

Introduction

Over the course of the past semester, I have gained many clinical skills for working with groups. As a culmination of my knowledge and growth in working with groups, I facilitated a 40-minute group session. This paper reflects on my experience facilitating my group session. Below, I have transcribed the group session, made an evaluative comment on each statement I spoke, and provided an alternative correction for each statement. The paper will conclude with a personal reflection of my facilitation.

Transcription, Evaluations, and Corrections

Clarified purpose:

Therapist:

Good afternoon, guys. I'm glad to see you all here today. My name is Savannah and I'm the facilitator here. This is a group for grief therapy. Everyone here has lost someone or is grieving a loss, and we'll talk about that. This is a closed group, so look at the faces around you. You will be seeing these faces every week for the next 12 weeks. We'll meet here at the same place at the same time for about an hour and 20 minutes every week. Does anybody have any questions about the group or its location and meeting time?

Comment: I feel as though my, “and we’ll talk about that” statement was awkward and/or redundant. I’d like to rephrase to include more about how we will be discussing grief and loss.

Correction: Everyone here has lost someone or is grieving a loss. During this group we will process our journey of grief through discussions and group exercises.

Therapist:

Okay, wonderful. Well, I'd like to take a moment for everybody to get to know each other before we continue on with the group session. Take a moment and think about ... Yes?

Lily:

I don't want to say anything about myself until I know that people are not going to talk to other people about me.

Comment: I am conflicted as to whether or not I should have allowed Lily to interrupt the beginning of my session the way she did. On the one hand, I want group members to feel open to voice their concerns, however, on the other hand, it opened the door to allow her to take us off topic and to interrupt in the future. I could have had the group members contemplate the thing that I was going to have them think about while I heard the concern of Lily. Then, if it was a pressing issue, I could address it before going around the group to discuss what they had thought about.

Correction: Okay, wonderful. Well, I'd like to take a moment for everybody to get to know each other before we continue on with the group session. Take a moment and think about... *Directed towards Lily* I will get to your question in one moment. I would like everyone to take a moment

and think about something positive about their past week. *Directed towards Lilly* What is your question?

Confidentiality:

Therapist:

That's fine. Alright, she brings up a good point about confidentiality. Confidentiality means that what is said here stays here and that nobody shares what is said anywhere else with anybody. Not your kids, not your spouse, not your...uhm... not your best friend. Does anybody have any questions about confidentiality?

Do we all feel like we can keep confidentiality?

Julie:

Yes.

Lily:

I can.

Comment: It is clear that I was taken off guard by Lily's statement. Even though I am familiar with sharing about confidentiality, I could have conveyed it more assuredly in the moment, omitting the pauses and "uhh's."

Correction: She is bringing up a good point, called confidentiality. Is everyone familiar with the idea of confidentiality? ... Confidentiality means that what is said here stays here, that we do not go home and share what is said by other group members with anybody, not your spouse, friends, or kids. Does anybody have any questions about confidentiality?

Do we all feel like we can keep confidentiality?

Therapist:

Is that better?

Julie:

Yeah, thank you.

Comment: Since Lily said, "I do not feel comfortable..." I should have addressed her feelings directly after discussing confidentiality.

Correction: Do you feel more comfortable now?

Therapist:

Okay. Thank you for bringing that up.

Julie:

Thank you very much.

Comment: Instead of just saying, “Thank you for bringing that up,” I could have redirected my wording towards to concept.

Correction: Okay, thank you for bringing up the importance of confidentiality.

Helped members get acquainted:

Set a positive tone:

Round:

Therapist:

But I would just like everyone to go around and say their name and something positive that happened to them this week. Okay? Alright, do we have any takers to start?

Comment: Having the group members think of something that happened to them could be a limitation to the answers they come up with. It is possible that something positive from their week was not an even that happened, but rather a feeling or experience.

Correction: I would like everyone to go around and say their name and something positive about their week. Would anyone like to start us off?

Lily:

I'll start. My name is Lily and something positive that happened to me this week is that I'm still alive and here. 'Cause I don't want to be. So I'm guessing that's positive that I'm still here.

Therapist:

Okay, well we are very glad that you are here, Lily.

Lily:

Thank you.

Comment: In the moment, I interpreted Lily's comment to mean that she did not want to be in group. After re-watching the video and reading the dialog, I see that it is possible that she was referring to something larger than group session.

Correction: Well I, for one, am very glad that you are here, Lily. Could you explain to me what you mean when you said that you don't want to be here?

Therapist:

Okay, how about you?

Comment: I could omit the “okay.”

Correction: How about you?

Jalene:

My name's Jalene and I found a five-dollar bill in the Burger King parking lot this morning.

Lily:
That's awesome.

Therapist:
Oh, that's awesome.

Jalene:
Yeah.

Julie:
Heck yeah.

Lily:
I'd love five dollars.

Therapist:
Nobody can argue with that, huh?

Jalene:
Free meal.

Lily:
Yeah.

Comment: This round of comments among the group was a light-hearted and brief discussion about Jalene's positive event and promoted bonding within the group.

Correction: I have no concerns with this dialogue.

Julie:
Well there hasn't been a whole lot of positive stuff. Oh, my name is Julie. I guess the only thing that I can think of is that it's not raining now, because ever since stuff happened to me and I lost somebody I love, it's just been raining. So all I want to do is stay in bed. I guess that's the positive thing is that it's not raining today.

Therapist:
Yeah. Have you ever heard of seasonal depression?

Julie:
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Therapist:
It is a real thing, guys. When it's raining, it can be hard for us to feel like we want to be

motivated to get out of bed. And it did rain for several weeks there, didn't it? So that is definitely a positive.

Julie:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Comment: Julie's comment made me think of seasonal depression. I should have summarized what Julie told me before bringing up seasonal depression to make the connection between the two more clear.

Correction: So you are thankful that it is not raining anymore because it has been affecting your desire to get out of bed and get things done? ...Have you ever heard of seasonal depression? ...Yeah, it is a real thing guys, and it can be hard at times to feel motivated to get out of bed, especially since it was raining for several weeks. So that is definitely a positive, thank you for sharing Julie.

Lily:

My house got flooded.

Therapist:

Oh, did it?

Comment: Here Lily interrupted the group for a second time. I had a feeling that she would end up taking the group off-topic, but I felt obligated to address her comment. My comment opened the door to allow her to bring the group off-topic. I could have said something else that acknowledged her comment, without allowing her to distract the group and ramble.

Correction: That sounds like a pretty major event. Maybe you can tell us more about it sometime.

Lily:

Yeah, my house got flooded. I live on this really low area, this low line valley area. I live in a trailer but the blocks that it's on, it's down. They kind of sunk down I guess you could say. I'm trying to think here. So what they did is when they brought the trailer in, they were putting the blocks up and they went ahead and put them up first, but they didn't take any of the grass out or anything. They didn't lay a foundation; they didn't take the blocks out. All they did was they just started stacking them up on top of each other and then they bring the trailer in and just put it right on top of it.

