



Letter from the President



Guy R. Crouteau, LICSW, CGP

Dear NSGP Members,

Our most excellent editors of *NSGPeople* reminded me that this "Letter from the President" will be my last in these pages as your president. In July, I hand over the presidency to Joel Krieg, LICSW, CGP, President-Elect. I thought I would take this opportunity to reflect on my time in leadership positions within NSGP.

I began my journey with NSGP back in 2011, when I took the Principles in Group Therapy course offered by NSGP. It was a great experience both in learning and in meeting some terrific colleagues, not the least our own Joel Krieg. From there, I began to participate in the Conference Committee as its registrar and went on to co-chair three conferences, including our last virtual conference in 2022. During that time, I also served two terms as treasurer with Steffen Fuller, and then Ann Koplow, as presidents. I then became President-Elect under Jenn DeSouza in 2021.

During these 13 years, I have had the honor to witness some of the best clinicians doing some amazing work as teachers, mentors, writers, and group therapists. And those of us who know NSGP well know that our strength lies with our members and

their talent, skills, and their love for the profession and group work.

The COVID pandemic was a challenging time for NSGP and we owe a debt of gratitude to Jenn DeSouza and William Sharp for seeing the organization through this difficult period with tact, grace, and a large measure of patience.

Following Jenn DeSouza, I became president in 2021, while we were still struggling with pandemic shutdowns of various forms along with social distancing and vaccines, boosters, and a plethora of conflicting information. We had to cancel our beloved annual conference in 2020, then held virtual conferences in 2021 and 2022. In 2023, we did not have the resources to offer a full conference. We also missed our Principles Course in Group Psychotherapy and lost our Breakfast Club.

Post-Covid and our membership shrinking, many of us on the Executive Committee and the Board saw 2023 as a year of transition, with a reorganization including a smaller board of directors and the pilot of a new Program Committee. We had to find ways to share resources more efficiently and take better advantage of the talent we have while improving our efforts on recruitment of new members and sharing the power of groups.

As a result, we are close to adopting new bylaws that better reflect our organization and its operation, a set of policies and procedures that detail the most important aspects of that operation, and a leaner board of directors. Also notable in these changes is the adoption of a potential co-president. Last but hardly least, our current board of directors is energized and eager to move forward on a number of initiatives that work

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Letter from the Editors



Nadia Khatchadourian, LICSW
Maddie Freeman, LICSW

Nadia: I find it invigorating to put together a new issue of *NSGPeople*. It's fun to think broadly about NSGP and attempt to capture where it's at, and to collaborate with the many wonderful people that are responsible for the content in these pages. Still, it's a task that would feel much less gratifying without the partnership I've enjoyed with Maddie Freeman. From our first issue together four years ago, when

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Member Spotlight — Adam Silk, MD, CGP



Adam Silk, MD, CGP, is a psychiatrist in private practice, as well as the founder and executive director of RELATE, a nonprofit providing professional development in mental health issues for teachers in K-12 schools. He is also an instructor in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital. Adam has worked in a variety of settings including MIT Medical Department, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and the Boston VA Medical Center Outpatient Clinic. A group therapist for over 25 years, Adam has a special interest in psychotherapy groups for young adults and for people struggling with feelings of shame and isolation, as well as supervision groups for psychotherapists and for teachers. A member of NSGP for many years, and former member of the Training Committee, Adam now serves on the board of the NSGP Foundation. In an hour-long interview, Adam spoke with Nadia Khatchadourian, NSGPeople co-editor, about his life, both personal and professional. Maddie Freeman, NSGPeople co-editor, acted as scribe.

Nadia: What was your early life like?

Adam: I would say I was very lucky. I grew up in an upper middle class Jewish family in suburban New York—it was actually the New

Jersey suburbs. My father was a journalist—a well-known columnist in the New York Times. My mother was a concert pianist. I grew up in a house full of ideas and art. They had a good marriage; they were good parents. No life is perfect, and mine was no exception, but looking back on it, it seems very clear to me that I was very lucky. And I am very lucky.

Nadia: What was a formative experience for you?

Adam: Being the son of a musician, I had a very serious music life of my own for many years. After high school, I studied at a music conservatory for several years and became a serious violinist, which I have maintained. Ultimately, in my early 20s I did an about-face and started at a regular college, and ultimately went to medical school and became a psychiatrist.

Nadia: What led you down that path?

Adam: Along the path of figuring out that a musical career was not what I wanted, I was fortunate to get into therapy myself. And I thought, well, this is the kind of work that I could imagine doing. So I talked to a lot of people in different fields of mental health, and pretty much everybody in those days—this would've been the early 1980s—said if you can get through medical school, you may have more flexibility in what you end up doing. Medicine has changed a great deal since then, and what I hear about the way doctors are trained and the way psychiatrists are used these days, I'm not sure that the same advice would be true 40 years later.

