



Self Confidence Course

Group Report

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(Group Facilitator)

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Supported by Stephen Fry

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Self Confidence Course

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Introduction

This 7 week group was offered to male and female clients for 2 hours each Thursday morning.

Referral was via our specified routes for groups. Clients were offered a visit to the project to meet one of the course facilitators or, where there wasn't an opportunity for this, a telephone conversation. This contact was an opportunity for clients to be given further details of the group and to decide whether they felt it was right for them. It also gives the facilitators a chance to explain the group in detail and help the client understand the commitment that is involved in getting the most out of it.

Twenty two people were referred to the group and of those twelve accepted and attended the group. Four people decided to go on hold for the next group, two were unable to attend due to work commitments, one person declined the service and one transferred to a counselling service. The remaining two didn't attend the assessment meeting.

The Facilitators

Joanna King is a qualified person-centred counsellor with 20 years' experience of working with adults with mental health needs. She has been running groups for the project for the last seven years.

Alexa Ryder is also an experienced, person-centred counsellor and an accredited member of the BACP. She facilitates groups for the project and assesses clients for counselling and group work.

Alexa and Joanna both attended group work training facilitated by Dave Mearns and Elke Lambers at Strathclyde University in November 09. This training for advanced practitioners has helped them work more deeply with groups and in a more person-centred way.

Through their training and experience Alexa and Joanna have learned to dare to work with groups at relational depth and risk offering only themselves to the clients; trusting the process.

Group work at this depth requires a lot of belief and bravery not only from us as facilitators but also, and much more so, from the other group members.

Our Aim

Our aim is to create a safe in environment where clients can explore their thoughts, feelings and experiences in a safe and respectful group. By being accepted by the

group for who they truly are we believe clients will start to be able accept themselves and that this in turn will lead to increased self-esteem. We offer various exercises, skills and techniques to help clients express themselves more assertively and gain new insight into their lives and their behaviour.

"I even like myself a bit"

"I do not feel alone any more"

The Clientele

The course is open to women and men aged 18-65. The people in this group spanned a wide age range.

Running the Group

The group met for a total of 7 sessions. Each session lasted two hours (including short coffee break). We had a break of a week over half term.

The topics covered were:

- What is Self-Confidence?
- Who am I?
- Discovering Choices
- Asking for what I need
- Rights and Responsibilities
- What am I waiting for?
- Being 'Me'
- Endings

Over the past couple of years with two person-centred counsellors now facilitating the group, the content of the group has gradually changed as we try to respond with more immediacy to the expressed and unexpressed needs of the group.

We have now built in various exercises that lead to more open discussion and sharing so that group members can express their true selves and experience acceptance from the other group members. For many in this group, being able to express their needs or hear their voice in the group was a huge struggle and risk.

"Dived in at last, "Yipee"

"Good to be allowed to participate or not (no pressure)"

"Its far easier to speak and 'open up' than I'd anticipated"

"Sometimes it was very painful"

"I'm less shy than I was"

Alongside this often deep experiential learning we continue to offer some skills and techniques to support clients when they want to express or assert themselves, to help them think about changes they want to make and to gain insight into their thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

"Good to be reminded of rights, responsibilities and declining requests which are not able to be taken on or not reasonable"

"When asked to do certain tasks I felt put on the spot and I felt extremely nervous but I could see the sense in participating"

"Good to share thoughts and coping strategies and maybe pick up ways to cope or get different perspectives"

We have moved more and more towards offering more unstructured space for clients to speak and feel that this is vital so that clients' issues are not simply buried and a set of skills laid over the top of the real issues. All this would do is make clients more skilful at hiding themselves and in turn increase isolation and lower self-esteem.

At each session handouts covering the main topics were available. These could be collected in the folder provided to build up a portfolio of information they can refer to when a difficult situation arises in the future.

Outcomes

This group had lots of themes around relating. There was much learning and processing around the risks of relating, asking for help and sharing their true feelings both within the group and outside.

There seemed to be a lot of individual process happening within the group. It seemed as if people got very different things out of the experience.

"My life has improved"

"I feel a bit more relaxed in social events"

"The group has been extremely helpful in being able to relate to others with the same problems as I have and by hearing others discussing those issues that relate to me it helps me get more in touch with my own emotions and realise that there is not a lot of substance to why I feel so unconfident"

"I have felt a lot of love within the group"

"I have a lot more energy"

"I have woken up and seen through the fog to a clear sunny day. What a relief to meet people in the same boat"

The participants completed the SOUL Project's "Getting to Know You" questionnaire at the beginning and end of the course. These have been used to create the attached graph showing the soft outcomes of the group.

The graph shows that the attitude section (first seven questions) moved from average of 24 to 31 points. These are the questions about the client's self-confidence and self-worth so this is an excellent result. The personal/interpersonal (questions 8-14) moved from 23 to 28 and the practical (questions 15 -21) moved from 26 to 30. These are great results as the members have shown higher self-worth and an increased ability to communicate and socialise with others.

As part of our effort to allow the group to be more facilitative and free in the group we decided not to use evaluation forms this time. These often limit clients to answering our questions and often seem quite difficult for clients to fill in. Instead made post-it walls where clients could be free to put any feedback they wanted onto the walls. One poster was feedback that was "Just for us" and one poster was "Feedback to share with our funders".

The feedback that is throughout the report is what our group wanted to share with you.

"My expectations were realised. I feel more positive"

"No longer a nut case"

"Not good to listen to people's specific individual issues as this can take up a lot of time and not be appropriate for all at the session."

"Sharing input has helped make sense of a few things"

"I feel happier"

"I think that unless my social situation changes I will not be happy. Words aren't sufficient to change me"

"Most sessions stayed with me for the rest of the week"

"I'm happy I was able to open up"

"I don't feel alone any more"

"As I became more familiar with the group members, my anxiety lessened, but anxiety is still largely prevalent in my life"

"I wish the meetings went on for longer than just a few weeks"

The Future

The Groups at One to One do not receive specific funding at this time and it is becoming difficult for the Project to find funds to run the groups. Now that One to One has lost its core funding the groups are even more at risk than ever.

One to One's person centred groups offer a different approach to all other organisations in the area. Our positive results are well documented in our group reports. Our referrers and clients clearly value the groups and I understand that 18 clients are attending the current group.

Group work makes sense as an affordable way of offering a timely service to clients.

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