Therapist:

So when it rained it flooded your house.

Comment: Lily was talking so fast that I had a hard time knowing when to cut her off. When I was first learning about interviewing skills during my undergraduate experience, a lot of stress was placed on NOT interrupting people, so I think that that has caused me to be hesitant when needing to cut individuals off now. My comment was intended to show interest while breaking

up her rapid-fire speech. However, it did not work and she just kept going. I should have taken that opportunity to cut her off, even though she has not even gotten to her main point yet.

Correction: I am sorry to hear that the rain flooded your house. Unfortunately, we only have so much time for group today and we need to make sure that all of the members have time to share. Do you mind if we postpone the rest of your story for later?

Lily:

Yeah, it flooded. And then when it was flooding and everything, I couldn't get out. That's why I stayed at home is because ... well, I'm depressed too, and I'm depressed because of the person that I lost. But I stayed home because I can't get out anyway because my house is sinking. And then I'm like, 'Well I think I'm just going to sink down with my whole entire house. I'm just going to sink down and nobody cares. Nobody's coming to see me, nobody even checks on me to see where I am.' I have-

Julie:

Anna didn't even get to finish yet.

Therapist:

Yeah, that's a good point.

Lily:

But I have a phone ... Well, I just have a few more things to say.

Cut-off a group member:

Maintained focus:

Therapist:

Do you mind if we wait until it's time to talk about how our grief has been affecting us?

Comment: I felt embarrassed that another group member felt like they needed to cut Lily off for me, because I had not done it yet. I really was intending to cut her off, I just had a hard time doing it right away because she was talking so fast and I was strictly taught not to interrupt clients.

Correction: That is a good point. Since it seems like you are beginning to talk more about your grief. Do you mind if we wait to hear the rest of what you have to say for when it is time to talk about how our grief has been affecting us?

Lily:

Okay. Yeah, I guess that's fine.

Therapist:

Yeah, Julie brings up a good point. In the interest of time for the group, we'll need to stay on

track, okay?

Lily:
Okay.

Comment: I am satisfied with this response.

Correction: I am satisfied with this response.

Anna:
What was I supposed to say?

Therapist:
You were going to say your name and something positive that happened to you this week.

Comment: Saying “you were going to say...” might make the group member feel forgetful. I could have put it back onto the group here.

Correction: We were taking turns sharing our name and something positive from this past week.

Anna:
My name is Anna and my plants are growing pretty good. I just planted them and I was kind of worried about it, but they're growing pretty good, so that's something good.

Drew out a group member:

Dealt with a hesitant member:

Therapist:
Good. What kind of plants do you have?

Comment: Anna seemed hesitant, so I asked some more questions about her plants in the hopes of getting her to feel more comfortable sharing with the group.

Correction: I am comfortable with this response.

Anna:
I just planted oregano and cilantro.

Therapist:
Okay. Do you like to do a lot of cooking?

Comment: I could have moved onto the next group member at this point.

Correction: I would omit this response.

Anna:

Not really, but my husband does.

Therapist:

Oh, okay. So the herbs are for him?

Comment: I could have moved onto the next group member.

Correction: I would omit this response.

Anna:

Yeah, and I like it 'cause they smell good.

Explained role:

Therapist:

Okay. Well that's good. I'm glad that they are growing well and that you'll be able to use them.

Well, I'll say it again, my name is Savannah. Something positive that happened to me this week, including the good weather, I was able to go and take a nice walk and I got some frozen yogurt at the end of my walk.

I'd like to tell you a little bit more about myself as a facilitator. My role is to lead the group discussion and to ask thought provoking questions, and to keep us on track if we were to maybe get a little bit distracted about what we're supposed to talk about. That's a very important part of group because since we only have an hour and 20 minutes every week, it's really important that we stay on track so that we can talk about everybody's needs and can get through everything that we have planned. Does anybody have any questions about my role as the facilitator?

Okay. We're just about to get into our first group exercise, but before we do that, I'd like to go over rules and expectations. We already went over one rule. Does anybody know what that rule we went over was? Yes?

Comment: Sharing something positive about my week was an appropriate example of self-disclosure. I also demonstrated explaining my role well. I would omit the part about getting through everything that we have planned, because the needs of the group out-weigh any lesson plans that I might have had and I want to convey flexibility when necessary to the group. Saying that we are about to go into our first exercise is not necessary at this point, because we still have to do rules and expectations. I would omit the last question, because it sounded like I was addressing a class of students, rather than a group of equal adults.

Correction: Okay. Well that's good. I'm glad that they are growing well and that you'll be able to use them.

Well, I'll say it again, my name is Savannah and I am the facilitator. Something positive that happened to me this week, including the good weather, I was able to go and take a nice walk and I got some frozen yogurt at the end of my walk.

I'd like to tell you a little bit more about myself as a facilitator. My role is to lead the group discussion and to ask thought provoking questions, and to keep us on track if we were to maybe get a little bit distracted about what we're supposed to talk about. This is a very important part of group because since we only have an hour and 20 minutes every week, it's really important that we stay on track so that we can talk about everybody's needs and everybody gets a chance to share and benefit equally. Does anybody have any questions about my role as the facilitator?

Okay. We're just about to get into our first group exercise, but before we do that, I'd like to go over rules and expectations. We already went over one rule, which is confidentiality.

Lily:
Confidentiality.

Rules:

Therapist:

Confidentiality. And you brought it up. In addition to confidentiality, does anybody have any other rules that they would like us group members to follow? Yeah?

Comment: In my previous comment, I stated that I would like to omit my question about confidentiality that elicited the first portion of my response. Instead of just saying the group members will follow the rules, I would like to present them as a mutual benefit to all group members.

Correction: Does anybody have any other rules that feel our group could benefit from?

Julie:
Be respectful of the time. I know that we're only here for like an hour and I feel that the time that we're here is not even going to be enough to just even touch the surface of mine, let alone other people's stuff. I just say be respectful of time so that we can all try to feel better.

Shift focus between person and topic:

Therapist:

And what does being respectful of time look like to you?

Comment: I could reaffirm Julie by stating that this is an important rule first.

Correction: That is an important rule for us to consider. What does being respectful of group time look like to you?

Julie:
Getting here on time, not interrupting, and that stuff.

Therapist:

Okay. Thank you for sharing. I think we can all agree that that's a rule that we'll be able to follow. Does anybody else have a rule that they would like to add?

Comment: Instead of speaking for the group by saying we'll be able to follow it, just reaffirm its importance and move on.

Correction: Okay, thank you for sharing. This is an important rule for us to consider as a group. Does anybody else have a rule that they would like to add?

Jalene:
No phones.

