

Northeastern Society for Group Psychotherapy Summer/F

Letter from the President



Guy R. Crouteau, LICSW, CGP

Members of NSGP,

It's early July and I sit on my front porch enjoying the spectacular weather that Boston can occasionally offer. My name is Guy Croteau and as of July 1st, I am your new president. It's a rather surreal statement to make and position to be in. It doesn't seem all that long ago that Jenn Ruiz introduced me to NSGP while I was at Fenway Health. So here I am, some 11 years later with a task that so many have taken on with purpose, pride, and commitment.

Many of us have completed a busy few weeks and months working on various NSGP endeavors including town halls, the annual conference, and our annual meeting. Summer often is a time for rest, relaxation, and refocus. We embark on a new chapter in NSGP evolution as we consider some difficult decisions in our organization's future. We have some important challenges ahead in order to continue to maintain what we cherish, support our members, and increase our visibility and membership. We all agree that NSGP has something very special to offer and it's our collective responsibility to find ways to let others know about us!

Our new smaller board will meet later this month with a renewed commitment. During 2021 and 2022, under the dedicated leadership

of Jennifer DeSouza, we have begun to make changes to how NSGP is organized and how we will operate. Over the next few months, I will continue that task to implement some, if not most, of the proposed changes. We have already "right-sized" our Board of Directors with a total of eight members—four officers and four at-large members, where we will work as a whole group and within newly re-organized sub-committees, in order to be more agile and efficient. Next steps include the implementation of a new set of by-laws coming from AGPA that are leaner and more flexible. To complement these new by-laws, we have been creating a new policies and procedures manual that documents all of the functions of NSGP. Many of these functions were either not formally documented or lived in various forms and locations. Creating a centralized, living document that represents what and how NSGP operates is necessary as we implement change.

As I begin my tenure as your President, I would like to take the time to recognize the efforts of the many people who make NSGP the great organization it is today. First, I would like to recognize Jennifer DeSouza for her dedicated leadership over 2020-2022. Her presidency occurred during one of the most difficult times in NSGP, in no small part due to the COVID pandemic. She bravely shepherded us through a pretty tumultuous storm. Next, I would like to thank Jeff Brand for his intelligent leadership and work in our town hall efforts. And thanks to the members of the board that have completed their terms in June: Jeff Brand, Mary Alicia Barnes, Richard Montes, Geri Reinhardt, and Amy Matias. They all brought their own special brand of talent, wisdom, and

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Letter from the Editors



This year, we could finally come back together. Although the pandemic is far from "over," it has felt relieving and connecting to gather for some key in-person events: the Foundation's garden party gala and the conference party at Jenn DeSouza's. Organizationally, we're excited to see what's next: the Board is resizing and reconfiguring to make a more agile team, with revised sub-committees working to keep NSGP relevant and vital.

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Member Spotlight – Joyce Collier, LICSW, CGP



Joyce Collier, LICSW, CGP is the co-founder of Facing Cancer Together, providing support, education, and wellness services to people affected by cancer and their families. Joyce played an instrumental role in establishing the Violence Recovery Program at Fenway Community Health, in response to anti-gay violence and the AIDS crisis. With over three decades of group therapy experience, Joyce has also been a member of NSGP for over twenty years, with time served on the board and multiple committees. In an hour-long interview, Joyce spoke with Nadia Khatchadourian, NSGPeople co-editor, about her life, both personal and professional. Maddie Freeman, NSGPeople co-editor,

Nadia: What was your early life like?

acted as scribe.

Joyce: I grew up in the 50s and 60s in a society that saw women as second-class citizens, but also in a very religious Jewish family. My grandfather who lived upstairs used to recite his daily prayers in Hebrew, one of which translated to: "Thank you God for not having made me a woman." That's the atmosphere I grew up in. My sister and I were expected to be active parts of taking care of the household and serving the men. I spent my time rebelling against that. Looking back, I was clearly struggling with my sense of myself as a girl as well as my sexual orientation, although I had no words at the time to describe any of this. I was a tomboy. The first thing I would do after getting home from school is pull off my dress and put on my pants where I felt more like myself.

"I rebelled against being a 'frilly little girl."

After I got a doll for Hanukkah, I was enraged. I went down to the cellar and tore it apart. I rebelled against being a "frilly little girl." At the same time, I was developing crushes on girls. I had no words for this; I knew it was perceived to be "wrong." I couldn't share it with anyone. I felt ashamed.