Nadia: Can you tell us about your interest in mental health and education and your work at RELATE?

Adam: I worked at MIT for 17 years, and at the time, working in student

mental health there was seen as kind of a cushy position. I think that's changed quite a bit as college mental health has become more acute care. After several years at MIT, I noticed that people were lined up around the block to do my job there. It was clear to me that there were a lot of other students in Boston—in the Boston public schools in particular—whose mental health needs were very acute, and people were not lined up around the block to help them. So I started to wonder, what could be done about that?

It was pretty clear to me that we were never going to have enough therapists to treat inner city kids. We were going to have to come up with different models to meet the mental health needs for people who didn't have the means to pay for individual therapy.

“We were going to have to come up with different models to meet the mental health needs for people who didn't have the means to pay for individual therapy.”

I began volunteering at a middle school in Dorchester about 15 years ago. We started a program where teachers led after-school groups for students—activities groups with a therapeutic focus. We'd take a bunch of angry, disaffected 7th grade boys and say, “You're angry for a good reason—we live in a deeply unjust society. Here's a camera for each of you: go out in the neighborhood and document the injustice in your community. We'll look together at your pictures, and talk together about why you took them and how

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Member Spotlight

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they could be stronger. At the end of the year, we'll have an exhibition at the public library to share what we learned about injustice, and also about photography." I provided back-up supervision and support for the teachers, and the teachers led the groups. The program was a success. Students began clamoring for these groups. Teachers love doing them. Eventually, every student in the school was in such a group, and the teachers became so experienced that I no longer had to be involved at all, because the teachers provide peer supervision for themselves.

"Semester after semester, I was teaching the same principles to teachers — Group Therapy 101. Principles like, it matters who shows up. It matters that you close the door. It matters that you start on time and end on time, and that you think about the group as a whole."

After about eight years of that work, the dime dropped for me. Semester after semester, I was teaching the same principles to teachers—Group Therapy 101. Principles like, it matters who shows up. It matters that you close the door. It matters that you start on time and end on time, and that you think about the group as a whole. Eventually, it dawned on me—teachers get no training at all in how groups work, while what they do all day is lead groups. A class is a group with an extra task, but it is a group nonetheless. So I thought,

if we can train teachers to be better group leaders, it would help everyone in the school.

I got some grant money. What we've done is adapt the T-group model, which has been used for years to train therapists. We've adapted it for teachers. Currently we're in two Boston high schools, and we have two basic goals: one is to help teachers learn how groups work, and the other is to have teachers feel like they are in more of a supportive community in their school.

So that's what RELATE is about. I've actually also gotten grant support from the NSGP Foundation to support this work, in addition to other organizations' help.

Nadia: Can you tell us more about your interest in helping group members with shame and isolation?

Adam: Shame has been a particular interest for many years. Shame creates barriers between a person and the other people in their life, and group therapy is particularly powerful in helping people with their shame. When you say, "I feel like I am such a worthless human being," and look around the room and other people are saying, "yeah, I feel exactly the same way," it gets easier to make the distinction between shame as a feeling and as an objective fact. Once you can see it as a feeling, you can begin to make some distance between what you feel about yourself, and who you actually are. It's a big way group therapy can be helpful.

Nadia: What led you to join NSGP?

Adam: Wow, it's been so long that I don't exactly remember. I think my first exposure was probably back in the 1990s, which was when the annual conference was held at Wellesley College. I certainly went to more than one of those, but exactly when I joined is lost to me.

"Shame creates barriers between a person and the other people in their life, and group therapy is particularly powerful in helping people with their shame."

Nadia: What are some of your favorite activities?

Adam: I am still a violinist, and I have groups of friends who I like to play with, and that's important to me. I am a reader in many directions. I like to have a work of fiction, a work of poetry, and a work of nonfiction going at the same time. These days my favorite thing is taking care of my granddaughter Emma. She was born last August, and we are having a great time taking care of her. And now my daughter is pregnant and is due in June, so hopefully we will be grandparents of two in July.

Nadia: What was the first concert you attended?

Adam: My life has been filled with wonderful concerts. Certainly the first concert I ever heard would've been my mother's. I am the youngest of three, and by the time I came along, she was so exhausted from taking care of children, and she needed to play the piano. So she put newborn me in the infant seat directly underneath the piano, so that I would be used to listening. Most days of my childhood, I fell asleep to the sound of her practicing, and even today, solo piano music calms me down wonderfully.

Nadia: What was the last movie you saw?

Adam: I just saw the Leonard Bernstein biopic, *Maestro*. It's a movie about a marriage. What I loved about it is that it didn't moralize.

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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, at newsletter@nsgp.com. Please remember to preserve the confidentiality of any group members described.

