The Triad Girls’ Group: A comprehensive intervention for at-risk adolescents

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Triad Girls’ Group

- Developed with PACE, Center for Girls

- Development funded by the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County
Triad Girls’ Group

• Background of Project
  – Triad Women’s Group – SAMHSA funded project
  – Interest of PACE Center for Girls, Inc.
    • Substance abuse focus for at-risk girls
    • Interviews with key stakeholders
    • Addition of material to address grief & loss, increase drug psychoeducation and drug refusal skills, make appropriate for this population

• Triad Women’s Group now *Triad Girls’ Group*
Sites Currently Conducting Groups

Manatee Palms Youth Services

Tampa Bay Academy

PEMHS

Children’s Home, Inc
Triad Girls’ Group

• Based on the Triad Women’s Group
• Focus on substance abuse treatment
• Modified to be appropriate for adolescents
Specifics of running a Triad group

• General group dynamics
• Groups for teens
• Group Therapy
  - What is known about group processes
  - What key stakeholders told us girls needed
  - Effective/Ineffective facilitators
• The Triad Girls’ Group
  - Relevant issues
  - Specific groups
  - Walking through a group
Basics of Group Therapy

The theory and practice of group psychotherapy

Irvin D Yalom

- Curative factors
- Tasks and techniques
- Stages of group
Curative factors

- Installation of hope
- Universality
- Imparting of information
- Altruism
- Corrective family
- Development of socializing techniques
Curative factors

- Imitative behavior
- Interpersonal learning
- Group cohesiveness
- Catharsis
- Existential factors
Tasks and techniques

• Group norms
• Content
• Process
Stages of group

- Setting group norms
- Building group cohesiveness
- Splitting
- Closure
Special considerations for teen groups

- Peer pressure – e.g. who’s the “baddest” re drug use
- Outside conflicts/cliques brought into group
- Confidentiality, confidentiality
- Using peer support for good
- Fostering leadership/autonomy
Group Benefits for Adolescents

• Alleviation of feelings of isolation and a fostered sense of trust
• Feeling understood by peers who have experienced the same kind of trauma
• Development of social skills and problem-solving skills, and the achievement of adolescent developmental tasks
• Unique opportunities for self and interpersonal learning
Group Benefits for Adolescents

• Structured and focused groups maximize skills associated with resiliency; and better outcomes for traumatized children
• For girls, emotional awareness and insight are important factors in group work
• Bonding with other group members is done by creating a trusting climate and developing a sense of mutual support.
Effective Facilitators of Adolescent Groups

- Promote feeling-focused responses
- Encourage reflective responses geared toward clarifying or summarizing
- Use simple acknowledgements to reflect that group members are being heard
- Use observation to facilitate feedback
- Use linking to demonstrate similarities among group members
- Focus on and attend to the process!
Ineffective Responses by Group Facilitators

- Giving advice and evaluating responses
- Interpreting for a group member without allowing for self-discovery
- Offering support before a group member has felt heard (feels insincere)
- Assuming ownership of the group rather than allowing members to define the group in their own terms
Each session includes

- Introduction – tying in with week before
- Rationale
- Goals
- Questions and sample responses
- Exercises
- Handouts
- Closure
Goals of Treatment

• Maintain personal safety
• Identify and cultivate existing strengths
• Reduce symptoms of emotional disorders
• Facilitate abstinence for those who are using or abusing substances
• Reduce trauma-related symptoms associated with histories of violence/abuse
How Goals Accomplished

- Building emotional regulation skills
- Building problem-solving skills
- Building social supports and interpersonal effectiveness skills
- Fostering feelings of self-efficacy
- Enhancing members’ capacities to cope with distress
How Goals Accomplished

- Addressing triggers for substance use
- Increasing awareness of abusive relationships
- Increasing awareness of risky behaviors
- Maintaining personal growth and healing, and preventing relapse
GROUP FORMAT

• The group is designed to meet once a week for two hours.
• The group is structured into four phases with four to five sessions (chapters) per phase, for a total of eighteen sessions (chapters).
• Some chapter material may take more than one session.
• Questions identified within the Session Outline are critical to the structure of the session. Other questions are important but can often be skipped.
GROUP SIZE

• Ideal size for the group is 5 to 10 members.
• All members need the opportunity to speak or not to speak, as they choose.
• Some programs may prefer to allow members to attend the group even when they have completed the 18 weeks.
OPEN VS. CLOSED GROUPS

