Group Dynamics 1

1:

1. Being assigned eight women and seven men for a therapy group creates an issue. In a therapy group setting, there should only be between five to eight group members. Since I was assigned fifteen individuals for this one therapy group, I will create two groups within this one. One group would consist of seven members and the other would consist of eight. I wouldn’t leave the groups as male and females unless a mixture of both created a conflict.
2. After analyzing my group members, I have notice their ages are widely dispersed from early twenties to a heavy concentration of others in their late fifties. I’ve decided to conduct an interview with each of the members prior to the first meeting. In this interview, I wish to gain an understanding of what they wish to get out of this group and ways to make this group beneficial to everyone. In these interviews, I would also ask their opinion about working in a diverse group (including individuals of different nationalities and ages).
3. There is also a substantial difference in their backgrounds, so while conducting these personal interviews I will ask questions pertaining to working with culturally diverse individuals. I would also make it clear that everyone may not have the same morals and beliefs, but everyone in the group will give respect and be respected.
4. From working at this agency, I am aware that two male members of this group have previously had physical and verbal altercations. I feel that it is best to meet with both these individuals separately prior to the first group session. In these conferences, I wish to gain an understanding on how these individuals feel about being in a group with one

Group Dynamics 2

another after having previous altercations. I would stress there issues of there being no form disrespect to the group or one another. If one of these individuals feel it is not possible for him to remain civil with the other during the group sessions, I would assist him in finding a similar group with different members.

1. There appears to be a central theme of anger in this group. Having angry individuals working together may not be tough. I would address this issue by creating rules and boundaries. This would inform members what behavior will be and will not be tolerated. Having a structured session would leave no room for off topic conversations; allow the group members to stay focus on the topic at hand
2. & 7. Not only have I been assigned the smallest group room in the facility due to the large number of groups in my agency, I have had no time to clear things over with my co-leader regarding our first session. I have decided to speak to the administration about the room being too small. Conducting an oversized therapy group in a tight space can be very overwhelming and dysfunctional.

8. My co-leader and myself have little experience or training in leading an anger management group. We have decided to speak to administrative services because we are not properly equipped for this role.

9. I believe two of the members of my group members are dating. I have no type of evidence that they are engaging in a relationship. I have decided to address this as a general discussion within the group without being direct or targeting these individuals. I would inform the group that personal relationships do not exist within this group.

Group Dynamics 3

2:

Jacobs, Masson, Harvill, and Schimmel’s outline of therapeutic forces include forces they feel need to be attended to by the leader, in order to have a successful therapeutic session. Among these forces; clarity of purpose for both the leader and the members, size of the group, the leaders attitude, closed or open group, and level of trust among members, in my opinion are the most important for a therapy group meeting for eight 1 ½ hour sessions in which there is leader and co-leader.

In any group setting, it is important for the members as well as the leaders to have a clear understanding of the purpose of the group. The purpose of the group gives the leader and the group members an understanding why the group is meeting and what the goals and objectives of the group are. When the leader is unclear about the purpose, groups are often confusing, boring, and unproductive. The group should be relevant to all members. “Clarity of purpose helps the leader keep the members on course by suggesting relevant activities, asking relevant questions, and cutting off irrelevant discussions.”

According to Jacobs, Masson, Harvill, and Schimmel’s outline of therapeutic forces; an ideal group would consist of five to eight members. The size of a group has an in impact on how a group fluctuates. A group who meets for one hour or less should consist of at max six members; with an exception to educational groups. In educational groups, members are less interactive with one another. The leaders usually provide members with information and then give the members to comments and reactive to the information facilitated. Often times when a group is too large, members hesitate when sharing personal experiences and interacting within the group. Groups that are too large aren’t usually successful. In a group where the main focus is

Group Dynamics 4

low self-esteem, a therapy group consisting of five to eight members allows members to feel more engaged and less hesitant about sharing their personal experiences.

A leader’s attitude towards a group is influential on the group’s success. Groups who have leaders that are often uninterested or have lack of knowledge on a topic, usually operates poorly. In a therapy group whams focus is low self-esteem in which a leader isn’t interested, adding a co-leader who is interested in this topic can help the group work productively. As a leader, your job is to always remain positive weather the topic is of interest to you. In a therapy group with aggressive individuals, it would be in best interest for the leader to be very dedicated and interested in topic. An interested leader would be more patient, understanding, and approachable; thus allowing the group to be beneficial to its members.

It is important for a leader to determine whether membership to the group will be opened or closed after the first session. This being a low self-esteem and aggressive management them based group, there will be no admission into the group once the sessions have begun. This being a therapy group, I have decided to close this group because our members have developed a since of comfort in trust in the consistent members. When new members enter a group with no knowledge on the existing member’s feelings, they may often respond to this person’s personal experience in an offensive matter.

The level of trust is also important in order to have a successful group. When a group is progressing positively, trust is usually developed over time. As a leader, it is my duty to keep the group as a non-hostile environment. When it is clear that there is tension between two individuals, I should meet with both of them and try solving things out. It is also my duty to

Group Dynamics 5

observe the reactions of group members when another member is sharing a personal experience. These reactions influence trust levels within the group. My job as a leader would be to inform my members that so one shall be attacked while sharing personal things in reference to their lives. As a supportive group, we will be supportive.

3:

According to Gladding, many groups are not successful due to little emphasis on pre-group planning. In order to have a successful group, along with deciding the meeting time and place, my pre-group planning would include determining the size of the group, whether potential members be screened or not, and whether or not my group will be open or closed.

Determining the consistency and the number of sessions my therapy group would meet, would first be based on my availability. I must always be available to lead my group. Therapy groups usually meet more frequent then discussion and education style groups. I plan to start my group off with a set amount of sessions and increase the sessions if the group members feel this is necessary. Thus allowing my members an idea of how long they have to complete any personal goals. As the group progresses, if the members need additional sessions, then we can continue to meet.