► Dear Analyze This,

Often a group leaves me dazed. It's like I've made it through another meteorite shower of countertransference. If only there existed while leading my group a nifty trick that could, in one motion, recognize an approaching threat (born of an earlier narrative) and alter its course in time to avoid a direct hit. I do reasonably well with identifying the invader and recognizing how it affects me, although only after impact, which is often too late to change course.

For example, during yesterday's online group, I had far too many moments feeling stymied and rudderless. It wasn't until after group that I realized my recurring tendency to check the space on the screen inhabited by a judgmental "college professor." This repetitious act wasn't so much to see how he was doing, but rather to read how I was doing.

This battle with intimidation by titles seemed to gain momentum when, while frequently hospitalized as a child, I recognized the deference given to those who possessed the title "doctor." On another occasion, I heard myself boldly encourage, even welcome, criticism from group members, as I learned I should, and simultaneously felt thunderstruck when it was delivered.

And lastly, when a group and I ascended to a discussion of the meanings inferred from being late with my bill, I shuddered when one member, who was three months delinquent, actually paused to weigh

my suggestion that he felt he was not getting his money's worth.

In each of these examples, was I really ready to ask the questions if not prepared to receive the answers? I cringe to think that at my age, the answer lies in more years of therapy, when all it might take is some nifty mind trick, like changing the meteors to harmless meatballs.

Sincerely,

A Meteorite Shower of Countertransference ◄

► Dear A Meteorite Shower of Countertransference,

I applaud your insight and willingness to address these challenging countertransference responses. You present the common, tender, and frustrating distinction between what our logical brains "know," and how our limbic systems respond to "an approaching threat (born of an earlier narrative)."

There are, of course, no easy answers, but there are strategies that can help. I draw from Psychodynamic Theory, Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB), and Internal Family Systems (IFS) in considering this dilemma. Your mature, educated brain wisely encourages honest reactions from group members, while some younger part of you is "thunderstruck" and "shudders" (visceral, physical images). First, I'll address the "top-down" reasons why we need to welcome clients' aggression, then I will suggest some "bottom-up" ways to support ourselves in order to do so.

Group, by design, provides inevitable opportunities for clients to experience disappointment, injury, and frustration. Leaders cannot track everything and meet all needs, nor should we expect ourselves to do so. We miss things and make mistakes every session. We set boundaries that evoke anger. We are the recipients of projections and transferences no matter what we do. This provides powerful developmental opportunities for clients, yet often induces difficult reactions in us. Our job is to welcome it all and not to take it personally. Seeing the leader hold boundaries without apology, receive criticism without defensiveness, or stay in relationship with someone who is angry helps group members learn to do the same.

"Seeing the leader hold boundaries without apology, receive criticism without defensiveness, or stay in relationship with someone who is angry helps group members learn to do the same."

A powerful maturational opportunity in group is learning to regulate one's own aggression, and to tolerate others' aggression without self-attack (Ormont, 1984; Black, 2017). Some clients struggle with destructive anger and need to explore it and develop more adaptive forms of self-expression. Many clients (and therapists!) struggle with self-attack, including shame, self-criticism, depression, and excessive apology. This "narcissistic defense" (Spotnitz & Meadow, 1977) is the child's attachment strategy to protect relationships by redirecting anger or disappointment into criticism towards the self (e.g. "what is wrong with me that I am not getting my needs met?")

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Analyze This

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lest caregivers retaliate or disappear.

In group, we must scan for, interrupt, and liberate the energy of self-attack in the service of personal and interpersonal development. We must help group members notice and express anger, including “small anger” (irritation, boredom, judgment, criticism of the leader) and to explore and metabolize those feelings. To do this, group leaders must believe in its value and then buckle our emotional seatbelts. We have to resist defensiveness and self-attack, to stay curious and inviting. In my opinion, we do this not only by understanding the “earlier narratives,” but by developing a compassionate and healing relationship with those reactions that are deeply embedded in our nervous system. While years more of therapy may not be necessary or desired, I believe the Internal Family Systems (IFS) model provides a strategy that enables us to build a compassionate relationship with these younger parts so that we can insulate them from the slings and arrows that might trigger them (Schwartz, 2021).

In a calm and safe moment, conjure the feelings that arise when you feel criticized or potentially intimidated. Take a few breaths, and notice how those feelings emerge, perhaps through bodily sensation, image, thoughts, and memory. And be on the lookout for self-critical, managerial reactions, agendas or interpretations, and ask them to give you space. This is crucial. Sense into how young these parts are, or how young you feel when you are flooded by them. Put your hand where the sensation lies, or on your heart, and let it know: “I see you, I understand, I’m here.” Listen deeply, let this part share its story, associations, and young logic, such as “if I did bad, I am bad” or “if someone is upset, I am in danger.” This provides internal healing and insulation. We can say to this part, with love and compassion,

“I understand your pain, that made sense. That time is over, you got through it. This is not about you. I’m here, I’m an adult, and I’ve got this.” Let it know who you are, what you know and not “you should know better,” but what you have learned, your resources and capacities, and that you are loved and valued. We thus develop a relational system inside ourselves that insulates, co-regulates, and provides disconfirming experiences and corrective emotional repair. Do this again and again; it takes repetition to build new neural networks. With practice, this will become more available, and eventually, even automatic.

