

Group Counseling

Lecture 8

Person - Centred Group Counseling

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Introduction

Person- centred therapy approach focuses on value of the huma person. This theoretical approach found behavioral therapy too mechanical and sought to bring the face of humanity in therapy. It borrowed a lot from Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and existential therapies. One of the most powerful outcomes of person- centred therapy is self-actualization. Counselors facilitate these goals by providing an open, accepting environment where clients can openly discuss their feelings and experiences with each other. In addition, counselors use techniques such as active listening, reflective dialogue, role-play, problem solving exercises, art activities, and more to encourage self-discovery. In this lecture, we shall learn more about how this theory can be applied in group counseling.

Expected Lecture Outcomes

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

- i. Define the term person centred group counseling.
- ii. Describe person centred group counseling process and techniques.
- iii. Discuss the benefits and challenges of person centred group counseling

Defining Person Centred Group Counseling

Person-centered group counseling is a type of counseling that focuses on the individual's experience and encourages them to explore their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors in a supportive environment. It emphasizes the individual's own ability to find solutions to their problems. In person-centered group counseling, counselors create an atmosphere of trust and safety where members can feel comfortable taking risks and exploring personal issues. Group members are encouraged to take responsibility for their own growth and development while also understanding that they are supported by other members in the group (https://counselling-uk.com/mental-health-therapy/person-centered-group-counseling/?feed_id=257&_unique_id=65f06e1388791).

Foundations of Person Centred Therapy

The self-concept is a central aspect of the person-centered approach to counselling. It is basically how people define themselves, for example, 'I am caring, I am cheerful, I can sometimes be funny'. It is 'a fluid but consistent pattern of perceptions of the 'I' or 'me' in relation to the environment, personal values, goals, and ideals' (Merry and Tudor 2006). As well as a self as it exists in the present, people also have an 'ideal self' which is the self they ideally want to be. This makes the interesting point that the self-concept might have been more accurately named the 'self-process', as this term more precisely captures the fluid, ever-changing nature of the self as conceived by Carl Rogers. Carl Rogers had deep philosophical belief that one can shape their Owen pathway given a supportive environment (Tudor & Merry, 2006).

Person-Centered Group Counseling Process

Person-centered (PC) group counseling is a great way to provide support to individuals who may be struggling with mental health and social issues. It provides an environment where people can come together to share their struggles and experiences and receive feedback and support from

others who have been in similar situations. This brings a sense of belonging and togetherness. This type of counseling process helps individuals work through their issues in a safe and supportive setting for all.

The primary goal of person-centered group counseling is to create an environment where people feel comfortable discussing their feelings and concerns without judgement or criticism. The counselor will help facilitate conversations by providing guidance, asking questions, and encouraging open dialogue between members. This type of counseling differs from traditional individual counseling as it allows members to learn from each other's experiences and provide feedback on how they are dealing with their own issues at a personal and communal level.

The counselor's main goal is creating a safe space for the group to discuss their feelings. This can include setting ground rules for how conversations will flow, using confidentiality agreements, and establishing expectations for behavior. Once the space has been established, the counselor will introduce topics for discussion that are relevant to the group's needs. These topics can range from managing stress, coping with change, building healthy relationships, or addressing other mental health issues, social problems, performance problems, skills capacity building, relationship, addictions, illness, divorce, separation, betrayal, trauma, loss, and grief among others (https://counselling-uk.com/mental-health-therapy/person-centered-group-counseling/?feed_id=257&unique_id=65f06e1388791).

Person centred counselors are catalyst of change without force. He/she uses core conditions that enhance a working relationship with the members of the group. He/she knows the value of feelings for individual members and among the participants as a group ((Taukeni, Mollaogiu, & Mollaogiu, 2024). Safety and freedom are very critical in person centred therapy.

Expected Therapy Outcomes.

The following are the expected PC therapy outcomes:

- Enhanced self-awareness
- Enhanced interpersonal skills.
- Enhanced assertiveness
- Purpose driven future.

Key Benefits of Person-Centered Group Counseling

The following are some of the benefits of person-centered group counseling:

Increased Self-Awareness: Through active listening, compassionate questioning, and positive feedback from others in the group, individuals can gain greater insight into their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors by listening to others sharing.

