

Southern Adventist University  
School of Social Work and Family Studies

Self-Evaluation Paper

By

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## Group Therapy Self-Assessment Paper

### *Getting Started*

*Set a positive tone*

*Clarified the purpose of the group/ Explained group rules when necessary*

**Therapist:** Welcome everybody, I'm Mike, I'll be the facilitator today in the group. Our group is covering depression and anxiety, I'm sure everyone is aware of that. Before we get started I'm going to explain how the group works. I have a pad here; I'm going to be taking some notes so I can keep track of where we are going and some things we have brought up. One thing I want everybody to realize is that here in the group we may bring up some sensitive issues, some things people don't want taken out of the group, so we need to be respectful of that and remember our confidentiality that everything we say and do needs to stay in this room that way it creates a safe atmosphere so people can share and not worry about it going outside here. Can everybody agree on that?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of opening the group session.

**Group:** Everybody agrees

*Explained his/her role*

*Explained how the group will be conducted when necessary*

**Therapist:** About myself, how I like to do these groups is sometimes when I go around and ask a question somebody might start going on about the question, if I interrupt you I'm not being rude, I'm not trying to be rude, Just respecting the rest of the group so we have time to cover all the other issues because our time is limited in this group. Also if somebody is answering a

question, you may notice me looking around the room at everybody else, the reason I'm doing that is I'm trying to gage your reaction to what they are saying and see if you have a connection with something they are saying. What I want to do first is go around the room and tell me your name and what brought you here today.

Comment: I'm satisfied with the response. It met the goal of setting a positive tone and explaining my role in the group.

*Helped members get acquainted/Demonstrated active listening*

**Group:** Each member introduced their selves and explained they had been having high levels of anxiety and depression.

*Helped members verbalize expectations*

**Therapist:** It sounds like we have a lot of anxiety and depression among the group members here. So what I want to do now is tell me your expectations for this therapy group, what do you expect to get out of this therapy?

Comment: I'm satisfied with the response. It met the goal of helping the members verbalizing their expectations for the group.

**Group:** Members expressed their expectations which included getting rid of anxiety and learning coping skills to deal with things that are going on in their life. One member Syletta states she does not know what her expectations are.

*Drew out members when necessary*

**Therapist:** (Speaking to Syletta) you don't have any expectations for group?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. I think it met the goal of trying to draw a member out.

**Syletta:** I don't know?

*Used exercises when necessary/Understood the purpose of the group and communicated this to the members when necessary*

**Therapist:** Ok we can get back to that, just think about it and we will check back on that later.

One of the good things about having group therapy for depression and anxiety is that you have other members and can hear their stories and see what has worked for them and what has not worked for them and what they have tried. So you can actually use this as a resource.

Depression and anxiety is kind of like being at war and fighting an unseen enemy, the one thing you need is your comrades. This group can create a solid foundation and help you get past some of the anxiety and depression. What I want to do, usually when you start out these groups, people don't really feel safe to talk about things, so I want to get to know one another I want to try a little exercise right off, a real quick exercise one or two minutes. I'm going to pass out a piece of paper; on the paper I just want you to write three things about yourself, real short things, not long, we will share this with the group. Write two true things and one false that people don't know about you but I don't want you tell us which one is which.

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of using exercises when necessary and I believed the exercise was really useful.

*Addressed questions as necessary/had an effective plan regarding the direction and activities of the group.*

**Sidney:** And everybody in the group is going to see what everybody else wrote?

**Therapist:** Correct, we are going to share this with the group so that we can feel more comfortable.

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of addressing questions from group members when necessary.

**Sidney:** Ok.

**Therapist:** (passes out paper and pens) something real brief that people don't know about you. (Group conducting exercise).

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. I was explaining that I didn't want to spend a lot of time on this as our time was limited so something short would work.

**Therapist:** Ok Lisa while you're finishing up we are going to start with Sidney. What I want you to do is read off these three things, and the rest of the group, we will vote and see which ones we believe are true and which ones are false.

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response however I probably should have waited until Lisa was done writing her answers to make this statement.

**Group:** (Members read off their statements and the group votes on statements). When Brandon reads off his list the members vote and find out that what they believed was true was actually false and what they believed was false was true. They start to loosen up and smile and start interacting about the exercise.

*Checked out the comfort level of members when necessary/Demonstrated, as necessary, the use of a variety of rounds.*

**Therapist:** Now what I want to do is now that we have done this bit, you know when we first came in everybody was a little apprehensive, what I want to do is go around the room one more time and on a scale of one to ten with one being not comfortable at all to ten being comfortable, how are you feeling now with the group? We will start here this time. (Selecting Lisa).

