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| Support/Therapy Group Interaction with Adults Who Stutter: A Participatory Demonstration of a Dynamic and Fun Model | | |
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This workshop is the result of more than a decade of experience at West Virginia University, beginning with NSA chapter interactions that evolved into weekly group stuttering therapy sessions designed to achieve various desensitization and insight goals. We hope that participants will experience an enjoyable “group experience” with the following aspects: a light-hearted warm-up activity, individual goal setting and evaluation, a “gut level” (as opposed to merely “intellectual”) experiential activity followed by summarizing/sharing/digesting ideas with others (stutterers and visitors focusing on a non-stuttering problem), and theme-based “lessons.” This handout describes the group session to be featured as well as several other sample themes and associated warm-up and participatory activities from more than 200 group sessions we have developed.

We are indebted to numerous speech-language pathologists who, as students, met with the first presenter for at least two hours each week planning sessions and writing up the results. The second two presenters are veterans of several years of these group sessions.

I. Purpose

- A. To provide a therapeutic environment where adults who stutter can...
 1. Experience the acceptance and insight that comes from sharing openly with other stutterers
 2. Become more desensitized to their own stuttering in order to...
 3. Make faster progress in individual therapy
 4. Become more comfortable with their stuttering
 5. Practice their stutter-reducing skills
- B. To provide an authentic group therapy experience for clinicians in training

II. Where, When, Who?

- A. NSA support groups, private or public speech clinics, or other settings
- B. 1 to 1 ½ hour sessions
- C. Group composition—Adolescents and adults who stutter, visitors (usually) and supervisor
- D. Need to be led by a facilitator
 1. At WVU, two graduate students alternated weekly between facilitator and co-facilitator roles

III. Guiding Principles

- A. Four characteristics of most group therapy sessions
 1. Features a theme and “lesson”
 2. Includes something FUN!
 3. Involves some “real experience” of participants—not just ideas
 4. Must “stand alone” for a one-time participant, even though themes may be ongoing or sequential

IV. Some Sample Themes

- A. Expanding one's comfort zone
- B. Nonverbal communication
- C. "Baggage" we carry
- D. Cost vs benefit of therapy
- E. Expressing emotions
- F. Containing emotions
- G. The values and misuses of humor in stuttering
- H. What do we feel, think and do about stuttering
- I. Difference between "like" and "respect"
- J. Stuttering and social situations
- K. "Small talk"
- L. "Easy" and "difficult" conversation partners
- M. Acknowledging stuttering
- N. Accepting what we cannot change
- O. How we change
- P. Costs vs benefits of support or therapy
- Q. Relapse

V. Typical Components

- A. Each participant decides and reports on one goal for the session
 - 1. Stuttering voluntarily in every utterance
 - 2. Speak as fluently as possible
 - 3. Maintain good eye contact
 - 4. Enjoy myself
 - 5. Speak more slowly
 - 6. Practice my easy onset target
 - 7. Let every stutter come without any avoidance, etc.
- B. Ice breaker activity, ideally related to the session's theme, but as light-hearted as possible
 - 1. Demonstrate the proper use of a toothpick after a formal dinner
 - 2. Take a pill ("Tic Tac") to demonstrate how some easy things can be hard
 - 3. Describe the bed, room, pillow, etc. for a "perfect" night's sleep
 - 4. Your best friend has a bad haircut and asks for your opinion. What do you say?
 - 5. Pay the person next to you a compliment
 - 6. Describe how you buy shoes, etc.
- C. Activity (wide variety)
 - 1. Self-examination and report
 - 2. Videotaped speeches and interactions
 - 3. Paper-pencil exercises
 - 4. Brainstorming
 - 5. Role-playing, etc.
- D. Processing / discussing the activity
- E. Discussing / identifying the lessons of the session
- F. Rating of individual goals (e.g., 1 to 10)
- G.

