

Group Process Journal
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The brief process therapy group I attended this evening consisted of six individuals, including the group facilitator. The group will complete five two-hour sessions by meeting weekly for five weeks. Tonight, the group completed its first session together. The group members consist of five female graduate students, and a group facilitator. The group facilitator (Rick) is a Caucasian male, which is something that he addressed during this initial session. This allowed members to have the opportunity to discuss any concerns, thoughts, or discomfort they might have regarding his gender. He briefly addressed race and ethnicity differences that exist within the group to allow members the freedom to discuss their thoughts and views regarding those differences. The group spent time creating group rules of conduct and getting acquainted with one another.

In tonight's initial session, I recognized some aspects of a person-centered approach to therapy implemented by Rick. He used the skills of reflecting, summarizing, and sharing personal experiences with the group. His approach was more "go with the flow" than directive. The therapist presented himself as casual and non-threatening.

As a group, we were rather quiet in this first meeting. No one in the group seemed to talk unless they were initially addressed by the group therapist. The group honestly felt somewhat disorganized. None of the group members had attended or been part of a therapy group prior to this process group. There seemed to be discomfort and apprehension as we did not know what to expect. It will likely take time for this group to become open with one another.

My hope is that our group will find more direction in the coming weeks. At this time, no goals have been expressed or established. Personally, I found this to be a little discouraging as I

like to have direction. I believe I would have benefited from a conversation that explained how process groups work.

June 22, 2020

This week's group session was similar to the first week in the fact that the group members, including myself, were quiet. The conversation during our two hours together was superficial. We discussed current events. Our responses were quite global (i.e., "racism is bad"). We talked very little about how we personally connect to these events. There was a general feeling of awkwardness among group members as we did not seem to know what to talk about or where the session was leading.

As the session was approaching an end, Rick asked our opinions on how the group was going. One group member, Lisa, began to convey her disappointment with the group. She directed her frustrations at Rick. Other group members echoed her frustration stating that they felt that they were not getting their money's worth. We all seemed to agree that there is a general lack of direction in our sessions. There was almost a sense of relief that this was being brought to the attention of the group. Unfortunately, the therapist's initial response was defensive. He expressed that he too was frustrated with our lack of interaction and that he had been attempting to "rescue" the group conversations. His attempts to "rescue" the group have felt more like interruptions. It is my opinion that Rick is uncomfortable with periods of silence.

I believe the therapist missed an opportunity to explore some of the group members' frustrations. He could have asked questions regarding expectations and goals. What does Lisa want to get out of this group? How might we facilitate that? Currently, our group does not have

any clear goals. This might have been the opportunity for Rick to guide the group in establishing goals. The topic of money related to the cost of our sessions was mentioned by more than one member. I believe that is also something that could have been explored. Unfortunately, we ran out of time and none of these things were addressed during this session. The conversation (and this week's session) ended with Rick telling the group members to bring topics that they want to discuss next week.

Admittedly, Rick has made attempts to create member-to-member interaction. He has done this by asking the group questions such as "can anyone relate to what Lisa (or whichever member has shared) has said?" after someone makes a statement about themselves or the topic of discussion. However, we have disclosed little of ourselves to the group. Trying to relate to someone's global comments about current events does not seem productive.

Personally, I have found myself waiting for someone else to initiate meaningful personal disclosure. I would be able watch the reactions of other members and the therapist. Our group exhibits signs indicating that trust has not yet been established. Some members rarely speak, while others take time to tell stories that lack emotion or personal content.

June 29, 2020

This week's session started with some hesitation. I was a little disappointed that last week's ending conversation was not addressed this week. I am recognizing my hesitance in being the one to initiate conversations. I want to give the group direction by asking questions to initiate discussion, but I do not want to "take over" the group. The general lack of direction of this group has proven to be frustrating for me.

