Using Technologies in Groupwork

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Integrating Technology in Groups

• Face to face
  – videotape
  – computer simulation
  – virtual reality

• Technology-based
  – telephone
  – computer
Face to Face: Video

- Behavior modeling
  - video of situation where new behavior needed
  - observe successful behavior of other on video
  - observe successful behavior of self on video
- Video reviewed during group for feedback
- Video reviewed at home for additional learning
What Does the Research Say?

• Video modeling shown effective with
  – decreasing disruptive classroom behavior (Lonnecker, Brady, McPherson, Hawkins, 1994)
  – increasing task fluency of ADLs (Lassater & Brady, 1995)
  – childhood phobia (Schwartz, Houlihan, Krueger, Simon, 1997)
  – self modeling and increased awareness of effectiveness (Renneberg, Goldstein, Phillips, Chambless, 1990)

• Limited: mostly case studies, no comparison designs, much of the research on individuals, not groups
Face to Face: Computer Simulations

• Benefits
  – individualized feedback responsive to learner needs
  – unlimited chances for repetition and rehearsal
  – non-threatening and “game-like”
  – can be used individually, or as small group task during group
  – can be used as homework and processed next group
  – can complement face to face work
What Does the Research Say?

• Facilitate positive interaction among program users, which enhances the health promoting benefit of the computer program (Brennan & Fink, 1997)

• Existing simulation programs have been tested and show moderate effectiveness (Smokowski & Hartung, in press)
Face to Face: Virtual Reality

- Allows user to experience and interact with simulated environment generated by computer
- Interaction in real time
- Benefits
  - similar to computer simulations, with additional
  - group and group leader can coach/help individual through the experience
  - immersion may allow for easier transfer of skills to real situations
What Does the Research Say?

• Effective with a variety of phobias (North, North, Coble, 1998)

• Used for childhood skill training (Muscott & Gifford, 1994)

• Limitations
  – mostly individuals, not groups
  – small sample size and few comparison studies
  – complex and new technology
Practice Issues

• Barriers to use
  – Acceptance by professionals
  – Safety of equipment
  – Efficacy research very limited
  – Cost, especially virtual reality and computer simulation development

• Group Process
  – Disruptive interactions
  – Confidentiality
  – Post-technology activity processing is essential
Technology-Based Groups

- Allows group work for people isolated, incapacitated, distanced, or stigmatized
- Links people across distance
- Easier to attend
- Protects anonymity
- No prejudice due to physical appearance
- Unlike traditional groups, never meet in person
- New issues and interventions?
Telephone Groups

• Conference call led by professional
• Used successfully with a variety of groups, including people with:
  – physical disabilities
  – HIV
  – cancer
  – caregiver demands
What Does the Research Say?

• People with HIV, weekly for 6-8 weeks (Rounds et al., 1995) found
  – high satisfaction, positive changes in selected areas of social isolation and self efficacy
  – no change in coping and social support

• Mothers who lost a child to HIV, monthly for 12 months (Weiner, 1998)
  – sense of support, normality and resource

• Gay men, to lower risk of HIV, CBT model, weekly for 14 weeks (Roffman, et al., 1997)
  – experimental group much less likely to engage in risky behavior than a control group
Computer Groups

- Considering mediated on-line support groups, not self-help web sites
- Synchronous
  - chatrooms
- Asynchronous
  - discussion boards
  - listserv
What Does the Research Say?

- Breast cancer patients found discussion board very helpful (Weinberg et al., 1996)
- Social workers experiencing job stress used listserv and reported overall satisfaction with group, and agreed leader was important to the group (Meier, 2000)
- Comparison of psychodynamic group therapy face to face and chat room groups found some small improvements in both group, with the computer group having slightly more improvement, and both groups equally satisfied (Barak & Wander-Schwartz, 2000)
Barriers and Considerations

- Some people may have less comfort with technology, less access
- Limited literacy clients excluded
- Costs and technical problems
- Confidentiality
- Ability of members to pose or deceive
- Limits of research
  - few rigorous studies
  - small sample size
Group Process Issues

• Lack of interpersonal cues
  – visual
  – voice tone
• Less control, risk of “flaming”
• Traditional group work process harder to do
• Need a practice theory for technology-based groups
Recommendations for Technology-based Group Leaders

- Have extensive pre-group screening and recruitment process
- Be more active in guiding group process than in face to face
- Provide more structure and clearly articulate and repeat norms
- Address potential technological problems up front
- Emphasize technology strengths
- Find ways to foster interaction and enhance cohesion
References


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