• Intended for use in both inpatient/residential and outpatient settings.
• Pragmatic issues often dictate whether the group is open or closed.
• Lends itself to Modified closed format. That is, new members would only join at the beginning of each phase.
• Allows for both the building of cohesion provided by closed groups and the flexibility to respond to agency contingencies provided by open groups.
FACILITATOR STYLE

• Foster an environment that promotes personal growth and healing;
• Clear boundaries between staff and members;
• Collaborative attitude that communicates respect, empathy, and compassion;
• Respecting uniqueness while affirming similarities;
• Conveying optimism for positive change
FACILITATOR STYLE

• Focusing on positive steps toward personal growth, empowerment, and healing.
• Believe that members are doing the best they can with their unique circumstances and skills.
• Identify their strengths rather than to focus on their deficits.
• It is important that members are empowered to participate or not, as they wish.
FACILITATOR EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

• Experience with facilitating groups is not as important as having experience with adolescents.

• Special training in treating co-occurring disorders and in working with people that have trauma-related disorders

• Ongoing supervision by a trauma specialist is recommended
FACILITATOR EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

• Weigh carefully how their own experiences can influence their work in this arena
• Lived experience can be helpful
• Undealt with issues can be problematic
• What has worked for you may not work for others
Group Safety

Threats to safety include

- Current violence within relationships or from strangers,
- Direct attempts at self-harm,
- Less direct attempts such as relapse into substance use or abuse.
- Each member’s safety plan and individual coping “toolbox” should be reviewed periodically and as needed.
Dealing with current crises/issues

- Most facilitators elicit this discussion at the beginning of the group during the Feelings Check-In.
- Can often be incorporated into the session materials.
- Issues brought up during the Impact Check-Out should be addressed directly after the group session.
PROBLEM SITUATIONS

- Flashbacks,
- Loss of emotional control,
- Literacy and comprehension problems,
- Boundary violations, and
- Disruptive behaviors
Coping with problems

- A sense of safety and security
- Develop group rules that promote safety and a supportive and collaborative (rather than authoritative) group process.
- What is said within the group stays within the group *without exception*.
- Periodically the group can be asked how safe they feel
- Grounding and deep breathing exercise
Part I: Mindfulness

Getting Comfortable With Yourself

Chapter 1: Empowerment—Building Safety
Chapter 2: Mind, Body, and Emotions
Chapter 3: How Mind and Emotions Work Together
Chapter 4: What It Means to Be a Female
Part II: Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

Having Healthy Relationships with Yourself and Others

Chapter 5: Assertive Communication
Chapter 6: Trust and Intimacy
Chapter 7: Boundaries
Chapter 8: Social Support
Chapter 9: Family
Part III: Emotional Regulation

Feeling Good

Chapter 10: Controlling Cravings and Urges
Chapter 11: Self-Esteem
Chapter 12: Self-Soothing
Chapter 13: Acceptance and Healing
Part IV: Distress Tolerance

Staying Healthy in a Stressful World

Chapter 14: Problem Solving
Chapter 15: Dealing With Violence
Chapter 16: Grief and Loss
Chapter 17: Crisis Management
Chapter 18: Empowerment, Healing and Personal Growth
Walking through a sample group

Chapter 1: Empowerment—Building Safety

Session Outline:

- Rationale
- Goals
- Questions
- Exercises
- Supplies
Let’s Break Out into Groups

- Exercise Leaders:
  - Teresa Van Alstine
  - Michelle LeVasseur
  - Vicki Hummer

- Distribute Handouts to Conference Attendees
HANDOUT 1A: EXAMPLES OF FEELINGS

- FRAZZLED
- SHOCKED/SCARED
- OVERWHELMED
- EXCITED
- HAPPY
- EXHAUSTED
Walking through a sample group

- Introduction to Phase I: Mindfulness
- Distribute Handout 1A: Examples of Feelings
- Feelings Check-In
- Question 1
- Question 2
- Question 3
- Exercise 1: Principles and Resiliencies
  - Handout 1B: Principles of Triad Girls’ Groups
  - Handout 1C: The Seven Resiliencies
- Question 4
LET'S TAKE A 10-MINUTE BREAK!
Walking through a sample group

- Question 5
- Question 6
- Distribute Handout 1D: My Safety Plan
- Exercise 2: My Safety Plan
- Distribute Handout 1E
- Exercise 3: Substance Use Questionnaire
- Impact Check-Out
Participant Feedback Session
Introducing Colleen Clark

- Participant Feedback Exercise
- Evaluation
Closing Remarks- Teresa Van Alstine

Thank You!!
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