Before group, we can practice this “nifty trick” of hand on the body, deep compassion, listening to the fears of all the little, vulnerable ones, and reminding them that we’ve got this—that we have resources and perspective we didn’t have back then, that it’s an honor when our clients feel safe enough to criticize us, that enabling them to do so it is a vital part of our job, and that it’s not personal.

Annie Weiss, LICSW, CGP, AGPA-F

Black, A. (2017) On attacking and being attacked in group psychotherapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 67(3), 291-313, DOI: 10.1080/00207284.2016.1260459

Ormont, L. (1984). The leader’s role in dealing with aggression in groups. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 34(4), 553–572.

Spotnitz, H., & Meadow, P. (1977). *Treatment of the narcissistic neuroses*. Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, MD.

Schwartz, R. (2021). *No bad parts*. Sounds True: Boulder, Co.

Dear Showerer,

I understand the all-too-familiar blow to your confidence and authority you experience when there’s a member of status (especially doctors) in your groups. You get distracted (in your head) imagining how the doctor is seeing you, which can leave you feeling stymied and rudderless. Stuck in old dynamics, you are less available to be with what’s going on for the members and yourself.

Your confidence also gets dismantled when receiving negative feedback from members—though you are aware it’s good practice to invite it. You get flooded with uncomfortable feelings. All of this sounds painful, debilitating, and relatable. It’s great you can identify your points of sensitivity (people of status and negative feedback). Your work is to figure out how to manage your feelings (countertransference) that come up while leading and own and maintain your authority. Unfortunately, there’s no simple, one-motion trick to get there. I’ve shared some thoughts below that will hopefully help.

1. Harness the power of “It’s your job.” This is a mindset shift and the closest match to a “one-motion trick.” The spirit is: get out of your head (your familiar thought patterns) and into the role of group leader, which I imagine you have the capacity to do very well when you’re not triggered into your old patterns. The first time I can remember experiencing this mindset shift myself was as a high school wrestler. In my first year wrestling varsity, my team—ranked #2—had a chance of winning the end-of-the-season state tournament. I was terribly anxious. Two years earlier, I had wrestled in a New England middle school tournament. An anxious mess, I threw up several times before wrestling. Weak and shaky, I lost my first match badly. Going into the state tournament, I felt the

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Analyze This

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same nerves (and nausea) creeping in during weigh-ins. When learning my first match would be against #1 NFA [a school], my coach pulled me aside, looked me in the eyes and said, "Krieg, your job is to beat NFA. Whatever happens after this match, it doesn't matter. Your job is to BEAT NFA." My coach's instructions to beat NFA were organizing. My fears of losing shifted toward a more aggressive stance, and I was able to focus on the task at hand. With my anxiety in check, I did my job.

A more recent example of this mindset shift came when Jerry Gans and I co-led an Experience Group (EG) at an NSGP Conference. Again my anxiety showed up and limited my capabilities. The EG committee member who came in to observe noticed this. During the lunchtime consultation, she instructed me, "Joel, your job is to talk. It almost doesn't matter what you say—it'll be okay—the group needs to hear from you." She was right. With my job in mind, I found opportunities to bring in my voice, and did my job. The group benefited.

As a group leader, I've found it helpful when I can clarify for myself (or through supervision/consultation) what my "jobs" are in a group. Showerer, you have a couple jobs. With the doctor, you need to own your authority. An image comes to mind: the doctor is a baby and you're bottle feeding him—he's dependent on your ability to take care of him. He needs you to be his leader. He needs you to use your group training and personal strengths in order to grow. Perhaps the image (such as holding his bottle) might help you maintain your authority as group leader.

When receiving negative emotions/feedback, your job is to tolerate the discomfort. Be sturdy. The image that comes to mind: breathing through the discomfort of a challenging yoga pose. The group benefits from feeling

your sturdiness.

2. Have your own containers.

Leading groups involves a lot of holding—feelings, dynamics, boundaries, uncertainty, etc. It's a lot of work! It's helpful to have containers of your own to help you hold and process what gets stirred up in the work. Group or individual therapy, supervision, and/or peer supervision are places where you can metabolize the challenging moments in group, receive help getting yourself out of familiar thought patterns ("I need to find out what that doctor thinks") that don't serve you anymore, and celebrate the great work you are doing!

