

Group Counseling

Lecture 5

Group Facilitation

Lecturer: Dr. Susan Gitau (PhD)

Introduction

Effective facilitation makes learning from each other, from the leader and the group dynamics easy and productive. The group leader who is referred to as the facilitator in this lecture plays different roles and functions to ensure that the group achieves the set goals and objectives and that all members feel a sense of belonging and purpose.

Expected Lecture Outcomes

At the end of this lecture, you will be expected to:

- i. Define group facilitation.
- ii. Explain the roles and responsibilities of a group facilitator.
- iii. Describe the functions of a group facilitator in the group process.

Defining Group Facilitation

Group facilitation refers to the way group interactions and processes are organized to give the best output. The person who does this is referred to as a group facilitator or group leader. The facilitator influences the members and the process to achieve the desired set goals and objectives from the formation to the termination stages.

Core Leader's Function in Group Process

- Teaching members general guidelines and ways to participate actively.
- Developing ground rules and setting norms.
- Teaching basics of the group process.
- Assisting members in expressing their fears and expectations.
- Modeling the desired behavior for the group members.
- Fostering open and sincere communication
- Assigning roles and responsibilities.
- Helping members establish specific goals linked to the main group aim and purpose.
- Equip members with relevant life skills like self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, creative thinking among others.
- Developing trust among the members and in the process.

Foundation of Group Trust

Trust is important in the group process. Without trust, the group interaction will be:

- Superficial
- Little self-exploration and behavior change
- Constructive confrontation of defeating members behavior is avoided
- Group will operate under a handicap of hidden feelings.

Ways of Establishing Trust

- The way the leader introduces him/herself should be, enthusiastic, personable, psychologically present, open and show that they have faith in the group.
- The leader should be adequately prepared to display confidence and also not to be taken by surprise by any unplanned event in the group.

- Leader should show interest in welfare of individual members and whole group.
- Leaders should offer good degree of structuring e.g. norms, rules, rights, responsibilities of all parties involved.
- Leaders should show warm and accepting qualities e.g. welcoming fears, concerns, anxieties etc.
- Maintenance of confidentiality is key.
- Remain open to change of behavior but maintain steadfast compassion and support till the end.

Rationale of Building Group Trust

- Trust brings up joy and affirmation.
- Trust helps build a caring and productive relationship.
- Trust is necessary for open communication. communication of information that is accurate, relevant and complete.
- Trust enables sharing of relevant, thoughts, feelings and ideas.
- Trust gives us confidence in other people's thoughts and deeds.
- Trust creates a desire for interaction with others.
- Trust is necessary for the complex existing societal interactions.
- Trust allows people to take risks without seeking protection.
- Trust increases spontaneity
- Trust increases friendliness makes members to feel easy, less anxious and secure.

Characteristics of trust

- Trust is a complex concept to fully understand.
- Trust exists in relationships not in one's personality- it occurs between people not within people.
- Trust is constantly changing as two people interact.
- Trust is hard to build and easy to destroy.
- The key to building and maintaining trust is being trustworthy i.e. the more accepting and supportive you are of others, the more likely they will disclose their thoughts, ideas, theories, conclusions, feelings and reactions to you.
- Trust needs to be appropriate- never trusting and always trusting are inappropriate.
- Cooperation increases trust, competition decreases trust- trust is higher among collaborators than among competitors.
- Initial trusting and trustworthy actions within a relationship can create a self fulfilling prophecy- the expectations you project about often influence the action of other people towards you.

Knowing if Members Have Built Trust

A member will.

- be willing to risk beneficial or harmful consequences by making themselves vulnerable to other people.
- self-disclosing is easy.
- be supportive by providing support to others in the group.
- be accepting of others- it reduces anxiety and fears about being vulnerable.

