

SWRK 409
SOCIAL WORK WITH GROUPS
(Ragg, 2010, Garvin, 2011-2012)

ISSUES OF PITCHING THE GROUP TO POTENTIAL MEMBERS

To set the tone for mutual aid development potential members must understand the dual nature of the group prior to entering the first session. This requires the group leader to frame the group very carefully in the invitation to join.

Concurrent with developing an understanding of the group as a mutual aid system, the leader needs to also help potential members understand the common ground among the members and purpose for bringing the group together. Without the sense of purpose, members cannot find a reason to attend.

When bringing these two elements together into a “pitch”, keep the following cautions in mind:

1. Avoid using loaded terms such as issues, problems or violence when pitching the group. These terms are negative and may have particular meaning (or history) with the group member. Rather, select words that are strength focused and reflect normalcy such as (most people your age get fed up with parents..., most people who have gone through similar events find...).
2. Make your general explanation of what the group is about neutral and supportive rather than educational or corrective in nature. When you frame the group as corrective or indicate that people have “problems” or “issues” you are likely to scare people away. Stress the normal elements as much as possible and identify activities that reflect how the group is growth rather than corrective in nature.
3. Stress the supportive elements and egalitarian elements of the group where people are not being helped by professionals but rather sharing their thoughts and ideas. Identify how people with things in common are better sources of help than professionals. Define your role in a way that helps the potential member understand the role of the group.
4. Never confuse your rationale for including people in the group, or their needs, with a pitch. A pitch must build on unique strengths that the group member can bring to the group rather than the weaknesses or needs of the group member.
5. Develop a strength-focused description of the group purpose and an individualized strength-focused summary of the individual members’ potential contributions to the group. First share the general frame and then describe how the individual member can make the group successful. People need to understand how their involvement will benefit others.