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Theory Based Group Counseling



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Agenda

- Importance of Theoretical Foundations
- Steps for Group Development
- Narrative Therapy
 - Sample Group

Benefits of Group Counseling

- Young people and group effectiveness
 - Groups are the treatment of choice for adolescents, why?
 - Are groups successful with young children?

An Equation for Change

- Client Factors
- Relationship Factors
- Hope of Expectancy
- Model of Theoretical Orientation
- The Group

Client Factors

- Strengths
- Talents
- Resources
- Gifts
- Social Supports
- Values

Relationship Factors

- Alliance & perceived support between the practitioner and participant
- Includes:
 - Level of respect
 - Acceptance
 - Warmth
- Complex as leader has a relationship with each member

Hope of Expectancy

- Group leaders are in a unique position to ignite hope (sometimes the students have yet to see strengths in themselves)
- By identifying the best in students they begin to see it for themselves

Model of Theoretical Orientation

- Model directly impacts relationship factors and hope of expectancy
- Model should enhance other factors and fit well in the school setting
- Model should match student expectations and leader's personal style

The Group

- Interactions & feedback can be powerful to members
- Using research can make groups a safe, organized and productive endeavor

The Importance of a Theoretical Model

- Strong potential for affecting the other areas of the equation for change
- Factor over which we have the most control
- Provides a foundation for the group so that activities are not fragmented
- Provides for integrated experiences
- Places us in a great position to effect change

How a Theoretical Orientation Directly Affects Students

- Becomes a framework around which we understand students and their group
- Helps us to have a guide as groups are created which in turn helps students to have structure

Which Model?

- The model we choose depends upon
 - The goals and theme of the group
 - Developmental needs of the members
 - The setting
 - Leader's training & experience

No “Perfect” Theoretical Model

- Ask yourself which model is best for this specific situation
- No single approach has proven to be more effective than others.

Getting a Group Started

- Get Administrative Approval
- Meet With Teachers
- Get Parental Permission
- Choose Developmentally Appropriate Activities

Facilitating a Group

- Select a scope and sequence of topics dependent upon:
 - Group members
 - Relationships
 - Politics of the school
- Select a theoretical model based on:
 - Comfort level and knowledge of the theoretical model
 - Best fit for the factors mentioned above

Sample Session Outline

- Suggested Session Outline for a Cultural Identity Group:
 - 1) Getting to know each other/Setting goals
 - 2) Who am I?
 - 3) Family identity
 - 4) Heroes and Sheroes
 - 5) Music
 - 6) Fairness in our school
 - 7) Discrimination in our town

Sample Session Outline

- Suggested session outline for a social skills group focusing on communication:
 - 1) Getting to know each other/Setting goals
 - 2) Learning to Listen
 - 3) Eye contact
 - 4) Don't interrupt
 - 5) Active listening
 - 6) Waiting
 - 7) Group closure session

Facilitating a Group

- 1st Session:
 - Discussion of what this group is all about (should be tailored to developmental level of the group)
 - Get to know each other activities (Icebreakers)
 - Build Group Cohesion
 - Choose a name for the group
 - Have group create rules for participation

Narrative Therapy

The epitome of creating the life story

Accomplished by the choices or perceived lack of
choices for people

Therapist attempts to create a new story of personal
empowerment

New stories lead to increased satisfaction of client
and new hopefulness

Assumptions about Problems in Narrative Therapy

- Person is situated in their or others stories and they see no alternative
- Person is an active participant in this unsatisfying story
- Story is insufficient in representing person's experiences

Types of Stories

- Oppressive Stories
- Alternative Stories
- Gaps

Focus of Narrative Therapy

- Create alternate stories
- Alternate stories contain a more positive perspective
- Narratives are representations of identities

Narrative Maps

- This is the term that refers to how people organize important aspects of their life to “weave the tapestry of their life’s story” (social constructs)
 - Social constructs: interactions and experiences with others in a historical context

Deconstruction

- Deconstructive listening
- Deconstructive questioning

Practices in Narrative Therapy

- Position Collaboratively
- Externalize the Problem
- Excavate Unique Outcomes
 - Opening space
 - Exception questions
 - Hypothetical questions

Sample Group

- 6 week, Keep Calm counseling group focusing on emotions:
 - 1) Keep Calm & Bond: Getting to know each other/Setting goals
 - 2) Keep Calm & Find Happiness
 - 3) Keep Calm & Find Peace
 - 4) Keep Calm & Find Hope
 - 5) Keep Calm & Find Honesty
 - 6) Group Closure

Session 2: Keep Calm and Find Happiness

- Introduce the topic for the day (happiness vs. sadness)
- Have the group define each feeling
- Read the book “Little Miss Happy”
- Once the book is read have members identify the main themes of the character’s stories and discuss the feedback loop that each character is stuck in. Also discuss the sign that states the rules of Miseryland and how these rules help to construct the townspeople’s stories.
 - Have members develop a sign that guards their own city and keeps happiness away (things in their lives that make it difficult to be happy).

2nd Session Continued

- Ask those who are willing to share their sign.
- Discuss how Little Miss Happy changed the rules and helped the city to rewrite their stories.
- Have members turn their papers over and rewrite their signs to let happiness in.
- To close the group discuss how we can live by rules that cause us to not be happy but with a little bit of re-writing things can change dramatically.

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