

Group and Experiences Together

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I was resistant to this whole process since the beginning of the semester. I am working full time, with 20 hours allocated for internship. I barely have time for myself, so I was not pleased when I realized I required to participate in a group in addition to my group dynamics class. I was advised by previous students that the most groups were costly. Most students spoke of a previous facilitator who was unpleasant and upsetting. I was elated when I realized Professor Varela was facilitating a group. That was my first blessing. I took a chance and contacted my insurance and found out that her agency was in network, and I was covered for the counseling. My second blessing. This group experience has been my third. I needed this group and this experience.

One of the themes in the group is that everyone is having a pandemic experience. There is widespread hardship and transformation that has occurred since the pandemic. We have all experienced a form of loss and gained some talents and insight along the way. We were all in the program prior to the pandemic. In some way, Nyack has been a form of support for all of us through this difficult time. During the informed consent Miss. Varela instructed us to speak freely and not wait to be called on. She encouraged a round robin conversation style of interaction. The sessions and the conversations feel like social meetups.

The group leader is very warm and engaging. She has a genuine demeanor and easily encourages the development of a safe space. She understands that we have all reported how frustrating and stressful our lives can be during the week. She starts the sessions with a mindfulness activities and a grounding experience to bring the group in with positivity. The technique has worked consistently, and we are able to close out

distractions and engage. During informed consent we discussed confidentiality and did an exercise where we were all able to see each other and agree to hold a safe space for each other. We engaged and agreed to be accountable to each other. She utilizes psychodrama therapy techniques that allow for insight and enjoyment. Key goals of psychodrama are the release of feelings to obtain insight to develop healthy effective behaviors. Psychodrama includes acting out situations to gain perspective and improve functioning .Techniques of psychodrama include the encouragement to explore conflicts and develop additional coping methods and overcome feelings of isolation (Corey, Corey& Corey, 2018). She facilitates us joining other members in their experiences to ensure that they feel supported.

The group consists of black, white, and Hispanic members and race has not played a role in the dynamics. We have similarities in all areas and the popular theme has been hope. As believers we are not lost and even when we speak of hardship and dark times faith is present. That has been the common thread among members. We have been carried and encourages due our strong beliefs. This has impacted the group dynamics and we have bonded in this similarity. We have also encouraged each other with faith. The group has one male and he is fully engaged and cooperative during session.

The most surprising part of the experience was finding out that I needed this. I have been in individual therapy at various points of my life. I have generalized anxiety and I am often overwhelmed. I am currently in therapy now with a psychologist. I am pretty sure that I have no treatment plan and I utilize her as a safe place. I just speak my mind knowing I am in a safe space at our sessions. I vent and I don't feel guilty. I

wanted a safe place to complain and be vulnerable. I have never been in group counseling. I did not know it would be so rewarding to have other people with support give their perspective. I am thoroughly enjoying these sessions and having this experience. I have missed my classmates since we started virtual learning. I kept in contact out of school with very few people. This setting has allowed me to really get to know a few classmates.

I would not do anything differently. Our group has been enjoyable, functional, and helpful. The leader has been engaging and supportive throughout the process which has encouraged group cohesiveness to occur. All the group members were honest about being overwhelmed and not looking forward to the financial and emotional toll of having another academic task to complete weekly. We are glad to be enrolled and have been getting supported and uplifted in this space.

References

Corey, M.; Corey, Corey, C. (2018). *Groups: Process and Practice 10th Edition*. Boston, MA. Cengage Learning. ISBN-13: 978-1305865709