**MentEd**

Mentalisierungsbasierte Pädagogik

Module 3:

Mentalization-promoting work

in and with groups

Structure

1. Basics of groups

2. Groups in pedagogy

3. Group, mentalisation and social learning
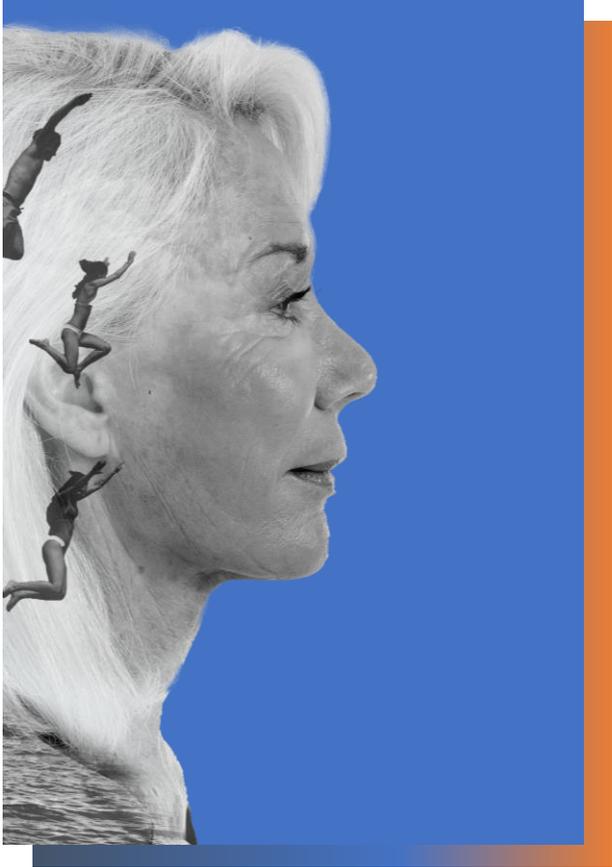
Learning objectives per submodule

I Basics about groups

The participants know the most important basics of group theory. They know what a group is and which dynamics it can have, or which factors are connected to group dynamics.

II Groups in pedagogy

The participants know the special importance of groups in pedagogy.

II Group, mentalising and social learning

The participants first learn about the general context. This is refined in an attempt to adapt the tripartite communication system to pedagogy according to Fonagy et al. (2017). Finally, the participants learn to transfer important principles of mentalizing work with groups to pedagogical groups.

Example

Mrs Kleinhans is 62 years old. She has worked as an educator in the municipal kindergarten for over 42 years, the last 17 years in the *Blue Group*. She still likes children ("Each one for himself.") after all these years and has not lost her heart for "special" children. For the past three years she has been in the team with the young colleague Mrs. Lobmüller (24 years), which has developed into an ideal combination. While Ms Lobmüller tends to work with the Blue Group as a whole (singing games, sports and romping games, competitions, chair circles, excursions, free play and role play, etc.), Ms Kleinhans now much prefers to work individually, quietly and sitting with children (e.g. reading aloud, preschool, handicrafts, conversations, board games). Both educators are equally popular with the children because of their differences.

Now, however, Ms Lobmüller has been on parental leave for at least 2 years and since the job market for educators is "empty", there will probably be no replacement for the Blue Group. This group is once again a challenge: 4 of the 22 children only speak insufficient German, 3 children quickly show aggressive behaviour, 2 girls are very shy and hang "on the coat-tails" of Mrs. Kleinhans and the kindergarten suspects that one child has a mental handicap and the other a risk to the child's well-being. Approximately one third of the parents are, roughly speaking, disinterested or overly concerned. Since Mrs. Lobmüller has been on parental leave, Mrs. Kleinhans notices what a challenge the group activities have become for her every working day. This also affects her already high blood pressure. She also increasingly notices that she tries to avoid open group situations or to control them in an authoritarian way. The job, which she has always loved because of its playful openness in contact with the children, causes her increasing stress. She longs for early retirement and wants to " just tinker with the granddaughter."

There is no individual without a group

Foulkes sees intrapsychic structure as the result of a process of differentiation that develops through the internalisation of various, ever-expanding group relationships.

Therefore, social interaction not only precedes the organisation of intrapsychic life, but actually organises and structures it.

cf. Knaus, 2006

There is no individual without a group

This unique, unconscious group interaction in the mental life of each individual

can be understood as an inner, ongoing process of communication in which

- centripetal forces secure internal cohesion through ties to significant others, and

- centrifugal forces enable the differentiation and individuation of significant others.

cf. Knaus, 2006

There is no individual without a group

These two forces determine the development of each individual within his or her group to which he or she feels (not) belonging.