Determining the size of my group would depend on the type of group I am conducting. A therapy group would include five to eight members. In an educational style setting, one group can consist of up to twelve members. In my therapy group I prefer at maximum, five members. I want these individuals to feel comfortable when discussing personal issues or

Group Dynamics 6

experiences. The larger the group, the less comfortable and less willing some members may be willing to share.

Once my therapy group has begun, I will not allow new members to join the group sessions. My reason is mainly because of individuals lacking the ability to trust others. After meeting with the same people over a long term, you gain a bond and relationship with these individuals. Bringing in new members can create conflict and old members may become less interactive.

In my group, my group members will be screened. Screening would allow me to see whether an individual has the same goals and focus as the group’s description. I am deciding to screen my potential members because I want my group to be beneficial to all my group members. My screening process would include a personal interview. In this interview, I can gain an understanding of each individual’s expectations of the group and what they hope to gain. I would inform these potential members of any relevant information pertaining to the group. Information including: what is expected of the group members and the basic rules of the group. During this personal interview, I can also determine if group counseling is ideal for this person or if individual counseling would be more beneficial.

4:

Due to the leader having many different dynamics and logistics to manage during the first session, the first session is the most important and the most difficult. Concepts including the beginning of the group, setting a positive tone, and the use of exercises are all important concepts the leader should follow in order to have a successful first session.

Group Dynamics 7

However the leader decides to open up the group during the first session usually gives group members an idea on how the group will function. This time, they will also develop their first impression of the leaders. “How the leader opens the group session will have an important bearing on the tone of the group and the comfort level of the members.” When the leader comes off as non-welcoming and intimidating, this sometimes leads to members quitting a group that could have been very beneficial to them. For example, a statement such as “Throughout this group, I hope you realize that you are not the only one feeling the way you do”, will allow members to see that you have an understanding of the clients and their needs.

While conducting the first session, the leader being empathetic and understanding to group members and their issues at hand, will set a positive tone for the group. While developing and setting a positive tone for the group, leaders should be enthusiastic, inviting, and allow everyone the opportunity to voice prior experiences. You should encourage everyone to share but not forces those who aren’t as open to share. You should also never allow an individual to dominate the group. This may be very intimidating to a shy and less outspoken group member.

During the first session, the use of certain exercises can be used to create a welcoming environment. Exercises including: dyads, rounds, and sentence completions. Rounds are the most valuable exercise we use during the first session because everyone gets to speak. An example of rounds would be the name round; allowing everyone the chance to introduce themselves. For an individual who isn’t as comfortable in sharing out within the entire group, dyads would be beneficial to these individuals. Individuals that are more outspoken, sentence completion with be more beneficial to these individuals. An example of sentence completion would be: In a new

Group Dynamics 8

group, I feel most comfortable when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. As a leader, whichever exercise I choose needs to be beneficial to everyone in the group.

As the leader, it is important for me to determine what the rules should be, who makes the rules, and when the rules should be discusses. Creating rules are needed in order to have a successful group. I have decided I will make the rules since I have an understanding of the group. During the first session, I will state the rules and thoroughly discuss their meaning rather leave the rules to be interpreted by the members. Stating the rules should not take more than ten minutes. Discussing rules for a long period of time distracts the purpose of the group. During the first session, basic rules such as: confidentiality, one mic, and respect for all will be discussed. It is important to educate members on what will be and will not be tolerated.

It is important not to allow one member to dominate the group or attack other members. As a leader, it is my duty to cut off a member those members. When group members dominate the group, individuals will feel intimidated or upset because they did not have a chance to contribute. To prevent the domination of the group by a member, during the first session I will make it clear at times I may cut members off. Stating a sentence such as: “Something that I may do from time to time is interrupt if I feel you are off on a tangent or others may want to speak. Two of my tasks are to keep you focused on the purpose of the group and to give everyone a chance to talk.” This will allow members to refocus on the group rather than some irrelevant tangent.

Group Dynamics 9

5.

The interpersonal leadership style focuses on the interactions among the group between individuals. These interactions would include the obstacles to the development of effective interpersonal relationships within the group. These interactions would include the group members speaking aloud, reading aloud, and repeating what one hears. The intrapersonal leadership style focuses on the needs of the group members as individuals. Intrapersonal relationships refer to those that occur within the individuals mind and one’s own intellect. This includes conflicts within oneself that needs be dealt with, usually developed out of one’s own thoughts, ideas, emotions, and values. Depending on the style of group and the dynamics occurring whining the group, the leader must decide which leadership style is appropriate.

In an educational group setting, the interpersonal oriented style of leadership would be ideal. Education groups aren’t as interactive as a therapy group or discussion group. In an education group your main focus would be to educate the group as a whole. In a discussion or therapy style group, though this is a form of group counseling, you main focus is still each member as their own individual.

In my therapy group, I prefer the leader directed approach rather than the group directed approach. As a leader, I have an understanding on how to meet the group member’s needs and have been educated on how to structure the group to meet the needs of the group. “Effective leaders who follow the leader-directed model never demand that the members follow them as if they were gurus; rather, they lead in a manner that is valuable for members.” In the group directed approach, the group is run by the members. They will determine the direction of the

Group Dynamics 10

group. Members usually don’t know what they need and how to attend to personal issues; this is why I prefer the leader directed approach. Leader directed style allows me provides structure and exercises pertaining to issues and questions of the group. “Leaders because of their training and professional commitment, are remiss if they do not exercise their responsibility to prevent negative consequences in the group.” As a leader, it is my responsibility to lead the direction of the group but I will allow the input of the members.

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Take Home Examination

Talaya Fulton