

Psychoeducation Groups with Torture Survivors

Alison Beckman, MSW, LICSW
The Center for Victims of Torture

Objectives

At the end of today's webinar, participants will:

- Have an understanding of CVT's psycho-educational group model
- Be familiar with the format and content of group sessions
- Be able to explain why pre-planning between co-facilitators is important to the success of the group
- Be able to describe potential adaptations to this group model to allow it to be used in other programs

CVT's Group Treatment Model

- History of groups
- Based on Judith Herman's model of trauma recovery
 - Safety and stabilization
 - Remembrance and mourning
 - Reconnection and commonality
- Three levels of group

Group Model

- Support and education group
 - 12 weeks
 - Mixed gender
 - Mixed language (English & 1 other)
 - Facilitated by a therapist and a social worker
 - Clients also receive services from other disciplines during group and sometimes receive individual therapy

Group Model

- Challenges

- Balancing education and support
- Logistics

- Benefits

- Increased social support
- Learning from providers and other clients
- Both group and individual clients show improvement in three month measures

Group Screening

- Co-facilitators screen potential group clients together
- Assess for:
 - Suicidal/homicidal risk
 - Active psychosis
 - Potential signs of TBI
 - Ego resources and personality
 - Basic needs/stability
 - Individual support available to client
 - Language & literacy

Group Format

- Check-in
- Presentation of topic and related information
- Discussion
- Questions/concerns
- Closing ritual or relaxation exercise

Group Content

Topics are arranged in an order that allows participants to become familiar with group format and other participants before moving into more trauma-related topics

Session Content

Week 1: Introduction & Orientation

Week 2: Taking Care of Yourself

Week 3: Living in a New Culture

Week 4: Immigration & Political Asylum

Week 5: Employment

Week 6: Accessing Health Care

Group Content (continued)

Week 7: Effects of Trauma & Torture

Week 8: Effects of Trauma & Torture

Week 9: The Healing Process

Week 10: Grief & Loss

Week 11: Relationships

Week 12: Closure

Co-facilitation

- Helpful to divide some parts of the workload
 - Case notes
 - Preparing & delivering presentations
- Complimentary roles
- Different areas of expertise
- Can help reduce secondary trauma

Note: If co-facilitation is not possible, the group can be conducted by one clinician.

Co-facilitation

- Coordination
 - Structure of group
 - Structure of screening interviews
 - Determine how responsibilities will be shared

Co-facilitation

- Planning & debriefing
 - Meet each week before and after group sessions
 - Content planning
 - Logistical issues
 - Clinical issues
 - Group dynamics
 - Important to either include interpreter in this or debrief separately
 - Language & interpreting issues
 - Secondary trauma

Interpretation in Group

- Anticipate interpreter challenges
- Anticipate linguistic & cultural differences among group members
- Preparation & education of all group members regarding working with an interpreter is essential

Adaptations of Model

- Number and type of facilitators can vary
- Order of sessions can be adapted as relevant for your group members and program
- Can be adapted for international, post-conflict settings
- Can be used with bicultural workers as facilitators

Questions & Comments