It is then the lifelong task of each individual to find a constantly new balance between these two forces.

cf. Knaus, 2006

I Basics "Groups"

1. **Task (group discussion), time: approx. 7-10 minutes:**

What is a group, what belongs to a group, what constitutes it?

What doesn't?

cf. König & Schattenhofer, 2012

I Definition: Group as a form of work

Group represents a social, dynamic and limiting communication and interaction system. It has a high potential as a direct and indirect learning and experiential space, however, it cannot be controlled linearly andit processes and communicates influences individually and systemically, consciously and unconsciously autonomously. This makes working with groups, e.g. in pedagogy, as appealing as it is complex. (Gingelmaier, 2020, König & Schattenhofer, 2012)

I Basics "Groups"

1. This training is strongly group-based, especially because institutionalised pedagogical work is mostly group-based (e.g. peer, team and mixed groups in schools, day-care centres, youth welfare).

2. This concerns children and young people as well as the level of the team system and that of the organisation.

3. Groups play a central role in the context of social learning and mentalizing.

I Basics "Groups"

1. Groups by sizes:
   - Small group (5 - approx. 12 members)
   - Medium group (approx. 12-24 members)
   - Large group (>25 members)

2. Distinction between managed and non-managed and structured and non-structured groups (incl. mixed forms)

cf. König & Schattenhofer, 2012

I Factors influencing "groups"

The following factors, among others, have an influence on group formations and dynamics:

- the leader and the form of leadership,

- the individual members and subgroups in the group,

- the group size,

- the method, the setting (e.g. degree of structuring) and the specific group culture

- The implicit and explicit group goals, (e.g. formal/informal education, leisure, coping, self-awareness, curative treatment).

- the specific institution hosting the group (school, day care centre, youth welfare, clinic)

I Characteristics of group culture

- **Group cohesion/we-feeling**: Describes how strongly/weakly a group feels it is belonging together. What connects, what separates?

- **Group boundaries**: How open or permeable, how rigid and excluding is a group?

- **Group identity**: Does the group identify itself with a mature achievement of its own or does it fend off its own feelings of inferiority as a pseudo-identity through the group-related devaluation of other groups (prejudice formation)?

cf. König & Schattenhofer, 2012

I What does group dynamics deal with?

"Group dynamics studies the way **people behave in groups** and seeks to understand the circumstances that **make a group more productive**. Group dynamics examines **different types of leader behaviour and patterns of influence**, group **decision-making processes,** group norms - i.e. ideas about what constitutes appropriate **behaviour** and procedures, **patterns of communication** within the group, and facts such as **openness and cohesion in the group.**" (Standford 1995, 13)

