

Emotional impacts of social media



Topic and Rationale

During our growth group, we will focus on how social media affects people emotionally. Our goal is to explore how social media has become an influence in the lives of people and how it influences their emotional well-being. We aim to explore how group members are using social media, what their motives are for using social media, and how their emotions tie into the process of them using it. These emotions are important to understand because depending on how social media is used one's lifestyle is affected. Social media has either a positive or negative impact on individuals and that impact is reflected in their behaviors and attitudes online and offline.

Social media is a way for individuals to interact with one another through several different interfaces found on the internet. The usage of social media has accelerated in recent years. For example, on September 30, 2018, Facebook Newsroom (2018) concluded that 2.27 billion people are monthly active users. This could primarily be due to the fact that, "social networks provide individuals with the chance to present themselves positively and make their moods more positive" (Bilgin & Tas, 2018). In our society, negative emotions are often shunned away and not readily or openly discussed as much as positive emotions are. This could explain why so many individuals gravitate towards social media platforms; they can make their lives appear to be more positive than they are in reality.

How a person views social media depends on whether they use it in an emotionally healthy way or not. For example, Bilgin and Tas (2018) found that those who are capable of handling and coping with their negative

emotions are able to keep from seeking outside validation. They also found that those who lack in “ interpersonal relations and cannot find the need support in the real-life, resort to social media to meet these needs” (Bilgin & Tas, 2018). For example, profiles can be arranged in such a way so that others perceive users in a more positive light. We often like others to see us as our best selves, considering that when negative content is viewed, it has more of a negative effect than positive content does (Schroeder & Cavanaugh, 2018).

Social media has a direct effect on every aspect of life from family and friends to work and school. As with everything we do in life, there are pros and cons that come along as well. Hall (2016) presented that social media makes it “ difficult to convey emotional context”. She was stating that although while people prefer face-to-face interactions (Nagel, Remillard, Aucoin, and Takenishi, 2018), by becoming immersed in social media one may lose skills or hinder the development of stronger skills in empathy and interpretation.

Theoretical Orientation

Person-centered therapy (PCT) is an encouraging, in the moment form of therapy that is centered around the idea that one has the ability to understand the problem at hand, and they are able to comprehend on how to resolve said problem (Corey, Corey, and Corey, 2018). This form of therapy “ promotes the client’s capacity to find and use chance experiences as well as to discover and use his or her inner resources” (Glauser & Bozarth, 2001). In PCT, the counselor needs to listen actively and genuinely, reflect

feelings with a sense of warmth, and be able to paraphrase to help encourage the client in becoming more comfortable (Jones-Smith, 2016). Group leaders also need to be careful not to direct clients and to provide a climate that encourages clients to accept themselves.

Gestalt approach is an existential and phenomenological approach based on the assumption that individuals and their behavior must be understood in the context of their ongoing relationship with the present environment (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2018). Group leaders are there to support members as they break down their perception of self-awareness, in a style that does not violate the integrity of the group members. Corey, Corey, and Corey address this by stating, “ group members identify their own unfinished business from the past that is interfering with their present functioning by re-experiencing past situations as though events were happening in the present moment” (2018).

Theoretical Alignment

Considering our topic consists of social media and emotions, we believe that our theories of choice, person-centered and Gestalt, would be effective in co-leading a group. The two theories both focus on uses of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and warmth. By inviting a climate of acceptance and trust, we are able to help the group further the process of accepting themselves (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2018). PCT is useful in this instance because it involves clients accepting their emotions they may be feeling when considering social media. Gestalt therapy is the holistic view that people are intricately linked to and influenced by their environments

and that all people strive toward growth and balance (Goodtherapy. org, 2018). Social media is a place where we share our emotions, accomplishments, and, sometimes, failures. The degree of support felt is usually what drives the intimacy of content shared. For example, Cho (2017) stated that, “ attitude towards a social networking site is a main driver for the extent of self-disclosure on the social networking site”. Together these theories work together to focus on what is happening in the moment, and as awareness of what is happening increases, group members move towards a more heightened perception of self-awareness. During growth group, we aim to work together to help participants focus on what they are experiencing and feeling, rather than directing them.

