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## **Introduction**

This paper will discuss the group theories and how it can be for the integrated part of this paper, I will use my internship as a reference to how a clinician can implement or use group therapy. I conducted my internship at Evolution Mind, where I worked with individuals and groups. I created a program for a group setting called, Project Restoration where we help women deal with their past hurts and we journey along with them into their healing through an interactive process. In the first part of this paper, I will be focusing on the group I was working with. I worked with young women who were in residential homes for behavioral issues.

The use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy are the theories I integrated during the twelve weeks. You will see how these theories were demonstrated throughout the sessions.

## **Key concepts**

As a clinician one of the key concepts that I would implement for CBT is precise therapeutic goals. This concept is fitting because it targets specific areas of change. The program is designed for individuals to formulate specific statements of their personal goals that they want to achieve. The group members will be able to target problematic behaviors they want to change and new skills they want to learn. Being that the group is time limited they would create SMART goals.

Another key concept for CBT that I would implement in the group sessions would be treatment plan. This will help members have specified goals. Using CBT their goals will be action oriented, they will be expected to be intentional with their task and goals they want to achieve. The group and the leader can brainstorm ideas goals to come up with the intervention strategies that might be used for specific goals.

A key concept for SFBT that I would implement is focus on solutions, not the problem. This concept focuses more on the presenting problems and what is possible now and for the future. This concept provides the member the ability to choose their goals that they wish to accomplish, and they do not have to focus so much on their diagnoses. They can focus more on solving the current issue without unpeeling too many layers. This might work for some members who may not be prepared to address multiple rooted issues.

### **Role as group counselor**

As a group leader I assume the role of a teacher, encourager and empower them to learn new skills to navigate through their journey. Along with providing encouragement to step into the healing process and own their story, no matter how it may look. Furthermore, encouraging them to understand the power they must change their story as they change their thinking. I believe it is important to show them the power they possess within themselves to transform and evolve as an individual. Moreover, showing the group my support to journey with them and meet them where they are in the process. Along with giving back feedback, assigning homework assignments, and keeping them connected to the process.

I have effectively demonstrated my commitment, caring, interest, respect, and human concern for the group in action and deed. I've illustrated this behavior by my actions and seeing that the group received my mannerisms well. I can see their response to my actions because they demonstrate it by reciprocating the same interest in their action. Furthermore, as the leader it is important for me to be supportive of the individual(s) who decide they are going to walk this journey. It will not only require sensitivity, empathy, and patience, it will require me to be aware of their resistance when certain topics arise. For example, being aware when we are addressing the past and the issues/things that can come from "uprooting." In the same way, seeing how

certain topic(s) can bring the group closer and allowing the space for the group to flow effortlessly, even with a topic. I like to empower the group members to interact with one another and make it a conversation and not a teacher/student vibe. Most importantly as a group leader being observant to what is going on with everyone, from a person's body language, speech, tone in voice, attitude, participation etc. One thing that I am aware about is remaining culturally competent and aware of a person's worldview based off their cultural, especially in a group setting like mine.

Lastly, my role would be to help group members to prepare for termination well ahead of the ending date. This is written in the program structure to when the conversation around termination will be introduced to the group and processing where they are on the journey, gather feedback, and what skills they are going to apply along their journey.

### **Role of group members**

The role of the group members is to come to the group with the intention to learn, grow, and participate in the sessions. The desire is for them to be open to learn and unlearn. For each group member to come with the expectation to grow and apply the assignments and teachings to their lives to see the desired outcomes demonstrated in their lives. The role of a group member is to respect, support, honor, and build rapport with each person in the group, but most importantly meet each person where they are without judgement. The goal is for the women in the group to form a sisterhood. The goal is for each member to come to the group with a heart of transparency and authenticity to speak in a safe space where they can share their story and allow past hurts or issues to be revealed so they can work on overcoming and healing. Group members are invited to provide empowerment and encouragement to each other.