VI. Subjective Results

- A. People who stutter
 - 1. Most have continued and enjoyed the group
 - 2. Developed trust and friendships
 - 3. Felt ongoing support during hard times
 - 4. Believed to be a useful adjunct to individual therapy

5. Had fun!
6. Some have not continued
 - a. Possibly could not continue one's pattern of avoidance
 - b. Embarrassment or shame too strong
 - c. Not interested in desensitization—wanted fluency
 - d. Schedule conflicts

B. Visitors

1. Virtually all have been surprised, impressed and pleased with their acceptance and inclusion
2. Virtually all have said they found it meaningful
3. Graduate students
 - a. All have found it unique and educational
 - b. A few have wished they could continue

VII. Sample groups

A. Featured group: Acknowledging Your Strengths and Weaknesses to Others

1. Ice breaker
 - a. Which of the Seven Dwarfs best describes your personality: Sleepy, Happy, Grumpy, Dopey, Sneezy, Bashful, or Doc?
2. Activity
 - a. On a card, write 3 important positive things (“strengths”) about yourself
 - b. On the other side of the card, write 3 serious, negative things (“weaknesses”) related to your stuttering (or another nontrivial, serious issue if you do not stutter)?
 - c. Select the most positive thing and most negative stuttering (or related) problem about yourself
 - d. Pair up with another person
 - e. Switch roles with your partner and comment on “your” problem as you would like an outsider to comment on the problem (Try to talk for 3-4 minutes for each)
 - f. Listen as your partner switches roles with you and comments on “his/her” problem as he/she would like an outsider to comment on the problem (Your partner should try to talk for 3-4 minutes for each)
3. Processing (to be led by the facilitator)
 - a. How did you feel as the commenter?
 - b. How did you feel as the receiver of comments?
 - c. What were differences when you talked or listened about positive vs negative things?
4. Lessons (to fill in)
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

B. Sample: Importance of Nonverbal Communication

1. Ice breaker
 - a. Imagine you are in a country where instead of shaking hands, people make eye contact, lose it, and then make it again.
 - (1) Greet the person next to you but give the same impression you try to give with a handshake
2. Activity
 - a. Go to separate room and be videotaped about giving an animal back after pet sitting in an assigned scenario.

- (1) Could not wait to give it back
 - (2) Loved pet but are glad to give it back
 - (3) Relieved because nothing happened to pet
 - (4) Something awful happened to pet
 - (5) Want to keep pet
 - b. Videos all played without sound
 - (1) After each video the “speaker” gets feedback from everyone on nonverbal communication (e.g., How could the person have engaged the listener better?)
- 3. Processing
 - a. Group discussion
- 4. Lessons
 - a. There is much more to communication than what we say
 - b. People who stutter can maximize their nonverbal communication to their advantage
- C. Sample: “Small Talk”
 - 1. Objectives
 - a. To provide insight into difficult versus easy speaking situations
 - b. To gain insight into and to desensitize participants to “small talk” activities
 - 2. Ice breaker
 - a. No chairs are provided in the room
 - b. Everyone, including guests, are asked to mingle and change persons every 2 min (upon signal by the facilitator)
 - 3. Activity
 - a. Everyone is asked:
 - (1) Who was the easiest and hardest to talk to?
 - (2) What problems did you encounter?
 - (3) Describe a time you did well at “small talk.”
 - (4) Describe a time you did not do well
 - (5) What pointers do you have to share about this activity?
 - 4. Processing
 - a. Assignment: Put yourself in a social situation you would normally avoid
 - (1) Come back next week and report
 - 5. Lessons
 - a. We remember and react more to how people make us feel than what was said
 - b. Stuttering need not prevent one from engaging in small talk
- D. Sample: Stuttering “Baggage” (Shame/Guilt)
 - 1. Objectives
 - a. To acknowledge and accept negative emotions and that bad experiences happen
 - b. To experience sharing negative emotions with others
 - c. To experience receiving negative emotions from others
 - 2. Ice breaker:
 - a. Write top 3 feelings about stuttering on Post-It notes
 - b. Paste notes onto books from stack with size of book representing size of feeling
 - c. Put book into a cloth bag
 - d. Now, hang the bag around your neck
 - 3. Activity
 - a. Pick a serious shame/guilt/humiliation related feeling and let a quantity of