One member, Janelle, chose to bring a topic to the group this week. She shared some very personal things that she had been dealing with over the weekend. As Janelle shared, other members were very receptive of her and what she was sharing. Members were able to discuss what Corey, Corey, and Corey (2018) refer to as “here-and-now interactions” (p. 300) in their responses. For example, Janelle prefaced her time of sharing with a statement indicating that she knew that what she was about to share would change the way other members viewed her. This was addressed by another member who said they felt that she had not given them the opportunity to respond before making judgements about their response. There is evidence that our group is in the transition phase, and some trust is being established between members.

One thing that made this week’s meeting difficult had to do with technical issues that occurred. Our group has been meeting online using the zoom conference platform. Unfortunately, an unpaid subscription to zoom only allows for 30-minute meetings. Our group continued to be interrupted because the “room” would close, and we would have to find a new link to reconnect. This interrupted the flow of conversation and disrupted work that was being done. The interruptions seem to have added to the frustration group members have already felt toward the process. Group members seem to aim their frustrations at Rick.

As a student in a mental health program, I hope to lead groups one day. Tonight’s experience has shown me the importance of being prepared as a therapist. Rick was unprepared tonight. We experienced difficulties because of the platform that he chose to employ for our group. We also had difficulties reconnecting because he was using his phone which was not charged and could not maintain an internet signal. Some of these difficulties could have been avoided had the group counselor been more prepared. “If group therapists are prepared, they are

more likely to be able to effectively prepare members for a meaningful group experience” (Corey et al., 2018, p. 168).

July 6, 2020

Tonight’s meeting was difficult. In many ways, our group meets the description of a nonworking group. Participants seem to disclose very little, and no one exhibits trust toward Rick or the group process. The communication that takes place is generally superficial and disconnected. When a group member does exhibit some level of disclosure there is little encouragement to dig for deeper insight.

We had technical difficulties again tonight. Rick’s internet connection was poor, and his iPhone had difficulty maintaining connection with the google platform that we chose for tonight’s meeting. Lisa left the group for about 25 minutes to attend a friend’s engagement. The group does not seem to be a priority for everyone in the group. We will only meet one more time after tonight. I think group members, myself included, have begun to lose hope that we will get to the working stage of the group process.

Rick was at a disadvantage in the formation of this group. He did not choose the members. It is my understanding that the group was formed and then given to him. He did not, however, take time to meet with members individually prior to the initial group meeting. All the group members are students in a master’s level group therapy course and are acquainted with one another outside of the group.

Because we are students in mental health, I have wondered if Rick made assumptions about our understanding of group process. I do not know that he did, but there were times that he

indicated that assumption by making statements like, “you all are counseling students, so . . .” Whether he believed we understood group process or not, he did not take time to explain it to us. This experience has highlighted, for me, the importance of recognizing my assumptions and biases about clients I might serve in the future. I cannot take for granted that a client will understand the therapeutic process whether individually or in a group. Corey et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of pregroup orientation and pretherapy preparation. I believe that the members of this group (including myself) experienced the negative impact associated with the lack of these preparations.

July 13, 2020

Tonight, our group completed our last session together. We talked briefly about what that meant for us as individuals. Given the fact that we are all students in graduate school, there was an expression of relief from most. We will have two hours added back to our schedules.

Group members were more engaged tonight. The conversation did not go very deep, but members were more willing to talk. It was much more relaxed. If we had taken this approach earlier on, it may be that we would have become a working group and group cohesion may have been established. I do not, however, believe that we were ever a working group. Group cohesion was never truly established. I think it is possible that some of the issues that this group encountered may have resulted from members feeling forced to be a part of the group. This group was a requirement for a course so participation may not have been viewed as voluntary. It is also possible that our individual expectations were high, and a lot of pressure was placed on the initial session to produce results. When the unspoken expectations and hidden agendas were

not realized, the group did not progress. The therapist's defensive responses to the group's request for more direction created a lack of trust from which the group did not recover.

Tonight, Rick used Socratic dialogue to encourage members to think about issues that were being casually discussed. We talked about ways that school stress and pressures impact us. Tonight's session showed me that members of the group, including myself, desired to be a part of a working group. Unfortunately, lack of trust and insufficient group cohesion prevented us from getting to that stage.

Reference

Corey, M. S., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2018). *Groups: Process and practice* (10th ed). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.