### **Key development tasks and therapeutic goals**

Some developmental tasks for CBT would be providing the group with homework assignments that reflect on the past week. The homework will be an extension of the topic that was discussed in the session. The homework would focus on their thoughts surrounding the question, what came emotions/feelings came up for them during the sessions. The homework will be given to the group so they can reflect and process their experience, and they can write any questions that may come up or anything they want to bring to the next group session. The homework assignments allow the individuals to sit in the experience and think about the session, and the goal is for them to be able to look within and continue to work on the rooted issues.

The program design and goal are for the youth to take an object (picture frame, jewelry box) which is distorted and damaged. They are to take the object of their choice and each week answer thought provoking questions to help unpeel layers to get to the root of their behaviors. Additionally, as they are answering the questions, they are to sand off the imperfections, blemishes, and marks on the object. As they are sanding the object as a reflect of negative thinking falling to the wayside. They are to talk about what part of their thinking/behavior they are address and allowing to fall off. The object is used as a mirror of the individual to illustrate how something, or someone can start off a certain way and can be transformed. This also shows how the process of the healing journey. At the end of the group sessions, the individual gets to take home their object restored.

### **Techniques and methods**

The techniques that I would be implementing for CBT is social skills training because it enables people to communicate with others in a way that is both appropriate and effective. This skill is necessary because it helps one effectively interact with others in varies social situations. There are many benefits that come with this skill such as being able to provide psychoeducation,

modeling, reinforcement, shaping, feedback, role playing, behavioral rehearsal that will develop better ways to engage socially. This skill will continue to evolve as they grow as an individual and it will continue to increase their confidence in social settings and as they become more confident in themselves as they are developing into a better version of themselves.

Another technique for CBT that I will be implemented in this group would be the stress inoculation training which teaches specific coping skills. This technique addresses a person who has issues such as resistance and relapse. The coping skills used in this technique will help the individual with both preventative and treatment to address their stress. This skill will equip the individuals with present and future coping skills to apply when necessary.

For SFBT I will implement searching for exception to the problem which can be helpful with helping the client seeing where in their life where problems weren't as stressful, and their life presented to be less severe. This method can help them see their own inner strength and highlight what they did in those moments to pull on those strengths in the individual so they can use them again. This takes the client out of being in their own bubble and gives them a different perspective.

Another technique that can couple with this one is encouraging motivation; this approach helps the client see in the future and provides them the ability to imagine their situation in a better space and it helps them come up with solutions on their own. Also, you can incorporate group participation and allow the members to pay attention to what being shared by others and give feedback on their progress. This can help other members feel seen and heard.

### **Stages in the evolution of a group**

The process of the group will be implemented starting with the initial stage, which would look the group members will get a synopsis of the group. They will have the ability to sign up if

they feel the group is something they are interested in. A meet and greet meeting will happen with the individuals that would like to join. After this meeting the group members will decide if they would like to officially join, and then orientation will happen. This is where rules, expectations will be discussed from both the leaders and members. This process will be collaborative between the leader and members to cohesively work together to give the members a voice in their process.

During the working stage the practices that will be implemented in this process will be feedback, this will help with keeping the individuals accountable to their homework and receiving praise, encouragement, or supportive specific suggestions for correcting or modifying errors. The reinforcement practice will help strengthen the group dynamic and the individual by receiving praise, approval, support, and attention from the leader and the other members. This can help with strengthen the relationships and one's ability to feels safe and comfortable with sharing information. Starting each group with the success instead of failures can help with setting the morale for the day to be positive.

The final stage that will be implemented in the group process will be practicing how to implement the new behaviors they learned in the group. By doing so they will give and receive feedback, practice new and effective behaviors by role playing. In addition, to help members prepare for setback, hiccups, that could potentially happen when they interact with others that may trigger their negative behaviors. Lastly, discussing their individual experience and the affect it had on them. Having an open discussion about their process and if they can identify growth within themselves.

**What did you learn about yourself from participating in this group?**

As I participated in the weekly group sessions, my behaviors that were highlighted were my innate ability to lead. Additionally, I had to resist the urge to take control and step over the group leader that was appointed for the day. I saw that if I don't release the spirit of control and allow myself to also become a student in these moments, I can create a negative tension and, in the group, and lose the trust of my group members. On the other hand, my leadership skills help the group start the process of conversation and how we are going to navigate the topics assigned.

