



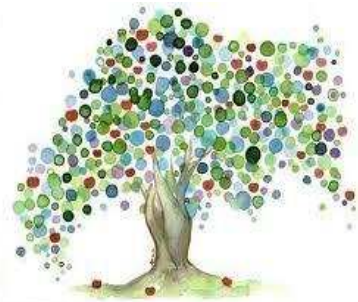
Self Confidence Course

Group Report

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(Group Facilitator)

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One to One Project
Registered charity 29905
Supported by Stephen Fry

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Self Confidence Course

Group Report

Introduction

This 8 week group was offered to female clients for 2 hours each Thursday morning.

Referrals were via our specified routes such as G.P.'s, Community Mental Health Teams, Fermoy Unit (Department of Psychological Therapies), the Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies Team (IAPT) both of which are based at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Health Visitors, the Community Alcohol and Drugs Service and Surestart Children's Centres. Each client was invited to visit the Project and meet one of the course facilitators to be given further details of the group and to decide whether they felt it was right for them. It is thought that this visit helps the client overcome the anxieties involved in joining a group where they otherwise wouldn't know anyone. 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.

For this course 34 referrals were received and a total of 20 clients visited us to find out more. Fourteen clients were invited and 5 clients were put on hold for the next group. 12 of the invited clients accepted and went on to attend the group.

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 six years.

Alexa Ryder is also an experienced, person-centred counsellor and an accredited member of the BACP. She facilitates the men's, and the women's self confidence groups for the project and assesses clients for counselling and group work. She has just begun facilitating our first ever self-confidence group that has both men and women attending.

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.

"Both counsellors were very helpful and supportive"

"Facilitators are lovely. Very friendly and approachable"

“Right combination of personalities between the facilitators”

“Both facilitators have been excellent, Alexa and Joanna”

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.

“This course has really helped me find myself and give me back my confidence. I believe the decisions/ choices I make are correct. So now I have much less self-doubt”

The Clientele

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

Attendance

This started off as a very large group of 12 and 10 people completed the course. Most of the group attended nearly every session and the group were very supportive of one another with many travelling in together.

Running the Group

The group met for a total of 8 sessions. Each session lasted two hours (including short coffee break). There was a break of 3 weeks over the Easter holidays and we returned for our final two sessions.

Although we added one more week and a break to span almost 3 months it still felt too short for the group.

“Course is very helpful but I feel it should last longer. As we make progress we still need the support of the group”

“The course needs to be longer or have a follow up course - as we improve we still need guidance”

“I wish the course was longer, it’s really helped me to feel happier about myself”

“Needs to be longer session”

“Longer course time”

The topics covered were:

- What is Self-Confidence?
- Who am I?
- Discovering Choices
- Assertiveness
- Rights and Responsibilities
- What am I waiting for?
- Being ‘Me’
- Endings

“I feel the course wasn’t long enough. I feel I need more topics to work on”

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.

“This course should be open to lots more people. It has been great working with the facilitators, Joanna and Alexa who work very hard and have a wonderful understanding of how to encourage each and every one of us”

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.

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.

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 new 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 took risks from the very first week; being honest with one another in a way that led to acceptance and support not only within the room but also many supported each other outside of the group too.

“This course has changed my outlook on my life and I feel more confident. It has given me my self-confidence back. I enjoyed the support of everyone in the group.”

Strong bonds were formed and it seems likely that some of the group will continue to meet or stay in touch.

The participants completed the Soft Outcome Universal Learning (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 24-33 points. These are the questions about the client's self-confidence and self-worth so this is an excellent result. The whole demeanour of some group members changed noticeably over the duration of the course, which was both self-affirming and encouraging to witness, The personal/interpersonal (8-14) moved from 24-35 and the practical (questions 15 -21) moved from 26-35. These are exceptional results as the members have shown higher self-worth and an increased ability to communicate and socialise with others. There was a real sense of friendships developing beyond the confines of the group which lessened a sense of isolation and confirmed an ability to form and develop relationships.

Some members felt that they were unable to score themselves any higher by the end of the course but feel that their insight into themselves and what they need to work on has hugely changed.

As part of our effort to allow the group to be more facilitative and free in the session 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 I 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.

“Being in a group is very supportive. I feel that the group should run for longer or twice a week. The facilitators were very friendly, professional, supportive and informative”

“I have seen people blossom and really show great improvement”

“It was well taught. I think it would be good to have a follow up session a few months later to keep the course fresher in your mind”

“Now the 8 weeks have ended we have all made some progress but I feel we could do with more time - maybe a break and then 3/4 more weeks”

“The course has been helpful and thought provoking”

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.

However the Management Team, Committee and Group Work Team are enormously committed to the future of the groups and our referrers truly value them. Our women's group is usually oversubscribed and there has been considerable demand for the mixed group which has just begun.

We are also keen to offer outreach groups for other organisations who can use our experienced facilitators to run groups for their clients/ service users.

The Group Workers and the Management Team are looking for extra funding and designing creative ways to support the groups.

We are also looking to provide some sort of follow up groups for established groups wishing to take their work further. Alexa has offered our last group the chance to come in to meet with her next week to share their views of how they could be best supported in their further development.

The Groups themselves are evolving as the Group Workers grow in confidence and skill.

Evaluating the group

Alexa and Joanna often receive feedback from groups regarding difficulty with filling in the SOUL questionnaire, particularly in the first week when they are feeling so anxious and are therefore looking at new ways to offer good feedback and simpler evaluation; both for our own growth, but also for funders.

Alexa and Joanna both attended Strathclyde University's course in Groupwork run by Dave Mearns and Elkie Lambers in November 2009.

This advanced practitioners' course has trained them in the most up to date theory of Person-Centred Group Work and has encouraged them to trust the group dynamics and to allow clients to become more facilitative of the group.

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