

# PLENARY SPEAKER



## *The Importance of Cohesion in Group*

### **RICHARD BECK, LCSW, BCD, CGP, FAGPA**

Richard is the President of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes; Lecturer at the Columbia University School of Social Work, where he teaches Treatment of Childhood Sexual Abuse and Comparative Group Approaches; and is also a Lecturer of Social Work in Psychiatry (Voluntary) at Weill Cornell Medicine and a Professional Associate (Psychiatry) – Social Work at the New

York Presbyterian Hospital.

Richard was recently awarded the 2019 Social Responsibility Award by the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health. He was the recipient of the 2007 Alonso Award in Group Therapy for the co-authored article "In the Belly of the Beast: Traumatic Countertransference".

Richard Beck is an honorary member of the Italian Society of Psychosomatic Medicine for his studies in group, mental health, social and cultural enquire.

After the terror attack on 9/11, Richard conducted over 1000 hours of groups with survivors, survivor families, witnesses, rescue workers and mental health professionals.

Richard chaired the IAGP Task Force for Disaster/Trauma Management for ten years, coordinating responses internationally after both natural disasters and acts of terror.

Richard lectures, teaches and leads demonstration groups nationally and internationally that deal with trauma, terror and the importance of group intervention following such events as well as the importance of therapist self care.

### **"To be a human among humans."**

That is one of the main goals for everyone to experience and feel in any group. This will be the focus of my talk at this ASGPP conference.

When everyone in a group has the experience of feeling connected, emotionally and intellectually; when in that moment the group itself feels safe and trusting/trusted; that experience is a gift that leaders owe the members of their groups. It's something that I always keep in the 'side of my mind' when leading groups. The term that resonates most with me for this experience is what is known as "Group Cohesion."

It is a felt sense among and between group members themselves as well as between the group and its leader, conductor or facilitator.

There are many components to what makes for a successful group experience, depending on the type of group and the theoretical orientation of the leader and the setting of the group. As psychodramatists, you might have a unique way of thinking about or naming cohesion. This talk will address the meaning of cohesion in groups, and will include types of interventions that foster group cohesion.

Examples will be given from international groups that this presenter has led that have forever become part of his soul as well as examples of his clinical experiences leading groups after the terror attack of September 11th, 2001.

An encounter at the recent IAGP Psychodrama Conference in Iseo, Italy, with an Israeli man and the President of IAGP regarding inclusion/exclusion of people will be also be included and discussed with respect to the power of group cohesion.

