

Journal 3

Our group session topic is on Mental Health and Depression with High School Students. In our group membership and leadership experience we are social workers assigned different roles to help the high school students who are experiencing mental health and depression. As a social worker my role is helping the high school students discover interventions to help decrease their depression and mental health issues. **(Note: this introduction will be in each journal)**

I was an active participant in the assessment session of the group experience. It is significant to be part of an assessment session of the group experience as it provides an opportunity to “establish the individual member’s goals and desired outcomes, the group’s outcomes and the group process (i.e. group cohesion and productivity)”, (Berg-Weger, Adams & Birkenmaier, 390). The group experience was interesting and well –organized. The group leader Jennifer went over the topic briefly on engagement prior to talking about the assessment stage. Jennifer asked the other social workers in the group what we thought were the best strategies from the engagement stage to the assessment stage of the group? The group of social workers stated the following points regarding the above question:

- Keeping tabs on the previous sessions
- Starting where the client are at
- Ice breakers
- It about how you are wording the questions

The group rules are being followed. The group rules are that no phones to be used unless there is an emergency. Only one person talk at a time. Everyone must respect each other’s opinions. The group members (social workers) appeared to be connected and engaged. The group leader Jennifer was able to engage all the social workers and she was able to transition from the engagement stage into the assessment stage.

In the assessment stage, the focus shifts to information gathering. During the assessment, social workers must remember to operate from a strengths-based perspective, with careful attention to seeking information about client’s skills, capacities, resources, and other strengths (google). Like the engagement stage being an outgoing process, the assessment stage you will revisit throughout the duration of your group experience. Participating in a virtual group is different than

an in person group because in person group you have face to face interaction while virtually you are physically separated and rely on technology such as video conference. In addition, participating in group in person is more reliable because times technology does not always work. Also participating in person group there is more trust, and collaborative behavior. I found so far my experience with in person and virtual group experience have been similar, working with my virtual group has been positive, trustworthy and a good experience thus far.

The first assessment session of the group experience was great. The group leader was able to keep the group of social workers interested in what was discussed. The group leader provided the definition of assessment stage, and stated that it is important to use the biopsychosocial-spiritual assessment and the strength based perspective. The group leader stated that using the strength perspective with the group of clients will help the clients point out their skills and strength of each other.

The authors of the book the Practice of Generalist Social Work stated an "issue that it is important for the group process is the bonding (cohesiveness) experienced by the group. "While individuals can experience growth and change without feeling close to other members, cohesiveness can be empowering. A range of factors impact group cohesiveness, including interpersonal attraction (connection to others), proximity, acceptance and approval, similar expectations recognition and value, security, access to resources, and working on issues they feel can influence. Also group cohesion can become an ongoing issue regarding attendance, commitment to group, satisfaction and goal attainment", (391).

A strength of a leader is that she asked questions of the social workers in the group to answer regarding assessment. For example, she asked the question, as a social worker how do you think we can assess a child/teenager that has depression or experiencing mental health issues? Some of the others social workers stated to start where the client is at and, always redirect the question if the client goes off the topic. Also some of the other social workers stated to examine the whole person dimension, and have open communication. In addition, it was stated that there is a silent period and after a few minutes go back to the ice breakers, have a mental health screening to detect early

identification of depression and mental health issues. I think the group leader could have summarized everything she went over in the beginning of the session.