



the
Self
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Connection

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Tips for Professionals Using Self-Help Groups As Part of Their Practice

Is Your Client Ready for A Self-help Group/ is A Self-help Group Ready for Your Client? Is it Your Decision Or Your Client's Decisions?

- Is your client in active crisis, suicidal, actively using drugs/alcohol?
- Are there other things that might prevent or affect your client from participating in a group - too angry, are their emotions all over the place, behaviours that would make it difficult for them to "take" care of themselves in a group?
- Will your client's behaviour adversely affect the group?
- Is the group actively dealing with issues that may trigger your client to the state where they can't participate in the group, or they function less in life, or the group is causing them harm?
- The group will have guidelines, norms around safety, confidentiality, air time, trust - is your client seeing a professional? - can your client conform?
- Do you believe self-help has benefits, and have you discussed this with your client?
- Are you willing to help your client work through the issues that may come up as a result of their participation in a group?
- Is self-help the only source of support for your client - are there support groups, clubs, independent recreational/learning resources, a social network?
- Does your client have one other person they can talk to besides you?
- Does the group have an action plan to deal with a distressing situation before it happens?
- Has your client contacted a self-help group to find out if it might be a good fit?
- Do you know about local groups, and are you willing to refer your client?
- If there is no group available locally, are you willing to help your client start a group, and what role are you willing to play in the maintenance of the group?

Remember, the job of the group is not to go deeply into issues, but to offer support and practical help as your client heals. Your client may never find a better place than a SHG to learn about boundaries, safety, to explore their inner lives, to recover.

Model for Transitioning From A Professionally-Led Support Group To a Peer-Led Self-Help Group

Why Make the Next Step?

- There *will be* resistance to termination and closure
- A way of dealing with the dynamic of ending and continuity

- Becoming increasingly attractive as a logical next step on the healing/recovery continuum
- Hope and confidence in the group process has already been established
- A way of dealing with a group that wants to exist beyond an identifiable termination stage
- An alternative to dissolution —provides new opportunities for further growth and change even though they may be anxiety and disequilibrium
- More support groups are being offered as a response to current restraint programs
- Way to use precious time for new clients and waiting lists
- More support groups are being offered as a response to current restraint programs
- More clients want to continue to meet as a group after the time-limited program ends

Steps in the Transition

Educate yourselves

- ✓ Do your clients want to move on?
- ✓ Are your clients “ready” to move on?
- ✓ What does transition mean?
- ✓ Where is push is coming from?
- ✓ What are the differences between a SG and a SHG?
- ✓ Discuss fears: When our leader leaves, I am afraid that...

Build a transition team

- ✓ Start building your team as early as possible
- ✓ List the roles and responsibilities of leader and group members
- ✓ Model/Mentor how each job that keeps the group going is done
- ✓ Match job with member skills or desire to learn new skills
- ✓ Allow time for new jobs to be practiced

Plan on how you want to let go

- ✓ Ask each person how they want to say goodbye
- ✓ Spend a meeting or two closing the group
- ✓ Review group work and highlight progress of members
- ✓ Have a goodbye party
- ✓ Acknowledge transition team

Plan on how to launch the new group

- ✓ Decide on your role or style of relating to group: mentor, information giver, mediator, starter, co-facilitator, advisor, referral agent, consultant
- ✓ Help to develop a referral list

- ✓ Help the group find a meeting space
- ✓ Help the group fashion a group questionnaire to decide what they want to continue, what they want to change
- ✓ Encourage members to develop a group vision or strategic plan
- ✓ Encourage the group to pick a new name, one that sums up how they see themselves now or how they want to see themselves in the future
- ✓ Make sure they are in touch with the Self-Help Connection for ongoing support and consultation