

Group Counseling

Lecture 7

Cognitive Behavioral Group Counseling

Lecturer: Dr. Susan Gitau (PhD)

Introduction

Behavior therapy targets and individual's behavior. Psychoanalytic therapy ends at gaining insight and behavioral therapists challenged this concept and developed many behavioral theories in this regard. Sigmund Freud asserted that as an analytical therapist, one must understand the client from all aspects including what lies beneath what they are saying and doing (Peter, 2015) but behaviorists insisted that some behavior must change for positive outcome to occur. Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) has been the most preferred effective therapy among the many behavior therapies developed this far. During this lecture, we shall learn more about application of cognitive behavior therapy concepts, techniques, and skills used in group counseling.

Expected Lecture Outcomes

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

- i. Define the term cognitive behavior group counseling.
- ii. Describe the cognitive behavior group counseling process and techniques.
- iii. Discuss the benefits of CBT.
- iv. The guiding principles of CBT for a group counselor.

Defining Cognitive Behavioral Group Counseling

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of therapy that helps people learn how to identify and change the destructive or disturbing thought patterns that have a negative influence on their behavior and emotions. Cognitive behavioral therapy combines cognitive therapy with behavior therapy by identifying maladaptive patterns of thinking, emotional responses, or behaviors and replacing them with more desirable patterns (Merriam-Webster). Negative thoughts are replaced with realistic, objective, and positive thoughts in CBT.

Types of Cognitive Behavior Therapy

CBT encompasses a range of techniques and approaches that address our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. These can range from structured psychotherapies to self-help practices. Some of the specific types of therapeutic approaches that involve cognitive behavioral therapy include:

Cognitive therapy which centers on identifying and changing inaccurate or distorted thought patterns, emotional responses, and behaviors.

Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) that addresses destructive or disturbing thoughts and behaviors while incorporating treatment strategies such as emotional regulation and mindfulness.

Multimodal therapy suggests that psychological issues must be treated by addressing seven different but interconnected modalities: behavior, affect, sensation, imagery, cognition, interpersonal factors, and drug/biological considerations.

Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) involves identifying irrational beliefs, actively challenging these beliefs, and finally learning to recognize and change these thought patterns.

While each type of cognitive behavioral therapy takes a different approach, all work to address the underlying thought patterns that contribute to psychological distress (Hofmann, Asnaani, Vonk, Sawyer, & Fang, 2012).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Techniques

CBT is about more than identifying thought patterns. It uses a wide range of strategies to help people overcome these patterns.

Here are just a few examples of techniques used in cognitive behavioral therapy.

Identifying Negative Thoughts

Negative thoughts lead to negative feelings and actions. But taking the time to identify these thoughts can also lead to self-discovery and provide insights that are essential to the treatment process.

Practicing New Skills

In cognitive behavioral therapy, people are often taught new skills that can be used in real-world situations.

Goal setting

Goal setting can be an important step in recovery from mental illness, helping you to make changes to improve your health and life.

Problem-Solving

During cognitive behavioral therapy participants learn how to identify and solve problems that may arise from life stressors, both big and small. It can also help reduce the negative impact of psychological and physical illness.

Process of CBT Group Therapy

Problem-solving in CBT often involves five steps:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Generate a list of potential solutions.
3. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each potential solution.
4. Choose a solution to implement.
5. Implement the solution.

Self-Monitoring

Also known as diary work, self-monitoring is an important cognitive behavioral therapy technique. It involves tracking behaviors, symptoms, or experiences over time and sharing them with during therapy sessions.

What Can CBT treat?

CBT is used to treat a wide range of conditions, including:

- Addiction
- Anger issues
- Anxiety

- Bipolar disorder
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Panic attacks
- Personality disorders
- Phobias

In addition to mental health conditions, cognitive behavioral therapy has also been found to help people cope with:

- Chronic pain or serious illnesses
- Divorce or break-ups.
- Grief or loss
- Insomnia
- Low self-esteem
- Relationship problems
- Stress management

Benefits of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- CBT is known for providing the following key benefits:
- Developing healthier habits from positive thoughts
- It is an effective short-term treatment option as improvements can often be seen in five to 20 sessions.
- It is effective for a wide variety of maladaptive behaviors.
- It is often more affordable than other types of therapies.

- It is effective both online and in person setting.
- It can be used for those who don't require psychotropic medication.

One of the greatest benefits of cognitive behavioral therapy is that it helps clients develop life skills for present and future (Rnic, Dozois , & Martin , 2016)

Cognitive Restructuring Process

As the group counselor, ask participants what cognitive thoughts are not working for them. Train them to check in with their mood and identify automatic thoughts. The aim is to ground them for ease of processing those thoughts.

Steps for Cognitive Restructuring

Step 1: Record the situation, thoughts, and feelings on your cognitive restructuring thought record. What is important in cognitive restructuring is that you identify as many thoughts associated with the negative emotion(s) as possible. Don't just stop at one thought.

Step 2: Pick *one* automatic thought from the list you created, the one that feels most responsible for your negative emotion.

Step 3: Develop different points of view about the situation.

There are several probing questions you can ask yourself that are bound to help you discover new perspectives on the situation:

1. What is the effect of believing this thought? What would happen if I didn't believe this thought?

2. What is the evidence supporting this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?

3. Is there an alternative explanation?

4. What's the worst that could happen? Would I survive it? What's the best that could happen? What's most likely?

5. If my friend _____ were in this situation, what would I tell them?

6. What can I do about this?

Step 4: Craft an alternative response. Having answered a few of these questions, you may find that you already feel better.

CBT Group Counseling Guiding Principles

For CBT work to be effective, a group counselor/facilitator ought to be aware of the following:

Change Can Be Difficult

- because changing negative thoughts can be hard to change too, it may take some time.

CBT is Very Structured

- The approach to understanding issues and treatment planning is highly structured.

You Must Be Willing to Change

- Participants must commit to change.

Progress is Often Gradual

- Setting goals and achieving them is a step-by-step process and this requires patience and positivity.

Uniqueness of Clients

- Group members are quite different and unique and because of such, the counselor ought to treat them as different (inclusivity and diversity)

Conclusion

In this lecture we have learned about CBT, described the CBT process, techniques, and benefits. We have examined the challenges of applying CBT in groups and how a counselor can observe certain guiding principles during group therapy. In our follow up lecture, we shall discuss person centered group counseling.

References

1. Hofmann, S., Asnaani, A., Vonk, I., Sawyer, A., & Fang, A. (2012). The efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy: A review of meta analyses. *Cognit Ther Res.*, 427 -440.
2. Peter, K. (2015). *Basic aspects of psychoanalytic group therapy*. London: Routledge.
3. Rnic, K., Dozois , D., & Martin , R. (2016). Cognitive distortions ,humor styles ,and depression. *EurJ Psychol*, 348-368.
4. Taukeni, S. G., Mollaogiu, M., & Mollaogiu, S. (2024). *The theory and practice of group therapy*. London : IntechOpen.

Suggested Further Readings

1. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). [Cognitive-behavioral therapy \(alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, nicotine\)](#).
2. Trauer JM, Qian MY, Doyle JS, Rajaratnam SMW, Cunnington D. [Cognitive behavioral therapy for chronic insomnia: A systematic review and meta-analysis](#). *Ann Intern Med*. 2015;163(3):191. doi:10.7326/M14-2841