*"It's helpful to have
containers of your own to
help you hold and process
what gets stirred up in
the work."*

3. Get more training. Attend workshops, conferences, and training groups. NSGP, EGPS, AGPA, and The Center for Group Studies (CGS) all have wonderful offerings. The upsides to attending are two-fold: 1. you're likely to learn or be reminded of helpful content and 2. you give yourself the opportunity to make connections and be a part of a community, which is helpful in itself.

As group leaders, we have the opportunity to grow and expand alongside our group members. It's both a challenge and a gift to have weekly emotional workouts where, like your group members, you get to experiment with different ways of being. Managing and processing countertransference is important work that takes time. I hope these ideas are helpful to you.

Joel Krieg, LICSW, CGP

Member Spotlight

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It didn't say this person is behaving badly, shame on them. It said, these are people, flawed human beings. They love each other, they hurt each other. This is real life. I found it moving and convincing.

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

Adam: When you interviewed Joe Shay last year, I liked his answer to this question very much. He said it would be bigger and fuller. I agree with Joe. There's a lot of group therapy going on in the Boston area, and most of the people leading those groups don't even know about NSGP, let alone belong. It would be wonderful if NSGP could be this big, noisy, cacophonous community of people who care about group therapy. Somehow, even though I don't think anybody wants it this way, NSGP has become a little bit limited, seemingly just for people who think about group therapy as interpersonal, process-oriented groups. Those are great. I love them dearly, and I run them. But the world of group therapy is bigger than that. Serious efforts have been made to attract people doing other kinds of group into NSGP, but they haven't succeeded to the extent that I'd like.





Collaborating: the Gift of Groups Between Organizations



William Sharp, PsyD, CGP



Julie Anderson, PhD, CGP

It can be difficult to get two distinct organizational entities to come together on a project, but when it works, the synergy adds excitement. Recently, NSGP has embarked on bridge-building with the Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis (BGSP), with both short- and long-term goals in mind. BGSP is a degree-granting (Masters in Counseling, Doctorate in Psychoanalysis) psychoanalytic training institute in Washington Square/Brookline. As such, there has always been a group component to the curriculum (i.e. a group therapy class) and the option to use hours in one's group therapy

towards the overall therapy hours required to graduate. However, William Sharp has long felt that more could be done and that partnering with NSGP's rich training and experiential programs would enhance BGSP's offerings.

When Julie Anderson began co-leading an NSGP Observation Group at the Brookline Center for Mental Health, she was taken by the idea of inviting BGSP students to become Observers at the Brookline Center. The physical proximity (1/2 mile!) promotes this kind of collaboration, and as many groups are also on Zoom, the ease of attending as an observer is hard to deny, and soon may become a reality.

On April 8, 2023, the organizations co-hosted an event entitled, "The Power of Group: Prioritizing Connection in Fractured Times." Over 50 participants, consisting of NSGP members and BGSP students and faculty, observed a demonstration group led by NSGP's Oona Metz followed by a de-brief of what dynamics were observed. Many BGSP students enrolled as members of NSGP as a result of that event.

On the heels of that success, NSGP and BGSP hosted an all-day conference on October 14th entitled "Learning About Groups from the Inside Out." Participants chose to be in either a mother-daughter process group led by Geri Reinhardt and Kim McNamara (of NSGP) or a general process group led by William Sharp (BGSP/NSGP) and Pat Hugenberger (BGSP). This full-day experience with process groups continued to bolster BGSP students' interest in groups. NSGP also gained some new members and increased comfort level in this kind of collaborative program offering.

NSGP and BGSP are currently exploring ways to expand their partnership with the help of Jeff

Brand at the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health. The plan currently is to use the observation groups as part of advanced training in group therapy for students at BGSP. This will allow students to earn academic credit towards their BGSP degree, while also meeting part of the requirement to become a Certified Group Psychotherapist through NSGP and its parent organization, AGPA. NSGP is also energized by new members joining from BGSP, reminding us again that the most valuable resource we share is one another.

NSGP's Sasha Watkins wrote in the introductory chapter of *Women, Intersectionality, and Power In Group Psychotherapy Leadership (2022)* that groups can be constructive and welcoming when members work to avoid othering. "When unaddressed, the process of unwelcoming reinforces the exclusionary aspects of the symbolic group boundary... Welcoming can enhance hopeful gains and lessen painful losses. Welcoming does not mean approving or agreeing; it means making intentional room to explore (P16)." Hopefully both organizations can continue to explore and be curious about one another, building bridges and connections between the two memberships.

Reminder: *Interested in the Observation Groups yourself? One of the benefits of membership of NSGP is half off the cost of the observation groups! And this fall, you may also have the added benefits of meeting some other professionals working to better understand group therapy from BGSP. Say hello! Want to know more about BGSP? Check out their website at www.BGSP.edu.*

Women, Intersectionality, and Power In Group Psychotherapy Leadership (2022) is available through Rutledge and has wonderful chapters from many AGPA and NSGP members!





