your Special Someone** and **Keeping Your Sanity (In an Insane World)**. (You may read the flier describing these works on page 9 of this newsletter).

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

This is the time of year for GPASC members to renew their membership in our re-energized, dynamic and collegial organization. The due date for renewing membership is **January 1, 2004**. Individual membership will officially expire if a member has not paid and renewed by April 1st; renewal after that date will require a reinstatement application process and application fee if someone wishes to rejoin GPASC.

Full Clinical Membership fee is....\$120.00
Affiliate Membership Fee is..... ..\$ 60.00

Please remit your payment today. Payment in full renews your membership for the calendar year. You will all be receiving renewal notices by mail and can pay and renew either by using these mail-in forms or by using our web site, on-line renewal system. GPASC now accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover as payment options.

Please check out all the benefits, events and programs that come with your GPASC membership by reading the Membership Benefits flyer that will arrive with your renewal letter, or by logging on to our colorful and informative web site, www.gpasc.org. If you have changes in your contact information or your bio, please contact our office at (323) 960-5143, email us at groups@gpasc.org or attach your updated information with your payment.

Don't miss the opportunity to continue to be part of this outstanding, progressive and energetic organization that has been a vital part of Southern California's psychology and psychotherapy community for over 51 years!

IN MEMORIUM

Claire Wolpe, MSW, MFT, Ph.D. 1902-2003

Claire, one of the original founders of GPASC, passed away leaving two daughters and a load of friends and admirers behind. She was a graduate of Mills College, and held licenses in three fields: social work, marriage and family therapy, and psychology. The following are a few comments from those who knew her:

I have just been informed that Claire Wolpe, Ph.D., has died. Claire was a very active member of GPASC who hosted board meetings at her home frequently (and provided a spectacular buffet). She was honored for her long service to GPASC at an Annual Conference a few years ago. She may have been our last surviving Life Member. I hope to have her biography available soon.

Marvin Kaphan, MSW, CPG, Past-President

I am very sad to hear about the death of our colleague Claire Wolpe. She was an elegant, generous and wise lady. I had the good fortune to train together with her at the Los Angeles Center for Group Psychotherapy where we were in the same seminars and observation groups of groups from 1968-1972.

She also opened up her home to those who presented on groups or came to learn about groups. She was an example of a great group facilitator who created group cohesion through her own human warmth. I will miss you Claire

Irene Harwood, LCSW, CGP

So sorry to hear about Claire. She was such a sweet, caring, elegant and lovely lady. She wasn't in the best of health when we met and I was homeless. In June, 1994, I took the oath of office as GPASC president. At that time, board meetings were always held in the home of the current president, but I didn't have one. The Northridge Earthquake had made me homeless and for a year and a half, Kim and I moved around. Anthony was in college, out of state, so Kim and I became vagabonds. When she heard that I was in temporary quarters, Claire volunteered her elegant home (filled with antiques) and for one year, that's where we held our board meetings, until I became past president.

It wasn't enough for Claire that we were meeting there. She had a live in cook/helper, etc. and on the second Sunday of each month, Board Members were treated to all sorts of culinary delicacies, with tea and coffee being poured from china pots into china cups. And we would force ourselves to be allowed to clean up (at least put the dishes in the kitchen).

Claire was a delight. She must have been a terrific therapist, because she was a terrific person.

Matt Seidman, Ph.D., CGP, Past-President

CLASSIFIED ADS

GPASC NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING RATES AND INFORMATION

Ads must be accompanied by a check, made payable to GPASC

Member rates apply to current GPASC members only.

Type of Ad	Size	Member Rate	Non-Member Rate
Full page display	7.5" x 9.5"	\$75	\$110
3/4 page display	5.0" x 7.0"	\$60	\$90
1/2 page display	7.5" x 4.75"	\$40	\$60
1/4 page display	4.75" x 4.75"	\$30	\$50
1/8 page display	4.75" x 2.25"	\$20	\$35
1/16 page display	2.5" x 2.25"	\$15	\$30
Business Card	3.5" x 2.0"	\$15	\$30
Classified Ads	30 words *	FREE	\$25

* \$10 additional charge for any part of any additional 10 word increment

GPASC

P. O. Box 2631

Winnetka, CA 91396

Women's ongoing process group
Tuesdays 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM
25550 Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 212
Torrance, CA
Call Bonnie (310) 265-6644 or
Terri (310) 296-4942

Ongoing Mixed gender process
Thursdays 8 PM-9:30 PM
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Culver City, CA
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Terri (310) 296-4942

Women's ongoing process group
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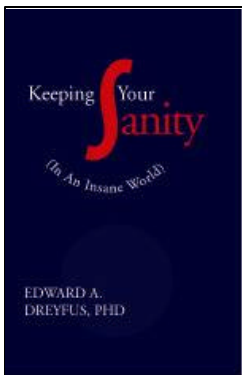
www.gatla.org

Two Books to Help Your Clients Find That Perfect Mate and to Live More Successfully *Nationally Recognized Psychologist Offers Twenty-First-Century Guides*



Someone Right for You: 21st Century Strategies for Finding Your Special Someone offers a unique strategy for finding an appropriate mate. All practitioners have heard their patients lament, “*where can I find Mr./Ms. Right.*” This book will help them create a step-by-step plan based on an understanding of themselves and what they need to be happy in a relationship. Mental health practitioners know that fundamental in the quest for that all-important partner is knowing oneself. Dr. Dreyfus outlines an approach that incorporates the work that you and your clients are doing in psychotherapy. Based on his forty years of clinical practice, he has developed a step-by-step approach to finding an appropriate mate. It is an approach that is based on planning, logic, and forethought, rather than on luck, myth, and fantasy. The issues that are discussed and the case examples presented will be fodder for the therapeutic process.

Publisher: Xlibris Corporation, 2003 ISBN #1-4134-2090-7 pp. 221 Retail Price: \$21.99
Available from Amazon.com, Borders.com, BarnesandNoble.com, or for a 15% discount order directly from
www.SomeoneRightForYou.com



Keeping Your Sanity (In An Insane World) Based on many years of clinical practice with hundreds of individuals, Dr. Dreyfus has written a series of thirty essays designed to give your clients an opportunity to explore themselves as they come to terms with the various trials and tribulations of everyday life. Clients can often learn through reading. They often feel out of control. Most of them, however, do not recognize that they have a lot more control over how the issues they face affect them and how to cope with these issues than they give themselves credit for. Written in an easily comprehensible style, the essays cover such concerns as: relationship issues, social issues, addictions, environmental crises, personal tragedies, illness, depression, spiritual issues, sexuality, and more. Clients often find that they identify with the issues discussed in the book and are more willing to explore their concerns once they have recognized that others are struggling with similar issues.

Publisher: Xlibris Corporation, 2003 ISBN # 0-7388-2207-8 pp. 310 Retail Price: \$21.99
Available from Amazon.com, Borders.com, BarnesandNoble.com, or for a 15% discount order directly from
www.KeepingYourSanity.com



Edward Dreyfus, Ph.D., CGP, has been in private practice in Santa Monica, California as a clinical psychologist, marriage-family therapist, sex therapist, and life coach for almost four decades. In addition to having published four books, he has published frequently in professional journals and newspapers, presented at local and national conventions; he has often been quoted in local and national magazines and has appeared as a guest on TV and talk-radio programs. He is a past-president of the Group Psychotherapy Association of Southern California and the Los Angeles Society of Clinical Psychologists. In 1996, he received the Distinguished Psychologist Award from the Los Angeles County Psychological Association. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and is listed in *Who's Who in America*.