I Group phases

Work phase

Test phase

Performing

imaginative

flexible

Open
Solidarity and
helpfulness
efficient

Forming

polite

impersonal

Tensed

careful

Norming

New manners and
behaviour emerge,

Constructive
criticism

Storming

Subliminal
conflicts

Confrontations

Cliquing

laborious

Organisation
phase

Melee phase

Tuckman, 1965
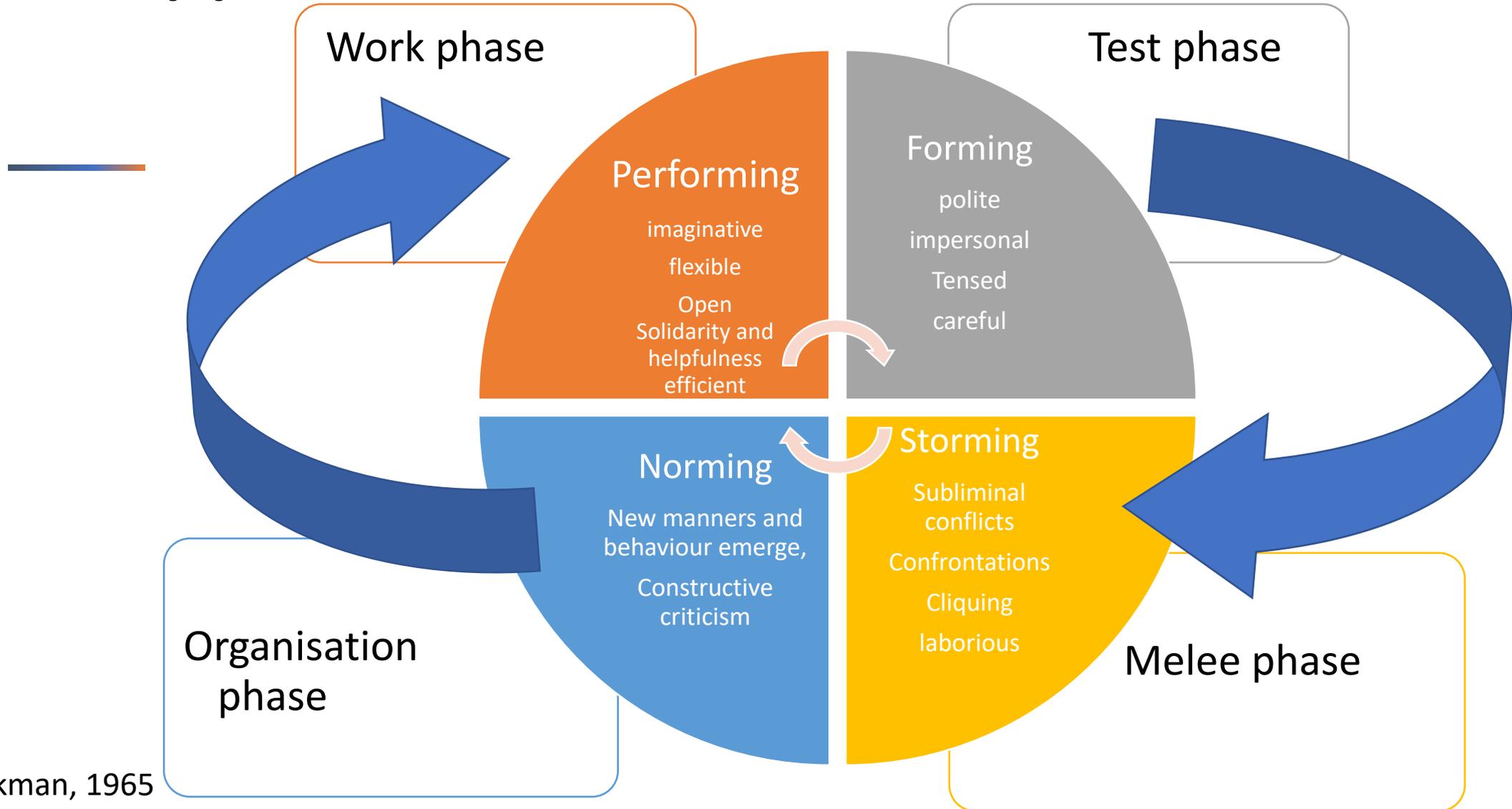
I Group phases and productive group dynamics

Group stage	Typical group dynamics	Possible unconscious affects
Foundation phase: initial and orientation phase (Forming)	Get to know, assess, classify	Fear, curiosity
Dispute phase: Position and role clarification phase (Storming)	Showing oneself, expressing an opinion, arguing	Envy, prove yourself, show yourself
Contract phase: familiarity and consolidation phase (Norming)	Settling, coming to terms, agreement	To like, to desire
Work phase: Differentiation phase (Performing)	Getting involved, getting committed cooperation	Working alliance as abstinence
Orientation phase: phase of separation, farewell and/or new beginning (Re-Forming)	Taking stock, reflecting, exchanging experiences	Denial of the end, curiosity about the new, Anxiety and grief (depression)

cf. König & Schattenhofer, 2012, p.62-63

I Group phases and non-productive group dynamics

Phase	Too little, for example	Too much, for example
Foundation phase (Forming)	No getting involved, no getting to know each other, mistrust, fear	Too much closeness, no working atmosphere or too quickly "intimate", "familiarization".
Dispute phase (Storming)	Aggression inhibition, Too little debate	Quarrelling for the sake of quarrelling, hurtful quarrelling, Hardly any level of substance
Contract phase (Norming)	Poor fit, poor organisation	Over-regulation
Work phase (Performing)	No or only superficial results	"Pseudo results": Everything is worked through in a striving manner, little independence, dynamism, creativity,

cf. König & Schattenhofer, 2012

I Four group levels:

1. **The issue level**: task and goal achievement of the group.

2. The **socio-dynamic level**: Visible network of relationships in the group work.

3. **The psychodynamic level**: Life-historical/developmental level of the group members that enters unconsciously into the group events.