Welcome to One of Our **Newest Members!**



Name: Lieb Swartz-Brownstein, they/them

Joined NSGP: September 2023

Graduated from: I received my master's in clinical social work from Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College in New York City.

Place of Work: I have worked in community mental health, group practice, and Eating Disorder IOP and PHP treatment centers, running multiple groups a day. I now run my own private practice seeing clients both in MA and NY for individual and family work. www.lsbpsychotherapy.com

Place of Play: I do improv and sketch comedy with Improv Asylum in the North End. Usually you can catch me in a Tuesday night show. In the warmer months, you can find me hitting doubles and playing first base with team Mutiny through the Beantown softball league and jumping into any body of water I can find.

Special Interests: I predominantly work with LGBTQIA+ and gender/sexuality-questioning clients who are working towards healing their complicated relationship with food and their bodies. Many of the clients I support are at a range of stages in their eating disorder recovery and are wanting to engage in healing through an anti-racist, queer liberation, Harm Reduction, feminist, fat liberation, and attachment-focused framework. I also work with young adults who are in the process of navigating separation from the Orthodox Jewish Community as they create more space for their own queer and personal identities. I am a partner in this work as people change, heal, and move forward in their lives and I bring my whole self into the room with them.

Fun Fact: I have a 1.5-year-old Old English Sheepdog named Tofu (he/him) and he truly brings joy to one and all on the regular...you will often find us in our matching buns.

Why I Joined NSGP: The work we do is so hard. And I believe the isolation that is inherent in being a therapist is part of what makes the work hard. I was looking for a local clinical community to build alongside with. I have been in relational groups since I was a late teen and in many ways, I feel "group raised me." I love the connection, healing, and most importantly the experience of partnership that can be created for members. I love the learning I get to do through groups—both as a leader and as a lifelong learner. NSGP feels like one of the few clinical spaces that holds value in the ability to sit in both chairs. I feel deep gratitude to be part of a community that knows this to be true.





When the Math Changes

Oona Metz, LICSW, CGP, AGPA Fellow



Back row, L-R: Oona Metz, Amy Matias,
Christine Boie, Barbara Schmitz
Front row: Joyce Collier

"We know Amy will bring the yogurt (honey vanilla, from Sophia's)," I say to Barb. "You've got the coffee and tea, I'll bring fruit, Joyce is bringing the granola and Christine will bring some pastries." And every other month, this is how it goes. My trusty co-chair Barb and I spend a few minutes before our Practice Development meetings planning out the Food Agenda before we talk about the Meeting Agenda. The PD committee has been meeting every other month for brunch for 10 years, mostly in person. During those years, our kids grew up, first grandbabies were born, second grandbabies were born, new houses were bought, injuries and health scares happened, jobs changed—oh, and did I mention we put on four to five Practice Development events for NSGP every year? Our committee meetings used to start with a quick check-in and a

long business agenda, but we have gotten the business part down to a science and our friendships have deepened so our math has changed. We eat and talk—really talk—for the bulk of our meetings before we get down to our business agenda, and then spend 20 minutes planning our next event. We linger and chat some more as we clean up. "Barb, do you want the extra fruit for your grandkids? Amy, can I keep the yogurt?"

I feel so lucky to count these women among my close friends: women I call with good news and bad. And I am acutely aware that despite best intentions, in a busy life we would not have nurtured these friendships as much without our regular meetings. I am so grateful for NSGP, my professional home, and the many varied friendships I have made here.



Grants for Group Therapy

The NSGP Foundation: Who Are We and What Do We Do?

Caleb Englander, LICSW, NSGP-F Secretary

NSGP and the NSGP Foundation (NSGP-F) have been intertwined since the mid-1990's. Initially begun as a task force of former NSGP presidents to provide financial and general support for NSGP, the NSGP Foundation was officially formed as an independent philanthropic organization in 1999. The mission of the Foundation is to "provide financial support for training in group therapy and organizational leadership. Through fund-raising and philanthropic activities, the NSGP-F actively promotes the use of group modalities to improve client outcomes, advance personal and professional growth, and increase the effectiveness of teams and organizations in a wide range of settings."

Over the years, the NSGP-F has provided grants for a variety of group therapy-related initiatives for NSGP and outside NSGP. For example, many of the special presentations and Demonstration Groups at the NSGP annual conference have been funded by the Foundation. Outside of NSGP, the Foundation has funded an initiative to lead interpersonal groups for Boston Public School teachers as a way to help teachers understand group processes and thus be more attuned to them in their classrooms ([see this issue's Member Spotlight](#)). Another example: recently the Foundation funded a grant for supervision for group therapists in

under-resourced mental health clinics serving low-income populations. And finally, of course, if you have ever received an individual scholarship to attend an NSGP event or participate in group therapy training, it has likely come from one of the several scholarships that the Foundation oversees.

