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Clinical Social Work Practice III with Groups

Journal #2

This week's group was centered around anxiety caused by bullying in schools. Our group consisted of 6 students and 1 social worker who facilitated. 3 of the participants identify as female and 3 participants identify as male. All participants are students currently enrolled at North Rockland High School. This is a closed group. The same group members will attend the group from January through April 2023. The goal of the group is to support students who are impacted by bullying in the school. In this group, students will share their experiences with bullying and anxiety in order to create a sense of community and mutual support. The facilitator will also help students identify and learn coping strategies for their anxiety related to bullying.

The facilitator allowed students to express their experience with bullying, one at a time. Tensions between participants of the group were apparent as each shared. The facilitator had to step in at times to mediate conflict between participants. It was clear that there were victims of bullying within the group as well as participants who have bullied others. The facilitator took an authoritative leadership role in order to keep control of the group and stay on topic. Some participants responded well to the social worker's leadership style by halting their conflict within the session. Others did not respect that leadership style and acted out in order to protest against her as an authority figure.

One participant mentioned that she is considering bringing a knife with her to school to protect herself from the violence and physical attacks that are happening frequently in the high school. The facilitator quickly told this participant that bringing a weapon was not the answer. However, the facilitator did not question the participant about her intentions. This could be problematic because the facilitator does not know how serious the participant was or if she had a plan to harm herself or others.

The facilitator had a difficult job since there was tension between participants in the group and some were making inappropriate comments. The facilitator was able to maintain the focus of the group. The facilitator would have been more effective, however, if she was able to take a more democratic leadership role. This would have allowed students to develop solutions themselves which would have improved their critical thinking skills and ability to develop coping strategies.