Group Counseling Leadership Style

Map your facilitation style, widen your range, lead with greater versatility

10-Day Challenges

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Part 1 · About this challenge

A ten-day guided journey for SUD and mental health clinicians to map your leadership orientation, widen your range, and lead groups with greater versatility — one day at a time.

Helpers Helping Helpers · Father Martin's Legacy

Your Journey

Primary Style

Before You Begin

Growing as a group leader is not a single insight — it is a daily practice of honest self-examination and deliberate stretching. This is parallel process: we ask of ourselves exactly what we ask of our clients. Move through one day at a time. The days that feel uncomfortable are usually the ones doing the most work.

Leadership Style Profile

Map it on Day 1 · Return to it on Day 10

The 10-Day Pathway

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Why Style Matters

The leader as the climate of the room

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The Directive Leader

Expert authority, structure, and the scaffolding of safety

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Presence & Communication

Attunement, and the skills beneath every style

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Safety, Boundaries & Ethics

Guardian of the therapeutic frame

DAY 9 · ADAPTATION

Adaptive Leadership

Reading the room and shifting in real time

DAY 10 · INTEGRATION

Your Leadership Identity

Integrating your primary style, range, and growth edge

Sheamus Moran - Founder of The Recovery Files

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Part 2 · Leadership Style Profile

Leadership Style Profile

Rate each statement on how accurately it describes your actual facilitation practice — not what you think you should do. 1 (Not like me) to 5 (Very much me).

Directive · Authoritarian

I prepare a detailed, written agenda before each group session

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I provide handouts, worksheets, or structured exercises that guide the group through specific content

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

When a session goes off-topic, I redirect members back to the planned agenda

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I rely heavily on established curricula or manualized protocols to structure my groups

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

When a member asks me a question, I typically give a direct, informed answer from my expertise

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I set firm, non-negotiable consequences for group rule violations

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I maintain a consistent, predictable structure so members always know what to expect

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

Facilitative · Democratic

I begin sessions by checking in and letting members help shape the direction

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I ask more questions than I make statements, deepening members' self-exploration

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

When a member asks me something, I often turn it back to the group

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

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Not like me · Very much me

I actively link members' experiences, pointing out commonalities and connections

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I collaboratively negotiate group norms rather than presenting them as fixed

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I help the conflict between members become an opportunity for interpersonal learning

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I feel most confident when members are in rich dialogue and I facilitate from the background

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

Advisory · Laissez-Faire

I enter sessions with minimal pre-planned content, trusting the group to find what it needs

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I speak relatively infrequently, allowing long pauses and member-to-member dialogue

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I am comfortable with extended silence and trust that processing happens within it

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

When conflict arises, I generally let members work it out unless it becomes harmful

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I believe confrontation is most effective coming from peers rather than from me

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I let members determine the direction of sessions, offering my view mainly when asked

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

Confrontive · Here-and-Now

I draw attention to what is happening in the room right now — body language and shifts

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I directly confront denial, minimization, and resistance when I observe it

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

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Not like me · Very much me

When a member's behavior contradicts their words, I name the discrepancy directly

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I use current interactions as the primary curriculum of the group

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I help members see how their in-group behavior mirrors patterns that keep them stuck

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

Transformational

I inspire members by painting a vivid picture of what recovery can look like

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I model vulnerability and authenticity in ways that invite deeper transformation

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I challenge members to envision a life of meaning and purpose beyond sobriety

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I am energized by creating breakthrough insights about members' patterns

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

With professionals and first responders, I honor expertise while challenging the armor

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

Transactional

I use praise, recognition, or privileges to reinforce positive participation

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I set clear, measurable goals and track members' progress across sessions

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I give specific behavioral feedback to reinforce members who follow through

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

I provide immediate positive reinforcement for pro-recovery behaviors in group

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

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Not like me · Very much me

I tend to focus on managing behavior and compliance more than emotional depth

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not like me · Very much me

Sheamus Moran - Founder of The Recovery Files

Scoring guide

Each group gets its own score, as a percent.

Score: 80% and above — Dominant Orientation: This is a primary home style for you. Lean on its strengths — and watch for over-reliance when the group needs something else.

Score: 60–79% — Strong Preference: A well-developed part of your range you reach for readily and use with real skill.

Score: 40–59% — Situational Use: You access this style in the right moments. Deliberate practice could make it a more reliable tool.

Score: 20–39% — Underused Range: This style is available but seldom used. Stretching here would widen your versatility as a leader.