One of my goals that I desired going into the group was being able to learn about myself and the ability to be a student and teacher whichever one is required in that moment. I desired to become more self-aware, and have community, unity, and a place to brainstorm ideas and work together as a group. I wanted to see the use of theories being incorporated into the groups and how we tackled each topic and came together as a team in our agreements and disagreements. This goal was reached from the very beginning, it was refreshing on how organic our group was and how we interacted with each other. There were even some points where we changed how we would approach it because we felt it would be better for the population at hand. Working together empowered a different level of inspiration for me within myself. Our group dynamic provided me with hope. Hope for our future clients and families that we will impact. Everyone was empathic, honest, and vulnerable when it came to the group discussions and provided strength-based feedback. I was nervous at first with facilitating a group, although I already have a group I run, I had moments of feeling inadequate of being a strong lead. My goal was to grow as an individual and group leader, it was accomplished during the weeks. The small action plan I have as a group leader is to continue to do self-assessments and process my role in group sessions and write my intended goal and review if I was able to accomplish them in the session and areas I can improve it and I will use that to gauge my growth in accomplishing my self-awareness, I can

also have the women do pre/post assessments and expectations so I can get feedback on the participants experience.

There can always be potential countertransference issues in group especially when the gender is women. More than likely there will be an experience that I have journeyed through and if that does come up, I must process this with my supervisor and work through those emotions or feelings. Additionally, I would need to make sure I am not operating out of my personal feelings and my feedback and be objective.

One of the skills that I have acquired is my ability to be a strong active listener and summarizing. This skill allows me to hear what the client is not saying verbally but hear the unspoken words. This helps me connect to the deeper issue and pull out, emotions, and feelings that they may not know how to communicate. In session I was able to use this skill and see it work affectively. I saw the group members layers still to peel off and we were able to go deeper beyond the surface. This skill also helped as a group member, it allowed me to be empathic to others, encourage, and empower them after they shared. It showed the person who was speaking they were heard. As I continue to grow as a clinician, I will continue to grow in areas I am weak in and become stronger in the skills that I thrive in. I must continue to read, study, and learn from my supervisor through supervision how to sharpen my tools to develop into a knowledgeable, effective clinician.

### **Group Personality**

I would describe our group personality as professionally mature. I chose this word because it best describes our interacting with each other and the vibe that was created with one another. From the beginning our group took on every topic and task with seriousness, and maturity. Our approach was as if we were really during the task in real life. The respect,

communication, and interactions came from adults who are mature and professional. There was a level of care that was displayed with each group member. I felt like everyone had a voice, and we even had some real passionate conversations that took place. Our group created a safe space for us to be vulnerable, emotion, and open with each other about our experiences and how those translated to the task at hand. Compassion was our foundation on what we build the group from.

What made the group run effectively was the willingness to serve each other and being present and willing to complete the task at hand. We worked together as a team, there wasn't any resistance from anyone, and it allowed us to role play effectively and as close to a real-life situation. The experience from this small group let us know that there can be friction, togetherness, unity, and healing that comes from a group. It showed the power of how vulnerability can transform a groups atmosphere bring about change, and breakthrough. One thing that I will apply ground rules when conducting groups by providing each person the opportunity to have an input to feel like they are contributing to their journey.

### **Stage 1- Pre-group Issues-Formation of the group**

The group I was a part of discussed stage once of the group process. We demonstrated this in having discussion at the beginning of each group because each weekly scenario was different, and the approach needed to be different because of the client population and issue at hand changed. We discussed open and closed groups based on the scenario and we decided what would be the best choice. Voluntary verses involuntary membership was also something we discussed and then we were able to plan according to the decision we made. Some scenarios required us to do involuntary members, especially those based in the school, and we were asked to create an intervention and solution to the problem. Every part of the first stage was discussed

when implementing a plan and how the group would be running; from the gender, the group size, to the length of the program.

### **Stage 2-Initial Stage-Orientation and Exploration**

The second stage of the group was explored and creating the foundation of the group. I would say that the group foundational seeds, were compassion, trust, confidentiality, and respect. Apart of forming the foundation was allowing everyone to be a part of the process. There was an authenticity that radiated off everyone that I believe helped established the trust. I also, believe people had a willingness to want to create change and be heard with like mindedness people. We address each task at hand with the goal in mind, creating the plan, and the responsibility each member would operate in. I believe always operated out of structure.