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of using rounds in the group setting while also checking the pulse of the group after the exercise.

**Lisa:** I would say probably a 4.

**Syletta:** I still don't know?

**Therapist:** Ok you still don't know. We are not going to force you to answer any questions.

That's one thing in this group is that we are never going to force anybody to answer questions. If you don't feel like answering we will respect that.

Comment: This comment was probably the correct statement to make at this time.

Correction: Ok so what would you say was your comfort level was coming into the group compared to now? This response may have gotten more of a response out of the member.

**Sydney:** I feel like a 5. I feel a lot better now than I did when I first walked in about talking in front of them.

**Brandon:** I guess a 7.

**Therapist:** I'm glad you guys feel a little more comfortable and Syletta hopefully we will get to that place where you will start to feel more comfortable, ok? (Syletta nods)

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of encouraging and supporting the group members.

*Established and maintained the groups focus/Was able to appropriately shift the focus from a person to a topic and back when necessary.*

**Therapist:** We have already mentioned we are having a lot of anxiety and depression with our members so what I want to do is think about one time when you weren't stressed out and you didn't have all this depression and all this anxiety and tell what was different about that time.

We will start with you Sydney.

Comment: This response was not the correct response to make as it was not in the here and now and made the members think about the past instead of getting better.

Correction: We mentioned that anxiety and depression have been a problem for members, what are some ways in which each of you deal with these problem situations. This response would have allowed the members to look for solutions that would help them deal with the problem times.

**Sydney:** Well I have four kids and when I was married to their dad I was not so depressed because I had help. So after we got divorced and he remarried someone with four kids of her own he put everything on me, he just left me to take care of them all. So I guess when I was married and I had help I was ok.

**Therapist:** So during that time you didn't have so much anxiety?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of demonstrating clarification and questioning with the members of the group.

**Sydney:** Right.

**Therapist:** Ok Brandon what about you?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. This statement along with use of eyes let Brandon know it was his turn to address the group.

**Brandon:** I guess for me when I didn't have so much anxiety was when my wife was at home before the divorce, before she took the kids and left. Everyone was at home and everything was going well. So I didn't feel the way I do now.

**Therapist:** So you didn't have all the anxiety you do now?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It was used to ensure I was understanding what Brandon was saying.

**Brandon:** (nods).

**Therapist:** Syletta, when was there a time when you were not having as much anxiety as your having now.

Comment: Once again I probably should not have been asking about the past and instead focused on the present when dealing with group members facing depression and anxiety.

Correction: Syletta, how has your week been going? This short and simple response would have gotten the client to address the group and led the group in a different direction.

**Syletta:** When I had a job.

**Therapist:** When was that?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of clarification and questioning.

**Syletta:** About six months ago.

*Demonstrated effective use of voice/Demonstrated clarification and questioning*

**Therapist:** Six months. So it's been quite a while since you haven't felt any anxiety? That must be pretty hard on you.

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. This met the goal of showing empathy to the member while also using effective use of voice.

**Syletta:** (Nods)

**Therapist:** Lisa.

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. This was used to let Lisa know she could answer.

**Lisa:** I would have to agree with Syletta. When I was working I had less anxiety plus when I wasn't in school I had less anxiety?

**Therapist:** So when you were working, how long ago was that?



Comment: This comment could have been worded differently to get more of a response out of the member.

Correction: So when you were working you didn't have all the anxiety you're having now?

Why do you think that is? This response would have clarified the answer she gave and let her explain what problems she was now facing that was causing her anxiety.

**Lisa:** A year and a half.

*Demonstrated encouragement and support*

**Therapist:** (Motioning to Lisa and Syletta) so both of you can identify that the whole not working thing creates a lot of anxiety. That's pretty common when you're thinking about how you're going to pay your bills and how you're going to support your children. Maybe you guys would be able to be a crutch for each other or a resource to talk about it. (Motioning to Syletta) I hope that makes you feel a little more comfortable knowing she is facing some of the same challenges you are.

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of linking and at the same time made Syletta feel like someone else could understand her story.

**Syletta and Lisa:** (Both nod).

**Therapist:** (Addressing Brandon) so right now, how are you feeling inside the group? As your sitting there are you depressed or....

Comment: Although this question was in the here and now it should not have been worded in this way.

Correction: So as your sitting here in group how are you feeling? This response would have gotten the answer I was looking for without adding the depressed part in it. Saying depression insinuated that he was depressed at this moment which may not have been the best response.

**Brandon:** I guess I'm doing alright. The more I think about it the more those depressive feelings kind of hit me. Right now it's alright. Not too depressed at the moment.

