

Group Counseling

Lecture 11

Dealing with Problem Situations

Lecturer: Dr. Susan Gitau (PhD)

Introduction

Group counseling like individual counseling has several challenges that hinder achievement of set goals and purpose. Some of the challenges include issues that surround ethical practice, competence-based challenges, relationship issues, ethical dilemmas among others. Group therapy is a relationship-based practice that is prone to many ethical issues that compromise the value and the quality of group therapy (Taukeni, Mollaogiu, & Mollaogiu, 2024). In this lecture, we shall review different problem situations or case studies in group work.

Expected Lecture Outcomes

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

- i. Identify ethical issues from the selected case studies.
- ii. Apply ethical principles in resolving the issues identified from the case studies.

Case Study 1

Joseph and Judy are trained counselors who qualified with a first degree in counseling psychology. They are thinking of starting a support group for ladies who have lost their husbands in the last five years. Joseph has not done personal therapy though he lost his dear mother when he was 12

years old. Judy had taken 20 therapy sessions during his training and mostly focused on her life as a total orphan.

Based on this knowledge, help Joseph and Judy to:

- i. Consider key factors before forming this group.
- ii. Identify challenges that Joseph and Judy are likely to encounter as they undertake this group formation task.
- iii. How can they resolve issues that may arise.

Factors that Joseph and Judy must consider before forming the group.

- Recruitment and selection criteria
- Venue of the meeting
- Cost implications
- Start and end of the group sessions.
- Session content
- Loss and grief knowledge, skills, and practice
- Leadership plans

Challenges

- Competencies required to deal with loss and grief issues, trauma counseling and other unresolved issues or past unfinished businesses among the group members.
- Cost implications – are they able to fund the group counseling sessions like facilitation fees, venue, and other related costs?
- Licensure – are they authorized to do loss and grief therapy?
- Personal issues getting into the way.

Possible Solutions

Self - Disclosure

Joseph and Judy need to disclose about themselves and especially personal issues that come in between, see how they use their strengths to give the best in therapy.

Supervision

They need to seek supervision services because of the issues that may arise while offering their support to the group members. In case of ethical issues that may arise, they will seek help from the supervisor.

Clear goals and schedules

When forming a group, clear goals and workplan to be followed must be adhered to. This is planning and knowing how to deal with any challenges that may arise.

Professionalism

Joseph and Judy need to be members of a professional body and licensed by the state to practice. They should be clear about this to avoid future issues in their group work.

Case Study 2

John has been attending counselling sessions for several months seeking help with the difficulties he is finding in dealing with his relationship break-up. He and his partner were together for ten years and have two children, a boy aged 9 and a girl aged 7. John has access to them every other weekend and for part of each school holiday. This arrangement has been operating reasonably well for the past two years. John has joined your group therapy that you formed to enhance personal wellness and personal development for the group members.

During the group sessions, you become increasingly aware of building frustrations and stress regarding visitation and access to his children. His heightened display of frustration has raised several concerns for you about the stability of his mood and thought processes.

Aware of recent reports about parents taking the lives of their children and themselves in similar circumstances, you begin to become apprehensive about the children's welfare and safety (AIPC, 2008).

What would you do in this situation?

Guiding Steps

Identify the problem or dilemma – issues like safety and health of the children, relationship with the wife, and his safety as well.

Identify the potential issues involved – premature termination of group attendance, group therapy may be disrupted by the emotional issues John is battling.

Review the relevant ethical codes – this may include the duties and responsibilities of a counselor, group counseling practice and how to deal with children at risk., reporting procedures, who are the stakeholders among others.

Know the applicable laws and regulations - licensing rights and obligations provided and using them approximately to address the issues in this case.

Obtain consultation and supervision – Before taking certain serious steps, consult relevant authorities and experts in child matters, dealing with illegal drugs and how to handle cases of minors in a drug addiction environment and how to rescue such children if need be if the parents are the ones abusing drugs. How to deal with John is critical due to his emotional and psychological distress.

Consider possible and probable course of action – After serious consultation, receiving clinical supervision and considering many options, then choosing the best course of action is done.

Enumerate the consequences of various decisions – It is prudent to consider the forces for and the forces against taking certain decisions. This may include relationship conflicts that may arise following the choice of this course of action.

Outline the monitoring and evaluation plan - It is important for the course of action to be accompanied by a good plan to monitor progress, impact, and challenges.

<https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/salem-college.pdf>).

Case Study 3

Miriam is one of the group counselors with over 50 youths who have several personal, family and community-based issues. Miriam is a foreigner in this country where she practices as a licensed practitioner. She is worried that the young people may not understand her during the group counseling sessions. She cites incidences of conflicts related to cultural differences, age differences, moral principles among others. Miriam has come to you as a clinical supervisor for help.

How would you go about this case?

Miriam needs to be helped to nurture the qualities of a multicultural counselor. Factors that are to be identified here range from age, culture, ethnicity, values, and training background. Another issue that has been cited is conflict resolution. As a supervisor, there is need to educate Miriam on offering counseling that respects cultural diversity and inclusivity. The process of handling her group needs to embrace the skills, knowledge and values of diversity and inclusivity. Clear boundaries and respect are also important to consider avoiding value-based conflicts in the group process. Miriam also needs to embrace best practice qualities of a good multicultural counselor.

These qualities include empathy, active listening, confrontation, compassion, silence, focusing, disclosure, mindfulness, sensitivity among others (Kabir, 2017). Safety for all is important unless there is a very big concern or danger to the wellbeing of both the counselor and the group members (Younggren & Harris, 2008). Miriam should be also encouraged to educate and facilitate multicultural competent relationships among the members (Parsons & Dickinson, 2017).

Conclusion

In this lecture, we have covered the case studies that are possible to encounter in group counseling. We have interrogated possible solutions to these issues and the qualities of a good multi-cultural counselor. In our follow up lecture 12, we shall review ethics in group counseling and show how to apply ethical principles and strategies in ethical dilemmas in group counseling.

References

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