4. **The core conflict**: specific communicative gesture, which appears again and again and constitutes the specific character of a group.

cf. König & Schattenhofer, 2012

I Vertical section: Inner and outer environment

- Inner environment (group dynamics): Group members with their behaviours, feelings, perceptions, norms, wishes, expectations, fantasies, etc.

- External environment (framing): conditions under which a group takes place (place, time, financial, political, legal, hierarchical, organisational, conceptual)

cf. König & Schattenhofer, 2012

I Horizontal section: The visible and the hidden

As an iceberg model (6/7 lie under the water surface): only a part of the topics and conditions are directly available for communication (communicable vs. non-communicable; conscious vs. unconscious, manifest vs. latent), but they are communicated all the more indirectly and through all "channels".

Group communication, because it is ambiguous and multiform, must be understood!

cf. König & Schattenhofer, 2012

I Psychoanalytic perspective on groups: Working group versus basic assumptions (Bion)

Working group

Structure

Task orientation

Rational discourse

Cooperative action

Reality reference

Basic assumption group

- Dependence
- Fight and flight
- Pairing

Inhibition of the working group

Kirsch after Bion 1990; Weimer, 1998

II Groups in educational practice

Depending on the subject and the teaching load, a teacher often spends more than half of his or her total working time with numerous children, young people or adults who are more or less involuntarily confronted with him or her and for whom he or she bears pedagogical and disciplinary responsibility. The high density of interaction associated with this means, depending on how it is defined and recorded, reacting to hundreds to thousands of individual decisions per hour, intervening or not doing so. Ultimately, this is only possible on the basis of sufficient self-confidence and adequate competence to act. Uncertainties and meticulous attempts to control individual aspects of communication lead to disruptions in the flow of teaching with potentially serious consequences.

(Hillert et al. 2013, p.806)

II Groups in educational practice

- Group pedagogy is a concept of working in and with groups with pedagogical (upbringing and education) intent.

- In our culture, pedagogy usually takes place in groups and thus peer contacts are often group contacts for children and young people.

- The group is ascribed an independent pedagogical significance.

(cf. Schrapper, 2015)

II Group and content transfer

Statement:

Social-emotional learning and cognitive learning ideally go hand in hand in educational settings through guided (e.g. lessons, team meeting, chair circle) and open group experiences (free play, break, changing situation).

Exercise: Share your experiences and theoretical knowledge about this statement with your immediate neighbours for 5 minutes.

II Groups in educational practice

Common and typical features of groups in pedagogy

- There is usually a relatively high degree of structuring (external environment).

- Mostly leadership, setting and connection to an organisation are clearly defined.

- Educational groups are often (relatively) age homogeneous.

- Rules are learned, negotiated and experienced through group experiences.

- The groups usually have a clear educational goal.

25

(cf. Schrapper, 2015)

I Information processes in (educational) groups

- How are information processes organised?

- How transparent is the communication and information?

- One-way, straight, two-way or circular flow of information

- Watch out for dual functions

- Build in feedback processes

Concrete intervention: e.g. use active listening:

- Eye contact, mimic sympathy, focus on the speaker, open questions, summary at the end of the conversation, reassurance;

NEW is the inclusion of

- ostensive cues and
- mentalising

Turner n. Stanford, 1995

26

II Decision-making processes in educational groups

- Authoritarian or democratically organised?

- Obeying and adapting instead of deciding or taking a stand

- Prefer simple and catchy unitary theories: black and white painting.

- „Groupthink" - dynamics of wrong decisions in groups (Janis 1972)

- Systematic analysis as a tool

- Facilitation for a decision-making process (also for conflicts)

Turner n. Stanford, 1995

II Groups in educational practice

Basis for discussion: *Pedagogical groups are designed as a learning field and rehearsal space, they are a pedagogically stressed protected space in which they and their members are confronted with reality in a way defined by pedagogical professionals.* (cf. Schrapper, 2015)

What would you say: are the pedagogical groups that you lead more like a protected space or based on the reality principle or a mixture? Give reasons.

28

(cf. Schrapper, 2015)

III Group, Mentalizing and Social Learning

From empirical research (Yalom, 1995), the following overarching effective factors of group psychotherapy could be obtained.

Impact factors
Instilling hope
secure emotional competence
Recognition of relational influence
social learning

In the following, these are also assumed to be important **effective factors of** a mentalizing "group pedagogy".