Nadia: It sounds like you really knew who you were.

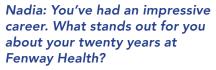
Joyce: Actually, I knew who I wasn't. I didn't have words to describe what was going on for me or any role models.

Nadia: What helped you move forward?

Joyce: When I was a kid, I read a book about Jane Addams, who is considered to be the first social worker. I was transfixed by this "strong independent woman" who cared about making people's lives better and she became my role model. Years later, I learned from Wikipedia that she was a lesbian as well!

Nadia: What prompted you to go into the field of mental health?

Joyce: During my own therapy, I became fascinated in the power of the therapeutic relationship in transforming how I felt about myself and interacted with other people and the world. This inspired me to develop the skills to engage in similar work.



Joyce: I started working at Fenway, a community health center dedicated to LGBTQ+ health, when a job opened up to start a program around anti-gay violence. It was a part-time position, and at the time, we didn't even understand what the scope of the problem was. If you picked up Gay Community News, you'd often see a headline about anti-gay violence. We were flooded with calls from people who had been beaten, who'd never reported—the police were sometimes the abusers. It was 1986, at the height of the AIDS epidemic. There were few laws protecting LGBTQ+ people. And we were activists fighting for LGBTQ+ rights.

During the first week on the job, Channel 5 News called asking to interview me for a piece on anti-gay violence. I was so nervous. I told my colleague, "I've only seen one client." He said, "That's one more than anyone else. You're an expert now." This was the beginning for me of leading a more visible gay life.

Nadia: Is that how you came out to your family, through this news piece?

Joyce: I had come out to my immediate family many years before, but we didn't talk about the topic again. I used to joke that I wondered if maybe they forgot. My work at Fenway changed all that as I was thrust into the limelight as a spokesperson for the LGBTQ+ community. It was a tremendous relief to be able to integrate what I had kept secret from many people into the rest of my life. To my family's credit, they did a lot of work to eventually get to a place of publicly embracing me and my partner.

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Member Spotlight (continued from page 2)

Nadia: What led you to make the shift to your work now at Facing Cancer Together?

Joyce: In 2003, while still at Fenway and working in my private practice, I was diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML). That's how my professional life as I had known it ended abruptly. I spent the next year in and out of the hospital undergoing treatment and an eventual bone marrow transplant. This meant saying goodbye to my clients, my groups, my colleagues... I was very much preparing to die. After the transplant, I joined a cancer support group, and I loved it. It was instrumental in bringing me to a moment when I found myself standing at the kitchen sink, unconsciously humming "I'm singing in the rain... What a wonderful feeling... I'm happy again." It was

"...what if I got sick again?...And she said, 'What better place to be than with us, with a cancer support community.""

still raining, but I was starting to look forward. As I prepared to leave the group, the clinical director, who knew that I loved groups, mentioned that they had a job opening and asked if I was interested in joining the staff.

That made me panic: what if I got sick again? I wasn't emotionally sure I wasn't going to have a relapse. And she said, "What better place to be than with us, with a cancer support community."

So, I started working there. A few years later, the organization closed, but five of us re-grouped to start a new nonprofit—Facing Cancer Together—so we could continue to serve our clients. We've had quite a ride together.

Nadia: Tell me about your life as a group therapist.

Joyce: Initially, groups intimidated me. Then, at Fenway, I started a gay men's therapy group. I didn't have a clue as to what I was doing. There were a few other people in Boston starting gay men's therapy groups at the same time. We formed a supervision group; we approached Anne Alonso and asked her to supervise us, and we worked with her for well over 20 years. She took us from "people who led groups" and turned us into "group therapists." She encouraged us to do more groups, and I did.

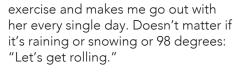
Nadia: What prompted you to join NSGP?

Joyce: Anne Alonso also encouraged us all to join NSGP. I joined, attended conferences, but didn't become actively engaged in the organization until around 2006 when Deb Carmichael said, "Come join the Registration Committee." I co-chaired that committee for a few years with Joe DeAngelis. I've also been part of the Nominating Committee, the Practice Development Committee, and the Experience Group Committee, and served as the Listserv Moderator, as well as on the board for a short period of time recently, filling in.

For me, it's been such a gift to get to work with and know so many wonderful, talented people. I truly value the friendships I've made as a result of being part of this organization.

Nadia: What are some of your favorite activities?

