



If you use these materials in your work, please credit to Christine Thornton @ www.thorntonconsulting.org

SETTING THE GROUP UP TO BE FUNCTIONAL FROM THE START -- GETTING THE ENVIRONMENT RIGHT

In group theory the setting is seen as wholly the responsibility of the group facilitator, whereas the work of the group is a shared responsibility between facilitator and group. A good setting is conducive to good work. Here is a checklist:

The group's meeting place

- Is it always the same room?
- What is the general character and ambience of the room?
- What is the lighting like?
- What are the group's associations with the building?
- Does the organisation or building in which the group meets ever create or allow intrusions into the group's space?

Chairs

- Are all the chairs the same?
- Where does the group facilitator sit?
- Where do group members like to sit?
- Does anyone always sit in the same place?
- What happens when someone is absent – does the group sit with an empty chair? How does this help or hinder the group in making sense of an absence?

Physical focus

- Is there a small table or other point of focus in the centre of the group?

Messages

- How are messages to the group communicated? How is their impact considered?

Time boundaries

- Are the start and finish time boundaries of the group understood to be binding on everyone?
- How are any variations handled?

Contact outside sessions

- Is there any contact between members between group sessions?
- Is there any contact between the facilitator and a member between group sessions?
- If there is contact, is the impact of the contact thought about within the group?