Score: below 20% — Growth Edge: This orientation is rarely accessed. Intentionally developing it would expand your clinical range.

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Part 3 · Day 1 · Why Style Matters

DAY 1 OF 10 · FOUNDATIONS

The leader as the climate of the room

Today's Reading

Group counseling is one of the most powerful and cost-effective modalities in substance use disorder and mental health treatment. Yet a group's effectiveness rests not only on the content delivered but on how the leader facilitates the experience. Your leadership style sets the emotional climate of the room, the depth of member engagement, the pace of therapeutic movement, and ultimately whether members internalize real change or simply go through the motions.

In SUD treatment this carries unique weight. Many clients arrive with deep ambivalence, profound shame, fractured trust, and histories of chaotic relationships. The leader must hold space for vulnerability while maintaining structure, promote autonomy while ensuring safety, and challenge denial while preserving the alliance. How you navigate those tensions is your leadership style. And here is the central truth this pathway returns to again and again: no single style is universally superior. The most effective leaders practice adaptive leadership — intentionally shifting between styles based on the group's stage, its members' functioning, the goals in play, and the dynamics unfolding in real time.

This is, at heart, parallel process. We ask clients to grow in self-awareness, to examine their patterns, and to stretch beyond their comfort. Over the next ten days you will do exactly that with your own facilitation. We are Helpers Helping Helpers — and the first move is the same one we ask of every client: tell the truth about where you actually are, not where you think you should be.

Reflect

1. When you walk into a group room, what is the very first thing you instinctively do — review your agenda, read the energy, or wait to see what members bring? What might that reveal about your dominant orientation?

2. Describe a recent group where the climate felt right. What were you doing as the leader that created it?

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3. Where do you feel the tension most: holding structure vs. allowing process, challenging vs. protecting the alliance, leading vs. trusting the group?

Today's Work

My instinctive first move when I walk into a group room:

Review the agenda? Read the energy? Wait for members to bring something?

If I had to name my dominant leadership orientation in one word right now, it would be:

Directive, facilitative, advisory, confrontive...

The tension I feel most as a group leader:

Structure vs. process, challenge vs. alliance, leading vs. trusting...

Map Your Baseline

Before going further, take the Leadership Style Profile. It maps your natural orientation across six domains. On Day 10 you will return to it and read your full range.

Carry Into the Group Room

One thing from today I am bringing into my next group:

A single intention, experiment, or awareness to hold onto...

Sheamus Moran - Founder of The Recovery Files

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Part 4 · Day 2 · The Directive Leader

DAY 2 OF 10 · DIRECTIVE

Expert authority, structure, and the scaffolding of safety

Today's Reading

The directive (authoritarian) leader operates from expert authority. This leader sets the agenda, establishes clear rules and expectations, dictates pace and structure, and provides direct guidance. Decision-making flows top-down. The conviction underneath it is that many clinical situations require someone to take charge and provide the predictable structure that becomes the scaffolding on which healing can occur.

In SUD treatment, directive leadership is particularly valuable in specific contexts. Early-recovery and detox groups often include members with cognitive impairment, poor impulse control, high anxiety, and limited distress tolerance — people who cannot yet tolerate the ambiguity of unstructured process and who need a clear roadmap. Crisis situations demand it too: when a member discloses suicidal ideation, reveals a relapse, becomes aggressive, or conflict escalates past productive limits, the leader must step in with authority. In those moments democracy is not therapeutic — decisive action is. Psychoeducational groups, the backbone of many programs, also align naturally with a directive teacher-trainer role.

The strengths are real: clear expectations reduce anxiety, evidence-based content gets delivered consistently, safety is maintained, and limited time is used efficiently — especially with involuntary or court-mandated populations who need external structure. But the blind spots matter. Directiveness can foster dependence rather than internal resources, replicate authoritarian family patterns, suppress genuine emotion in favor of compliance, and quietly communicate that members are incapable of self-direction. The honest watch point: examine whether your need for control stems from clinical intentionality or from your own discomfort with uncertainty.

Reflect

1. When a session goes off-topic, what is your reflex — redirect to the plan, or explore the digression? What does your honest answer tell you?

2. In which groups is your structure genuinely serving the members, and in which might it be serving your own comfort with uncertainty?

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3. Recall a crisis moment where your directiveness was exactly what the group needed. What made it effective rather than controlling?

Today's Work

A group/context where my directive structure genuinely serves the members:

Detox, crisis, psychoeducation, court-mandated...