Joyce: I go walking every day, seven days a week, through the hills of Brookline into the hills of Newton. My wife, Jenny, pushes me to



"[Anne Alonso] took us from 'people who led groups' and turned us into 'group therapists."

Back in the 90s, I did the Boston-New York AIDS Ride. We formed a biking group that has expanded and exists to this day. I also love to cook. I have two stepdaughters; I've been with them since they were 5 and 10. They're now 25 and 30. They're a very important part of my life.

Nadia: What's the first concert you ever attended?

Joyce: The Beatles, at Shea Stadium in New York. I think a bunch of us hitchhiked to New York to see this show. It was beyond thrilling.

Nadia: What's the last book you read?

Joyce: I recently finished an amazing book, called *The Last Slave Ship*, about the *Clotilda*. This ship went out to Africa from Alabama even though slavery had already been declared illegal. Some slave owners secretly smuggled in a last group of enslaved people, and then sank the boat so it wouldn't be found. The book's author is the person who discovered the boat. It shares a lot about the horrors of slavery, and the amazing community—Africatown—that was eventually formed by the people who were finally freed. It is very powerful.

Nadia: If you had a magic wand and could make NSGP whatever you wanted it to be, what would that look like?

Joyce: NSGP has so much to offer. We are a strong community that is committed to training the next

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🗕 Analyze This 🚤

This question-and-answer column appears regularly in *NSGPeople* and addresses complex dilemmas in group therapy. Featured are case vignettes presented by NSGP members, with responses by senior clinicians. If you have a question you would like considered for this column, please submit a case vignette of 400 words or less to Natasha Khoury, LMHC, through the NSGP office, or via email to newsletter@nsgp.com. Please remember to preserve the confidentiality of any group members described.

Dear Analyze This,

I am a relatively new group leader, and I want to talk about the art of adding members. In one of my process groups, the group quickly went from seven members to four members over the course of a few months and some scheduling changes. I found myself feeling desperate for new members: will everyone want to leave now? Will the group completely crumble if I don't show them that I am able to have more children? This internal desperation seeped into the external sometimes, as I would tell the group that I was interviewing potential new members. My mentor wisely suggested I work through this desperation in my own supervision, and not let the group in on my process until I had a group member who had signed the papers, ready to join. Sticking with the metaphor, it's true that I would not tell my children that I was "trying" to have a new child; it would only make sense to reveal that if there was one arriving with certainty.

How do you know when it's time to add a new member? How do you quiet your fears and desperation and get comfortable with four in a group? When is the right time to tell the group that a new one is on the way? Sincerely,

Too Desperate for More 🥣

Dear Too Desperate,

I like your phrase "the art of adding new members," because so much of what we do in running our groups is artful. I think especially in our designing and maintaining the group's frame, we are being artful.

So, let's address your "desperation" as one of the artful colors you bring to this complicated moment in your group. Before we focus on bringing new members into the picture, can we take the time to understand the group's experience of losing several members in quick succession?

It may not be about you that members left, but I wonder if you're feeling responsible. It's certainly a significant change in the size and shape of the group, and the members undoubtedly have feelings and thoughts about it. It's so important that you step back and be curious with them about their experience of these changes, rather than assume that what you feel is what they feel. Maybe it was schedule changes (your responsibility?) that prompted some departures; maybe it was changes in members' commitments to the group (not your responsibility, except to help everyone reflect before acting), but this is a growth moment for the group. It could deepen the work quite a lot to invite the feelings and tolerate the not-knowing.

Now, what's in your desperation? We usually feel really anxious when we are desperate: the stakes seem high, the consequences dire. It's important for you to get the help you need to address this anxiety, because when you're desperate, the group has lost its insightful, helpful leader. If you are tremendously anxious about the size of the group, the members might feel it's "everyone for oneself" in the



room, and that the small size is a sign of failure.

I suggest you try broadening your vision of a successful group to include the times when members struggle to put language onto uncomfortable feelings, especially during transitional times like this. A small group often connects in surprising ways because it's small. Your group may find a new dimension of community in sharing their feelings and discovering it's "not every one for oneself" but rather a group experience of transition. One of my longest-lasting groups has transitioned several times over 15 years: to different towns, different times of day, from mixed membership to all-women, and lately—after years of my solo leadership—adjusting to my male co-leader. I'm impressed with how living through transitions has strengthened the bonds, and seems to make the group more sturdy.

"...when you're desperate, the group has lost its insightful, helpful leader."

