

Helping Students and Trainees
“Be More”
Through Group Therapy

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Objectives

- Participants will identify potential benefits of increasing the saturation and scope of group therapy in their home university/college counseling center
- Participants will identify key factors in building a strong group therapy program
- Participants will describe strategies for enhancing clinicians' commitment to referring to group and providing group therapy

Objectives

- Participants will describe strategies for overcoming objections and getting clients excited about group therapy
- Participants will identify benefits of co-leadership in group therapy
- Participants will identify strategies for providing effective group supervision to trainees

Why Group Therapy?

- Group therapy is at least as effective as individual therapy
- It is the treatment of choice for the most common presenting issues at college counseling centers.
- It is a cost-effective way of delivering mental health services

Obstacles to Overcome: Yes, But...

- Students are often reluctant to engage in group therapy
- Scheduling and timing issues can be prohibitive
- Significant time and energy are required for group leadership

Ten Features of Effective Group Therapy Programs

1. Group therapy is supported and valued by administration and well-integrated into the service delivery system.

Ten Features of Effective Group Therapy Programs

2. Clinicians recognize the value of group, both to their clients and to themselves.

Ten Features of Effective Group Therapy Programs

3. There are incentives for clinicians to provide group therapy and successfully recruit for and implement their groups.

Ten Features of Effective Group Therapy Programs

4. Clinicians consider group to be a creative endeavor and a welcome break from individual work.

Ten Features of Effective Group Therapy Programs

5. All clinicians are involved in group services either as leaders or as referral sources.

Ten Features of Effective Group Therapy Programs

6. Groups are marketed to students in a variety of ways and tailored to their needs
 - Balance the need to tailor treatment to the individual with practical considerations of the counseling center setting
 - Capture students' interest and engage them more fully in the process
 - Address developmental issues such as young adult population and lack of familiarity with therapy
 - Take into account diversity of the student population
 - Consider ongoing and open groups if process oriented, so students can enter at any time, as they are ready

Ten Features of Effective Group Therapy Programs

7. Pre-group information sessions rather than pre-group interviews are utilized to prepare and screen students for group.
 - It is more efficient: it saves time and energy and allows co-leaders to have more time for planning
 - Gives students a taste of what group would look like
 - Serves to screen out students who may not be ready and reduces drop out rates
 - Allows co-leaders to systematically prepare students for group
 - Provides an efficient way to complete documentation

Ten Features of Effective Group Therapy Programs

8. Clinicians receive support and training regarding group therapy, including effective ways to refer to group: how to overcome client objections, how to get clients excited about group, and how to prepare clients for group.

Making a Successful Referral

Can You Feel the Excitement?

Planting the Seed

- Mention group during the opening “spiel” of your intake.
- Insert relevant group references throughout the session.
- Allow ample time to discuss group!

Selling Groups

- Be excited! Show enthusiasm!
- Be explicit about how *your client's* issues can be addressed in group therapy.
- Crucial elements
 - Create hope
 - Highlight universality
 - Describe a “typical” group member and include client's presenting concerns

Overcoming Objections

- Normalize hesitance/anxiety & use humor if possible
- Explore anxiety/fears
- Dispel myths about group
- Utilize objections as evidence that group could be helpful

Ten Features of Effective Group Therapy Programs

9. Co-leadership is the norm and clinicians view group as an opportunity for collaboration.

Ten Features of Effective Group Therapy Programs

10. Group therapy is integrated into internship, practicum, and residency training programs.

Training Issues in Group

Benefits of Co-leadership Model with Trainees (staff thoughts)

- Trainees learn-by-doing in the presence of a co-leader
- Parallel process of what we encourage clients to do in group (learn and grow by experiencing and practicing new skills in the safe group environment)
- Minimizes number of non-clients in room
- Helps trainees develop a full appreciation of group
- Empowers their ability to engage in group work

Co-leadership Model Advantages

(The Voice of Trainees)

Greater Learning – by doing

- Forced me to take more ownership for the group and for my own learning. Rather than being able to passively sit back, I have had to take the chance and be an active part of the group.
- Not only have I been able to observe the group dynamic, but I have been able to be a part of it.
- It forced me to take responsibility for the group and take risks as a group leader and take a more active leadership role in the group

- Opportunity to engage in practical skill application
- Opportunity to engage in self-exploration/ awareness of personal interaction and leadership style that can subsequently be discussed in supervision and refined as experience increases.
- The best way to grasp group therapy is to experience the therapeutic collective and engage in the group dynamic and process.
- Learn stylistic things you cannot learn from a book
- Learning in vivo helps with our development as a counselor and also holds us accountable for our own training. Simply observing or assisting allows us to sit back and not participate.