A moment where my structure may have served my comfort more than the group's growth:

Be honest and compassionate with yourself...

My honest relationship with silence, off-topic moments, and member-initiated change:

What happens in me when the plan gets disrupted?

One way I could loosen control this week without sacrificing safety:

A small, concrete experiment...

Carry Into the Group Room

One thing from today I am bringing into my next group:

A single intention, experiment, or awareness to hold onto...

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Part 5 · Day 3 · The Facilitative Leader

DAY 3 OF 10 · FACILITATIVE

The group itself as the primary therapeutic agent

Today's Reading

The facilitative (democratic) leader positions themselves as guide and catalyst rather than expert authority. This leader promotes shared responsibility for the process, encourages member-to-member interaction over leader-to-member exchanges, and helps the group make collective decisions about topics, pace, and direction. The underlying belief is that change happens primarily through relational experience — that how members interact within the group mirrors, and can ultimately transform, how they relate in the world outside.

This style grows more valuable as members progress. In the middle and later phases of group development — once trust is established, basic psychoeducation has landed, and members have enough stability for deeper work — democratic leadership creates the conditions for genuine interpersonal learning. The facilitative leader excels at process-oriented intervention: helping members notice their relational patterns, drawing parallels between in-group behavior and outside difficulties, promoting peer feedback, and creating corrective emotional experiences.

This is the style that builds cohesion — the bond among members that research repeatedly names as one of the strongest predictors of positive outcome. The limitations are equally honest: it takes more time and can feel slow in time-limited settings, can overwhelm low-functioning or acute members, demands sophisticated dynamics-reading skill, and risks dominant members taking over if the leader does not intervene. The facilitative leader's greatest tool is not the brilliant interpretation but the well-timed question.

Reflect

1. When a member asks you a direct question, how often do you turn it back to the group versus answering from your expertise? What drives that choice?

2. Think of a moment of real cohesion in one of your groups. What did you do — or deliberately not do — to let it emerge?

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3. Where does facilitation feel risky for you: tolerating slowness, managing a dominant member, or trusting the group to find its own way?

Today's Work

A time the most therapeutic moment happened between members, not because of me:

Describe what occurred...

My most reliable facilitative tool (a question I return to, a way of linking members):

"What was it like for you when..."

What makes facilitation feel risky for me:

Slowness, a dominant member, losing the agenda, trusting the group...

One member-to-member connection I could intentionally foster in my next group:

Who, and how...

Carry Into the Group Room

One thing from today I am bringing into my next group:

A single intention, experiment, or awareness to hold onto...

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Part 6 · Day 4 · The Advisory Leader

DAY 4 OF 10 · ADVISORY

Trusting the group — and the line between restraint and absence

Today's Reading

The advisory (laissez-faire) leader provides minimal direct intervention, functioning as a resource and consultant rather than an active director or facilitator. This leader trusts that mature, high-functioning members can set their own agenda, manage their own process, support each other well, and benefit from peer-driven interaction. The leader offers gentle guidance, occasional reflection, and steps in only when the group genuinely needs outside input.

In recovery contexts this fits best with self-help and peer support groups, alumni and continuing-care groups, and peer-led recovery communities — settings where members have real stability and strong recovery capital, and where the power comes from mutual identification and the genuine support of people who have been there.

But there is a meaningful difference between intentional advisory leadership — a deliberate choice to trust the group's capacity — and passive leadership, which is avoidance of intervention driven by conflict-avoidance, lack of skill, or burnout. Effective advisory leaders are actively observing, assessing, and choosing when to intervene; their restraint is strategic, not neglectful. The risks of getting this wrong are serious: group floundering, scapegoating, harmful advice-giving, unaddressed safety concerns, and members who experience the leader's hands-off stance as abandonment. The discipline here is to know, honestly, whether your silence is a clinical choice or an escape hatch.

Reflect

1. When you hold back in group, is it usually a strategic choice to empower the group, or sometimes avoidance of a hard intervention? Be specific about a recent example.

2. Which of your groups have the recovery capital to thrive with an advisory approach — and which would experience it as abandonment?

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3. What is the earliest signal that "trusting the group" has tipped into floundering or unaddressed harm? How do you catch it?

Today's Work

When I hold back in group, it is usually (strategic empowerment / avoidance):

Name a recent example honestly...

Groups I lead that have the recovery capital to thrive with an advisory stance:

Alumni, peer support, advanced therapy...

Groups where an advisory stance would feel like abandonment:

Early recovery, acute, low-functioning...