Therapist:

No phones? Okay, that's a good one. I know we always all have our phones on us. They're our watch and our GPS and our contact. But during the one hour and 20 minutes that we're here in group, it would be respectful of us if we were to put those phones away just for a few minutes.

Anna, do you have anything that you would like to add?

Comment: Anna is the hesitant member of the group. I wanted to draw her out by asking her if she had any rules she'd like to add. I could have worded my questions better so that it does not come across as harsh; more of an inquiry rather than an interrogation.

Correction: Anna, are there any other rules you can think of that the group might benefit from?

Anna:
Just don't interrupt when someone is talking.

Therapist:

Okay. Yeah, that would be a respectful rule would be not to interrupt when other people are talking. That's basic respect. So for rules we have confidentiality, we have respecting the time by not getting here late and not over talking, and not interrupting others, and we have no phones. Did I cover all of the rules?

Comment: Instead of asking if I covered all the rules, I could just ask again if anyone would like to add anything.

Correction: Okay. Yeah, that would be a respectful rule, to not interrupt when other people are talking. That's basic respect. So for rules we have confidentiality, we have respecting the time by not getting here late and not over talking, not interrupting others, and we have no phones. Does anybody have another rule they think the group might be able to benefit from?

Lily:
What about eating and drinking? I've been in groups where we're not allowed to eat anything because the paper gets too crinkly.

Therapist:

Well what do you guys think? Would you want to allow eating and drinking in your group? We'll take it to a vote.

You guys want to eat and drink here?

Comment: In this exchange, I am emphasizing the group cohesiveness by giving them autonomy over their group. I could omit the line about voting and simply ask if they would like to be able to eat and drink in the group.

Correction: Well what do you guys think? Would you want to allow eating and drinking in your group?

Julie:

Yeah, I think it's okay if it's not going to be really crinkly.

Therapist:

Yeah. Let's just not make a huge mess 'cause I'm the janitor, too. Alright?

Comment: While a bit of an ice-breaker, this was technically unnecessary. I could omit this part and instead make sure that the rest of the group is onboard.

Correction: Anna, Jalene? What do you guys think?

Lily:

Good, 'cause this is when I normally eat during the day, so that's why I was wondering.

Therapist:

Alright, we'll say yes to eating and drinking then. Hopefully we just don't get too hungry looking at what you're eating.

Comment: While a bit of an ice-breaker, this was technically unnecessary. I could just move in to expectations.

Correction: Alright, we'll say yes to eating and drinking then, as long as it is not distracting to the other group members.

Lily:

Okay, I'll try to make it not look good.

Expectations:

Yalom's curative factor of socialization:

Dyad:

Therapist:

And I want to talk about expectations a little bit. We're all here because we're grieving someone that we lost. Looking at the next 12 weeks, what would you like to get out of these group

sessions? I would like you to split off with the people next to you, talk a little bit about your expectations for a couple of minutes. And then we'll come back to the group and share what your partner said, okay?

Comment: Here is my introduction to expectations. I did a good job presenting expectations and demonstrating a dyad at the same time. I could clean up my delivery better.

Correction: Next, I would like to talk about expectations for a little bit. We are all here because we are grieving someone that we lost. So, looking towards the next 12 weeks, what would you like to gain from our group sessions? I would like you to spit off into pairs, talk for a couple minutes about your expectations for group, and then we'll come back to the group and share what your partner said with the rest of us.

Lily:

So what she said is that she wants to get out of this group where she can go ahead and deal with all the emotions and everything so that she can start functioning again. I told her I really get that because that's why I'm here. I feel like I can't function at all. What I ended up doing was after everything happened, it happened six months ago, and after all that happened, I quit going back to work, I quit doing everything. I quit functioning, I quit-

Therapist:

Is this what your partner was sharing or what you would like to share with the group?

Comment: When Lily started rambling going off-track again this time, I knew right away that I had to deal with it quickly. My question was intended to help her realize that she was straying from the original topic at hand. I would be satisfied with my interjection if it weren't for the fact that Lily did not seem to get the hint. I could have been more direct.

Correction: As a quick reminder, you are supposed to be discussing what your partner shared with you, then your partner will share what you discussed with them.

Lily:

Oh, no, I was just telling you that I was on the same page as her. That's what I was telling her about me, too, yeah. I agree with her that what she said. And then she brought up anger too and oh my word, I didn't realize how angry I could get over losing somebody.

Cut off a group member:

Therapist:

Mind if I pause you right there for a minute?

Comment: This is a demonstration of cutting someone off.

Correction: I am satisfied with this response.

Lily:
Okay.

Demonstrated Yalom's curative factor of universality:

Demonstrated dealing with the chronic talker:

Demonstrated establishing the focus:

Therapist:

I see that you guys have a lot in common about what you're experiencing with your grief, which is good. You can really identify with each other. But in the interest of time for the group, for now we're just going to talk about what our partner shared, and then we can talk about our own grief coming up in the future exercises. Is that okay with you?

Comment: I would reword this to be more concise.

Correction: It is good that you guys have a lot in common with the grief that you are experiencing. It seems like you can really identify with each other. In the interest of time for the group, for now we are just going to talk about what our partner shared, and we can talk about our own grief later in the session. Is that okay with you?

Lily:

Yeah. So then hers was just the anger and the wanting to get back to normal functioning.

Therapist:

Alright. So you want to lower your anger and get back to normal functioning.

Comment: This was unnecessary and could come off as "parroting."

Correction: I would omit this statement.

Jalene:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Therapist:

What does functioning better look like to you?

Comment: I said "better" functioning, when "normal" functioning was the word Jalene had actually used.

Correction: What does normal functioning look like to you?

Jalene:

Just getting out of bed and going places and spending time with people that I care about.

Therapist:

Okay. That does sound like a good functioning, doesn't it? That sounds like a good level. And what did Lily share with you?

Comment: I stumbled over my words here. I would rephrase to be less awkward. I could have gone a little deeper with Jalene here, but I didn't because this was just an ice-breaking exercise.

Correction: Getting out of bed and spending time with loved ones does sound like a nice image to work towards.

Jalene:

We're a lot alike, but she wants to be able to go back to work.

Therapist:

Okay. To go back to work?

Comment: I was clarifying here, because I was caught off-guard with her statement. I would omit the "okay" because it is unnecessary.

Correction: To go back to work?

Jalene:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Therapist:

How long have you been out of work for?

Comment: I could ask a broader question here to open up dialogue. Thankfully, Lily does not need prompting to share her thoughts. However, a quieter group member might have needed a more open-ended question.

Correction: Tell me about your experiences with work.

Lily:

Well I've been out of work now for pretty much the whole six months. I went back three times, but when I went back, they noticed, they told me, "Look, it really doesn't look like you're going to be able to be here." So I'm kind of afraid I'm going to lose my job because I haven't been able to work.

Therapist:

'Cause of your depression?

