**Therapeutic principles of group therapy**

**(taken from** *wikipedia.org***)**

Yalom's therapeutic factors (originally termed *curative factors* but re-named *therapeutic* factors in the 5th edition of 'The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy' are derived from extensive self-report research with users of group therapy.

**Universality**

The recognition of shared experiences and feelings among group members and that these may be widespread or universal human concerns, serves to remove a group member's sense of isolation, validate their experiences, and raise self-esteem

**Altruism**

The group is a place where members can help each other, and the experience of being able to give something to another person can lift the member's self esteem and help develop more adaptive coping styles and interpersonal skills.

**Instillation of hope**

In a mixed group that has members at various stages of development or recovery, a member can be inspired and encouraged by another member who has overcome the problems with which they are still struggling.

**Imparting information**

While this is not strictly speaking a psychotherapeutic process, members often report that it has been very helpful to learn factual information from other members in the group. For example, about their treatment or about access to services.

**Corrective recapitulation of the primary family experience**

Members often unconsciously identify the group therapist and other group members with their own parents and siblings in a process that is a form of transference specific to group psychotherapy. The therapist's interpretations can help group members gain understanding of the impact of childhood experiences on their personality, and they may learn to avoid unconsciously repeating unhelpful past interactive patterns in present-day relationships.

**Development of socializing techniques**

The group setting provides a safe and supportive environment for members to take risks by extending their repertoire of interpersonal behaviour and improving their social skills

**Imitative behaviour**

One way in which group members can develop social skills is through a modeling process, observing and imitating the therapist and other group members. For example, sharing personal feelings, showing concern, and supporting others.

**Cohesiveness**

It has been suggested that this is the primary therapeutic factor from which all others flow. Humans are herd animals with an instinctive need to belong to groups, and personal development can only take place in an interpersonal context. A cohesive group is one in which all members feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, and validation.

**Existential factors**

Learning that one has to take responsibility for one's own life and the consequences of one's decisions.

**Catharsis**

Catharsis is the experience of relief from emotional distress through the free and uninhibited expression of emotion. When members tell their story to a supportive audience, they can obtain relief from chronic feelings of shame and guilt.

**Interpersonal learning**

Group members achieve a greater level of self-awareness through the process of interacting with others in the group, who give feedback on the member's behaviour and impact on others.

**Self-understanding**

This factor overlaps with interpersonal learning but refers to the achievement of greater levels of insight into the genesis of one's problems and the unconscious motivations that underlie one's behaviour.

**Transparency**

An emphasis of honesty, openness and being genuine in the group. Transparency also includes the psychotherapist.

Please identify the therapeutic principles of these examples that may either threaten or help the therapeutic process

During one group session there is an outburst between Bonnie and Rebecca. Shortly after the confrontation, Bonnie and Rebecca both admit that they resent the group; Bonnie resents the group for feeling ignored and Rebecca resents the group for feeling as though she is being criticized. It is apparent that they both yearn for attention.

During one group session Stuart reveals a sexual liaison with a woman fourteen years prior to the group therapy session. Revealing that he made a mistake is very difficult for Stuart regardless of the support he receives from other group members.

During one group session, the group therapist shares his sexual escapades, including a liaison with one of his wife’s relatives.

During one group session, Bonnie is transferring her feelings about her childhood on to Rebecca, and the group psychologist prompts the group members to address it – specifically Stuart and Gill.

When Philip is first introduced in to the group, the group has a difficult time understanding his behavior, his thoughts, his communication patterns and his seemingly obsession with Schopenhauer. Some of the group members feel that they should protect Philip and others feel that they should confront and expose Philip. These two different approaches by individuals in the group temporarily threaten the group’s unity as the group divides according to their approach to how to deal with Philip. The second instance is when Pam returns from her trip to India and finds that Philip is now part of the group. Pam’s previous experience with Philip is very difficult for her to deal with and definitely impacts the group’s unity.

One of the group members, Julius, he discovers that he is slowly dying from a terminal illness. Faced with his own mortality, Julius begins to examine his life through his his failures both in his personal and professional life during the group session. Finally Julius decides to make a brave decision: “live life to your fullest; and then, and only then, die”.