You asked about adding new members, and the issues around sharing with the group. I have told my groups consistently that I will give them two weeks' notice before bringing in a new member, and that in the meantime, all their fantasies, dreads, wishes, and speculations are valuable to the group. They also know that I will tell them very little about the new member in advance, and welcome what the not-knowing stirs up. When I get a referral from a clinician, I speak initially to the clinician to describe the group and think together about the fit, which may contribute to a nice working alliance with that clinician. I prefer then that the candidate calls me independently to begin our own

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Analyze This (continued from page 4)

exploration of "good fit." The goodness of fit among members will have aspects of age, comparable life experience, and goals. I prefer, if at all possible, to meet (or Zoom) twice with a candidate, and use the second meeting to explore their impressions from our first meeting and the sense they have of me, and then review their goals and the group contract. I like to review the group contract with the whole group each time I bring in someone new, and I invite members to help me cover all the items in the contract.

I hope I've conveyed the excitement I feel around transitions in a group, and how I see the transitional time as a rich part of group experience. And I hope, dear Too Desperate, to help you be less desperate and thus, more artful.

Sincerely,

Julie Anderson, Ph.D. 🥣

Dear Too Desperate for More,

Let me begin by empathizing with your pain of giving birth to a new group. New groups take time to develop and arrive at a place of relative stability, which is challenging. I want to compliment you on being in touch with your feelings in the process and maintaining the foresight of seeking consultation with a wise mentor amidst your fear and desperation.

As I read through your "relatively new group leader" dilemma, I recall my days of being a "relatively new" parent. When my first child was born, I shared with my friend, a mother of three, my overwhelming fear of dropping my newborn or otherwise accidentally harming him. Those fears appeared realistic to me at the time. Inexperience amplified by my highrisk pregnancy, difficult childbirth, and the necessity for my son to spend his first days of life in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) amounted to the sense of fragility, my desperation for safety, and dread of making a fatal mistake. My friend patiently listened to my anxious recitation of imagined catastrophes involving dead infants. Then she smiled and said, "Sasha, you might be surprised, but it is actually very hard to kill the baby."

I am offering this anecdote as my association to your dilemma. I wonder if you are afraid of killing off your group by your inexperience. While I do not know the circumstances under which your group got "birthed," I wonder if the fact that it dwindled "quickly" from seven members down to four might have made you feel that you were not a "good enough" parent. You seem to judge your parental ability by the number of group members. From your statement that you feel "desperate for new members," I infer that your idea of good parenting involves having more children rather than keeping those you have alive.

Aside from obvious financial implications, I wonder what the size of the group means to you. I hypothesize that, among other things, group size valence relates to your training and theoretical background. For example, the psychodynamic and interpersonal theories I am trained in prescribe a certain number of members for "productive" group work, usually in the range of five to ten. While I do not argue with the wisdom of numbers that comes from specific experiences, I can see how one might feel as not "good enough" when their group does not meet the established standard.

Suppose you received similar messages in your training about the group size as I did. In that case, I am not surprised that you would feel fearful and desperate



since your group shrinking to an "unacceptable" four would mean your failure as a group therapist. However, group size standards are not universal and need to be re-evaluated depending on the circumstances, including members' needs and capacity for intimacy. Therefore, I would caution against

"I infer that your idea of good parenting involves having more children rather than keeping those you have alive."

viewing yourself or your group as "not enough" based on numbers. You are still in the early stages of your group life when drop-outs are common. Besides, small group size offers unique challenges and surprising opportunities that can come out of overcoming them.

In addition to considering training, I suggest exploring the cultural underpinnings of your fear and desperation. As a therapist who approaches groups from an identitybased perspective, I am curious about the cultural influences behind your question, "Will the group completely crumble if I don't show them that I am able to have more children?" You seem to assume that the group is crumbling because of your infertility. I wonder what your ability (or inability) to have more children symbolizes for you, given your gender identity, age, race/ ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, etc. I also wonder how this interacts with the cultural make-up of the group.