The NSGP-F is eager and enthusiastic to have the opportunity to fund group therapy training or organizational leadership. So, if you have an idea for an initiative, OR if you'd like to join our lively team of grant-maker, fund-raiser group therapists, please do not hesitate to contact us (<https://www.nsgpf.org/>)!





Progress Notes



William Sharp published a chapter in *Doctor Who Psychology* (2nd Ed., Travis Langley, editor) applying psychoanalysis to the Doctor Who universe and a paper in the journal *Modern Psychoanalysis*, evaluating a local program using the program's learning outcomes.



Howie Schnairsohn: I am taking, what is for me, a step out of the box by integrating a tri-monthly in-person extended therapy session (three hours with a break) in two of my groups that have been exclusively online since their launch almost four years ago. And on a more personal and social note, I decided to become intimidating and scary by finally joining a strengthening and fitness program at the new Planet Fitness in JP. Very hopeful but slightly nervous on both scores.



Jocelyn Litrownik: I'm thrilled to be expanding my practice and hiring interns and pre-licensed folks interested in joining a mission-driven small group practice. This spring I'll be finishing research and interviews with patients about their fertility stories, to accompany a new book on reproductive justice for trainees. I am launching an online writing community called Survivor Village as well as rolling out a three-part series, multi-modal space for those affected by the war and collective trauma in the Middle East. I am delighted to co-host a drop-in New Moon women's circle in Concord, MA. I continue to offer trauma groups online, both a men's only and a mixed gender group for adults.



Joe Shay chaired the PCFINE 20th Anniversary Conference entitled, *"An Affair to Remember: How the Psychodynamic Model Has[n't]*

Met the Moment." Joe continues on the PCFINE Board and also presented *Betrayal in Relationships: Infidelity and Couples Therapy* to the second year group and will present *Defensive Processes in Couples Therapy* to the first year group. At AGPA's annual conference, he will be finishing his fourth year as co-chair of the Institute Committee and also chairing an Open Session entitled, *"What Did I Miss and Why Did I Miss It?": Unresolved Attachment Pressures, Narcissistic Burdens, and Sociocultural Insensitivity in the Group Therapist*. In April, Joe will be the keynote speaker at the Carolinas Group Psychotherapy Society presenting *Group Therapy Goes to the Movies: Two Features for the Price of One!* Also in April, at the NSGP Conference, he will be moderating the opening plenary by Aziza Belcher Platt as well as presenting a workshop with Jeff Brand entitled, *Is the "Here and Now" Really Here and Now?*



Oona Metz has enjoyed seeing her writing in print at *Cognoscenti*, *CommonWealth Magazine*, and the *Los Angeles Review*. She has an essay in the March issue of *Psychotherapy Networker*. In addition, Oona launched The Beacon Group Fellowship, a training program to train mental health clinicians to lead divorce support groups. The first cohort began in January.

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Progress Notes

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Maddie Freeman: I would like to announce (with a sense of bittersweetness!) that this issue of *NSGPeople* will be my last as co-editor, at least for a while. I will deeply miss working with Nadia Khatchadourian as co-editor, and with Natasha Khoury as "Analyze This" coordinator. They are the reason this is hard to say goodbye to! My personal and professional lives are becoming too full—in wonderful ways—to do the newsletter any justice, starting in the fall. I just started full-time at UMass Lowell in the counseling center, which is an excellent fit already: in and out of coworkers' offices, getting to know the student center building's staff, and a remarkable student body. You will be in excellent hands for the next issue(s) of *NSGPeople*, and I'll see you at NSGP events!



Jeff Brand recently published an article entitled, "Working in the 'There & Now': Groups in Context," in *GROUP: The Journal of the Eastern*

Group Psychotherapy Society. He and Joe Shay will be co-presenting a workshop based on that work at the NSGP conference in April.



Marsha Vannicelli: I am excited to be launching a new group to augment the couples work I have been doing with parents of failure-to-launch offspring. The highly satisfying behavioral model that I have been using for the past 10 years helps parents identify meaningful leverage and supports them in implementing this leverage to promote more adult behaviors in their offspring.



Amy Matias: I am thrilled to be leading this year's Experience Group for NSGP, which has continued into the second semester for 12 more weeks. Thank you to all who have

been behind the scene making this group happen! I have also stepped in with Jeff Brand to lead one of the Observation Groups at the Brookline Center for Community Health. Many thanks to Annie Weiss and Tracy McNab for their support and thoughtful guidance as we have made this transition. It has been, as promised, "the richest learning experience" I've had so far as a group therapist. I am so very appreciative of the observers in this group and the stimulating discussions we have every week.