Comment: Assuming that Lily's depression was the cause of her work troubles could have been a risk, because her work troubles could have been the result of any part of her grief.

Correction: What is happening at work that causes not only you, but also your bosses, to see that you are having a hard time?

Lily:

Yeah. The thoughts just take over my mind. Like I was saying earlier, I just started realizing I had all this anger about everything, too.

Therapist:

Well we'll definitely really talk more about that later. Thank you for sharing.

Comment: This was kind of curt, but I was trying not to allow Lily to start rambling again.

Correction: These recurring, obtrusive thoughts are something that I would like to talk about at some point if you're up for it.

Lily:

You're welcome.

Therapist:

How about you ladies over here? What did you share with each other?

Comment: I should have used their names to be more personable.

Correction: Anna? Julie? What did you share with each other?

Julie:

Anna, like these girls too, the functioning. Being able to just go about your day without becoming overwhelmed and stuff. And be able to just do the things that she used to do.

Anna:

Julie wants to not feel like people are judging her for still being upset, and not feel guilty about-

Lily:

That's a good one.

Anna:

-still grieving.

Therapist:

So you feel guilty that you're still grieving the person that you lost, and then you think other people are judging you for their grief?

Comment: Because Julie and Anna shared what their partner said back-to-back, I ended up discussing what Julie had said and did not converse back and forth with Anna about what she said. I should have addressed what Anna shared first, then moved on to Julie.

Correction: Anna, so you want to feel like you are functioning normally again and do some of the thing that you used to do?

Directed at Julie after done speaking with Anna So you feel guilty that you're still grieving the person that you lost, and then you think other people are judging you for their grief?

Julie:

Sort of, 'cause I don't want to participate in family outings and different things. When I do, I feel bad that I'm sad still, and then my family gets angry and stuff because they feel like I should be back to normal it seems like. They expect me to just be happy, and I don't feel happy yet. People think that I should be more active in organizations that I belong to, but I don't feel like participating. I don't feel like going out and doing things yet. I have heard some of my friends tell me that people are gossiping and saying that I need to get over it already. So I just feel like that's why I'm here, because I feel like for myself I need to know, is there a time period on this? Should I be further along? I want to feel like I'm okay.

Therapist:

That makes sense. Everybody grieves in different periods of time for different lengths. I want everybody in this group to know that we have no expectations for where you should be in your grieving process. We have no expectations of where each other should be and we're all going to just go through this journey together, okay? Does that sound alright?

Comment: Here I was attempting to create a sense of belongingness and acceptance among the group members. I would re-word for clarity.

Correction: What you are going through it normal. Everybody grieves differently and for different amounts of time. In our group, we have no expectations for where we should be in our grieving process and we're all going to work through the journey together. Does that sound alright to you all?

Julie:

Sounds good.

Exercise One:

Introduced exercise:

Therapist:

Okay. I would like to move into our first exercise. It's a sentence completion exercise. We'll only have maybe three to four sentence completion activities. We'll start with the easier ones and then maybe move a little deeper. The first one is, "I have been grieving blank," so that's where you would insert the person. "I've been grieving blank for blank amount of time." Okay?

Comment: I should have done a better job describing and explaining this activity. At the beginning of the session, I handed out pieces of paper for the second exercise, but the group members ended up writing on them for this exercise. I should have clarified that this exercise was a verbal one.

Correction: Great. I would like to move into our first exercise now. It is a sentence completion exercise. We'll do three or four sentences and discuss what each group member fill-in to the sentence. You don't need to use your papers for this exercise, because we can do it all verbally. Does anybody have any questions about this first exercise?

The first sentence to complete is, "I have been grieving _____" The blank is where you would insert the person you have been grieving. So, "I have been grieving _____ for _____ amount of time."

Lily:

Are we writing the whole sentence?

Therapist:

No, you can just put the person-

Lily:

Write the name and the length of time?

Therapist:

Yeah. But don't take up too much of your paper because you're going to need that later for a drawing exercise, okay?

Comment: This exchange between Lily and myself would not have even occurred if I had explained the exercise thoroughly to begin with. I would correct this by eliminating it altogether. Because if I had explained properly in the beginning, it would not have even occurred.

Correction: I would eliminate this exchange between myself and Lily.

Processed exercise:

Anna:

My sister for four weeks.

Therapist:

Okay. That's very recent. I'm glad that you're here this early in your journey. How about you, Julie?

Comment: I would eliminate, "okay" because I say that too much. I am sure there is something else that I could have done better, but I am not sure what.

Correction: That's very recent. I am glad that you are here with us so early in your journey. How about you Julie?

Julie:

My mom for two months.

Therapist:

Okay, that's also very recent. Jalene?

Comment: I would eliminate “okay” and reaffirm to Julie that we are also glad that she is here since I had done the same for Anna.

Correction: That is also very recent. We are glad that you are here so early in your journey as well. Jalene?

Jalene:

My boyfriend for five months.

Therapist:

Okay. So we have sister for four weeks, a mom for two months, and a boyfriend for five months. How about you?

Comment: I did not comment on Jalene’s person or length of time. Rather, I summarized what each person had said up until that point. The summary could have waited until after the final person had gone.

Correction: I’m sure that these past five months have been difficult for you. I hope that we are able to be a support for you while you continue to grieve the loss of your boyfriend.

Lily:

I miss my grandma, my mother in law, and my child for six months.

Therapist:

Grandma, mother in law, and child for six months?

Comment: This could be seen as parroting. However, I was clarifying for myself since she had surprised me by saying three people.

Correction: Wow, that sounds like a significant loss. Since you have been grieving them each for 6 months, does that mean that they all passed away at the same time?

Lily:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Therapist:

Did it all happen at the same time?

Comment: This comment would have already occurred based on my correction above.

Correction: Wow, that sounds like a significant loss. Since you have been grieving them each for 6 months, does that mean that they all passed away at the same time?

Lily:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Therapist:

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. That must have been very hard to handle.

Comment: While it was sincere, this could have come across as a blanket statement. I could have said something more uniquely genuine.

Correction: I cannot begin to imagine how hard that must be to deal with, but I hope that you are able to find at least a little bit of hope and peace from this group.

Lily:

Yeah. It was a drunk driver.

Therapist:

Those can be very hard to process because they are so senseless. But I want to thank you for coming to group and to making that step towards working through this together, okay? The next one that we'll be doing is, "Something I liked about the person who I lost or people, was blank."

Comment: Part of grief is acceptance. Instead of saying "those" I should have been straight forward and named what I was referring to in order to further along the process of acceptance.

Correction: Fatal accidents involving drunk drivers can be so difficult for a grieving person to process because they are so senseless. But I want to thank you for coming to group and to making that step towards working through this together, okay?

The next sentence that we'll be doing is, "Something I liked about the person, or people, who I lost was _____."

Julie:

What did the sentence start with?

