

TABLE 5.3. Group Rules and Their Rationales

Confidentiality. Group discussions are confidential: *What is said in group, stays in group!*

Rationale: Confidentiality is the sine qua non group rule; without it, members are unlikely to share or even come to group.

Do not socialize outside of groups. Although some interactions will occur outside of the group (e.g., waiting room conversations, riding home on public transportation), it is best to avoid having clients socialize with one another while they are in the group.

Rationale: Socializing outside of the group can undermine clients' treatment by blurring boundary issues. Even if clients go out for coffee after a group, they form a relationship that others cannot share, and the stronger the relationship, the more likely it is to interfere with group interactions.

Attend groups on time. Members are expected to make groups a priority and attend all sessions, arrive on time, and remain for the entire session unless there is an emergency. Members who are unable to attend a session are expected to call beforehand.

Rationale: Attendance is important, as each meeting builds on the previous session and missed groups cannot be made up.

Do not use alcohol or illicit drugs before group.

Rationale: Coming to the group under the influence of alcohol or drugs can be disruptive to group interactions and tends to put the focus on the intoxicated member rather than the group as a whole.

Do not talk about group members who are not present.

Rationale: Members who are not in the group any longer or unable to attend a session cannot speak for themselves. Discussions about absent members can undermine trust in the group.

Complete homework assignments and bring them to group.

Rationale: Because the completed assignments are discussed in the group, it is disruptive if some members have not completed their assignments. To enhance compliance, therapists need to give members an explanation about the rationale for and the importance of completing assignments (see Chapters 5 and 6).

All members need to participate in all group sessions.

Rationale: It is important for members to actively participate in the group (i.e., share their problems and feelings with others). Participation is very important, as each member is viewed as an agent of change, helping other members, being supportive, and providing feedback to others.

Exhibit appropriate behaviors in groups. (1) Take turns speaking and do not talk over one another; (2) respect the rights of others to express their opinions; (3) cell phones must be turned off during the group; (4) profanity, screaming, and yelling are not appropriate; strong emotions need to be communicated in a manner that is not disruptive and allows group members to help one another.

Rationale: Members should be respectful of one another and of the leaders. Individual outbursts or disruptions take the focus off of the group process.
