SUPPORT GROUPS

Chapters 6 in Community Health Education Methods by Bensley
“Individuals join groups to know that they are not alone; groups give people a sense of community”
SUPPORT GROUPS

“Structured groups that focus on a specific problem, task, or theme, and incorporate both interpersonal and educational gains.”

“They function to provide information, comfort, and connectedness with others who are experiencing similar circumstances.”
Types of Support Groups

- Children and adolescents
  - Parental involvement,
  - Confidentiality, Termination

- Adults
  - Needs assessment is important. Issues of transitions, growth, identity, intimacy, next generation

- Older adults
  - Address loneliness, isolation, loss of productivity, health issues, ageism. Meetings should be early. Reading materials should be in large font.
TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS

- **Substance Abuse**
  Most well established is AA. Use of motivational interviewing and cognitive-behavioral therapy may involve more self-disclosure.

- **Peer-led/Self-help**
  Community group without a professional facilitator. Provides a support network where friendships can develop.

- **Web-based**
  Allows for accessibility by a wider range of people. Those who are homebound can join. Loss of non-verbal interactions. Synchronous versus Non-synchronous.

**WHAT IS AA?**
Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.
QW: List the issues you will need to address in the different types of support groups.

**Types of Support Groups**

- Children and adolescents
- Adults
- Older adults
- Substance Abuse
- Peer-led/Self-help
- Web-based
STEPS FOR CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE SUPPORT GROUPS

- Plan carefully:
  - Define the audience
  - Goals, objectives
    This “is the driving force for a successful support group”:
    Overall goal;
    Objectives specifying what needs to be accomplished, how, and when; where, how frequently, and for how long the group will meet;
  - Activities
    Develop activities which will help accomplish the objectives.
STEPS FOR CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE SUPPORT GROUPS

- **Site**
  Must provide privacy, be free of distractions, inviting, and comfortable. Options can include churches, schools, hospitals, community rooms. Sitting arrangement should be in a circle.

- **Identify Resources and Materials available**
  Review the theories and use them in determining what information and activities to implement.

  - Theory of Planned Behavior (subjective norms)
  - Social Cognitive Theory (people learn through observing the actions of others)
  - Health Belief Model (perceived susceptibility)
  - Transtheoretical Stages of Change Model (preparation)
STEPS FOR CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE SUPPORT GROUPS

- Notify the community about the support group
- Select a facilitator (an active listener who has empathy)
  ...and who can effectively use:
  * reflection,
  * summarizing,
  * questioning,
  * confronting.
WHAT ARE THE STEPS FOR CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE SUPPORT GROUPS?
QUALITIES OF A GOOD LEADER

- Believes in the group process
- Creates an open, caring atmosphere
- Facilitates communication among members
- Values creativity
- Clarifies individual ideas or suggestions
- Facilitates the group process by providing insight into the group process
- Keeps the group focused on the present
- Helps group set standards and goals
- Summarizes group ideas or suggestions so that group can accept or reject them
List off to your neighbor all the qualities of a good leader.
Selective perception

A new member may deal with the anxiety of joining a group by gravitating to members they perceive to be like themselves, and avoiding the others, or acting as though they are not truly interested in the group. . . .

. . . deal with this by involving everyone in some meaningful activity.
GROUP DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

Communication in a group is influenced by four needs:

- The need to survive without a loss of personal integrity
- The need for identity (who am I in this group?)
- The need for power, influence, and control
- The need for acceptance by others.

Make sure to encourage the group to give feedback in a non-judgmental, nonthreatening manner. Model good listening skills.
GROUP DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

- **Group size and structure**
  - Ideal group size is 5 - 8
  - An open structure is best for having a high morale
  - A more controlled and directive group structure is best for efficiency.

- **Membership**
  - Factors that make membership more attractive: cooperative group attitude, member interactions, people feel that they belong.
  - Factors that make membership less attractive: inability to agree on a group goal, arguing, dominating self-involved members.
GROUP DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

- Norms (expectations of behavior):
  - Formal norms (written rules)
  - Explicitly stated norms (stated verbally)
  - Informal norms (rules of behavior that are accepted by all, but not stated or written)
  - Unconscious norms/tabooos (norms that are not stated but rarely violated)
GROUP DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

- Goals (the desirable outcomes that provide motivation for joining a group)

For the group to be effective, the individual and group goals need to be compatible.

