

A Group Therapy Model for Adults Who Stutter

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Purpose

- ✦ To provide a therapeutic environment where adults who stutter can...
 - * Experience the acceptance & insight that comes from sharing openly with other stutterers
 - * Become more desensitized to their own stuttering in order to...
 - ↳ Make faster progress in individual therapy
 - ↳ Become more comfortable with their stuttering
 - * Practice their stutter-reducing skills
- ✦ To provide an authentic group therapy experience for clinicians in training

Where, When, Who?

- ✦ West Virginia University Speech Clinic
- ✦ 1-hour per week in late afternoon 6:00 to 7:00 PM
- ✦ Group composition—Adolescents & adults who stutter, visitors (usually) & supervisor
 - * Led by two graduate students in Speech-Language Pathology
 - * Graduate students alternate facilitator & recorder roles

Guiding Principles

- ✦ Four characteristics of most group therapy sessions
 - * Features a theme & “lesson”
 - * Includes something FUN!
 - * Involves some “real experience” of participants—not just ideas
 - * Must “stand alone” for a one-time participant, even though themes may be ongoing or sequential

Typical Components

- ✦ Each participant decides & reports on one goal for the session
- ✦ Ice breaker activity, ideally related to theme
- ✦ Activity (wide variety)
 - * Self-examination & report
 - * Videotaped speeches & interactions
 - * Paper-pencil exercises
 - * Brainstorming
 - * Role-playing
- ✦ Processing / Discussing the activity
 - * What are the lessons?
- ✦ Rating of individual goals (e.g., 1 to 10)

Some Sample Themes

- ✦ Expanding one's comfort zone
- ✦ Nonverbal communication
- ✦ "Baggage" we carry
- ✦ Cost vs benefit of therapy
- ✦ Expressing emotions
- ✦ Containing emotions
- ✦ What do we feel, think & do about stuttering
- ✦ Difference between "like" & "respect"
- ✦ Stuttering & social situations
- ✦ "Small talk"
- ✦ Acknowledging stuttering
- ✦ Accepting what we cannot change
- ✦ How we change
- ✦ Relapse

Subjective Results

✦ People who stutter

* Most have continued & enjoyed the group

- ☞ Developed trust & friendships
- ☞ Felt ongoing support during hard times
- ☞ Believed to be a useful adjunct to individual therapy
- ☞ Had fun!

* Some have not continued

- ☞ Possibly could not continue one's pattern of avoidance
- ☞ Embarrassment or shame too strong
- ☞ Not interested in desensitization—wanted fluency
- ☞ Schedule conflicts

Subjective Results: Cont.

✦ Visitors

- * Virtually all have been surprised, impressed & pleased with their acceptance & inclusion
- * Virtually all have said they found it meaningful

✦ Graduate students

- * All have found it unique & educational
- * A few have wished they could continue

Sample: Acknowledging a Problem Can Help

✦ Ice breaker: Your best friend has a bad haircut & asks for your opinion. What do you say?

✦ Activity

- * Write & share 3-5 positive things about yourself.
- * Write & share 3-5 negative things about yourself.
- * Pick the most negative problem about yourself.
- * Pair up with another person, switch problems & comment “your” problem as you would like an outsider to comment on the problem.

✦ Processing

- * How did you feel as the commenter?
- * How did you feel as the receiver of comments?

Sample: Importance of Nonverbal Communication

- ✦ Ice Breaker: Imagine you are in a country where instead of shaking hands, people make eye contact, lose it, and then make it again. Greet the person next to you but give the same impression you try to give with a handshake.
- ✦ Activity
 - * Go to separate room and be videotaped about giving an animal back after pet sitting in an assigned scenario.
 - ☞ Could not wait to give it back
 - ☞ Loved pet but are glad to give it back
 - ☞ Relieved because nothing happened to pet
 - ☞ Something awful happened to pet
 - ☞ Want to keep pet
 - * Videos all played *without sound*.
 - * After each video the “speaker” gets feedback from everyone on nonverbal communication (e.g., How could the person have engaged the listener better?)
- ✦ Processing
 - * Group discussion

Sample: “Small Talk”

✦ Ice breaker: No chairs. Everyone, including several new guests, asked to mingle & change persons every 2 min.

✦ Activity

* Everyone is asked:

☞ Who was the easiest & hardest to talk to?

☞ What problems did you encounter?

☞ Describe a time you did well at “small talk.”

☞ Describe a time you did not do well.

☞ What pointers do you have to share about this activity?

✦ Processing

* Assignment: Put yourself in a social situation you would normally avoid. Come back next week & report.

Sample: Stuttering “Baggage” (Shame/Guilt)

✦ Ice breaker:

- * Write top 3 feelings about stuttering on Post-It notes.
- * Paste notes onto books from stack with size of book representing size of feeling.
- * Put book into a cloth bag.
- * Now, hang the bag around your neck.

✦ Activity

- * Pick a *serious* shame/guilt/humiliation related feeling & let a quantity of Play Doh represent it.
- * Sit in a tight circle with everyone in complete silence.

“Baggage” Continued

- 👁️ Looking at each person for 15 seconds each (signal of “Next.”) give (share) some, all, or none of your Play Doh to each person.
- 👁️ Recipients are to accept what—if anything—is given.
- 👁️ Repeated for each participant, including visitors.

✦ Processing

- * You may reveal what the emotion is or not, but...
- * Tell everyone what it felt like to...
 - 👁️ Give/share your shame/guilt/humiliation.
 - 👁️ Accept others’ shame/guilt/humiliation.
- * If you want, tell why you gave/did not give as you did.