**Therapist:** So what are some of the things that have been causing your anxiety and depression?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. I used this question so that Brandon would open up and identify the cause of his depression.

### *Demonstrated reflection*

**Brandon:** Since my wife left with the kids and I'm at home by myself I think about things too much. That's why I like being out, I don't think about it.

**Therapist:** Like we mentioned earlier, that's like the group, it gives you people to talk to.

Comment: This statement was not a good response as it did not encourage the client.

Correction: I'm sorry to hear about that, that could cause anybody to feel depressed and that understandable. How do you deal with it now? This response would have showed the client empathy and also found out what steps he was taking now to get through the day.

**Brandon:** Yea.

### *Dealing with problem situations/ The resistant member*

**Therapist:** Sydney, how are you feeling right now?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of drawing the member out and also focusing on the present moment.

**Sydney:** Well to be honest, I don't want to be here. I feel like I have nothing in common with everybody else. I mean yea they are depressed but we don't have the same problems. Don't have the same reasons to be depressed about. So I don't.....I really don't see the point of me being here, I don't want to listen to people talk about their problems, that's not what I want to do.

### *Yalom's Curative Factors-Universality*

**Therapist:** That's understandable. A lot of people feel like they don't identify with other members, that they don't want to be here. What are some things that can cause your depression?

Comment: Although part of this response may have been proper it left the client's feelings of not wanting to be in the group unattended.

Correction: That's understandable. A lot of people feel like they don't identify with other members and they are often reluctant of the group process when starting it. How can we make the group more comfortable for you? This response would have should empathy to the client and would have stayed on the subject in which the client was dealing with at that time.

### *Dealing with negative member*

**Sydney:** Coming to group is one, with a bunch of strangers. But the biggest part of my depression like I said is me having these four kids by myself, I don't make enough money to take care of four children. I don't want to go on welfare, I don't want to lose my house and live in the projects.

### *Demonstrated Linking*

**Therapist:** Ok just prior, Syletta and Lisa both talked about facing anxiety since they lost their jobs. I think you guys have more in common than what you think you do....

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of linking.

**Sydney:** I have a job.

**Therapist:** Ok but you still have the same financial strains like your saying with four kids; it's hard to support them even with a job.

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of linking to members anxiety issues with the current member.

**Sydney:** Yea it is.

**Therapist:** A lot of financial strains that people face causes a lot of anxiety, it creates problems and problems lead to depression, kina like a domino effect. Lisa what about you, how are you feeling right now?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal mini-lecturing and information-giving.

**Lisa:** I feel a little bit better doing the exercise it helped deal with some of the anxiety I was having, it's not as bad anymore.

**Therapist:** Syletta, How are you feeling right now?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of drawing this member out and getting her to think about the present moment.

**Syletta:** I just feel like I'm here.

*Drew out members when necessary/Dealing with resistant member*

**Therapist:** Tell me more about that.

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of getting the client to open up and go into more detail about the issue at hand.

**Syletta:** I don't really know these people and I just really reserved.

**Sydney:** Even with you telling us that what we say in this group stays in this group, we are still talking in front of strangers.....

*Cut off members when necessary/*

**Therapist:** Let me stop you right there for a second. Actually just a little while ago she (Syletta) said she didn't feel comfortable with the group. A lot of people come into this and it's normal with groups, it's not abnormal that you feel that way. That's why we do a lot of these exercises, trying to get our comfort level a little better. We are not going to feel comfortable this

first session maybe not the second, but hopefully as time progresses we will get more and more comfortable.

Comment: Although I think this comment met the goal of cutting of a member it probably should have been worded differently and some of it left out.

Correction: Sydney let me stop you for a min. Our time is limited and I want to make sure we stay focused. A lot of people come into groups and feel uncomfortable; it's not abnormal that you feel that way. That's why we do a lot of these exercises, trying to get our comfort level a little better. Hopefully as we continue our meeting each one of you will become more and more comfortable with the group. This statement would have provided an effective cut off to the member but then shifted the focus back to the statement the other member just stated and let the group know that the group is a work in progress.

*Addressed questions as necessary*

**Brandon:** So it's kind of normal to feel this way?

**Therapist:** Yes it is normal, usually most people feel that way. Sometimes I feel that way, I'm nervous, I'm anxious so it's not uncommon to feel that way. (Group nods)

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of universality and ensuring the client the feeling he was having were not uncommon.

*Summarized and highlighted the main points of the group*

**Therapist:** Our time today is kind of limited so what I want to do is go over what we worked on today which was getting a comfortable environment and talking about our anxiety, about our depression and things that have been happening just kind of summarizing what we went over.

