

Reflection Paper 1

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What themes and patterns you have observed within your group?

A common theme I have noticed within my group is the unwavering support that each member gives. It was understood very early on in our sessions that this is merely a requirement for us. Meaning that none of us sought out this type of therapy. Over the weeks, however, our group has become very supportive of one another. I believe it's because we understand that this is new for all of us. As a result, there seems to be a non-verbal understanding that this type of vulnerability is hard. So, when we are sharing, it is an oddly comforting feeling to know that your members are listening with no judgment to what you're saying because they understand.

What are your impressions of your group leader? What is their style?

My group counselor is Denise. The first word that comes to mind when I think of Denise is intuitive. The way she operates can even be described as intrinsic. I don't know how she does it! However, I love her leadership style. In our sessions, she takes a backseat to our sessions; but somehow, she still guides us without overtaking the sessions. She's also very in tune with her feelings as well as the feelings of the group. I especially love the fact that she is so in tune. For me, it is a lot easier to have a group leader like her, because I know if I would ever get to a breaking point of not knowing what to express or how to express myself, she would still understand. Denise is very caring and careful, but she also pushes you. I think that is very necessary for any good counselor because it lets me know as the client that she cares enough for me to push/challenge me to do better. One of my favorite things that she does is sit in silence when someone is struggling to gather their feelings and thoughts. She doesn't try to fill the silence with words or with movement. She just lets you feel and that's something I appreciate, and I will be taking into my practice.

What has been most surprising about your group experience?

What has most surprised me is how open I am within my group. It's one thing to be open and transparent with my therapist, but it is a completely different ball game to be open and transparent with a counselor as well as four other people in the room. Not only am I also transparent with my counselor and with other people in the room, but these are the very people that I will be working with for the remainder of my time in this program. In some cases, I will be working together with them in this industry. It is very nerve-wracking to spill your guts to someone, especially someone who you would like for them to see you with your best foot forward. As a result, I have been very surprised at myself. I like to think of myself as a transparent person, but this experience thus far has very much surprised me with how open I am in my sessions with my group.

How has culture, race, ethnicity, or gender played a role in your group dynamic?

In my group, there are three African American women, two Hispanic women, and one white male. As we speak throughout our sessions, the role of each of our cultures race and ethnicity even gender shows with each experience that is shared. There have been times when one of my group members (a woman) would share a personal experience and as a result I automatically assumed my group member who is a male would have no idea or no understanding of what she's speaking about. It has been a surprise to me, however, when I am proven wrong. We had a recent conversation in which I simply knew he wouldn't understand. However, when he spoke, I was surely mistaken and realized he did understand. As a result, I have come to a place where I am teaching myself to expect the unexpected. What that means for me is rather than expecting that my fellow group member doesn't know what we are speaking about simply because of who he is, I am teaching myself to be open-minded as well as to be understanding. Someone's gender, race, and ethnicity don't automatically prove certain stereotypes to be true.

Yes, there will be stereotypes for every gender, race, ethnicity, religion, etc., but they do not always have to be true. And that is what I am learning within our group.

If you were the group leader, what would you do differently if anything?

As a group leader, I do not believe that I would do anything differently from my current group leader. The reason is that I like the way my group leader leads. She leads with such compassion and strength. She cares for you and pushes you to do better because she cares. When completing my mock group session, I found that I was doing some of the things that my group leader does now. Such as repeating back what each of the members were saying to me, trying to involve everyone as much as possible by asking questions that would invoke the group response, as well as giving encouragement when encouragement is needed. I hope that over the next couple of sessions that I have with her as my group leader I can pick up some more techniques. I love and appreciate how my group leader leads.