



Group Radical Openness (GRO)



What is Group Radical Openness (GRO)?

Group Radical Openness (GRO) is a group therapy programme run by the Department of Psychology at St Patrick's Mental Health Services (SPMHS). For very valid reasons, some people develop a style of coping that includes keeping others at a distance, having a strong desire for order and control and suppressing the experience and expression of emotions. This way of coping is called an 'overcontrolled' style of coping. It often develops in early life in an effort to feel safe. However, it can become costly and lead to difficulties such as a deep sense of loneliness.

GRO aims to help individuals develop safety and flexibility in three key areas:

- Relationships: Improving relationships by developing connections with self and others

- Rigidity: Learning to soften rules and ease harsh and unrelenting standards for self and others

- Emotions: Learning to experience and express emotions in a way that feels safe.

What is the structure of the GRO programme at SPMHS

GRO is a 27-session programme that takes place over a five-month period. It runs twice a week for 12 weeks and then once a week for the final three weeks. There is a break after session 15 where each group member attends an individual reflection session. Participants are also invited to a final individual session when the group is over to read through their therapeutic ending letter, which summaries their journey through GRO.

GRO is a closed group, meaning that all participants begin and end the programme at the same time. This helps to build connection and belongingness. Together the group work on the three core themes of overcontrol; distance in relationships, rigidity, and inhibited emotion. The therapeutic process facilitates developing understanding, awareness and insight into each individual's struggles with overcontrol.



Safety is core to the treatment, and through a series of experiential exercises, the group work out ways to develop more intimate and connected relationships, develop more flexibility in their lives and experience and express their emotions. The group learns about how their overcontrol served to protect them in their lives and while this has come at a cost, they take time to honour their lived experiences while exploring what a more fulfilling life would look like.

Who is the programme for?

GRO is for individuals who experience mental health difficulties associated with costly and harmful overcontrol. It is a transdiagnostic group, meaning that those who attend may have different diagnoses, but will all share common overcontrolled ways of coping. GRO is for people who struggle with forming and maintaining close connections with others, for those who have difficulties with rigidity, and for those who find it hard to experience and express their emotions.

Who runs the group?

Each group is facilitated by two psychologists and an assistant psychologist.

How are referrals made?

All participants who attend GRO must be under the care of a multidisciplinary team at SPMHS. If you are interested in attending GRO, you can speak to your team psychologist who will help you determine if this group would be a good fit for your needs.

All referrals to GRO must come through the team psychologist. Once you have been referred, you will be placed on a waiting list based on the date of your referral. You will then be invited to a more detailed assessment for the group by a member of the GRO team. This may be a number of months after you have met with your team psychologist, depending on when a new cycle is starting and the length of the waiting list.

More information

Group Radical Openness:

A Feasibility Study. *Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*.
Egan, R., Long, E., McElvaney, J., & Booth, R. (2021).

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/capr.12480>

St Patrick's Mental Health Services

James' Street, Dublin 8, Ireland
t: +353 1 249 3200 f: +353 1 679 8865
www.stpatricks.ie