Therapist:

It would be, "Something I liked about the person who I lost ... "

Comment: I could have avoided this confusion if I had reminded the group before coming back together of the sentence.

Correction: Alright guys, it looks like everyone is done with our second sentence. "Something I liked about the person who I lost..." Julie, would you start us off?

Julie:

Her unconditional love, and she was always there to talk to me.

Therapist:

Okay. How about you, Jalene?

Comment: I could have processed this more with Julie by digging deeper. However, I did not want to go too deep on all of the responses, because I knew how much material I still needed to get through and how much time I had left. Either way, I could have said something more personal than, "Okay."

Correction: It sounds like your mom was a great support and friend to you.

Jalene:

He understood me.

Therapist:

Okay. Did he understand you, you think, in a way that maybe other people don't?

Comment: Omit the okay and re-word the question about understanding.

Correction: Do you feel like he understood you in a way that other people don't?

Jalene:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Lily:

They were my sunshine.

Therapist:

They were your sunshine. That paints a real picture, doesn't it, guys? How about you, Anna?

Comment: This response was kind of vague. I would keep the same line of thought, but re-word for clarity.

Correction: They were your sunshine. That paints a vivid picture, not only of how much they meant to you, but what kind of difficulties you must be facing now in a life without sunshine. How about you Anna?

Anna:

Her sense of humor.

Therapist:

Her sense of humor? Okay. I'd like to hear more about that later. Maybe you have some funny stories you could share with us.

Comment: Repeating, "Her sense of humor?" could sound like parroting. I would omit that, and move onto the rest.

Correction: I'd like to hear more about that later. Maybe you have some funny stories you could share with us.

Anna:
Okay.

Therapist:

Our next one would be, "Right now, I feel blank about the loss."

Comment: I should have been more specific, instead of just saying, "Our next one..."

Correction: Our next sentence to complete is, "Right now, I feel _____ about the loss."

Lily:
Anger. Lots of anger.

Therapist:

Could you tell us a little bit about your anger?

Comment: Lily's anger was something that she was trying to bring up earlier when I had to cut her off. I could have referred back to then in the session to show her that she was heard and that now is the time to bring up those concerns.

Correction: Earlier in the session you were telling us how you could not believe that one person could be so angry and that your anger was really affecting you. Could you tell us more about your anger now?

Lily:
Well it was a drunk driver and sometimes I feel like I want to find him and kill him, because I know he's not even in jail right now.

Anna:
Wow.

Lily:
And it's been six months and literally nothing has happened.

Therapist:

I understand why you would be angry.

Comment: I would like to move away from "I understand" and make it more general or put it back on the group.

Correction: Considering the circumstances, it is understandable why you would be so angry.

Lily:
Very angry.

Therapist:
That's not fair, is it?

Comment: This could have been fine without saying, but I wanted to try to connect with the group member some more. However, it seems to have elicited an interesting reaction from one of the other group members.

Correction: I would omit this and move on.

Lily:
Not at all.

Julie:
Have you Facebook stalked him yet?

Lily:
Oh, I didn't even think about that. Can I write that down? Do I get to keep this paper?

Therapist:
You can keep that paper. But I would not recommend taking any action against him.

Comment: This caught me off-guard and I was not entirely sure what to say. I remembered that just a couple moments prior to this that Lily said that sometimes she wants to kill the drunk driver who killed her family, so I became concerned at where this conversation was going. However, jumping right to "I would not recommend taking any action against him" might have been to the extreme.

Correction: Of course, you can keep your paper, however, I would recommend thinking twice before searching for or contacting this man.

Julie:
Oh, sorry.

Therapist:
You're fine. We can talk about it all we like. We can talk about the anger and how unfair it is, but I would not recommend contacting or attacking anyone. Okay?

Comment: Again, jumping straight to attacking might have been to the extreme. However, Lily had mentioned feelings of malicious anger, so I was not sure what to do.

Correction: You're fine. We can talk about him and what he did all we like. We can talk about our anger and how unfair it is, but do you feel like looking him up or even contacting him would help you in your grieving process?

Julie:

It was probably not a good idea.

Lily:

Yeah, I don't want to go to jail.

Therapist:

But if you think it would help you to know a little bit more about him, then that's your decision.

Comment: I was affirmed a bit when Lily said, "I don't want to go to jail" because that told me that I was right to be overly cautious when the group members started thinking about Facebook stalking the man. I would just re-word this for clarity.

Correction: Lily, if you think that learning more about him would help you in your grieving process, then that's your decision. I just want to make sure that you are doing what is best for you as you navigate your grief.

Lily:

No, it would be primarily for angry reasons.

Therapist:

So it would only make you more angry?

Comment: This did not need restating. I could have combined this with what I said below.

Correction: Okay, then maybe we should stay away from that, because there is no reason why you should allow yourself to become even more angry when it is already hurting you personally.

Lily:

Probably.

Therapist:

Okay, then maybe we should stay away from that, okay?

Comment: I would combine this response with what I said in the above comment.

Correction: Okay, then maybe we should stay away from that, because there is no reason why you should allow yourself to become even more angry when it is already hurting you personally.

Lily:

Yeah, especially if I want to be going back to work.

Therapist:

Yeah. So how has your anger been affecting your daily life?

Comment: In the interest of time for the group. I should have used this opportunity to move on to the next person. Instead, I decided to dig deeper with Lily.

Correction: How has your anger been affecting your ability to live a productive and happy life?

Lily:

Well at first I didn't let myself be angry because I was like, 'That's wrong.' I grew up in church and it's, "Immoral to be angry. That's one of the bad things." And then I was just like, who cares. I'm angry. I'm going to be angry, I'm going to feel it. Basically, I just feel like a simmering, boiling pot of stew and it's been affecting me. I guess that was your original question, I need to quit getting off on rabbit trails. It's been affecting me because as it's a simmering, boiling pot of stew, I just sit and I'm basically just paralyzed in my house and can't do anything. Or the times I've tried to go to work, I was just sitting there and I couldn't do anything. So that's how it's affected me.

Therapist:

So not only has this drunk driver taken away people that you love, but he's also preventing you from living your best life because of your anger towards him.

Comment: This was intended to show Lily that her anger towards the drunk driver was an issue that she needs to work on.

Correction: I am satisfied with this response.

Lily:

Yes.

Therapist:

Now, this anger, that is something you would like to work on, isn't it? You mentioned that you identify with the anger?

Comment: I am not sure what I was even trying to say here. I would just omit the whole thing.

Correction: I would omit this question.

Lily:

Oh yeah. Yeah, because it's keeping me from working and living and actually being able ... I almost feel like it's keeping me from being able to grieve just because I'm so angry about it, I don't even feel like I can actually grieve 'cause I just get mad and I don't cry. I feel like I should be crying, not be mad. But anyway.

Therapist:

Well everybody goes through the different stages of grief at different times. But we would love to process that more with you in future sessions.

How about you, Jalene?