Suzanne Cohen presented a workshop at Cancer Support Communities in January called Mindful Movement to Music for Cancer Support. The workshop introduced attendees to safe and supportive movement based on The Nia Technique, a holistic practice that includes movement from dance and yoga, helping them discover ways to connect to good feelings and sensations, even alongside pain or discomfort. Suzanne was also invited by Sasha Watkins to be the guest speaker at Drawing on Strengths: A support group for Mass Rehabilitation Consumers with LD/ADHD on March 12. The presentation covered how music can be soothing to help with self-regulation, as well as stimulating to help with motivation, and how the structure of music can affect attention, executive function, and working memory.

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Please join us for our 2024 annual
in-person conference,

Groups: Here and Now

at Lesley University
on April 27th!

We are excited to be welcoming
Aziza Belcher Platt, Ph.D.,
as our Plenary Speaker and
Carlos Canales, PsyD., CGP, FAGPA,
as our Demonstration Group Leader.

A welcome breakfast, various workshop
options, and an evening social event will
also be a part of this enriching experience
filled with learning opportunities,
mentorship, and community.

Head to our website
at nsgp.wildapricot.org to register.
We can't wait to see you there!

Your NSGP Conference Committee,
Jenn DeSouza, Kim McNamara,
Amanda Neas, & Natasha Khoury

Progress Notes

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Joel Krieg is mourning the loss of his favorite across-the-hall colleague, Maddie Freeman. He is simultaneously thrilled for her in her next professional chapter! In January, Joel had fun teaching Group Development for AGPA's online Principles of Group Psychotherapy course. He's been enjoying getting to know Sasha Watkins more and more through their walk 'n' talks and coffees—he looks forward to their future work together, including setting up the Mentorship/Peer Support Program. Finally, Joel has great appreciation for Sara Emerson allowing the NSGP Board to use her office so that we can meet in-person once again!



NSGP
Northeastern Society for Group Psychotherapy

Share the Connection!

Invite a colleague,
co-worker, or other
clinician to join **NSGP!**

Learn more at
our [website](https://nsgp.wildapricot.org).



NSGPeople Together



Joel Krieg and Kurt White smile while watching an incredible professional step team (StepAfrika) at the closing luncheon at AGPA Connect.



Alan Witkower, Barbara Keezell, Amy Matias, and Josh Zollman attend one of Joe Shay's famous Poker Nights.



William Sharp and Elizabeth Juliver at the October 2023 workshop "Learning from the Inside Out."



AGPA Connect 2024 in Washington, DC was a big success! A big crowd came out to the annual NSGP Dinner on the Thursday night of the conference.



Kurt White and Maddie Freeman took a selfie before they co-lead a workshop entitled "The Power of Presence in Group Therapy: Harnessing Authenticity and Vulnerability through the Therapist's Use of Self."



The NSGPeople team (Maddie Freeman, Nadia Khatchadourian, and Natasha Khoury) share a laugh, on virtual planning meetings: one in 2020, for the first issue of the new NSGPeople, and one in 2024, for Maddie's final issue.



NSGPeople Masthead

Co-Chairs Madeline Freeman, LICSW
Nadia Khatchadourian, LICSW
Members Natasha Khoury, LMHC
Headshots Various
NSGPeople Newsletter
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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.

NSGP Executive Board

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Oona Metz, LICSW, CGP, AGPA-F
Training Program Annie Weiss, LICSW, CGP, AGPA-F
Justin Hecht, PhD, CJA, AGPA-F, MBA

Letter from the President

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towards strengthening what NSGP has and does best: experiential learning and mentorship. Oh! And we met for the first time in-person since 2020—Thank you, Joel Krieg and Sara Emerson!

As you have seen by now, our Principles in Group Therapy course has returned and our Annual Conference will soon follow suit, both in person! Much appreciation goes out to the new Training and Conference Committees for pulling off these feats! We hope to continue to build the momentum that we lost during Covid and come back strong, including the return of our Breakfast Club!

These past few years have been difficult for NSGP, but I am so thrilled about where we are and where we are headed. Our board of directors are enthusiastic and energized to move NSGP forward. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to lead this wonderful organization and help it through some difficult times.

Warmly,

Guy R. Croteau LICSW, CGP
NSGP President



Letter from the Editors

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we reimagined the newsletter as an online vehicle, we've worked and laughed together, from planning articles to placing commas. We've become an efficient team in the process, but more meaningfully, friends. As this is Maddie's last issue ([see her Progress Note](#)), I anticipate missing her dearly, while at the same time, I'm looking forward to collaborating with our new co-editor, Natasha Khoury, who has ably helmed "Analyze This" alongside us. Collaboration and friendship are at the heart of what makes NSGP feel vital and necessary, and we're clearly not the first people to forge meaningful bonds in the service of NSGP ([see Oona Metz's article](#)). I know you'll join me in thanking Maddie for her contribution and in welcoming Natasha to her new role!