Learning by Doing - Safety

- Having a co-facilitator in the room also means that I have been able to take chances and to learn because someone is there to keep things on track if I stumble.
- Opportunity to learn in real time with safety of supervisor
- Having someone else to attend to things on days when I'm not "on"; having someone to "watch my back"
- Opportunity to take on the observer role in the beginning and take on more responsibility as my confidence increased

- Safe induction to group leading process
- Opportunity to try out different techniques with co-leader assistance if needed
- Opportunity to learn to run group in a real setting, but with safety of having senior staff present

Learning by Feedback/Supervision

- I learned to establish a flow with the co-leader, anticipate one another's thoughts, and use the dynamic between co-leaders in a way that benefits the group process.
- We had the opportunity to not only discuss what was going on in the group, but what was going on for the leaders as well (how we were reacting to the process, what was difficult, what felt like progress etc).
- Feedback provided to me by senior staff co-leader

- When my co-leader had facilitated the group before and could give me a sense of what to expect from the population.
- Opportunity to obtain feedback regarding how I was in the room
- Opportunity to consult on the validity of the experience/have someone else's feedback about what occurred
- Not having to videotape the group
- Opportunity to connect before the group and process immediately after
- Real-life supervision in which the supervisor gets to observe all trainee interventions and client responses to them, not just a sampling

Learning from Senior Staff

- Get to observe someone with experience – useful to observe timing, use of silence, and general presentation of different practitioners. Get seasoned point of view of group process and group stages.
- Opportunity to experientially learn from and interact with a seasoned group therapist.
- I have learned so much from being able to watch someone work with the group dynamic.
- Ability to observe experienced group leader

Developmental Advantages

- Sense of egalitarianism with senior staff
- It was a confidence boost to run the group by myself when my co-leader was absent

Potential Disadvantages

(The Voice of Trainees)

Power Dynamics

- When the staff member does not treat us as co-leaders.
- I felt as if I was constantly being critiqued and evaluated by senior staff, which added to some of my anxiety at first.
- Power differential
- Equity in distribution of responsibilities

Social Loafing

- Could potentially be a crutch if trainee sits back and lets supervisor handle challenging moments
- Easy to get into observer role
- Found myself taking less chances and deferring to the more experienced co-leader. Being forced into more prominent role might have helped gain experience but would have sacrificed learning of seeing knowledgeable staff member in action

Group Member Perceptions

- Difficult at first to become involved in the group because the members seemed to have such strong bonds to the senior co-facilitator, who they have worked with for some time. It made it feel a bit intimidating at first, but I think this was also partly because of my own insecurity.
- I worried about how clients would view my role as co-leader. I often thought that although my role was co-leader and senior staff viewed me as such, clients would not refer to me as experienced enough to handle "bigger" issues.
- Takes time for members to appreciate role as equal. How we introduce selves to group must be collaborative.

Trainee Factors

- Might take supervisee some time to let go of insecurities.
- I felt somewhat overwhelmed by my first few meetings.

Supervision Issues

- Hard for trainee to address divergent approaches
- Important to have outside space to discuss
- May be tempting to imitate style of co-leader

Trainee Comparisons

Co-Leadership versus other
models experienced

Vs. Observer

- I began as an observer, and actually, after that experience, I did not like group. I think that being an active leader in the group really ignites that interest and makes the experience real.
- Observer role did not allow me to be an active leader in group and I feel like I did not grow as a group therapist at that stage in my training. Co-leadership allows the most growth and training experience.
- Observation inherently includes distance from the group (physically, mentally, and emotionally)
- Process itself might become diluted by what might feel like a less natural presence.

Vs. Junior Leader /Live Supervision

- Junior leadership must contend with a pre-established (conscious/unconscious) power dynamic that is subordinate in some form.
- Interruptions such as knock on the door were unnerving in other group supervision models

Vs. Leading Alone

- Liked functioning autonomously leading by self
- If you lead a group alone, you don't have to attend to both sgroup and co-leader dynamics

Challenges and Strategies for Overcoming Barriers -

- Trainee anxiety
- Group leader similarities and differences
- Power dynamics
- Productive use of supervision time