Hannah Borstad

**Group Therapy Intervention Self-Reflection**

**Reflection**

The Group Therapy Intervention project allowed me to experience a group counseling session in a realistic setting. My teammates did an excellent job of pretending to be difficult teenagers. I learned I am much more confident in a group setting than anticipated. Leading a group felt comfortable and directing the conversations in positive directions was a rewarding experience. I learned that I manage conflict well and enjoyed helping the group work through difficult emotions and encouraging their growth. My group members were very encouraging and insisted that I had a talent for leading the group.

I did well maintaining group connectedness and promoting interpersonal learning. I leaned into several instances of conflict and opened opportunities for group members to learn how to work through their feelings. I pushed the group to go deeper and maintain the here and now. The group members were initially quiet and snarky, but I kept a calm and good-humored atmosphere that encouraged them to let down their guards. The group began to become more connected and even had moments of catharsis.

After reviewing the session, I realized there were several areas in which I could have improved my practice. I sometimes rushed the group through their reflection to prioritize ending on time. In doing so, I missed other opportunities to go deeper into discussion and develop group trust. If I had redid the group, I would have left more space for client conversations. We demonstrated conflict and interpersonal learning, but in an actual session, I would have allowed the conflict to develop further to provide opportunities for the members to dig deeper and find ways to resolve conflict with one another.

 This assignment taught me about the importance of human relationships in overcoming trauma and learning new coping strategies. Group therapy is something I had never participated in or witnessed before starting my MSW program. My classes have helped me grow in appreciation for group therapy. I understand now that group therapy goes beyond psychoeducation and incorporates interpersonal learning to advance the participants' healing (Yalum, 2022). The participants can act out their feelings in a safe environment and practice new behaviors and reactions with the guidance and encouragement of others. I also gained a deeper understanding of DBT. My teammates recommended doing DBT after we reviewed research that explained how DBT can be beneficial for youth in the juvenile justice system. We used several exercises, such as the Check the Facts and the STOP method, which gave an excellent framework for encouraging the youth to practice new coping mechanisms.

 After this project, I believe I can conduct an actual group session. I have a greater understanding of the importance of preparation and research before starting a group. Planning is critical for the development and success of a group (Kurland, 2006). I now have the skills to research and prepare for sessions. I am prepared to guide group discussions and meet the therapeutic factors Yalum (2022) set out. I feel confident I could facilitate group therapy and grow in my abilities over time.

 My group partners were wonderful teammates. They had the idea of using DBT and helped formulate the group characters. They had great insights regarding how to make our group more inclusive and culturally relevant without being stereotypical. My teammates acted as the characters in our initial video. They were fantastic at pretending to be the young guys and bringing up issues that would naturally arise if our group were honest. Misty has had a great experience with group therapy already, which helped our group feel more authentic and natural. Tomorrow also did a great job of creating activities for the group session. If we were to complete this assignment again, we could grow as a group by providing opportunities for the other members to lead the session and practice the skills. We could also explore other therapeutic methods and techniques, such as art therapy. We encouraged one another to grow by challenging ideas and creating creative solutions. Initially, we looked into traditional CBT, but Tomorrow suggested DBT after finding articles supporting this methodology. We discussed the pros and cons and decided that DBT was the best route for our client base. We worked well together and were able to encourage one another’s growth throughout the process.

**Cultural Issues**

Our group included individuals from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. We had group members who were Italian-American, white, black, and Hispanic. The only cultural discussion during our involved one client saying he was very passionate because he is Italian. As the group facilitator, I acknowledged his statement and turned it around to facilitate learning by saying he could use that passion for good. If the other group members had responded to his statement, it could have led to a healthy discussion about cultural differences and attitudes. It could have led to a discussion of race and ethnicity, which could have caused some conflict. Either way, the discussion would have opened opportunities to practice healthy discussions of race and culture using the STOP method. If we were to conduct the group again, I could have set aside time to intentionally discuss culture among group members, which would have developed their universality by helping them see that they all have an identity that is unique to them and worth sharing with others.

**References**

Kurland, R. (2006). Planning: The neglected component of group development. *Social Work with Groups, 28*(3-4), 9-16.

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