You need the correct atmosphere, Brandon had a lot of things that you guys didn't actually think was him; there was a lot of laughing.

Comment: Although this comment was meant to summarize the session it should have been worded better.

Correction: Because there are only a few minutes left in today's session, let's review what we have gone over today. This statement would have led to a good closing summary of the group while also letting the members know the group was about over.

**Sydney:** He surprised us.

### *Yalom's Universality*

**Therapist:** Correct. There was a lot of laughing there so it kind of lightened up the mood. Now you guys know something about Brandon that other people don't know. (Brandon nods).

The depression that you're facing and the anxiety, a lot of times people that are depressed feel like there is nobody there with them and that they are all out on their own facing the world by themselves and that's common for people to feel that way and hopefully that's what we will do as a group is to come together and support the other members of the group. I think we made a lot of progress today as far as getting comfortable and discussing some of our issues and I like to hear what you guys think. Do you think we made any progress Lisa?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of Yalom's universality.

**Lisa:** I'm not as anxious or scared to be here as I was when I first walked in.

**Therapist:** That's good. Syletta.

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It encouraged the client and helped improve her comfort level in the group.

**Syletta:** It was good listening to everybody else's problems. I know I'm not by myself.

**Therapist:** That's good we want everybody to understand that you're not alone in this (Group nods).

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It met the goal of showing the group encouragement and support.

**Sydney:** I feel a lot more comfortable. I guess coming in, I won't say who, but I thought a couple people in here were stuck up but after talking I see that they are not like that people just handle problems differently.(Brandon nods)

*Planned for and conducted an effective close for the first session/Allowed time for closing*

**Therapist:** Before we close does anybody have any comments or suggestions they would like to throw out there before we close?

Comment: I'm satisfied with this response. It gave the clients a chance to bring up anything they felt was of importance however I probably should have allowed more time for the closing but lost track of time in the session.

**Therapist:** So before we wrap this up kind of what I want to get out here is....If you leave therapy today and you were on the road to getting better, you weren't totally depression or anxiety free but you were on the road to getting better, what is one thing that you would do before our next meeting next week? We will start with you Syleta.

Comment: This response was not worded correctly and left myself and possibility the members confused.

Correction: Does anyone have something that was stirred up during the session that they want to mention? We'll either deal with it now, if it won't take too long, or we will deal with it at the next session. This statement would have let the members bring up issues they saw as relevant and gave them a proper space to do so. It also would have allowed the members to summarize what they believed happened in the group and could have pointed out important aspects which could be used in a follow up session.

**Syleta:** I guess I would go look for a job.

**Lisa:** Try not to worry about things that I cannot change.

**Sydney:** I just would not cry so much.

**Brandon:** I would think about what's going on instead of trying to ignore it.

**Therapist:** Ok those things are things we are going to think about and talk about next week, but I just wanted to tell you guys thank you for coming in today and I hope I'll see you next week.

**Comment:** This response showed that I did not allow enough time for the closing and left the feeling of the group members unattended as we ended the session.

**Correction:** We are going to stop now. I think we made a lot of progress in this first session and I want to thank each of you for coming in and I will see you next week. This response would have provided a better closing and letting the members know I thought we had made some progress and thanking them for the time they contributed to the group.



## Reflection

### My Role

Although my role as an advanced autonomous practitioner is still somewhat questionable, I think I will be able to improve over time and with more training. Prior to just a few weeks ago I had never worked with groups nor had I ever been a part of a group, so the experience was totally new for me. I think I did a good job working the group I was with. Although the members of my group were classmates I decided to discuss topics and issues that were in fact reality to the individuals real lives and the problems they have been facing recently. During my sessions, I believe I showed professionalism, ethics, and empowerment towards the client and used critical thinking during our sessions to help my group focus on key issues.

While conducting my sessions I think I did a pretty good job effectively demonstrating my role as an advanced autonomous practitioner. During the session I did a pretty good job helping the members get acquainted and I believe I set a positive tone from the beginning. I demonstrated active listening and use of eyes when dealing with members inside the group. I liked what some members perceived as problems with other members problems and I think the energy of the group was pretty good. When I started the group I had an effective plan regarding the direction and activities of the group but I got off track a midway through the session. I believe that the first session is vital to getting the members to feel comfortable which will allow them to open up in later sessions and during this first session I did several things to see that this happened. I used an exercise which seemed to work and had the whole group involved and I could see them open up a little more. I also checked the comfort level of the members after the exercise as I believed that they had open up and were more receptive about the issues we were discussing.

