

Group therapy techniques



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Running Head: Group Therapy Group Therapy Techniques of the of the For a group leader, one the most valuable skills is the proper knowledge of Ethical and Profession Guidelines as it is through the guidance of the leader that a group thrives. Group leaders are supposed to establish a friendly and compassionate environment, where members feel free to express themselves while they receive the support they require and experience personal growth.

An important element is listening. Group leaders need to be able to listen and have appropriate responses. Listening doesn't involve just hearing, it includes paying attention to details such as body language, understanding the real message being conveyed through the words spoken and the depth of the expression. The problem is that in therapy most of what is really meant is said non-verbally, so leaders need to pay special attention. For instance, Kline and Johannsen (1935) noted that the face is the primary way to identify the nature of the emotional response, and Mehrabian (1971) found that facial expressions were believed when words and expressions were inconsistent. Group leaders are required to be highly observant, if a member is blocking his/her emotions and the group leader fails to notice that it could lead to unexpected and tetchy outcomes. It is also essential for them to be aware of their own body language and facial expression lest they convey the wrong message.

Group members want to feel like the leader isn't judging them and yet is someone who is better off than them, i. e. someone who can help them. Group leaders need to make members feel like he/she is one of them and is still in a position to assist in every possible way. For this to be possible the depth of how well they understand their emotions and also of how well they

understand needs to be conveyed.

It should go without saying that confidentiality is a key feature of any sort of leadership, it part of expected behavior. When it comes to group therapy, this fact needs to be re-emphasized to leaders. It is requisite for members to feel safe and believe that leaders can be entrusted with such personal information to progress in their sessions and reveal their true-selves. While it is true that it is only the members themselves that have control over what they disclose, they may be made to feel so comfortable that information that they usually wouldn't want to divulge may just come out in the intensity of the moment. Obviously they need assurance that their privacy will be respected and once they have that trust they will be even more comfortable and this in turn will lead to them being even more open, which could only be good for group therapy.

Group members need to be able to seek themselves and be honest with each other. Brown (1996) has said " The leader has a responsibility to help members recognize similarities among themselves so that the group therapeutic factor of universality can emerge." There is an inclination of group members to get ensnared by forceful feelings, it is the group leaders' job in such situations to point out the resemblance and the connection they share. This process is called Linking. Another time when it is possible for a group leader to come in and link is when group members fail to see the pattern in their lives, then by correlation they can perceive the precedent of their lives. They have to learn to capitalize and foster these relationships which undoubtedly will lead to hope.

A group leader needs to be culturally sensitive and aware of cultural differences so that he can be more effective. Cultural influences can be

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highly subtle but nonetheless, they so exist. Discrimination can take place without the leader himself being aware how and when it happens, it can happen by stressing on differences, plain and simple insensitivity or ignorance. When members are made to feel different from those around them chances are that they will alienate themselves from those around them, in this way "group therapy" in itself becomes pointless. If differences need to be pointed out, for any possible positive reason such as making a cross-cultural member feel that he/she is esteemed for his/her difference, it should be done in such a way that even while pointing out differences, the bond that group members share for similarities shouldn't be violated.

Agazarian (1992) very eloquently points out, "groups form around similarities and dissolve around differences."

The extensiveness of what needs to be learned, practiced and understood in order to lead effective group therapy sessions is astounding, and of course leaders cannot be expected to have knowledge of every little detail. It is an ongoing process which is also ascertained with experience.

References

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