The facilitator should help members develop reachable, individual and group goals, and then serve as motivator in reaching those goals.
Leadership

- “A group member may become a leader by being an active participant” …by “inspiring a clear mutual vision, by empowering members through cooperative teamwork, or by leading by example.”
- “Members will follow a group leader if they think the leader is competent and knowledgeable and shares their goals.”
QW: DESCRIBE THE GROUP DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES
STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

- Initial stage/Forming stage
  - Focus in on creating a group structure, orienting members, and addressing expectations.
  - Members are observing each other, and deciding whether or not they fit in with the group.
  - Members defer to the facilitator. Therefore, it’s important for the facilitator to model open communication and compassion.
STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

- Transition stage/ ‘storming’
  - Anxiety and conflict emerge
  - Communication styles are tested by the members
  - The facilitator/leader is tested by the members
STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

- Working stage/Performing stage
  - Group is productive and growth is occurring at the group level as well as at the personal level.
  - A time of relaxation for both the members and the facilitators.
  - There is an increase in self-disclosure, confrontation, feedback and humor.
  - New activities and homework can be incorporated at this stage.
Ending stage/Termination

- Emotions (sadness, anxiety, anger) may come up and behaviors may change.
- To have a successful termination, the facilitator should prepare the group for this week's ahead.
- Members should be encouraged to discuss their reactions regarding termination.
Qw: LIST THE STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT and DESCRIBE EACH ONE IN DETAIL.
TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION

- Plan in advance
  - Allow several months for planning
  - If planning is well done, participants develop a group cohesion

- Over-recruit members
  - Attrition is common in support groups
TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION

- Support the facilitator
  - Co-facilitation can help prevent feeling drained
  - Schedule breaks
  - Bring in outside speakers
  - Encourage the group members to take facilitator roles
TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION

- Know what is available in the community
  - Contact local medical care providers, county and city health departments, schools, and community organizations.
TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION

- Generate initial buy-in during the first meeting
  - Provide refreshments
  - Create goal-centered activities
  - Plan an interactive activity
TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION

- Be aware of ethical issues
  - Informed consent
  - Confidentiality (Should be discussed at the first meeting).
  - Freedom to withdraw from the group
  - Psychological risk for members (group pressure, scapegoating, loss of confidentiality, and confrontation)
  - Multicultural awareness
  - Relationships between facilitator and group member not generally appropriate.
  - Group facilitator should not advance their own personal agendas or impose their views on members.
  - Socializing among group members outside the group can interfere with the group process.
TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION

Talk to your neighbor about the ethical issues which you need to consider when forming a support group.
OVERCOME CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE SUPPORT GROUPS

Deal with Problem Members

- The Monopolist
  (feels anxiety, has a need for attention, has a need to control)
- The Silent Member
  (has fears of disclosure, of not being perfect, has a fear of confrontation)
- The Help-Rejecting Complainer
  (feels dependent and has a need for attention)

Deal with Attendance
A support group is defined as:
A. Two or more individuals who meet face-to-face to achieve agreed-upon goals.
B. Two or more individuals who benefit by sharing experiences
C. Two or more individuals with the same medical diagnosis
D. Two or more individuals with an interest in research

The purpose a support group is:
A. Increase knowledge
B. Clarify changes an individual may want to make in order to reduce a variety of symptoms
C. Assist in the development of skills necessary for behavior change
D. All of the above.
E. None of the above

Groups need to address what type of content will be deemed acceptable and how to deal with members expressing hostility or negativity. This is especially important for:
A. Web-based support groups
B. Peer-led support groups
C. Support groups for substance abuse issues
D. Support groups for adults and older adults
E. Support groups for children
F. All the above
Factors that decrease attractiveness of group membership include:
A. Lack of cooperation among the group members
B. Fighting or arguing among members
C. Dominating members
D. Self-oriented members
E. A feeling that the group is not attractive to others
F. All of the above

One of the roles of the facilitator and expected outcomes of support groups is:
A. Point out negative changes being made by group members
B. Point out positive changes being made by group members
C. Encourage group members to support each other
D. All of the above
E. Both B and C

Informed consent is based on:
A. Clear and accurate information
B. Long-term group goals
C. Real time exchanges
D. Exchanges that occur in non-real time
There are several variables that must be considered when forming and maintain an online support group. This includes:

A. Synchronous vs. asynchronous groups
B. The time of day used to host the support group
C. Lurking participants
D. All the above

One of the qualities of a good leader includes all of the following EXCEPT:

A. Believing in the group process
B. Creating an open and caring atmosphere
C. Providing refreshments
D. Summarizing group ideas and suggestions
E. Clarifying individual ideas or suggestions

Communication in a group is influenced by four needs:

A. Need to survive without loss of personal integrity, need for identity, need for power, and influence and need for acceptance by others
B. Need to survive without loss of personal integrity, need to determine membership, need to avoid stereotypes, and need to maintain their own sense of worth
C. Need to survive without loss of personal integrity, need for identity, need to select the facilitator, and need to share
True/False

One issue to keep in mind when working with the elderly is the social prejudice toward older adults.

Facilitators should begin discussing the ending several weeks prior to the final session.

One tip for successful support group facilitation includes over-recruiting members.

One way to avoid the burnout experienced by some facilitators is to enlist a co-facilitator.

Groups enhance self-exploration and introspection and increase self-confidence.