Use of the Group Process for Reminiscence

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In many ways Reminiscence is the “act or process of recalling the past.”

(Butler, 1974)
“While our lives are lived in the present and oriented toward the future, we understand them from a past perspective. We build on past experiences to develop friendships, participate as a family member, and define who we are within our lives.”

(Soltys, Reda, Letson, 2002)
Why is Reminiscence Important?

- Reminiscence is an effective strategy for processing information, feelings and thoughts, and for putting experiences into perspective over time.

- It can be used in a variety of areas to achieve psychological, physiological and educational outcomes.
Why Use Group Settings to Reminisce?

- The sharing of life events within a group contributes to proper event placement and perspective attainment.
- Groups can be structured to serve psychotherapeutic needs of allowing elders to reflect on life in order to resolve, reorganize and reintegrate while receiving support.
Benefits of Using Groups With Elders

- Can lead to acceptance of loss and reduce depression.
- May provide linkage to family history and strengthen family connections.
- Can create a sense of belonging.
- Can enhance self esteem through an appreciation of the uniqueness of individual in the context of his or her time.
Benefits continued...

- Can assist the health care professional in better understanding the individual's health care beliefs and values.
- Memories provide a sense of continuity and completeness which is essential in the developmental task in old age.
Factors to Consider When Forming a Reminiscence Group

1. Historical perspective
2. Spirituality
3. Individual autonomy
4. Education level
5. Ethnic background
6. Cultural perspective
7. Health status

(Soltys and Coats, 1994 p. 14)
Factors the Facilitator Needs To Consider:

1. Begin where the members are.
2. Respect differences in values, knowledge, and problem solving styles.
3. Be willing to share own knowledge, values, and skills even when they may be in conflict with those held by others.
4. Capacity to work through rather than avoid conflict.
5. An openness to ideas and insights of others.

(Schopler and Galinisky, 1990)
Stages of Group Interaction

1. Forming (becoming a part)
2. Storming (defining ones’ place)
3. Norming (clarifying role and goals)
4. Performing (meeting those goals)
Examples of Reminiscing Groups

- An eight week group for older men
- Rationale:
  - Challenging to involve elderly men in group activities,
  - Elderly men are vulnerable to depression, and
  - Elderly men lack strong social support networks.
Format of men’s group

• Each week of the group was focused on a different decade of history.
• Benefits of format
  – Structure for those with cognitive disorders such as dementia
  – Made it possible for everyone contribute to the group process since all members have memories of each decade.
Topics of interest

- Popular songs from the decade
- Sports
- Individual presidents and their accomplishments
- Automobiles
Outcomes for Men’s Group

- No formal pre-post measurement
- Group facilitator noted qualitative effects of group cohesion at the end of this group time
Group Two: Older Women Living Alone and Depressed

- The focus of this group was to connect women with each other. So that this connection would lessen the depression that these women lived with.
- Depression is one of the most common psychiatric disorders among the elderly population.
Structure of Women’s Group

• An 8 week group consisting of all widows living alone. None of the women had any previous associations with each other.
• Upon entering the group the women were tested for depression using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, and for perception about quality of life, support and social activities using the COOP Chart.
• All women showed mild to moderate depression levels.
Topics of interest

- Earliest childhood memory
- First day at school
- Parents
- Meeting husband
- Wedding
- World War II and its impact on women
Outcomes of Women’s Group

- Five weeks after the end of the group the women were tested to see if depression levels had fallen, by retesting on the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, and the COOP.

- All women demonstrated fewer symptoms.
Using Groups in Rural Areas

- Groups can be formed using technology to connect people.
- Technology can be useful in connecting not only people in rural areas, but those that cannot be moved to meet with a group.
- Rural areas can benefit from the use of technology as a service tool.
Implication for Future Practice

• Reminiscence groups are a promising intervention for older adults
• In these days of economic concerns in health care the use of groups can be cost effective
• Significant positive outcomes can be seen for group participants
  – Increased self esteem
  – Decreased depression
  – Improved quality of life
References