

# (Re)constructing Positive Self: Group Work in Community with Persons Suffering from Mental Illness



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## Problem

Mental illness is a challenging experience that can destabilize personal, professional and social life of an individual. K. Charmaz (1983, 2000) pointed out to “loss of self” – a process when former self-image is deformed or destroyed which cause a deep suffering to an ill person, may led to social isolation and breakdown.

**The aim** of this poster is to present process of (re)building positive self through group work with aim to develop social, emotional and professional skills for persons with mental illness.

## Results and conclusions

Group members stated that the group helped them to overcome feelings of self-isolation, allowed them to discover their strengths, feel competent, regain hope and faith in oneself. Social work with groups is relevant and useful method for working with people with mental illness to help them experience transformations in self-awareness. Group participants, leader and group environment itself create safe and positive place which works therapeutically and allows a person to experience a sense of oneness, to know themselves through others, to discover and become aware of their strengths, to acquire new and rebuild lost abilities.

## The circumstances of the organization of the group and topics

**Group type:** educational group.

**Group environment:** „Friends of fate“ organization where social rehabilitation program is implemented which is a part of a large project taking place in the republic of Lithuania.

**Participants:** 8 persons suffering from schizophrenia, schizotypal disorder.

**Group duration:** 10 meetings.

The group was planned and implemented on the ideas of strengths-based and solution focused approaches (Kam, 2021) also ideas of Ch. Cooley “looking-glass self” theory.



## Self-knowledge

1st meeting. Introduction and rules. Topic: *All the answers are in me.*  
2nd meeting. Topic: *Finding and knowing my strengths.*  
3rd meeting. Topic: *I am among others (group discussion combined with cultural event experience).*

## Chronic illness self-management

4th meeting. Topic: *Lessons and meaning of an illness.*  
5th meeting. Topic: *Internal and external resource mobilization.*  
6th meeting. Topic: *Emotions recognition and management.*  
7th meeting. Topic: *Coping with stigma of mental illness (group discussion combined with dinner at restaurant).*

## Recovery of general and specific professional skills

8th meeting. Topic: *Work place rules and etiquette.*  
9th meeting. Topic: *What professional skills I have and need to acquire. How to do it?*  
10th meeting. Topic: *Entering the labor market. Evaluation of a group.*

## References:

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