I suggest you first examine the contextual, theoretical, and cultural luggage you bring into the group. This examination might help clarify your group's needs by separating the parts of your fear and desperation

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Providing Affirming Care through an Understanding of Sexuality & Gender Identity

Sienna Carpenter, OT/s Madison Dube-Adams, OT/s Maureen Kennedy, OT/s Emily Machado, OT/s



Sienna Carpenter, OT/s



Maureen Kennedy, OT/s

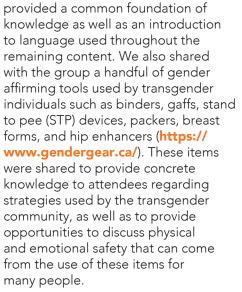


Emily Machado, OT/s

As part of this year's exciting NSGP Conference: Sex: Can We Talk?, a group of mental health professionals gathered in a workshop to discuss the topics of gender identity, gender expression, and sexuality. The workshop, entitled Sexuality & Gender Identity: Considerations for Group Leaders and Mental Health Providers was led by the authors of this article, who currently are four students pursuing their doctorates in occupational therapy at Tufts University, with the support of Dr. Mary Alicia Barnes. We designed the workshop to create a safe enough space for learning, reflection, and dialogue around topics which included: current accepted language identified by the transgender community, strategies for gender affirming and sex positive environments, and the importance of intentional language use. While the specific content covered laid an important foundation for a shared understanding of the material, we found that the thoughtful and honest conversations that unfolded became the most meaningful parts of the experience.

We came away from this experience with an appreciation for the respect and attention granted by participants. It can be intimidating to share knowledge while holding humility in one's awareness of not being an expert, while still having possible insights and expertise to offer. The participants were gracious recipients of the information and perspectives shared and genuinely engaged with the material. The group was introduced to the gender unicorn (https://transstudent.org/gender/), which is a useful tool to help people

understand the differences between gender identity, gender expression, sex assigned at birth, physical attraction, and emotional attraction. Having an overview of these concepts



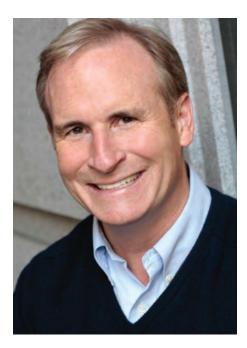
Interestingly, in addition to the intentional content that we as leaders shared, we also brought with us a range of professional and personal experiences due to growing up in different generations. The intergenerational exchanges were some of the most powerful drivers of conversation throughout the three-hour event. We provided knowledge shaped by a thorough review of the literature as well as lived experiences and consultations with colleagues in this area. Our developing OT identities have been shaped by the current environment: a societal and academic climate that is rapidly changing as our cultural and scientific understanding of gender and sexuality has gone through major shifts over the past decade. The group acknowledged that in practice it can feel challenging to adapt to this ever changing landscape at times. Workshop participants emphasized the importance of valuing both personal and professional growth as a lifelong process, to support best practice in providing affirming care to all.

Many of the major takeaways from this workshop related to challenging our biases and working to get to a

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Welcome to One of Our Newest Members!



Name: Justin Hecht (he, him, his)

Joined NSGP: August 2022

Graduated from: Columbia University (MA, developmental psychology); Boston University (Ph.D.)

Place of Work: I work and live (now) in Lexington, MA—and play all over New England.

Special Interests: My special focus is on people in midlife, struggling with questions of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment.

Fun Fact: I'm crazy about dogs (we have two).

Why I Joined NSGP: I joined NSGP to be part of a supportive community committed to furthering the practice of group psychotherapy, which is a major professional passion for me. I've met a number of people from NSGP at AGPA conferences over the years and always appreciated their knowledge and professionalism, so it seemed a natural thing to join NSGP. AGPA feels like my professional home, and I've made some good friends here in New England through the conferences. We moved here recently from California to get away from the worsening drought, heat, and wildfires, and have appreciated the warm welcome from friends and colleagues.

Progress Notes

Caleb Englander graduated from the four-year Training Program in Psychoanalysis at the Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis in June 2020. Only took him six years!



Jenn Ruiz and her family moved to a new home this summer and are excited to welcome their third child in September!



Howie Schnairsohn: I turned 75 this year. Given that as a small child I did not think I would make it beyond age 15, this is an achievement. I have to say that watching, participating in, and leading groups over the last decade and a half (a late career change) has been good to me—that, and living in JP, the birthplace of JP Licks! Keeping my same number of groups (six), I've added a modest amount of individual work to my practice using the platform BetterHelp. I also hope to return to a more active role in NSGP after this bit of a hiatus. Thanks for listening!