My earliest warning signs that "trusting the group" has tipped into floundering or harm:

What do I watch for?

Carry Into the Group Room

One thing from today I am bringing into my next group:

A single intention, experiment, or awareness to hold onto...

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Part 7 · Day 5 · The Confrontive Leader

DAY 5 OF 10 · HERE-AND-NOW

The here-and-now as the curriculum

Today's Reading

The confrontive (here-and-now) leader focuses on what is happening in the room at this moment. Rather than exploring distant history or future plans, this leader draws attention to observable behavior, interpersonal dynamics, emotional shifts, and incongruence as they emerge. "I notice that when Sarah started talking about her anger, three people looked at the floor. What's happening right now?" Rooted in Yalom's interpersonal model, this approach creates powerful opportunities for immediate feedback and relational learning.

The here-and-now is, in this view, the curriculum. What is happening between members in the present is itself the therapeutic work. When you help a member see how their in-group behavior mirrors the very patterns that keep them stuck in addiction and relationships, you give them something no didactic lesson can: a live, felt experience of their own pattern, available for change in real time.

The power of this style depends entirely on its container. Confrontation lands therapeutically only within a strong alliance and established group safety, and only when members have the ego strength and recovery stability to receive direct feedback. Used too early, with too little trust, or with too little stability, here-and-now confrontation can shame and retraumatize. The mature confrontive leader watches readiness as carefully as they watch the dynamic itself — and never mistakes their own sharpness for the group's safety.

Reflect

1. When you notice a member's words and behavior contradict each other, do you name it directly, explore it gently, or let it pass? What determines which?

2. Recall a here-and-now observation you offered that opened something real. What in the group made it safe enough to land?

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3. How do you assess whether a member has the ego strength and stability to receive direct feedback before you offer it?

Today's Work

A here-and-now observation I offered that opened something real:

"I notice that right now..."

How I read whether a member can receive direct feedback (ego strength, stability, alliance):

My readiness check...

A discrepancy I currently notice in a group but have not yet named:

Words vs. behavior, stated goal vs. action...

The difference, for me, between therapeutic confrontation and harshness:

How do I keep it in service of the member?

Carry Into the Group Room

One thing from today I am bringing into my next group:

A single intention, experiment, or awareness to hold onto...

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Part 8 · Day 6 · Transactional & Transformational

DAY 6 OF 10 · MOTIVATION

Two engines of change — reinforcement and vision

Today's Reading

Beyond the foundational styles sit two contrasting approaches to motivation. Transactional leadership operates on a reward-and-consequence framework: members earn recognition for participation, skill practice, and adherence to norms. This aligns with behavioral and contingency-management modalities and can be genuinely effective in structured SUD settings. Its strength is specificity; its limitation is that a focus on observable behavior can quietly bypass the emotional and relational wounds that drive the addiction in the first place.

Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring vision, empowering members to transcend their current limits, and fostering deep intrinsic motivation. The transformational leader models passion, authenticity, and belief in members' potential, creating an aspirational atmosphere in which people begin to see themselves as capable of real transformation — not merely compliance. This aligns powerfully with recovery-oriented, strengths-based care.

The two are not enemies. Transactional reinforcement builds the floor; transformational vision raises the ceiling. The risk on the transformational side is that members become dependent on the leader's charisma rather than developing their own internal motivation — so inspiration must be grounded in concrete recovery behavior and structured follow-through. The most effective leaders use reinforcement to make the daily work doable and vision to make it worth doing.

Reflect

1. Do you lean more on reinforcing observable behavior or on inspiring vision and meaning? Where has each served your groups well?

2. When you inspire a group, how do you make sure the vision stays anchored in concrete next steps rather than just good feeling?

3. Is there a member whose motivation has become dependent on your encouragement? What would help them build their own internal drive?

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Today's Work

Transactional Engine — Reinforcement

How I currently reinforce participation, follow-through, and pro-recovery behavior:

Praise, recognition, goal-tracking...

Where my focus on behavior might be bypassing the emotional or relational wound underneath:

Be specific...

Transformational Engine — Vision

How I inspire vision and meaning beyond sobriety in my groups:

What I model, what I name...

How I keep inspiration anchored in concrete next steps:

So vision does not float free of action...

A member who may be relying on my charisma — and what would build their own internal drive:

Name the shift...

Carry Into the Group Room

One thing from today I am bringing into my next group:

A single intention, experiment, or awareness to hold onto...