Mutual Understanding: Person-centered group counseling aims to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding between all members of the group. This allows members to feel comfortable expressing themselves openly and honestly. Thus, promoting genuineness and realness. This is a very fertile ground for trust building.

Supportive Environment: Person-centered group counseling provides a safe space where members are encouraged to share experiences with each other without fear of judgement or criticism. Free expression of personal views, emotions is evident thus building self-confidence.

Goal-Oriented Growth: Members can work together towards common goals that help them grow as individuals as well as strengthen their relationships with one another. There is focus on all undertakings. Less stress and clarity of goals and future plans.

Self-Esteem Building and Meaningful Relationships: As members become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, they can learn how to use these traits to build self-esteem and confidence. Person-centered group counseling is an effective tool for helping people develop meaningful relationships with others while growing in self-awareness. It also offers a supportive space where members can share experiences without fear of criticism or judgement. With its focus on mutual understanding and goal-oriented growth, person-centered group counseling provides many valuable benefits that can help individuals reach their potential.

Person-Centered Group Counseling Challenges

Person-centered group counseling is a form of therapy that focuses on recognizing the unique needs of everyone in the group. It requires counselors to provide support, guidance, and an open dialogue to help members reach their personal goals. While this type of counseling can be beneficial, there are also some challenges that come with it. These include managing multiple personalities, creating trust and safety, and dealing with resistance from group members (Smith, 2012).

Managing Multiple Personalities

When working with a group of individuals, it's important for counselors to recognize the different personalities in the room. Each person has their own background and set of experiences that inform their opinions and behaviors. As the counselor, it can be difficult to manage these multiple personalities to create an environment conducive to open dialogue and growth. To do this successfully, counselors must be able to recognize how people interact with each other and provide guidance when necessary.

Creating Trust & Safety

When working with a group, it's essential for counselors to create an atmosphere of trust and safety. This is especially important in person-centered therapy, as individuals need to feel supported for them to open up about their experiences and feelings. To achieve this goal, counselors must foster an environment where members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts without fear of judgment or criticism from others. This includes providing clear boundaries for acceptable behavior and allowing everyone a chance to speak without interruption or ridicule.

Dealing With Resistance

In any type of group counseling setting, there is always going to be some degree of resistance from certain members. This could be anything from refusal to participate in activities or discussions or unwillingness to take responsibility for one's actions or feelings. As the counselor, it is your job to identify these issues early on and work with everyone on overcoming these obstacles for them to get the most out of therapy sessions. This could mean providing additional support outside of sessions or helping them find ways they can better express themselves within the group setting. Person-centered group counseling can be challenging but also rewarding when done correctly.

By understanding the different personalities present in the room, creating an environment that fosters trust and safety among members, and managing any resistance present during sessions; counselors can help individuals reach their personal goals within a supportive group setting (Covey, 2004).

Establishing a Secure Environment for Group Counseling

Secure and safe environment

Group counseling requires a secure and safe environment for individuals to share their feelings, thoughts, and experiences. It needs to be established to get the most out of the counseling session. To create an environment that is conducive to person-centered group counseling, counselors must take into consideration the physical as well as psychological safety of everyone in the group. The *physical* safety of the group is paramount and can be established by providing a comfortable space with good lighting, appropriate seating arrangements, and access to necessary amenities such as tissue boxes or water bottles.

The *psychological safety* of the group can be created by fostering trust among participants through active listening and understanding without judgment. This can be done by developing ground rules for *confidentiality* and respect while also allowing people to express themselves freely without fear of criticism or ridicule from other participants. In addition to creating an atmosphere of safety, it is important for counselors to provide *structure* during group sessions. This can include setting time frames for each discussion topic or activity, assigning roles to different participants, *outlining expectations* for participation, and providing clear instructions on how to navigate conversations so that everyone's voice is heard. An effective way to ensure that everyone is comfortable in the group setting is to practice non-directive techniques, such as *open-ended questions* or *reflective statements*. This allows participants to feel heard without being confronted or judged by others in the room. Furthermore, counselors should always keep tabs on how individuals are feeling throughout the process by regularly checking in with them and monitoring their level of engagement in activities or discussions.

By implementing these strategies during person-centered group counseling sessions, counselors

can ensure that their clients are safe and secure while also giving them an opportunity to learn from one another through meaningful dialogue (Taukeni, Mollaogiu, & Mollaogiu, 2024).

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

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