Comment: I would like to include her anger and feelings of not being able to grieve specifically in my response.

Correction: Well, everybody processes grief differently and at a different pace, but we would love to process your anger and your feelings of the inability to grieve with you in future session. What did you come up with, Jalene?

Jalene:
Right now I feel confused.

Therapist:
Okay. What are you confused about?

Comment: I asked the right question, but I probably could have worded it better. I would also omit the "okay."

Correction: Would you tell us about your confusion?

Jalene:
Because his death, it was so out of character for what he was doing. I just don't understand why he would do what he did.

Therapist:
You still have a lot of questions about the circumstances surrounding the death?

Comment: I would like to name the person that died to help with the grieving process. I was demonstrating reflection here.

Correction: So you're saying that you still have a lot of questions about the circumstances surrounding your boyfriend's death?

Jalene:
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Therapist:
Okay. And your confusion and your questions around that, how has it been affecting your ability to grieve?

Comment: I could have asked her a question that dug deeper into what exactly she was confused about, but I decided to dig deeper in another direction. I would re-word for clarity.

Correction: How has your confusion been affecting your ability to properly grieve and process your boyfriend's death?

Jalene:

I get angry. I find myself cussing him daily and then I feel bad 'cause I cussed him.

Therapist:

Right, right. Well I'll say this, that anger is a normal part of grief and no one should feel guilty about it. We'll all just work through it together. How about you, Julie?

Comment: I could have used her feelings of anger as an opportunity to connect her back to Lily for support.

Correction: I'll say this, anger is a completely normal part of grief and nothing to feel guilty about. Both you and Lily are experiencing feelings of anger along with your grief. This is something that you can support one another with. What did you come up with Julie?

Julie:

I said that I feel empty and dead. But I think that anger is in there too, but it's not towards my mom, it's towards everybody else for not leaving me alone and thinking I should be different than I am right now.

So I go off on everybody. I'm literally letting it effect the rest of my family because of my actions. I don't feel anything, really, except for sadness and anger.

Therapist:

And you don't feel anything other than your sadness and your anger.

Comment: This could have been parroting since she had just said pretty much those exact words. There was no need to clarify here.

Correction: I would omit this statement.

Julie:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Therapist:

Okay. And then how has that been affecting your daily life?

Comment: This question is beginning to sound repetitive, because it is similar to what I have been asking other group members.

Correction: How has your anger and sadness been affecting your ability to live your best life and process your grief?

Julie:

Well I used to, me and my husband and my kids, we would go on a walk down the green way and the kids would ride their bikes and I'd push them on the swings and all this other stuff. We

used to take pictures of the kids playing and stuff. Somebody had mentioned sunshine or something, and it just seemed like I used to feel that, and now there is no sunshine. I go through the motions and when somebody complains or thinks that I should be different or that I need to snap out of it, then I just kind of go off because they don't even have any clue what I'm feeling.

Lily:
I get that.

Therapist:

Well thank you for sharing that. Anna?

Comment: I did not process what she had said with her.

Correction: Again, I want to note that we do not care what stage you are in your grief and want to process all of your feelings of grief with you, even the anger towards your family members.

Anna:
I'm pretty un-accepting of it, still. I feel like I can't wrap my head around the fact that she's gone.

Therapist:

Okay. So you're having a hard time accepting the death.

Comment: While this was a form of clarification, I probably could have just moved onto the next statement. It may have seemed like parroting.

Correction: I would omit this.

Anna:
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Therapist:

What does that feel like?

Comment: This was a poor question, as evidenced by Anna's answer. I was trying to understand what not accepting her sister's death was like for her, but I think she misunderstood my question, which means that I did a poor job wording it.

Correction: What has that been like for you?

Anna:
I don't know because I'm not doing it.

Julie:
Would you expect her to walk in the door any minute? Or do you see her in cars? 'Cause I do that.

Anna:

Yeah, I guess. Honestly, I just can't really process it yet. So I just feel like she's on one of her trips or something.

Therapist:

Okay. Well if at any time you realize that you are feeling any sort of feeling about it, just speak up and let us know, and we'll definitely be willing and able to process that with you, okay?

Comment: This comment felt really awkward to me. I was just at a loss of words to say because she caught me off guard. I honestly did not know what to say. I would just let her know that we are here for her and to let us know if she wants to talk to

Correction: If you think of anything you'd like to share regarding your grief towards your sister's death, just let us know.

Anna:

Okay.

Therapist:

Alright. Well we're going to do our second and last exercise for the day, but I'd like to just give you guys a note of encouragement right before we do that. I've noticed something that is very positive about this group. You have been doing a great job making eye contact with one another. When someone is speaking, you're looking at them. Or you're looking at each other and you're really connecting. I would like to encourage you guys to continue to do that and say, "Good job." Okay?

Comment: I would re-word this to be more concise and clearer and omit the "okay" at the end.

Correction: Before we move into our last exercise for the day, I'd like to just give you guys a note of encouragement. I've noticed something that is very positive about this group. You have been doing a great job making eye contact with one another. When someone is speaking, you're looking at them. Or you're looking at each other and you're really connecting. I would like to encourage you guys to continue to do that and say, "Good job."

Exercise two:

Introduced Exercise:

Therapist:

Our last exercise for the day, it will look kind of like this. On this piece of paper, we have two hands. This hand represents the past, and this hand represents the future. For a couple of minutes, I'd like you to take the time to maybe trace an outline of your hands on the piece of paper that you were given, and label one, "Past," label the next one, "Future." If you don't have enough space, you can just draw a little baby hand. While you're doing that, I'll tell you guys what this exercise is going to be about.

In the past hand, you're going to put what life used to look like when the person was still alive. It might have had more sunshine, as some of you noted. So you're going to draw what the past used to look like. That can be pictures or words. Then on the future hand, you're going to draw what you want life to look like now. 'Cause right now we're in a state of grief and life probably doesn't look how we want it to look. But in the future hand, you're going to draw what you would like your future life to look like. Does anybody have any questions about the exercise?

Comment: I think I could have done a better job explaining this exercise. I should have started with what it was about and ended with what they'd be doing, because the way I did it, they started working before I could finish explaining and I feel like they weren't paying attention to my explanation and it got me a little distracted.

Correction: Our last exercise for the day is a drawing exercise featuring the past and the future. In each of our pasts we had loved ones that we were able to share our lives with. Now, we are left to grieve deaths of those loved one. Because of that, our futures may seem bleak. This exercise is aimed to help you think about what you would like your future to look like and realize that a bleak and depressing future may not be your only option. So on the piece of paper you were given, you will draw two hands and label them "past" and "future," like this one. In the past hand, you're going to draw what life used to look like, while the person is still alive. In the future hand, you are going to draw what you want your life to look like in the future. Right now, we are all in a state of grief and life probably doesn't look ideal, so take this time to draw in the future hand what you would like your life to look like now and into the future. You can use pictures, words, symbols, anything you like. Does anybody have any questions about the exercise?