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Part 9 · Day 7 · Presence & Communication

DAY 7 OF 10 · PRESENCE

Attunement, and the skills beneath every style

Today's Reading

Regardless of dominant style, certain competencies are the baseline from which all leadership operates. The first is active engagement and attunement: moment-to-moment awareness of the group's emotional temperature, energy, participation patterns, and non-verbal communication. In SUD groups this includes scanning for signs of intoxication, withdrawal, dissociation, or emotional flooding. Active engagement means being fully present — not reviewing notes, mentally planning your next move, or checked out from burnout — and it means promoting member-to-member interaction rather than allowing a "hub-and-spoke" pattern where everything routes through the leader.

The second is communication mastery, verbal and non-verbal. Verbally: reflective listening, open-ended questioning, summarizing, linking members' experiences, and reframing. Non-verbally: strategic eye contact, where you position yourself in the circle, comfort with silence, and continuous scanning to track several members at once.

This is also the most demanding parallel-process invitation of the pathway. We ask clients to be present, to listen, to notice what they would rather avoid. The same applies to us. Burnout, distraction, and the quiet drift toward going through the motions are occupational hazards for clinicians, and they show up first in our presence. Tending to your own attunement is not self-indulgence — it is the instrument of the work.

Reflect

1. How present were you in your last group, honestly? What pulled your attention away, and what would help you return to the room?

2. Do your groups tend toward genuine member-to-member dialogue, or a hub-and-spoke pattern routed through you? What would shift it?

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3. Which communication skill is your strongest, and which one would most expand your range if you deliberately practiced it?

Today's Work

How present I actually was in my last group — and what pulled my attention away:

Notes, planning, fatigue, a difficult member...

Whether my groups run hub-and-spoke (through me) or true member-to-member dialogue:

Honest assessment, and what would shift it...

My strongest communication skill:

Reflective listening, linking, silence, scanning, reframing...

The one communication skill I will deliberately practice this week:

And how I will practice it...

What I need to do to protect my own presence and guard against burnout:

Tending the instrument of the work...

Carry Into the Group Room

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One thing from today I am bringing into my next group:

A single intention, experiment, or awareness to hold onto...

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Part 10 · Day 8 · Safety, Boundaries & Ethics

DAY 8 OF 10 · SAFETY

Guardian of the therapeutic frame

Today's Reading

The group leader is the primary guardian of the therapeutic frame. This means establishing and enforcing confidentiality, managing dual relationships, preventing harmful confrontation and scapegoating, ensuring physical safety, and navigating mandatory-reporting requirements. In SUD treatment, safety management also includes monitoring for relapse indicators, addressing "war stories" that glorify substance use, preventing unhealthy enmeshment between members, and holding the crucial boundary between therapeutic confrontation and verbal abuse.

Layered onto safety is ethical and cultural competence. Group leaders navigate complex terrain: confidentiality in a room full of people, multiple relationships in small recovery communities, power dynamics tied to race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, and the boundaries of appropriate self-disclosure. Cultural competence in SUD treatment requires understanding how different communities relate to substance use, recovery, mental health, help-seeking, and group participation itself.

With trauma survivors in particular, safety takes precedence over depth. Prioritizing pacing and containment over premature processing is not timidity — it is the recognition that processing too fast can retraumatize. This is the day where the directive style earns its keep even inside otherwise facilitative groups: structure, predictability, and clear limits are themselves trauma-informed interventions.

Reflect

1. Where is your therapeutic frame strongest, and where does it tend to slip — confidentiality, lateness, cross-talk, war stories, or self-disclosure?

2. How do your own cultural background, attachment style, and history shape what you read as "resistance" or "safe" in a group?

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3. With trauma survivors in your groups, how do you balance the pull toward depth against the need for pacing and containment?

Today's Work

Where my therapeutic frame is strongest:

Confidentiality, limits, war stories, self-disclosure...

Where my frame tends to slip — and what would shore it up:

The specific boundary that wobbles...

How my own background and history shape what I read as "resistance" vs. caution:

Cultural humility check...

With trauma survivors, how I balance depth against pacing and containment:

My trauma-informed discipline...

Carry Into the Group Room

One thing from today I am bringing into my next group:

A single intention, experiment, or awareness to hold onto...

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Part 11 · Day 9 · Adaptive Leadership

DAY 9 OF 10 · ADAPTATION

Reading the room and shifting in real time

Today's Reading

The master skill is adaptive leadership: the capacity to shift styles intentionally based on the group's evolving needs. This requires accurate real-time assessment of the group's developmental stage — forming, storming, norming, performing — along with individual members' functional levels, the emotional intensity of the material being processed, and whether the current approach is producing movement or stagnation.