Jocelyn Litrownik: In honor of Maisy's first birthday, we celebrated at Prospect Hill Park and also raised money for Repro Legal Defense Fund. Two anonymous donors generously offered to match funds up to \$1,500 and anything beyond was matched double. Our goal is to raise \$3k by the end of summer (\$2,550 to date). It was especially wonderful to have so many of my peer supervision colleagues join. To donate: https://fundrazr. com/5239f5?ref=ab 5BY6f3

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Progress Notes (continued from page 7)



Natasha Khoury: Our daughter, Oriana, was baptized at St. James Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown on July 31st. Family and friends from around the world gathered to meet our baby girl and take part in her special day. Motherhood has been an adventure of a lifetime and we are loving our first summer with our curious, happy, and undeniably sweet six-month old bundle of pure joy!



William Sharp returned with his 25 students to London IRL ("In Real Life") to help them explore therapies of depth, insight, and relationship. This is his fifth time leading this trip, although the last two years were virtual. In addition, William co-authored a paper on "Stranger Things", recently published and available here via Open Access: https://buff.ly/3laowZV. A chapter on "Spider-Man" is coming out in 2023 in an edited book.



David Goldfinger: I was invited to speak about the psychology of music at the Blue Ridge Guitar Camp in North Carolina by Grammywinning guitarist Bryan Sutton. I reviewed techniques for managing anxiety during performance, and used Winnicottian theory to discuss creativity, improvisation, and the development of musical style.



Annie Weiss: Hi! I'm excited about a big transition in my practice. As of next month I will be leaving my Langley Road office after two decades there, and moving my practice around the corner to my home office in Newton Center. The fun part is that attached to the private office space at the back of my house, we have built a screen porch where I can see people outside, weather permitting—even groups! Come visit!



Member Spotlight (continued from page 3)

generation of group therapists. I want us to continue to build upon this foundation and I'd also love to see us shake things up a little bit more. I'd like us to interact more expansively; reach out to people and communities who are doing all sorts of different groups; open our minds and our hearts to what other people have to teach us—learn, grow, evolve, and be a catalyst for change.

Nadia: If you were not a therapist, what would be your dream profession?

Joyce: I used to think that I wanted to be a marine biologist. I find all the creatures in the ocean so interesting. There's a whole other fascinating world down there. But that was a long time ago. I don't snorkel, I don't dive. I'm afraid to jump off boats. So, I don't think that would be a good profession for me. And I'm not good at science. [Laughing] Other than that, it would have been fun to be a marine biologist.



Classifieds

OFFICE SUBLET: Fully furnished office in Coolidge Corner available for sublet days and evenings. High speed WiFi, windows that open, air filter. 4 hour/week minimum. Please contact **oonametzlicsw@gmail.com** for more information.

OPENINGS in New Beginnings Weekly Divorce Recovery Support Group for Men. Thursdays 6 - 7:15 p.m. This psychodynamic, open-ended, interpersonal group can accommodate up to 8 members and will meet weekly via doxy.me. Cost: \$50/session, payable with Venmo (Insurances not accepted.) Group Leader: David Poles, LMHC, CRC, LADC1. Please call 617-981-1186 or email david@ newtoncounselingcenter.org for more information.

NSGPeople Together

Guy Croteau presenting plaque of recognition to Jennifer DeSouza at the NSGP Conference Saturday Night Party.



Letter from the President (continued from page 1)

Next I would like to welcome Anaïs Lugo-Guercio onto the board. She continues her work on the DEI committee and will play an important role in the board's DEI efforts.

I would also like to give a shout out to so many that have continued to make NSGP a special organization, many from behind the scenes. We all have a lot of work to do and I am excited to take on the challenge of being your president. I look forward to hearing from any and all of you. Please reach out to me at **president@nsgp.com**. I am at your service.

> Guy R. Croteau LICSW, CGP President, NSGP

Analyze This (continued from page 5)

related to the here-and-now of the group from those connected to there-and-then. For example, does the group indeed need a new sibling or something else? When you share with the group that you are interviewing the potential candidate, whose needs are you meeting—yours or the group?

I believe that when you thoroughly understand what is needed, your fear and desperation will quiet down. When you are less fearful and desperate, you can better attend to your remaining children. Besides, you will know when to add a new member—when the group needs a new member. And you will know when to tell the group that a new member is on the way—when you and the group are ready to welcome them into the group.

Sincerely,

Alexandra (Sasha) Watkins, ¬ LMHC



Providing Affirming Care through an Understanding of Sexuality & Gender Identity

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place where we are more comfortable challenging our assumptions about those we work with. We do not have control over whether someone feels safe, but there are steps we can each make to create a supportive space where we make explicit efforts toward inclusiveness. Together the group was able to explore the vital need to become comfortable with not being the expert and addressing identity-focused topics in our therapeutic relationships.