Julie:

Yes.

The past life, is it our life when the people were alive? Or is it our life during the death period or grieving period?

Therapist:

Do you feel compelled to put any specific way in the hand?

Comment: I had explained previously that it was when the person was still alive, but Julie must not have heard me since they all started drawing before I got to finish explaining. This is an example of why it is important to introduce each exercise effectively. In the moment that she asked the question, I questioned myself and if I had forgotten to effectively explain that portion of the exercise. I would omit this and just refer back to the exercise explanation.

Correction: In the past hand, you're drawing a time when the person was still alive.

Processed Exercise:

Therapist:

Alright, is everybody done? Yeah, it's hard to think about, isn't it? Would anybody like to share first about their past and future hands? Jalene, would you like to start?

Comment: Instead of saying a blanket statement such as “It's hard to think about” I'd rather skip that line or say something more insightful.

Correction: Alright, is everybody done? ... Would anybody like to share first about their past and future hands? ... Jalene would you be willing to start?

Jalene:

Yeah. So that's my past and that's him. He was always helping me get back up on my feet, so in the picture, he's helping me up. In my future, I'm by myself and he's watching over me, and I'm happy.

Therapist:

Okay. And why are you happy in the future?

Comment: This question was aimed to help Jalene look at the specifics of her dream for her future, by recognizing what it is that is allowing her to do that. I would omit the okay, because it is repetitive, and instead of asking “why” (because that can sound interrogative) I would rephrase it.

Correction: What are you happy about in that future?

Jalene:

Because I will be able to stand on my own two feet.

Therapist:

Okay. What do you think it will take for you to be able to do that?

Comment: I would omit the okay, because it is repetitive. Instead of saying “do that” I would rephrase and use her language to show that I was actively listening.

Correction: What do you think it would take for you to be able to stand on your own two feet?

Jalene:

A lot of acceptance.

Therapist:

Okay, hopefully we can do a lot of that here. Alright. Julie?

Comment: I could have gone deeper and asked what acceptance looks like to her, but she was being pretty short with all of her answers and I felt like I was interrogating her.

Correction: What does acceptance look like to you? (or) How would acceptance help you to be able to stand on your own?

Julie:

Well that's the past. That was supposed to be a cell phone, or a telephone. I didn't know if I draw an old fashioned phone, people might not know what it is anymore. So instead, I draw an old fashioned Nextel two way. And a cat. And then me and my mom and my kids, and then me and my mom talking, sitting at a table. Because me and my mom and the kids used to always go do things together, and we used to talk on the phone. And we used to go out to eat on Fridays. She taught me how to love animals and creatures and stuff. And then in the future, I drew laughing and a book, because one of the last times we were together, we talked about writing our life stories out so that when the kids grow up, grandkids and stuff, we have something to pass down to talk about the family legacy or whatever. My mom is funny, or was funny, so we would be able to read the stuff and recall the memories and laugh and smile about it. My mom got mad at me because I threw a plastic bottle away, 'cause she's very liberal.

She said that she couldn't believe that she raised me to not recycle. So I want to recycle in her memory, and continue to love animals and flowers and stuff.

Therapist:

Okay. That sounds like a good depiction of what you'd like to do in the future. And you would have some steps that you'd like to take, moving forward, so that's very proactive of you. Thank you for sharing. Anna?

Comment: I could have helped her move forward with her vision by asking her what she could do to help her future become a reality.

Correction: Okay. That sounds like a good depiction of what you'd like to do in the future. And you would have some steps that you'd like to take, moving forward, so that's very proactive of you. What do you think you could do to start making that future a reality?

Anna:

This is me and my sister and just us shopping together. We lived together, so everything was just happy and I was happy. My future, honestly, I don't really know what it looks like, but I drew a road and kind of just being on my own and I guess just opportunity. Seeing the opportunity and being by myself now, and maybe traveling or something. I don't know.

Therapist:

Alright. So you still have a lot of unknowns for your future, but you know that you want it to include opportunities?

Comment: Opportunities for what? I should have been more specific or asked her what kind of opportunities she is looking forward to.

Correction: Alright, so you still have a lot of unknowns for the future, but you know that you would like it to include opportunities, such as traveling. What other kinds of opportunities would

like your future to have?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Therapist:

Okay, thank you. And Lily?

Comment: I could have made it more personal.

Correction: Thank you for taking the effort to think about what kinds of opportunities you would like your future to include, even though it is hard with a lot of uncertainties still.

Lily?

Lily:

I just started with words, first, that were in my head. My past was sunshine, shopping, playing, and just feeling like there was just life everywhere. 'Cause my mother in law and I went shopping together, and my grandma. And my kid and I, we always would go out and play and have fun at the parks and everything. So that was my past.

I realized this is really hard to write. I don't know. It was really hard. And then here, I just want to still be able to reach back and be able to touch a little bit, so I drew them touching.

Julie:

That's good.

Lily:

I want to be able to reach back and be able to touch my past hand whenever I need to, but also get to move forward. There's me going to work. I've always loved to travel and wanted to travel, so I decided that I'm going to finally get out of my home town and start traveling around the world once I start getting back to work. I'll just start saving up and just travel, 'cause maybe that's how I'll get life everywhere again and fill alive again.

Therapist:

You have some really good ideas. And I really like how you drew the hands touching. That's really meaningful, to me at least.

Comment: I could have said why it is meaningful.

Correction: You have some really good ideas. And I really like how you drew the hands touching. That's really meaningful, to me at least. It is very insightful.

Lily:

And I can reach back and touch them whenever I want, but I still have to be able to move forward.

Therapist:

I really appreciate that insight, thank you.

Alright, well we're just about out of time for the day, so I'll give a brief summary about what we have accomplished today. We started off this session not knowing anything about each other. I don't know about you guys, but I feel like I know you guys very well now, how do you guys feel?

Comment: I feel like it was not necessary to ask if they felt like they knew each other better. I could have just moved on with the summary, especially since I was running out of time.

Correction: Alright, well we're just about out of time for the day, so I'll give a brief summary about what we have accomplished today. We started off this session not knowing anything about each other. I don't know about you guys, but I feel like I know you guys very well now.

Julie:

I feel like, yeah, we know a lot about each other, I feel like, in a sense that we understand what we're feeling 'cause we've been there, so that feels really good.

Jalene:

Have a lot in common.

Julie:

Yeah.

Lily:

I thought I was the only one who was angry and it was just because of the guy, stupid idiot that did what he did. But I realized that, I guess, anger is a bigger part of grief than I thought.

Effective session closing:

Summary:

Therapist:

Yeah, many people experience it. You guys are not alone in your grief. Throughout this 12 weeks, I would like us to keep growing together and moving forward together. We talked about group rules, expectations. A lot of people, for their expectations, they just want to move forward. That was a common theme that we saw as well there. We did a sentence completion exercise and we were able to process where we're at in our grief a little bit more. And then we did an exercise with our past and our future hands.