Techniques

Person centered therapy consists of three major aspects: being empathetic, having a sense of unconditional positive regard, and introducing a warm and trusting environment (Jones-Smith, 2016). Alongside these techniques, is the concept of being nondirective. When a therapist is nondirective, they allow for the client to have control over their growth in which the therapist “ refrains from exerting influence in the service” (Moon & Rice, 2012). By taking a nondirective stance, one should also be aware to not give advice to the clients. Staying away from giving advice allows the clients the opportunity to be more open and communicate freely (Cheung, 2014). When being nondirective, the counselor also has to incorporate the other three aspects of the theory as well for therapy to be successful. In this growth group, I () plan to do this by being attentive to each member that speaks, asking open ended questions to facilitate a deeper understanding of the

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group, and give plentiful feeling reflections to express warmth and to hone in on feelings rather than content (Jones-Smith, 2016). I will also, if the situation calls for it, self-disclose necessary information to show a sense of empathy and to encourage group members to further explore themselves (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2018) Together, all of these aspects will be able to bring “ here and now reactions to what is occurring with group” (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2018).

Focusing on the here and now, Gestalt approach is about awareness and direct experiences. Feelings, thoughts, body sensations, and actions are all used as pathways to understand what is central for the client in each moment (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2018). While Gestalt is more experimental, our activity presents situations to bring attention to what and how, and here and now. As group leaders, we will serve as a guide to increase awareness, while allowing group members to do the basic work of therapy. The activity presents real-life situations, and members will have to think about their feeling and reactions; moving group from talk, to action and experience.

Outline

*-may be used later in discussion

- *writes on board number statistics for reference later in the group.*
- *passes out name tags*
- *welcomes*

Ice Breaker (3 minutes)

- This icebreaker will provide us, as group leaders, with a preface of each group member non-verbally. We can gain a sense of how the participants view themselves from an emotional standpoint. This will also allow us to see how open they are when discussing their emotions.
 - *introduces ice breaker*
- We will provide each group member with a label to design a personal hashtag “ name tag”. We will then state to the group, “ In front of you are name tags. If you had to make a hashtag or a handle based on your feelings right now, what would it be?”
 - *will allow time for group members to make their name tag*
- Would anyone be interested in sharing what their name tag means?
 - *If you had to add a hashtag or handle in a post, what would it be?
 - *moves the conversation into Topic 1*
 - *Connect how their emotions may transfer into what they post on social media either directly or indirectly.*

Topic 1 (8 minutes)

- We’re wondering how much time do you think you spend on social media?
 - *Allow for time estimates, discuss how they feel when putting it into consideration*
 - *explains statistics on the board*
- How do you feel now knowing those statistics?
- With there being many social media platforms around, which platform do you use most and why?

- *Link together similar answers*
- What do you want to gain from posting on social media? (Sharing life events with family and friends; looking for answers; feeding ego)
 - *Explore emotions within answers/paraphrase/concrete statements*
 - We're wondering if you seek validation from posting on social media?
 - *connect feelings/paraphrase*
- How do using said platforms affect your emotions and your behaviors?
 - *link together similar answers.*

Topic 2 (5 minutes)

- In what ways would you be different without social media?
- Social media has been known to prevent interactions, such as face to face conversations. Have you ever had a time when you experienced this? How did that feel for you?
 - *observe and give collective feeling reflections*
- How have your relationships with people changed since social media has become so prevalent?
 - *self-disclose about writing letters in middle school.*
 - *“ For example, in middle school, my friends and I would physically send letters to each other; now we don't. I'm wondering how some others social interactions have changed.” (PCT alignment)*
 - *leads into activity*

Activity (7 minutes)

- Social Sabotage
 - Each person selects WHERE cards, which give the destination for the message, picture, or caption. Then a WHAT card, which provides awkward messages, pictures or captions they'll need to "send". Since we will be varying the game, each person will only get one of each card. They will then have to read their cards out loud. We would like for them to think about how their cards would affect them emotionally based on as if they were really completing the task. We want them to think of the repercussions that their action may have on them, as well as others emotionally.
 - "Sometimes you may send or share things you don't mean to. Let's say you did what the cards in front of you say. Even though this isn't a real event and some of the topics may seem funny in the moment, in real life things like this happen. Think of a time you may have done something similar, what did that feel like for you?"

Debrief (5 minutes)

- We're wondering what this activity was like for you. What emotions arose when completing this?
- Images, messages, and/or videos are shared on social media that we may not want to be shared. What coping skills would you use if this situation (on the cards) arises for you?

Closing (2 minutes)

- *Bring back the main topic: social media and emotional effects*

- *Reflect on feelings*
- Today we discussed the different platforms of social media and the emotional effect it has on you all. While some may seek validation through social media, some use social media for entertainment, news, and a way to stay connected with friends and relatives. One overarching theme is that social media is used to express feelings; good and bad. What we post is a direct of who we are, what we feel, our values, morals, culture, and beliefs. We hope you enjoyed your time with us today and that is the conclusion of our group.

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