

Destructive and Reparative Processes within War Groups

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Aims. To discover whether group therapy is useful in helping war victims overcome psychological and emotional problems, in assisting them with their social adaptation and in preventing more serious psychic disturbances.

Method. Work in small and medium groups of war victims was observed clinically, processes in the groups evaluated and followed up. The groups included displaced persons and refugees, caregivers, the handicapped, and others.

Results. The groups showed both destructive processes and reparatory capacities. During group work, aggression and projective behavior were reduced and acceptance of reality improved.

Therapeutic effects were primarily a consequence of the groups' empathic and containing capacities.

The "here-and-now" situation was very difficult to realize because the patients tended to avoid it. In contrast to usual analytic groups, war groups showed no classical development of group processes.

Conclusions. Group psychotherapeutic approach is suitable for most war victims. Small and medium groups are very vulnerable and the therapist has to be ready for extensive modifications of the work.