If I were to give you, maybe, a little bit of homework for future sessions, I would like to see each of you, this next week before we meet again, to keep your drawings of your past and future hands, and over this next week I want you to take one step closer to that future hand. For some

people, it might be going out to see the sunshine. For others, it might be researching where you'd like to travel, or something that you'd like to see. So I want you to take one step closer to your future hand and do something that makes you happy. Does everybody feel comfortable with that?

Comment: My introduction of the homework could have been worded more effectively.

Correction: Yeah, many people experience it. You guys are not alone in your grief. Throughout these 12 weeks, I would like us to keep growing together and moving forward together. We talked about group rules, expectations. A lot of people, for their expectations, they just want to move forward. That was a common theme that we saw as well there. We did a sentence completion exercise and we were able to process where we're at in our grief a little bit more. And then we did an exercise with our past and our future hands.

If I were to give you a little bit of homework for next session, I would like to see each of you keep the drawings you made of your past and future hands and take one step closer to that future hand. For some people, it might be going out to see the sunshine. For others, it might be researching where you'd like to travel, or something that you'd like to see. So I want you to take one step closer to your future hand and do something that makes you happy. Does everybody feel comfortable with that?

Lily:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Therapist:

Okay. And before we leave, does anybody have any feedback that they'd like to give me? What you think well, and what you think we could do better in the future?

Comment: Instead of asking if anyone has any feedback for me, I should have said that I would appreciate their feedback.

Correction: Before we leave, I would appreciate any feedback you could give me. What you think went well, what you think could go better in future session?

Lily:

I like you.

Therapist:

Thank you.

Julie:

Yeah, I feel better already. I'm really glad I came.

Checked comfort levels:

Therapist:

Good, I'm glad you feel better. Does anybody else feel the same or worse or better?

Comment: Instead of saying "same or worse or better," I could have worded it to be less confusing.

Correction: I'm glad you feel better. How do the rest of you feel compared to at the beginning of the session?

Jalene:

I feel a little bit better.

Therapist:

How about you, Anna, anything you'd like to share?

Comment: Instead of saying, "anything you'd like to share?" I could have asked her specifically how she felt.

Correction: How about you, Anna? How do you feel now compared to at the beginning of the session?

Anna:

No. I'm excited for the group and for our next meeting.

Therapist:

Okay, well I'm really glad to have met you all today and I truly look forward to seeing you next week, Alright?

Comment: I could omit the alright and thank them for their openness and honesty.

Correction: Okay, well I'm really glad to have met you all today and I thank you for trusting the group with your open and honest feelings. I truly look forward to seeing you next week.

Julie:

Okay. Bye.

Lily:

Yeah, thank you.

Reflection

Cultural Issues

No known cultural issues surfaced during the group facilitation. However, based on my group's focus on grief, cultural differences surrounding the way in which people grieve could have come up. Everybody grieves differently and every culture has their own tenancies and customs surrounding grief. While it did not occur, a cultural issue about the diversity of grief across cultures could have surfaced. If a cultural issue had come up, there are several things that I could have done to deal with it. I could refer back to group rule and remind group members to be respectful towards others. I could remind group members that in our group, we have no judgements on how each other grieves.

In addition to these things, I could foster the cultural competence of my group by facilitating the creation of a group culture that involves members in the exploration of their cultural differences and similarities surrounding grief. This would help build bridges of mutual understanding between group members and promote Yalom's curative factor of socialization. In order to promote cultural sensitivity in my group, I could demonstrate and promote the expectation of open and honest communication about cultural differences. These things will help create a group identity among members that encourages a togetherness approach to dealing with issues. This would also incorporate Yalom's curative factor of group cohesiveness into the group dynamics.

Ethical Issues

No known ethical issues surfaced during my session. However, based on the nature of my group sessions, it is entirely possibly that one could have, or will in the future. One area that I see as a potential for incurring ethical issues within the scope of my group sessions, include religious views surrounding death. While this could be considered a cultural issue as well, I chose to discuss it in the ethical issues component of this paper because of the social worker's duty to not impose religious beliefs on clients. At any time in my group session, a group member could have begun to discuss the role that their religion has with their grief and could open up a potentially tumultuous discussion about group members' religious views.

If religious beliefs were to come up during my group session and become an ethical issue, there are several things that I, as a facilitator can do. Firstly, as a facilitator and a social worker, it is not my responsibility to educate my clients about religion. Rather, it is my duty to promote inclusivity and acceptance within the group. I can use the tactics mentioned above for promoting cultural competence in the group to also promote religious competence and promote acceptance among group members. Overall, it is important for me to remember that when talking about a sensitive topic, like death and grief, ethical issues can come up at any time and I need to be prepared for that as a competent facilitator.

Social Justice Issues

No known social justice issues arose during my group session. However, I recognize that each group member has their own unique struggles and life problems. Because of this, it is

entirely possible that, if given enough time, social justice issues would arise during group sessions. These issues could come from anywhere on the case management/policy spectrum. Group members could have a hard time with transportation, food, work, family. All of these things are areas in which social workers are taught to provide interventions for when possible and, if necessary, advocate for systematic changes through policy.

If a social justice issue were to arise, I would do my best to go above and beyond to connect my client to needed resources. If they need additional, individual counseling, I can refer them for that. Another area in which a client could need additional support could be food or housing. Maslow's hierarchy of needs promotes that food and shelter are the base level of needs for humans and that we cannot advance to self-actualization without having those needs met. If my clients are unable to meet these basic human needs, then they are unlikely to be able to properly grieve the loss of their loved one and move on. Therefore, when possible, I will connect my group members to needed resources and interventions in order to further promote healing and well-being.

Issues of Advanced Autonomy as a Practitioner

Over the course of this semester, I have grown exponentially in group facilitation skills. I feel comfortable integrating the essential components of each group session and feel competent to handle basic issues such as cutting off members and drawing members out. I also feel comfortable in my understanding of the integration of Yalom's curative factors and how they can be promoted with in group sessions. My biggest perceived growth for this year is my ability to view myself as a competent, autonomous practitioner. At the beginning of the semester, I was unsure of my ability and skills. However, now I can identify as an autonomous facilitator and look forwards to demonstrating these skills in the field of social work.

It is important to continually grow and learn in the field of social work. I intend to continually grow in my knowledge and ability to be an advanced, autonomous practitioner by engaging in community learning opportunities and conducting my own relevant research of best practices. If, in my future role as a group facilitator, I find myself conducting a grief group again, I will attend conferences and lectures and conduct personal research on the topic in order to maintain and grow my competence in that area. I will also continue to strengthen my roles as an autonomous practitioner by receiving supervision from a trusted supervisor or colleague.