### **Stage 3- Transition Stage-Dealing with Reluctance**

We were able to get to stage three in our group with dealing some level of reluctance. Some group members were shy about facilitating based off their own insecurities or fears like me, but because each person had to lead, we had to submit to the instruction. There were moments where certain group members would volunteer other members and they would decline nicely by calling on another person until someone decided to lead that day if there was no one who volunteered at the start of the group. We had a couple of scenarios where conflict was added into the task, and it was different from the normal way the group runs. It was interesting to see the group leader navigate through opposition being created and how to stabilize the group while address these behaviors. The conflict was a good thing to see and to learn new strategies and techniques from the leader who had to diffuse the situation. We were able to have feedback and talk about the feelings of the group participates and the leader to see their feelings about the role play.

#### **Stage 4-Working Stage-Cohesion and Productivity**

We were able to accomplish the goal in stage four which is the working stage-cohesion and productivity. As mentioned throughout this paper, our group organically flowed in unity, compassion, trust, and empathy. There was a level of intimacy that the group functioned at which created safety. I believe this came because we operated out of the characteristics of a social worker, whether that was a good thing or bad thing, we displayed a level respect unless we were instructed otherwise. There were even assignments where someone had to be racist and instead of doing the role play, the group leader asked the group if we wanted to role play or discuss the topic and the impact it has on us and how we experienced this in our own life. I felt like that was a very impactful group because we are a group that has four different ethnicities that are represented and we were able to share experiences that were different, but similar. I feel like that increased the level of intimacy in our group because of our shared experiences. It also allowed us to take a step in our client's shoes and what it would look like to navigate through this topic that is so important, and most people, job, and churches skip over because it is a hard topic to keep calm. Usually, this topic can bring about negative emotions and not allow the conversation to flow. In our group we became listeners and allowed each person to have space to vent and talk about their personal experience. It was a powerful group, and I appreciated the leader for changing the task and asking us how we wanted the session to go due to the topic being so heavy.

Most people in the group used self-disclosure and there were moments where the group leader used it to connect to the group. This method was a great way to bring closeness and unity in the group. It allowed me to see the leader as someone I can relate to, but also as the one in charge. Their self-disclosure did not make them a peer, but it allowed me to see them as someone who has either overcome my experience and that brings hope, faith, and encouragement to see

someone who has walked a similar path and has overcome. It makes the experience feel doable and attainable to accomplish.

### **Stage 5: Final Stage-Consolidation and Termination**

My group was unable to get to this stage in the process. However, we did discuss feelings and effects that the topic had on us at the end of each session. We were able to talk about if the topic was heavy, our experience as a leader, how we felt the group process went, whether if we felt the members were being difficult, manageable, or relieved from our feelings of anxiety. We discussed a lot, and everyone also gave and provided feedback to the leader on how they were perceived by the group. We discussed challenges they may have come up for the individual.

### **Stage 6- Post group Issues-Evaluation and Follow-Up**

My group did not reach this level in our group session.

### **Closing Summary**

In conclusion, I walked away with an understanding of different approaches, experiences, and understanding of how groups can be run from a leader and what it feels like to be a member of the group. The group I run outside of school is all females and the age group is different, so it differs in so many ways from this one. Especially, having a co-ed group and a multi-cultural group. This was probably the most enjoyable part of the group is learning about people and their experiences and being able to share part of you in a safe space. I was so blessed by being able to be placed with the group of people I had to journey with in this class. The group was a light, and it was fun learning with each other and being able to brainstorm idea, approaches, and interventions for clients. I loved the teamwork and creative ideas that we came up during those times. It literally made me excited to be a social worker and see the power of groups. We did not come together as one type of group. We formed many groups and was able to experience the

layers of group. For example, we gathered at times as all social workers with a leader, then we had a leader, and we would be children or whatever the scenario called for us to be. This is what I enjoyed most the different types of groups and our ability to adapt to each one.