- be open- sharing information, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the issues being discussed.
- share - offering of your resources to other people to help them achieve their goals.
- co-operative - communication of willingness to work together to achieve mutual goal.
- express warmth, empathy and compassion

Behaviors that Decrease Trust

- Rejection- ridicule or disrespect as a response to the other's openness, joking at the expense of the other person, laughing at disclosures, moralizing about his/her behavior, giving an evaluative response or being poker faced.
- Failure to reciprocate openness- it leaves the other party feeling overexposed and vulnerable.
- Refusal to disclose thoughts, information, conclusions, feelings and reactions after the other person has indicated acceptance, support and cooperativeness.

Re-establishing Broken Trust

- Establish super ordinate goals- these are cooperative goals that neither party can achieve alone and yet are so compelling that each person will join to achieve them.
- Resource interdependence- increase dependence on each other's resources so that one person has a chance of succeeding on his or her own.
- Openly and consistently express cooperative intentions.
- Reestablish credibility- make certain that your own actions match your announced intentions. (Keep your word).
- Be absolutely and consistently trustworthy- this is in your dealings with others: acceptance and support of others is critical.

- Periodically test the waters- it is by engaging in trusting actions and making yourself vulnerable to the other person.
- Apologize sincerely and immediately when you inadvertently engage in untrustworthy actions.
- Strive to build a tough but fair reputation.
 - Initially and periodically responding cooperatively to others even when you know in advance that others want to compete.
 - Use constructive feedback and behavior change.

Guideline on Trusting

- Trusting should be appropriate- you should size up to know when, whom and how much to trust others. Trust should result into benefit and not risk as trust involves some vulnerability.
- Trusting can be a self-fulfilling prophecy- it is a false definition of a situation that evokes a new behavior that makes it possible for the originally false impression to come true. Assumptions you make about other people and the way you behave towards them influence how other people respond to you thus creating self-fulfilling prophecies.
- Personal proclivity to trust- it is the level to which individual differences exist in willingness to trust others.
- Trust in friendships- interpersonal trust occurs in two levels.
 - a) Reliability- it occurs when others do what they have promised to do.
 - b) Emotional trust- conviction that others are concerned about how we feel and will act to protect our welfare.

- Teaching members the importance of recognizing and expressing negative feelings, anxieties, and conflicts.
- Helping participants recognize the ways in which they react defensively.
- Creating a climate where they can deal with their resistance openly.
- Teach members the value of recognizing and dealing openly with conflict.
- Point out behavior that is a struggle for control and teach members how to accept their shared responsibilities.
- Encourage members to keep in mind what they want from the group and to ask for it.
- Provide a model for the members by dealing directly and honestly with any challenges to you as a professional or person.
- Continue to monitor your own reactions to members who display problematic behavior and explore your own counter transference.

Facilitator’s Core Function in Different Stages

Group Stage	Facilitator’s Function
Formation	Set clear goals and objectives. Set meeting time, venue and frequency. Screen and recruit
Initial/ Transition stages	Relax members Build trust

	<p>Develop group norms and rules</p> <p>Build life skills</p> <p>Structure the process and assign roles and responsibilities</p>
Working/Performing Stage	<p>Builds cohesion.</p> <p>Offer high challenge and support.</p> <p>Promote peer support.</p> <p>Cognitive reconstruction</p> <p>Evaluate behavior change.</p> <p>Keep prompting personal and interpersonal relationships.</p> <p>Start preparing for future after the group</p>
Termination/Adjourment Stage	<p>Prepare for termination.</p> <p>Deal with separation anxiety.</p> <p>Make plans for exit</p> <p>Plan for follow up</p>

Conclusion

In this lecture we have discussed the facilitator’s roles, responsibilities, and functions in a group process. We have looked at trust as a foundational building block and how as a facilitator one can build trust, enhance trust, and rebuild broken trust. Together with skills and techniques in managing group dynamics and the functions we have covered in this lecture; the facilitator can

enhance effective group facilitation and give optimum group performance and outcomes. In our follow up lecture, we shall discuss group techniques using psychoanalytic theory.

References

1. Department of Counseling Psychology Faculty (2015). *Group counseling manual*. Nairobi: ANU Library.
2. Gitau, S (2024). Personal Class Notes
3. Corey, G. (2009). *Theory and practice of group counseling*. New York: SAGE