**Week 1 Discussion 1**

**Two assumptions you may have about group therapy.**

One assumption about group therapy is that it involves the process of individuals who have experienced similar situations in their lives that have adversely and psychologically affected them to come together and discuss how they each feel and deal with their day to day lives. According to Clark (2014), group therapy is a joint effort as opposed to a therapist centred approach that deals with sensitive issues in a collaborative process that is supportive (Clarke, 2014). An example of such group therapy would be grief and loss or substance abuse programs.

A second assumption especially as noted in movies etc is that group therapy is for those who feel sorry for themselves and require others to enable them to feel better about themselves. Karau and Elsaid (2009) believe that people either have a negative or positive belief about group therapy and as such may enter a group therapeutic process with a certain frame of mind i.e. negative but through participation leave with a changed perspective (Karau & Elsaid, 2009). Karau and Elsaid (2009) also believe that doubters will acknowledge the benefits of group therapy as they have confidence in the positive consequences, such as motivation and productivity, that exist (Karau & Elsaid, 2009).

**Explain any personal experiences that helped form these assumptions.**

As a paramedic, we often respond to calls/scenes where we are affected psychologically and each of us respond and deal with the situation in our own ways. When having attended such a scene we have group debriefings and we discuss the scene, how each part unfolded, what could have been done better or differently and how we have been affected. Although not necessarily considered group therapy as there are no therapists involved and are led by the person in control of the scene, these debriefings have provided an assumption about how group therapy on a continued basis could most certainly be of great assistance long term in the mental health of healthcare workers.

**Explain how your assumptions might help or hinder your interactions with clients.**

Having been part of many debriefing scenarios and having witnessed the advantageous effects of discussing scenarios in a group, I feel that it would certainly help with my interactions with my future clients. Knowing that the group environment would certainly assist in clients feeling more support not only from myself as a therapist but also from the collective group who knows and can sympathize as opposed to empathize with each other is of benefit.

**Explain how you might evaluate whether your assumptions are accurate or not.**

I do feel that my assumption on group therapy is valid as Lakin (1986) supports the view on communal feelings through group therapy holding value as each member of the group is encouraged to provide support to each other (Lakin, 1986). Other ways to evaluate could entail surveys that can be collected regarding conclusions on group therapy assumptions, partner with different groups to collect evaluation forms on group sessions conducted or research studies.

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**Week 1 Discussion 2**

**Describe the group process and explain the potential effectiveness of group therapy versus individual therapy**.

Both group and individual therapy are psychotherapy practices encompassing psychological philosophies performed by a professional therapist (Stockton, 2010). The difference between them is simply that group therapy entails the involvement of a therapist and more than one client at the same time, ranging between five to fifteen clients, all of whom have shared experiences; whilst individual therapy comprises of a therapist and a single client (Kivlighan et al, 2007; Stockton, 2010). Group therapy although facilitated by a therapist allows for the flow of input from the members, where ideas and experiences are shared with each other (Kernberg, 1998). The open formats allow for sharing of hardships as well as the offering of affirmations and feedback from peers through evaluation of life problems and past events (CSAT, 2005).

**Rationale**

Research has shown that group therapy is as equally effective as individual therapy however group therapy does have both benefits and limitations (Stockton, 2010; McRoberts, Burlingame & Hoag, 1998).

**Two benefits**

Group Therapy also offers the opportunity to give and receive support from others something not available through individual therapy (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005; APA, 2018). Therefore, you can give help and get help at the same time (Kemp, 2010). Effectiveness of group therapy is related to attributes such as belonging, communication, interdependence and participation resulting in therapeutic effectiveness (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Another benefit that group therapy offers is interpersonal feedback and the multiple coping mechanisms of the various individuals with the same problems allowing for the individuals to decode which coping method would best suit them (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005; Stockton, 2010).

**Two limitations**

One limitation to group therapy is known as social loafing, where a client in the group due to lack of motivation or performance on identified tasks does not actually make any changes through hiding their issues and refusing to accept accountability (Karau & Elsaid, 2009). It is thought to be because of a client’s beliefs regarding collectivistic or individualistic interpersonal interactions (Karau & Elsaid, 2009).

A second limitation is that the centre of care is not as attentive and strong as it would be for the client in individual therapy sessions (Karau et al., 2009). Meaning that this type of therapy may be unsuitable for clients who firstly expect a high level of privacy, are antisocial, introverted, violent, thoughtless etc (Karau et al., 2009).

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Week 3 Discussion

**Overview of the Group therapy and Type**

 Group therapy is one form of psychotherapy, and it involves more than one therapist working with several persons at a time. Group therapy is widespread today, and it can be applied in several locations including hospitals, community centres, private therapeutic services, mental health clinics among others. It can be used solely or in combination with a treatment plan such as medication and individual therapy. The type of group therapy that I will be using is the structured psycho-educational group approach. In this type of group therapy members are provided with knowledge and information on a particular issue or subject matter. Psycho-educational groups can also teach individuals some healthy coping skills, and they are led by a therapist who is qualified and plays the role of directing the various sessions and setting the therapeutic goals (Barlow et al., 2016). However, the bonds between the members are less significant in this context, because most of the content is provided through instructions, and he/she plays the role of a teacher.

**Group Population and Benefits**

The group will consist of one therapist who is trained and qualified to lead a therapeutic group. Additionally, there will be a group of seven members who will be meeting for about 2-3 hours a week for about six sessions; thus, the group will last for 8 weeks (Schuster et al., 2017). Like other groups, the group will have rules including confidentiality which dictates that all that is said or discussed in the group remains there and none of the members should discuss it outside. Further, members are expected to treat each other with respect. The group theme is ‘Being proficient Stress Managers.'

 The group members will benefit from the group in many ways. Besides learning more about stress management and their conditions, they will also gain some skills they can use in their day to day life activities and experiences. They will learn on how to handle anxiety, how to manage their time well to avoid stressful situations. The members will also learn some relaxation techniques which they can use whenever they are stressed or anxious, for instance, breathing exercises (Gordon & Kenny, 2018). The members will understand that they are not the only ones with facing the challenges they have, others also have the same issues. Since the group meetings are confidential, the group members have a safe space where they can open up. The members will also find a safety net. Additionally, through the group therapy, the members will learn how to relate to other persons in society and themselves in healthy ways. Also, the group member will be able to find their voice, they will be aware of their personal feelings and needs, and the means to effectively express them.

**Group purpose and Rationale for its Formation**

 The purpose of this Psychoeducational therapeutic group is to assist individuals who have problems in managing stress. With poor stress management skills, individuals may end up suffering from depression or other health issues such as cardiovascular diseases. The group members will learn techniques and tools for effective stress management which they can apply in the short term and long-term stress management. Besides stress management skills the members will learn other essential life skills, relaxation techniques, and time management skills among others (Wong et al., 2016).

 The group members will join independently through self-will and assessment, they will discuss with the therapist on why they intend to join such group and what their targets for the therapy are. The group therapy will also target helping the members realize that they are not alone (Phillipsen et al., 2015). The other purpose of the group is to give the members the essential support they require. The group's other purposes include helping the members find their voice and ways of expressing and handling their needs and feelings as well.