III Group, Mentalizing and Social Learning

Social competence (considering the individual in the group) :

Assertiveness

Conflict skills

Willingness to cooperate

Adaptability
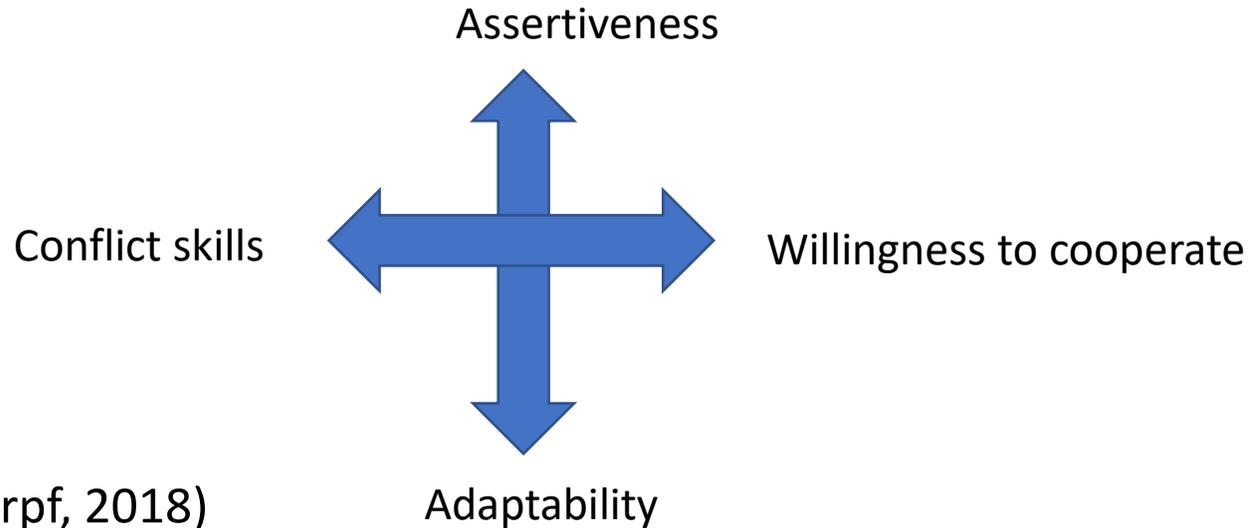
(Neyer & Asendorpf, 2018)

Group ability (thinking along with the group):

- Mediation between own needs and group dynamics
- Mediation between group dynamics and norms
  (e.g. group-specific, ethical, cultural, legal, etc.)

Needs Mentalization

III Group, Mentalizing and Social Learning

Inclusion using the example of group ability (Gingelmaier, Hoanzl & Bleher, 2015)

Children's ability to work in groups is a key factor in the success or failure of school.
(e.g. in inclusion).

Central, for example, is the question: How many other people can an (emotionally burdened) child "tolerate"? (Hoanzl, 2015)

Other people only become "bearable" or "assessable" when I can "read" their feelings, intentions and thoughts. (cf. Schulz-Venrath 2013, 14)

III Group, mentalizing and social learning

Fonagy opens up mentalising to the wider social space and to groups.

He says that *teachers, neighbours and older siblings [...] as well as parents, make an important contribution to optimising the child's mentalizing ability - [...] provided they succeed in attuning themselves to the child's understanding of its own and others' mental states* (Fonagy, 2013, p. 127).

III Group, mentalizing and social learning

*Groups are like a **room of mirrors** that open up the possibility of multi-personal resonance. **In this sense,** psychotherapy groups **offer an ideal place for mentalizing**.* (Schultz-Venrath & Felsberger, 2016, p. 11)

Does this statement **also** apply **to educational groups?**

In our opinion: yes, because here too there is a high degree of multi-personal and systemic resonance.

III Group, mentalizing and social learning

Communication system 1: Building trust,

Communication system 2 : practicingmentalising,

Communication system 3: Enabling social learning,

cf. Fonagy, 2017

III Group, mentalizing and social learning

Communication system 1: **Building trust**, reducing mistrust in educational organisations.

Form: Dyad - small group: structured.

Professional competence of the educator: Understanding the inner and outer (child/environment/group).

cf. Fonagy, 2017

III Group, mentalizing and social learning

Communication system 2 : The re-emergence of a resilient **mentalization wants to** be **tested**

Form: Small group: structured-semi-structured

Professional competence of the educator: Stimulates reflection/mentalization in the child/environment.

cf. Fonagy, 2017

III Group, mentalizing and social learning

Communication system 3: The re-emergence of **social learning**

Form: Small group-medium group: semi-structured-open

Professional competence of the pedagogical specialist: Enables social learning now also outside the pedagogical situation.

cf. Fonagy, 2017

III Group, mentalizing and social learning

Communication system 1: Building trust,

⬇

Communication system 2 : Try out mentalising,

⬇

Communication system 3: Enabling social learning,

Stress

cf. Fonagy, 2017

III Group, mentalizing and social learning cf. Fonagy, 2017

Group discussion:

- What mentalizing possibilities does one have with "disruptors and disturbed" pupils (Freyberg & Wolff, 2009) in (disturbed) groups in front of this communication system ?

