



Group To Healing, Proposal for Expressive Art Therapy Grief Support Group



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Abstract

Group to Healing, (8 week expressive art therapy grief therapy support group) is a proposed grief therapy support based on the Dual Model Process of Bereavement. Good social support in grief requires support in four categories: informational, instrumental, appraisal and emotional support (Cacciatore et al., 2021). Group to healing touches on all of these forms of support. Case management referrals allow for the person to have informational and instrumental support for tasks and life stressors while the group work and expressive art therapy interventions allow for the building of trust, mutuality, feedback and validation of group members through expression and peer contact. Group to healing uses psychoeducation, self-care, emotional expression and group processing rooted in expressive art therapy techniques and group work to facilitate healthy grieving in individuals.

Introduction

Older models of bereavement utilize “grief work” that include processing feelings about the loss as well as the relationship between the bereaved and the person that has passed away (Richardson, 2007). In addition, the famous “Stages of Grief” originally developed for people diagnosed with terminal illnesses have been applied to the grief individuals experience when they lose loved ones. However, discrepancies exist in earlier models (Richardson, 2007). To account for these discrepancies, the Dual Model Process of Bereavement was developed that involves processing painful thoughts and emotions (Loss Orientation) as well as dealing with new life stressors and building a new life after the loss (Restoration Orientation) (Solomon, 2024). Group to Healing guides individuals utilizing groupwork, with a focus on expressive art therapy, through both loss orientation and restoration orientation practices. Expressive art therapy differs quite a bit from art therapy. In art therapy, art is used for analysis and diagnosis. In expressive art therapy, the goal is not analysis but self expression (Thompson and Berger, 2022). Group to healing does this through poetry writing, letter writing, ritual (rock painting to be placed in a memorial garden during a memorial ceremony) and drawing. Emphasis during groups include gaining social support, self-care, examining spirituality and emotional expression and processing through various forms of arts. An emphasis on case management referral is also placed in the group. Researchers have shown that personality traits of individuals have less effect on bereavement outcomes than the way individuals are able to cope with new life stressors (Richardson, 2007). Groups to Heal works to assist in the stress associated with new life situations by making referrals to case management and individual therapy. A Sample of a case management referral form is provided along with an introduction to the group, notes on facilitation, lesson plans and handouts in the pdf provided on IASWG website.

Proposed Methods and Materials

Groups to Healing uses a combination of case management referral as well as expressive art therapy for groups. Before individuals enter the group, an intake is done with the social worker to assess for needs or major life stressors for case management and individual therapy referral. Materials needed for groups include drum circle instruments, pencils, colored pencils, rock painting materials and handouts. For handouts or complete materials list from Amazon.com see pdf associated with this presentation.

Limitations

Group to Healing was developed from personal experience and theory in a Western frame. While self expression and remembrance in the form of ritual, drawing about spiritual beliefs and music creation as well as building a wellness tool box for self-care techniques may align with other cultures, it is unknown to the author whether other aspects of the group such as letter writing and poetry writing are beneficial cross culturally. In addition, the case management referral form in the pdf provided is for older adult populations and would not be suitable for younger age groups.

Conclusions

Good grief support includes providing individuals with practical support in their lives as well as including emotional support, validation and mutuality. Group to Healing provides this through case management referral, and an emphasis on expressive art therapy groupwork. A newer model of grief processing, the Dual Model Process of Bereavement works with people by touching on both loss and restoration orientation to help individuals both process the loss as well as build a new life for themselves. Group to Healing accomplishes this through ritual, letter writing, case management referral and drawing. In addition, Group to Healing places an emphasis of self-awareness of grief symptoms and developing habits of self-care. Group to Healing proposes an innovative framework of engaging and creative grief support in a group setting that allows for individuals to process their grief in a healthy way. The full workbook (Including facilitation notes, lesson plans, handouts and materials list) are included in a pdf with this poster.

References

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