

Group Proposal: A Depression Support Group for College Students

Wei Shen

Alliance Graduate School of Counseling

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Dr. George Ramos

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Depression is a common mental disorder with significant consequences in terms of suffering and suicide (Bright et al., 1999; Elflein, 2022; Friedman et al., 2005). A survey of college students in the United States in 2021 found that about 41% had symptoms of depression (Elflein, 2022). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (APA, 2013), symptoms of depression vary in severity and can include depressed mood, a loss of interest/pleasure in all or most all activities, feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, fatigue, changes in sleep and appetite, and thoughts of death or suicide. Depression is not just a disorder that affects a college student inside; it affects every aspect of their life, including social life, family relationship, academic success, and more. Generally, group therapy for depression is effective, reflecting a reduction in symptoms of depression and an improvement in mood compared with untreated controls (Bright et al., 1999; Friedman et al., 2005)

The proposed group is designed to help college students increase their understanding of depressive feelings and become aware of the triggers of depressive feelings. It aims to provide a nonjudgmental and safe atmosphere where members are encouraged to discuss their experiences and have the opportunity to establish relationships with peers who have similar struggles. The goal is to combine support and educational content to increase members' awareness of their depression cues and symptoms so they can learn coping skills to reduce their depression. Moreover, through psychoeducation, individuals can identify specific areas of cognitive distortion and correct the irrational thinking that triggers depression (Corey et al., 2018).

Most empirical evidence on the effectiveness of group counseling has been based on studies of time-limited, closed groups; the value of these groups is strongly supported by evidence from meta-analytic studies (Corey et al., 2018). This group will typically run for about 15 weeks, the length of a semester, long enough to build trust and work toward changing

behavior (Corey et al., 2018). Each session will be 1.5 hours in length weekly. It will consist of 6 to 8 people, which is a good size for everyone to participate and have a sense of belonging (Corey et al., 2018). The group is designed to serve college students who are suffering from generalized depression. Consider a group of homogeneous individuals who can focus entirely on specific problems that characterize their development period. This similarity of members leads to a great degree of cohesion, allowing for open and intense exploration of their life experiences (Corey et al., 2018). The group is a closed group; members will be expected to remain in the group until the end to create a secure bond where they will be open to share.

The group will be located in a college meeting or study room that affords privacy and freedom from distractions (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). I like rooms where I can arrange comfortable circular seating so everyone can see each other. Flyers (see Appendix) will be posted in the school counseling office and website, as well as in the library and cafeteria. Members will be recruited primarily through referrals from school counselors.

Once the group has been announced, and members recruited, the next key step is to schedule the screening and selection of the members who will make up the group. The screening and selection process will hopefully screen out those individuals who may not be suitable for group therapy at this time; for example, individuals with severe behavioral or emotional problems that seriously interfere with the group process will not be selected. Corey et al.(2018) suggested considering diversity issues when selecting members. I will put together a group of individuals who share common experiences but also differ in gender, race, religion, and culture.

Additionally, there are ethical and legal considerations for this group. As a group leader, I will need to learn how to apply the established ethics codes of my profession to a range of practical problems (Corey et al., 2018). I must familiarize myself with these established codes of

ethics and the laws that may affect group practice. I must consult with colleagues and get continued supervision and training during the process. I will explain informed consent in an ongoing process (Corey et al., 2018) and emphasize the importance of confidentiality to members before they enter the group, during relevant group meetings, and until the group ends.

Group participants will be asked to complete a monthly feedback assessment form. This method will be used to determine how participants feel about the process and if any adjustments to future sessions or issues are needed. Post-group evaluations and assessments are also used to hold facilitators accountable and change the structure and organization of the next groups. The post-group interview can help better understand the specific factors that contributed to the successful outcomes or the group's failures (Corey et al., 2018). Members will discuss the degree to which they have accomplished their stated goals, whether the group met their expectations, and what the group has meant to them personally.

As Corey et al. (2018) mentioned, group experiences can provide college students with ways to connect with other students and increase their sense of belonging. This proposed support group for students with depression will provide a safe place to address their personal problems; students can learn coping skills to improve their interpersonal relationships and academic performance.

References

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Need Support?



Group for Depression

Who

College students with depression

What

A closed support group offering 15 sessions, focus on psychoeducation, increasing coping skills, exploring thoughts and feelings, and future support.

Group is limited to 8 members and will meet for 1.5 hour weekly

Interesting?



For more information, call us at (211) 345-6789
or visit www.depressionsupportgroup.com



Appendix