To explore this topic further, here are some helpful resources regarding gender affirming care as well as the transgender experience:

- 1. Providing Affirmative Care for Patients with Non-binary Gender Identities: https://www. Igbtqiahealtheducation.org/ publication/providing-affirmativecare-patients-non-binary-genderidentities/
- 2. Responding to Victims of Sexual Assult: Transgender Specific Issues: https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/ xyckuh226/files/pubs/forge/ transgender_physical.html
- Keuroghlian, A. S., Potter, J., & Reisner, S. L. (2022). Transgender and gender diverse health care: The Fenway Guide. McGraw Hill.



Letter from the Editors (continued from page 1)

Since NSGP is about the *people* who make it up, we as NSGPeople are particularly excited about coming together again this year. Look at the "NSGPeople Together" page to see evidence of actual human in-person interaction! We hope you enjoy this fourth issue of the new NSGPeople.

Maddie Freeman, LICSW Nadia Khatchadourian, LICSW







NSGP Foundation Announces Lifetime Achievement Award Winners

The NSGP Foundation board is pleased to announce the 4th annual Lifetime Achievement Award recipients. These awards are presented to those scholars and clinicians who have made significant contributions to the field of group psychotherapy. These highly regarded clinicians have devoted their professional lives to teaching, supervising, publishing books and articles, and engaging in organizational activities that benefit the group therapy community. They are committed to the principles of group work and believe that well-run groups heal. Each year we invite the winners to respond to two questions: "What drew you to group therapy?" and "What does being a group therapist mean to you?"

This year's winners (in alphabetical order) and their responses are:



Pamela Enders, PhD, is a psychologist in clinical practice in Cambridge. She has been a highly respected teacher, supervisor, and mentor in the world of group psychology. She has held leadership roles for the following: the Joint Committee on the Status of Women at Harvard Medical School, the Committee on Publicity and Marketing for NSGP, the NSGP board three times and on multiple committees for NSGP for more than 30 years. She was also crucial in the NSGP website update. In addition, she has served as the Staff Psychologist at Spaulding Rehabilitation Center, Clinical Assistant in Psychology at Massachusetts General Hospital and as Allied Health Professional Staff at Cambridge Hospital. She has authored or co-authored more than 15 articles and chapters in various journals, professional publications, and books, and presented more than 60 times on issues related to group therapy and on the psychology of performance, particularly mental

toughness. Pamela is also an accomplished cabaret singer.

"Anne Alonso! I would imagine many old-timers would respond similarly. Bob [Weber] knew Anne from his internship at MGH and I met her through him. She encouraged me to apply for a postdoc at the BIP and to apply for membership at NSGP. I was new to Boston and eager to make connections and friends, so these were good options for me. Plus, I was quite enamored of the force that was Anne Alonso! Hence, my attraction to group therapy was really a desire to get close to Anne, to make friends, and to enlarge my professional circle. NSGP was very vibrant at the time, and it was pretty easy to get involved. After my time at the BIP, I did an additional postdoc at MGH under Anne's tutelage where I was able to run a group for the first time and observe Anne and Scott Rutan run their long-term group. I was able to see and experience the power of group therapy, to see that one could "get" at things in group that one could never do in individual therapy. I had wonderful supervisors such as Scott Rutan, Cecil Rice, and Larry Bader. So, the best supervisors that group had to offer!

Because I no longer run therapy groups, I don't really consider myself a group therapist; however, learning about group theories and running/supervising groups has



helped me in group settings of all kinds (e.g. coaching, performances, organizations). I am quite tuned in to the various personalities of any group—social or work-oriented, even audiences when I perform—and so feel I 'run' those groups quite well."



Scott Reinhardt, PhD, is a psychologist in clinical practice in Newton, MA. He has been a Staff Psychologist at McLean Hospital, a Clinical Coordinator for the Group Psychotherapy Program at Harvard Community Health Plan, Chelmsford, and Chief of Training and Staff Development at South Shore Mental Health Clinic. He has held numerous teaching and consultation positions including at Trinity Mental Health Center, Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology, and Brighton-Allston Mental Health Center, among others. Scott served as editor of the NSGP newsletter and as a member of the NSGP board several times.

"Being a child surrounded by members of my father's large family—upstairs, (continued on page 11)



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downstairs, across the alley—had something to do with my becoming a group therapist: alliances and betrayals, battles and reconciliations, jealousy and love were all in the air I breathed.