I believe that my role as an advanced autonomous practitioner could have been strengthened if I had spent more time practicing the techniques. Although I think I conducted most the required assignments in the video there is plenty of room for improvement. After watching the video I feel like I may have gotten off track and lost focus for a while as I became more concerned with the comfort of the members than about the topic of depression and anxiety. I also noticed that although I did draw out the silent member I probably should have done more to get the individual more involved in the group instead of being more passive. All in all I liked the session I conducted but one important factor I'm going to need to practice in maintaining the focus of the group and better communicating the purpose of the group to the members.

I think my role as an advanced autonomous practitioner can also be strengthened by continuing my education and attending outside seminars which focus on group therapy techniques. I could have secured a better place to conduct the interview which would have provided a professional atmosphere. I also think I could have slowed my speech down and talked a little clearer as this may have helped the clients follow along more closely.

### **Diversity Issues**

The diversity issues I needed to be aware of during the session were age, ethnicity, and gender. The clients in my group were of different age, gender, and ethnicity. Three of the clients were female and were approximately forty years old and one was a male in his late twenties. Two of the females were African American while one was Caucasian. Due to them being classmates I thought I knew what to expect from them in the session but it backfired when dealing with personal issues in the group. There have been some issues outside of the classroom that my members have been dealing with and I thought it might be a good idea to try and talk

about real issues but it appeared as though some were not really into participating in this, however, I did get them to start opening up somewhat and explain the issues they have been facing in real life and talk about the depression and anxiety they have been facing since. While no direct diversity issues arose in the session being aware of them is beneficial to continuing my role as a Solution Focused therapist.

Learning to communicate clearly and effectively would probably be the most important thing I could do to enhance my cultural competence. I speak in a fast manner and have a tone in which it is difficult for people who have lived in this area all their life to understand. I believe that cultural competency is one of my strong points in that I have dealt with individuals from all over the world of different ethnic groups and gender and have become very cultured. I think I did all that I could possibly do to make sure there were no diversity issues between the clients and I however I often found myself unable to understand myself when watching the video.

### **Ethical Issues**

Under the NASW code of ethics there are several issues that could arise when practicing social work such as commitment to clients, self-determination, competence, sexual harassment, the use of derogatory language, respect, impairment, discrimination, and misrepresentation. Although there are several more ethical issues involved in the social work field these were the ones that I believed could have surfaced during our sessions.

A social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the wellbeing of the client. I believe I showed this by acting in a respectful fashion. I was mindful of the individual differences of the group members with regards to cultural and ethnic diversity. I attended the group sessions and set up the location and scheduled a time that was convenient for the members. I think my group session may not have been that good on video but I feel like I

actually accomplished something with my members that was real world and was effective. After the session we all stood in the parking lot for almost two hours talking about what had been discussed and the issues that arose. I felt this was probably ok due to all the members being in the group and they were the only ones present.

Self-determination is another ethical issue that played a role in the sessions. Therapist respect and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their expectations for the group which I think I attempted to do in this session. Although many times I was off the mark we attempted to do this and I think we prevailed in some small way. This is an area that I'm sure I will become more comfortable with each time I practice sessions and as my education continues.

Sexual harassment and the use of derogatory language are another two ethical issues discussed in the NASW guidelines. Neither of these issues arose for me with my clients but I did have to make sure my language was on par for the session. Often times I will find myself using profanity as not even know it so I actually pretty pleased with my results during this session.

I think I did a pretty good job with competence in that I have practiced and read the group therapy text several times over, although I may have practiced outside my ability in dealing with these issues. Although my competence is far from the professional I believe that I have grown vastly since first starting group therapy and will continue to do so as I progress with my education.

Lastly I showed my clients respect by being on time for the sessions and being considerate to their thoughts. During the session I listened to the clients and used only what I had learned when dealing with groups. I tried not to interrupt when they were speaking, except when I had to demonstrate cutting off, and made them feel as though their feelings were valuable. I tried to be fair with the clients in giving each a time to speak about what they felt was

the problem they were there for. I encouraged them in the efforts they were taking in coming to group and also on things they had done previously in their outside situations. I also refrained from impairment in that I did not allow my own personal problems to interfere with my judgment and performance and I did not jeopardize the best interest of my clients with whom I had a professional responsibility to.

### **Social Justice**

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. One such value is that of social justice in which workers should promote the general welfare of society. One way this is done is through advocacy in which we should attempt to facilitate informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions. I don't believe there were any social justice issues that arose in my sessions that I could identify. Although I'm sure there may have been some form of social injustice hidden in the session somewhere, I could not locate it. My clients did not suffer from discrimination, oppression, poverty, or any other form of social injustice that I could recognize.