

**Differences Between 12-Step Self-Help Groups
and Interpersonal Process Groups**

	Self-Help Group	Interpersonal Process Group
Size	Unlimited (often large)	Small (8–15 members)
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer leader or individual in recovery • Leadership is earned over time • Implicit hierarchical leadership structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained professional • Appointed leader • Formal hierarchical leadership structure
Participation	Voluntary	Voluntary and involuntary
Group Government	Self-governing	Leader governed
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental factors, no examination of group interaction • Emphasis on similarities among members • Here-and-now focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of intragroup behavior and extragroup factors • Emphasis on differences and similarities among members • Here-and-now focus plus historical focus
Screening Interview	None	Always
Group Processes	Universality, empathy, affective sharing, self-disclosure (public statement of problem), mutual affirmation, morale building, catharsis, immediate positive feedback, high degree of persuasiveness	Cohesion, mutual identification, education, catharsis, use of group pressure to encourage abstinence and retention of group membership, outside socialization (depending on the group contract or agreement)
Group Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive goal setting, behaviorally oriented • Focus on the group as a whole and the similarities among members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambitious goals: immediate problem plus individual personality issues • Individual as well as group focus
Leader Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educator/role model, catalyst for learning • Less member-to-leader distance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for directing therapeutic group experience • More member-to-leader distance
Use of Psycho-dynamic Techniques	No	Yes
Confidentiality	Anonymity preserved	Anonymity strongly emphasized and includes <i>everything</i> that occurs in the group, not just the identity of group members

	Self-Help Group	Interpersonal Process Group
Sponsorship Program	Yes (usually same sex)	None
Determination of Time in Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members may leave group at their own choosing • Members may avoid self-disclosure or discussion of any subject 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predetermined minimal term of group membership • Avoidance of discussion seen as possible "resistance"
Involvement in Other Therapies	Yes	Yes—eclectic models No—psychodynamic models
Time Factors	Unlimited group participation possible over years	Often time-limited group experiences
Frequency of Meetings	Active encouragement of daily participation	Meets less frequently (often once or twice weekly)

Source: Adapted from Spitz 2001. Used with permission.