In graduate school, exposed differently to the emotional pain and distress in people's lives, knowing that one could learn to be of real assistance to people struck a chord deep in me. I jumped into both individual and group therapy—both interesting and useful in their own ways, but group felt like I had come home! The thing is, the homes were different and so was the one returning. Strangely enough, however, I always felt comfortable and that it was where I belonged. So how cool is that?

Being a group therapist means I have a chance to assist group members to bear witness to the uniqueness of their lives and that of the other members, as they come to understand and recognize the common denominators which link us as humans. What is it like to connect with others, to love another being, and to be loved, or not in return? What is it to endure loss? What does one do with the knowledge that everyone we know will die, including ourselves? What is it to revel in triumph and success and how bitter is the taste of defeat? And how does it feel to express compassion, kindness, and empathy to another and to experience that from another when one needs it the most?

Of course, these experiences don't happen all the time. In fact, they may not happen in a particular group meeting at all. Very frustrating, upsetting, and aggravating to me. But that is a part of life in a group as well. Nothing is perfect and the group and all its members do the best they can at any particular moment in time. Sometimes one's best isn't quite good enough, however. That's a part of group, too. To me, all this is best accomplished and experienced in a group setting—a microcosm of life, as it were.

Not so bad to be a part of that. Not so bad at all."



Robert Weber, PhD, is a psychologist in private practice who has supervised and been a faculty member at the Center for Psychoanalytic Studies and the Center for Group Therapy at Massachusetts General Hospital Department of Psychiatry for 20 years. He has trained and supervised clinical staff at many agencies in the Greater Boston area including: Dimmock Community Health Center, Roxbury; Massachusetts General Hospital Department of Psychiatry; Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (now William James College); South Shore Mental Health; American Society on Aging, San Francisco; and Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services. His current specialty is issues of spirituality and aging on which he has presented numerous times and published a book in 2015 titled The Seeker's Guide to Aging: Spirituality for Boomers. In addition, he has presented more than 100 times and authored or co-authored more than 35 articles, chapters, and reviews on issues in group therapy.

"In 1972, a friend and fellow student in clinical psychology at BU invited me to join him and another colleague to lead a couple's therapy group for divinity students in Cambridge. It was my first taste of group work, and I knew I would do more in the future. After three years of graduate study at Temple University, I returned to Boston for a pre-doctoral internship at MGH. There I met Anne Alonso, Scott Rutan, Cecil Rice, Larry Bader, and Jerry Gans, and through their enthusiasm, nurturance, and mentoring I became more involved in group work and joined NSGP and AGPA. Completion of a two-year postdoc at MGH-HMS (1981–1983) further cultivated my interest and whetted my appetite for group work. NSGP became my professional home, and "the family members" I grew to know and to love. Friendships and collegial relationships proliferated and contributed to my growth as a clinician and as a human being beyond the professional roles. For these experiences I am deeply grateful.

What has been meaningful? Both the good and the bad experiences of being in a group have been meaningful. Sometimes I learned more about life and myself through what I considered, at the time, "bad" experiences, including when I served as a group leader of many different kinds of groups.

The people whom I met through group membership and participation deepened my attraction to groups over time. The co-created group experience and the collaborative processes warmed my heart and encouraged my spirit in the face of life's challenges and pain. Even when there was conflict, I discovered opportunities for growth and change, and experienced inner and outer transformation in myself and others.

For me, as important as it is to have 'alone time' or solitude, that time is only fruitful when it is co-experienced with 'together time' with others."

The NSGP Foundation Board is pleased to honor these three distinguished group therapists.





NSGPF Annual Gala and Lifetime Achievement Awards: Coming Back Together



Erica Kirsners, Adam Silk, and Julie Anderson



Joe Shay and Marushka Glissen



Tracy Macnab and Barbara Keezell



Michael Murray, Caleb Englander, and Jeff Brand



Natasha Khoury, Nadia Khatchadourian, and Maddie Freeman: the NSGPeople Committee together in person, finally!





NSGPeople Masthead

Co-Chairs Madeline Freeman, LICSW Nadia Khatchadourian, LICSW Members Natasha Khoury, LMHC Headshots Various NSGPeople Newsletter Design K. White designer_solution@comcast.net

The goals of NSGPeople are two-fold:

- To promote the objectives of the Northeastern Society for Group Psychotherapy, an affiliate of the American Group Psychotherapy Association.
- To be an online forum for the exchange of ideas and information among members.

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