- What happens to mistrust and social learning under disruption?

- What is concretely needed in groups so that EP can be restored?

- What does this mean for inclusive processes?

III Mentalization support work
in groups (Fonagy, Campbell, Bateman 2017*)

Group as training ground for interpersonal mentalizing

Facilitate communication for all participants

- Group climate (containing, empathic and collaborative)
- Structuring (directive, regulating arousal)
- Explaining content to promote epistemic confidence (e.g. explaining the patient's difficulties so that he/she feels understood).

(Kirsch n. Fonagy, Campbell, Bateman 2017)

III Mentalizing-pedagogical attitude in groups

- ✓ Maintaining leadership without becoming authoritarian
- ✓ Maintain mentalizing
- ✓ Maintain focus
- ✓ Stop non-mentalizing dialogues (stop-rewind-explore)
- ✓ Regulating arousal (especially anxiety)
- ✓ Maintaining a non-knowledgeable attitude
- ✓ Maintain curiosity and interest in relationships and motives
- ✓ Staying as much as possible in the here and now
- ✓ Provide own mentalization as a role model

Cherry n. Fonagy, Campbell, Bateman 2017

III Mentalization-based group work

1. *maintain* **arousal regulation in the here and now,** perspective taking in *groups* and *reflection* (instead of acting).

2. holding "mind in mind", *keeping the* individual and the group as a whole "in mind" (e.g. bonding perspective, epistemic vigilance).

3. open intermediary spaces/play spaces group provides a "transitional or play space" to promote the patient's way of affect regulation

Goal: Mentalized affectivity complex understanding of one's own experience of affect (Fonagy et al 2004, p. 437). One's own affects become the object of reflection as one perceives them within oneself.

Cherry n. Fonagy, Campbell, Bateman 2017

III Procedure of a group session

- **Summary of** the last session (issues, conflicts, different perspectives, what is still open?)

- **Go-around** collection of topics (current problems)

  - not too detailed and still without comment among themselves
  - Summary allows control by leader

- **Synthesis of** problems, commonalities, focus on affects, involvement of the group

- **Conclusion of** the session/ **wrap-up**

Cherry n. Fonagy, Campbell, Bateman 2017

III Group, Mentalizing and Social Learning

Task: Group exercise, time: 30 minutes

1) A volunteer (P.) is chosen from the group. They have to write four individual personality traits about themselves on a card. Three of the characteristics are true, one is not. The group now discusses, without being able to ask P., which of the characteristics could be true and which not and agrees on a result. The group briefly explains to P. how they assess the individual characteristics. P. indicates which one is not true and can say something about the reasons.

2) Why is this (not) a group mentalization exercise?

Revision of the learning content (all content can be found on the slides)

What is a group?

What are essential components of group dynamics?

What distinguishes groups in pedagogical practice?

Why is mentalizing in group situations as complex as it is highly relevant?

How does social learning work in (pedagogical) groups?

What are the basics of mentalization-based group work?
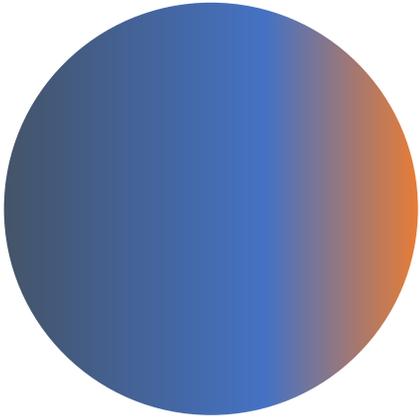
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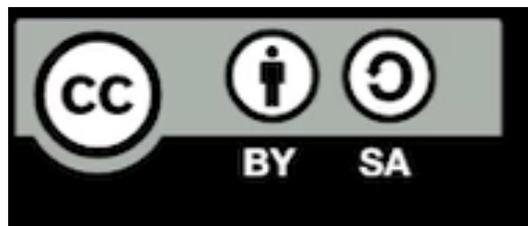
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