This shows up most clearly in population-specific adaptation. Clients in early detox need highly structured, simplified psychoeducation; members several weeks in can move toward process-oriented, member-driven work; high-functioning continuing-care clients may thrive with a consultant stance. Court-mandated clients need firm structure while you build genuine alliance. First responders and professionals need their expertise honored while their armor is gently challenged. The same leader, in a single week, may need to be directive on Monday morning and advisory on Thursday afternoon.

Adaptive leadership is not abandoning who you are — it is widening your range around a stable center. The first step is honesty about where your range is narrow. Most of us over-rely on the style that fits our temperament and reach for it even when the group needs something else. Recognizing that your preferred style may not match what a given population needs, and consciously stretching beyond your comfort zone, is among the most sophisticated clinical moves you can make.

Reflect

1. Which group developmental stage do you read most easily, and which catches you off guard? How do you know which stage a group is in?

2. Name a population you serve where your natural style is a poor fit. What would it cost you — and give the group — to stretch?

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3. Recall a session where you successfully shifted styles mid-group. What signal told you to change, and what made the shift work?

Today's Work

The group developmental stage I read most easily (forming/storming/norming/performing):

And how I recognize it...

The stage that catches me off guard — and the signals I tend to miss:

Where my read fails...

A population I serve where my natural style is a poor fit:

And what stretching would cost me and give the group...

A session where I successfully shifted styles mid-group — what told me to change:

The signal and the move...

Carry Into the Group Room

One thing from today I am bringing into my next group:

A single intention, experiment, or awareness to hold onto...

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Part 12 · Day 10 · Your Leadership Identity

DAY 10 OF 10 · INTEGRATION

Integrating your primary style, range, and growth edge

Today's Reading

You began this pathway with a single question: when you walk into a group room, what do you instinctively do? Over ten days you have examined the directive, facilitative, and advisory foundations; the confrontive here-and-now; the transactional and transformational engines of motivation; the presence and communication skills beneath every style; the safety and ethical frame that makes the advanced work possible; and the adaptive capacity to shift in real time. Today you integrate it into a coherent identity as a group leader.

The goal was never to become every style equally. It was to know your primary orientation clearly, to name your secondary strengths, to recognize your blind spots honestly, and to widen your range deliberately around a stable center. The most versatile leaders are not the ones without a home style — they are the ones who know their home style so well that they can leave it on purpose when the group needs them to, and return to it without losing themselves.

This is, finally, the same work we ask of every client. We invite them to see their patterns without shame, to build on their strengths, and to grow into a fuller version of themselves one day at a time. Helpers Helping Helpers means we hold ourselves to the same invitation. Your leadership identity is not fixed; it is a practice. Write it down today in the present tense, carry it into your next group, and let it keep evolving — Embrace, Empower & Evolve.

Reflect

1. In a single honest sentence, what is your primary leadership orientation — and what does it cost the groups that need something else?

2. What is the one style or skill you most want to develop in the next ninety days, and what is the first concrete practice?

3. How will you keep tending to your own presence and growth so you can keep offering your full range to your groups?

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Today's Work

Step 1: Your Range, Honestly Named

My primary leadership orientation:

The home style I return to...

My secondary strength:

What I reach for next...

My narrowest range / blind spot:

The style I rarely access...

What my primary style costs the groups that need something else:

The honest trade-off...

Step 2: Your 90-Day Growth Edge

The one style or skill I most want to develop in the next ninety days:

Be specific...

My first concrete practice — what, when, and in which group:

A real, doable experiment...

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How I will keep tending my own presence and growth:

Supervision, peer consult, reflection, rest...

Step 3: Your Leadership Identity Statement

Write in the Present Tense

Not 'I want to be' — simply 'I am.' Name your home style, your range, and your commitment to widen it. It should make you both proud and a little uncomfortable. That discomfort means it is honest.

My Leadership Identity Statement:

I am a group leader who...

Carry this into your next group. Revisit it each quarter. Let it keep evolving — Embrace, Empower & Evolve.

Revisit Your Style Profile

You mapped your baseline on Day 1. Return to it now and read your full range — your primary orientation, your secondary strengths, and your growth edges.

Carry Into the Group Room

One thing from today I am bringing into my next group:

A single intention, experiment, or awareness to hold onto...

Sheamus Moran - Founder of The Recovery Files

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