- Play Doh represent it
 - b. Sit in a tight circle with everyone in complete silence
 - c. Looking at each person for 15 seconds each (until signal of “Next” by facilitator) give (share) some, all, or none of your Play Doh to each person
 - d. Recipients are to accept what—if anything—is given
 - e. Repeated for each participant, including visitors
- 4. Processing
 - a. You may reveal what the emotion is or not, but...
 - (1) Tell everyone what it felt like to...
 - (2) Give/share your shame/guilt/humiliation
 - (3) Accept others’ shame/guilt/humiliation
 - b. If you want, tell why you gave/did not give as you did
- 5. Lessons
 - a. Shame/guilt/humiliation often becomes “baggage” that we carry around
 - b. These emotions and experiences can be shared (even somewhat secretly) in a caring environment
 - c. Our likelihood to unburden ourselves of shame/guilt/humiliation is often a function of the empathy we experience from others
- E. Sample: Celebrating Who We Are
 - 1. Objectives
 - a. Explore how we view ourselves and how others view us
 - b. Increase insight into each of our unique, positive qualities
 - c. Explore the power of having a positive self-perspective
 - 2. Ice breaker
 - a. The facilitator asks the participants to each choose an unwrapped chocolate candy with different filling and eat it slowly
 - (1) Each person is asked to describe the characteristics of the chocolate (taste, feel, etc)
 - b. The facilitator points out how a simple piece of chocolate that may seem plain on the outside has so many different unique qualities, just as a person does
 - 3. Activity
 - a. Pass around cups with each person’s name on the outside of one
 - b. Write something positive about the person named on the cup and stick the piece of paper in the cup
 - c. Continue passing the cups around until each person has written a positive quality about everyone in the room
 - d. Take your own cup and share what others wrote about you
 - (1) Identify comments that:
 - (a) Surprised you
 - (b) Were easier to accept (fit with your own beliefs of yourself)
 - (c) Were harder to accept (didn’t fit with your perspective of yourself)
 - (d) “Touched” you
 - 4. Processing:
 - a. The facilitator explains that in this session, the goal was to take time to celebrate the participants of the group and their impact on others
 - b. The facilitator asks guests to share what kind of impact coming to group/being around people who stutter has had on them
 - 5. Lessons:
 - a. We often see ourselves how others see us; however, we filter other’s beliefs through what we already believe about ourselves

- b. People need affirmation
 - c. There is great power in positive thinking
 - d. Quotes about self-image
 - (1) Your self-image is your pattern. Every thought has an activity visualized. Every activity belongs to a pattern. You identify with your pattern or thought. Your patterns leads your life.—J. G. Gallimore
 - (2) We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done.—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- F. Sample: Anxious Negative Thoughts (ANTS) (Amen, 2008)
 <<http://www.amenclinics.com/pbs/change-your-brain-change-your-life/>>)
1. Objectives
 - a. Learn to differentiate between productive vs. counter-productive negative thoughts
 - b. Increase insight into participants' own negative thoughts
 - c. Enhance desensitization through self-evaluation
 2. Ice breaker
 - a. Various phobias are written on the board (e.g., apotemnophobia - Fear of persons with amputations; arachibutyrophobia - Fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of the mouth; arithmophobia - Fear of numbers. <<http://www.insidehoops.com/forum/showthread.php?t=128053>>)
 - b. Guess what each phobias the words represent
 - c. Share a unique phobia that you have
 3. Activity
 - a. Participants will define ANTs through group discussion
 - b. Participants will make a list of 5 ANTs they have and then choose 1 from the list that is most negative but that they would be willing to talk briefly about
 - c. Participants will individually identify their ANT
 - d. The facilitator can optionally write them on the board as they are mentioned and discussed
 - e. After everyone has shared, the facilitator will ask each person regarding his/her ANT:
 - (1) Is it true?
 - (2) Are you 100% sure, guaranteed, it is true?
 - (3) How does it feel when you think the thought?
 - (4) How would you feel if you didn't have the thought?
 - (5) Who would you be if you didn't have the thought?
 - (6) Turn the original thought around. What if the opposite were true?
 - (7) Is it true more often than the ANT?
 - f. Participants will discuss what they have learned, experienced, and heard
 4. Lessons:
 - a. Often things we are anxious over are not physically or emotionally healthy
 - b. When evaluated, many of our negative thoughts and fears are not true/accurate
 - c. It is possible to change our "scripts" by evaluating the way we view our thoughts and attitudes
 - d. Although self-evaluation is important, it is not always a solution
 - (1) Some thoughts/fears are deeply ingrained and some are justified
 - (2) The purpose of this ANT activity is not to put a guilt trip on us, but rather an exercise to help us evaluate our negative thoughts based on what is actually likely to happen, rather than on emotion