

The Importance of Group Experience During Adolescence and Beyond: Pathways from Trauma to Growth

Presented by Frederic M. Baurer, MD & Andrew I. Smolar, MD

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Program Description

Beginning with the question of the individual's fitness with their family of origin, the authors describe the variables that determine the adolescent's capacity to join peer groups. Optimally, the adolescent – when cognitive advancement is combined with a specific kind of group psychological mindedness – can consolidate their group identifications. When traumatized, an adolescent's exclusion from groups is characterized by bullying dynamics. Clinical vignettes demonstrate the authors' way of addressing hurtful and beneficial group experiences within their patients' individual therapies. They include an example from their work together with a specific family. Finally, they offer technical suggestions for this work, including how to recognize when an additional referral for group therapy is indicated.

About Frederic M. Baurer, MD

Dr. Fred Baurer is a graduate of Wesleyan University and Temple University School of Medicine. At Wesleyan, Fred learned to cultivate spontaneity through the medium of improvisational dance, which informs his clinical work to this day. He completed psychiatric residency at the Institute of PA Hospital and psychoanalytic training at the Philadelphia Psychoanalytic Institute. Fred pursued his interest in addiction psychiatry at the Strecker Program under the mentorship of Dr. Donald Gill.

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About Frederic M. Baurer, MD Continued

With the closing of the Institute in 1997, Fred remained on site as the facility transformed into the Kirkbride Center, where he was instrumental in developing addiction treatment services, in particular integrating pharmacologic approaches, including methadone, with psychosocial and psychotherapeutic modalities. He has served as president of the PA Society of Addiction Medicine and has worked extensively with physicians in recovery from addiction. He is a faculty member and Supervising Analyst at PCOP.

Addictions and psychoanalysis are not common bedfellows, but Fred has devoted his career to the melding of these. Through clinical work and teaching, he has learned to work with substance using patients through a psychoanalytic lens. He teaches classes and seminars in this approach through PCOP, and published a paper describing this approach in 2021. He seeks to engage his patients as partners in a collaborative process, believing that people recover from addictions when they join this partnership and become pro-active in their recovery, not so much when they are passive recipients of care.

Since retiring from Kirkbride, Dr. Baurer has devoted himself to intensive psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytic work with addicted and non-addicted patients. He continues to teach, mentor, supervise, and serve on committees of PCOP.

About Andrew I. Smolar MD

Andrew I. Smolar MD, is Training and Supervising Analyst at the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia and Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Temple University School of Medicine. He has been in the private practice of adolescent and adult psychiatry in Wynnewood, PA since 1998. Dr. Smolar served as President of the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia from 2015-2017; he has also served here as Chairman of the Education Committee, Training and Supervising Analyst Committee, co-Chair of the Supervision Study Group for Supervising Analysts, and is co-Director of the Developmental Pathway for recent graduates. Dr. Smolar has contributed to the academic literature by writing on the following subjects: analytic work with an immigrant analysts and, group therapy in various clinical settings, combining analytic treatment with group therapy techniques, and most recently, psychotherapy during this era of political turmoil, contributions of group fragmentation toward national discord, and the role of group identifications during normative development. He is co-investigator of research of American citizens suffering from conspiracy thinking. He has also published op-eds on mental health subjects in the Philadelphia Inquirer and in the Pittsburgh Tribune Review, where he is a regular contributor.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

1. Describe why adolescence is the developmental phase essential for group identifications.
2. Describe how bullying interferes with this developmental task.
3. Become acquainted with technical interventions that facilitate exploration of group experiences—both healthy and unhealthy—in the patient's past during individual psychodynamic psychotherapy.

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