

# Designing a group therapy exercise critical thinking examples

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



## **Designing a Group Therapy Exercise**

The purpose of group therapy is to help individuals find a way of learning and developing their social skills. In this exercise, the dramatic processes are designed to help produce real-world situations without the pressures or actual, real-world circumstances.

### **Type of Group**

The type of group which would benefit from my exercise is those dealing with social difficulties. The exercise itself involves dramatic therapy which allows for the individuals to be placed into no-pressure, social situations and learn how to manage these situations before applying them to a real life circumstance (Emunah & Johnson, 2009, p40). Dramatic exercises are excellent for improving social and communicative skills and the type of group which could benefit greatly from this are people who are not socially dangerous but rather more socially difficult or awkward.

### **Stage of Group**

The stage of the group would need to be dependent upon their current progress as being ready to undertake such an exercise. In other words, the group would need to be at a point where they were comfortable with one another and had begun to trust each other with more intimate details of their experiences. The exercise can only work if they are happy to carry out the dramatic exercises with one another and are comfortable with receiving constructive criticism as well as learning from one another's mistakes.

## **The Purpose of the Exercise**

The purpose of the dramatic exercise is to aid the patients' progress in social situations but without the pressure of doing it in the real world. This strategic approach to therapy allows patients to have a new experience of the world (Gersie, 1996, p42). The purpose is to place people with social difficulties into dramatic situations where they are able to practice their social skills without pressures and the fear of getting it wrong. The use of dramatic exercises provides “ prime means of examining, reframing, and resolving current issues, and of discovering new perspectives and options” (Gersie, 1996, p42).

## **The Purpose of the Exercise: as I would present it to group members**

Now that we are at a point where we feel familiar and comfortable with the other members of the group, it is time to start putting our new knowledge into practice by beginning to apply our new social skills to dramatic situations. By carrying out these exercises, we will be able to explore our social capabilities without the fear of ‘ getting it wrong’ and by allowing us to have some room to move. This will allow you to discover what feels natural and comfortable to you whilst still learning how to be more socially competent.

## **Possible Group Member Responses that Would Lead Me to Discontinue It**

As with all group therapy exercises its success is contingent upon every member behaving and taking it seriously. Some members of the group may

be involved in the therapy because their social awkwardness has taken a violent or aggressive turn and so their involvement in dramatic exercise could procure the same results. Equally, patients could be there for the other end of the spectrum; if their social awkwardness is so crippling that they are too shy to talk or participate then the exercise could also be pointless.

Dramatic exercises are well-known for being quite intimidating and scary to some people (see school classrooms, for instance) and as such, for socially awkward people, this exercise might be worse than a normal social situation. It is, therefore, vitally important that every member of the group feels completely comfortable with one another and it is up to the group leader to gauge the situation properly.

## **Questions To Ask the Group at the Conclusion of the Exercise**

Following the end of the exercise, it is important to review the group's progress by asking a number of questions which will allow them to reflect on their actions as well as those of others around them too:

1. How did you feel knowing that the other person was responding positively to you?
2. Which areas did you feel most uncomfortable with?
3. Which areas did you feel most comfortable with?
4. Did you feel more or less comfortable than when in a normal social situation?
5. Can you think of an area which you would like to work on in the next session?

6. How will you make progress on this?

7. Will you feel willing to practice these skills in between sessions?

## **Examples of Observations you Might Share with the Group**

As a way of directing their progress, it might be prudent to detail some examples of their progress as observed by you. For example:

### **One of you answered a question without giving your partner the opportunity to respond in kind.**

One of you smiled whilst saying you felt fine, helping to empathise your meaning.

Some of you seemed unsure of what to do with your hands, try to find what feels comfortable for you.

It is clear from this discussion that this exercise would work best in conjunction with others because whilst it may help patients to examine their social behaviour, it may also cause them to feel anxious and nervous. The key idea is that they must feel comfortable with one another as a group and the rest will begin to follow naturally.

## **References**

Emunah, R. & Johnson, D. R. (2009). *Current Approaches in Drama Therapy*. Illinois: Charles C. Thomas Publishers.

Gersie, A. (1996). *Dramatic Approaches to Brief Therapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.