



The use of group practices as a therapeutic tool: an experience report

  10.56238/homeinternationalanais-076

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Keywords: Therapeutic Group, Resource, Dynamics, Perceptions.

1 INTRODUCTION

"A group process can sensitize each subject in its uniqueness, and bring about interesting transformations in their everyday relationships - with themselves, with others, with the world." (SAMEA, 2008, p. 89). Thus, the group can add to its participants new experiences, providing new perceptions about everything that involves this subject. "The group space enables the contact and recognition of one's own doing, its limits and facilities; the observation of the other's doing, the perception of similarities and contrasts, and the potentialization of doing together." (SAMEA, 2008, p. 88). Thus, this paper seeks to present the course of the discipline "Group Dynamics and Body Activities" and point out the possibilities of using the group as a powerful resource for intervention in various professions.

2 METHODOLOGY

This is an experience report of two occupational therapy students from the Universidade de Brasília, Campus Ceilândia, about their experiences in a discipline entitled "Group Dynamics and Body Activities" with a focus on group approach. This course is offered by the College of Occupational Therapy, however, open to students from other courses (nursing, physiotherapy, physical education and others).

3 CONCLUSION

The discipline of group dynamics consists of demonstrating to the students and allowing them to experience how a group activity should be conducted, what the facilitators and barriers are. The group may or may not be therapeutic, so one must be aware of the rhythm of that group and its demands. Besides students from the Occupational Therapy course, Physical Education, Nursing, and Physiotherapy students were also part of the class. However, the course is open to all courses. In the first meetings, the teacher presented to the class the group concepts and its aspects according to some authors, such as Pichon Riviere and Kurt Lewin. The course contents included concepts such as operative groups, therapeutic groups, techniques such as psychodrama and theater of the oppressed, and the use of integrative and complementary



practices. During the classes we were allowed to try some dynamics and think about how to adapt them, which groups could make use of them, the materials used (preferable low cost materials), how many participants (minimum and maximum), which difficulties could be faced, and the other possibilities that could occur. Among these dynamics are the use of mandalas, presentations, guided meditation, "corre cotia", life projects, relaxation, self-care, self perception, and self qualification. Knowing that each dynamic has its own purpose, the group leader must select activities that meet the public's needs. Each group activity conducted by the teacher put the student in a participant position and, at the end, everyone expressed their observations, understandings, and questions about that activity. During these moments of reflection, it was possible to identify the reactions of each member to the situation and the group. The mandala activity, for example, allowed us to identify anxious pictures, color preferences, and each one's concentration level. The first proposed presentation dynamics made the participants present themselves the way their pets would present them; it was possible to observe the difficulty of the participants to present themselves through the other person's eyes, even more when this other person is their main companion; the second dynamic had the objective of having a member of the group take a random shoe from the trunk next to the door (which contained all the shoes of all the participants) and then describe how they imagine the owner of this shoe to be, after which the owner must present himself and say what he got wrong and what he got right about it. Guided meditation and relaxation techniques, on the other hand, allowed for moments of slowing down in the face of a very demanding university routine, so that the students could practice self-care. From this point on, as a final work for the course, it was proposed that, in groups, we think of therapeutic activities that would serve the children, teenagers, adults, and elderly publics. For these audiences, the activities "corre cotia", life projects, relaxation, and self qualification, respectively, were selected. By the end of the course, it was possible to realize how important the therapeutic group practice is, as well as its versatility among professions. Therefore, the group is a facilitator of support networks, social interaction, sharing of experiences, broadening of perspectives, and an excellent working tool.



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