



Measured Impact Webinar

Group work with survivors of Torture: Engaging Communities

July 19, 2017

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National Capacity Building Project

Presenters



Hawthorne E. Smith
Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture



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National Capacity Building Project



Group Work with Survivors of Torture: Engaging Communities

Insights from Treatment Centers and Impacted Communities

Hawthorne E. Smith, Ph.D.
Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture

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Objectives

- Identify potential benefits associated with engaging community-based organizations and interventions in their group work with survivors of torture
- Cite key points and best practices in providing group work to survivors of torture
- Identify the essential components of distance supervision

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Types of Groups Currently Offered at PSOT

- Psycho-Educational Orientation Groups
– (French, Tibetan, English)
- LGBTQ Group
- English Speaking Group (Geographically Diverse)
- English Speaking Group (African men)
- Two Tibetan Groups
- Francophone African Support Group
- Workshop Series
- Art therapy
- Yoga



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Rationale



- Reduction of isolation –
“I’m not alone”
- Culturally appropriate coping mechanisms
 - e.g., African extended family
- Empowerment of clients –
“Not just needy, but needed”

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Emotional Empowerment – Telling Our Story

The power of the narrative and oral history

Helping the voiceless to find their voice

Being part of someone else's healing process



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Treatment Goals




- Information
- Attending to Current Life Issues
- Coping/Adaptation
- Reduction of isolation
- Normalization
- Affect Regulation Techniques
- Multidirectional Empowerment

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"You should have seen me when I first got here..."



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Group and Cultural Contexts



Original artwork by Sangpen Dolpa

- Importance of social and collateral ties
- Importance of the extended family network
- Hospitality and openness valued
- Feelings of isolation in this "cold" society
- Potential stigma associated with mental health services

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Heterogeneous Population

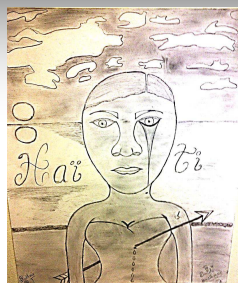
- Males/Females - Tibetan, Francophone, LGBTQ, and Orientation groups
- Christians, Muslims, and Indigenous Religions in African groups
- Ethnic Tibetans and Nepalese in Tibetan group
- Varying social classes and levels of education
- Amount of time in the US



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Shared Experiences



- Massive losses
- Trauma and Abuse
- Recurrent Stressors of Resettlement

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Group Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

- Motivated for treatment
- Experiencing current psychological distress
- Not a perpetrator of human rights abuses
- Having positive expectations of being aided by group treatment
- Willing to attend sessions regularly
- Having adequate language skills
- *No suicidal or homicidal ideation*
- *No psychotic symptoms or thought processes*

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Group Processes and Development

- Notion of "family"
- Contacts outside of group
- Phone numbers exchanged
 - Social support (e.g. jobs, housing, etc.)
 - Confidentiality
 - Safety issues



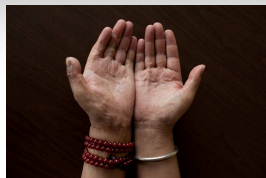
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Group Content

- Subject matter not pre-determined by staff
 - Adaptation / Logistical Support
 - Philosophical
 - Supportive
 - Trauma Focused

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Group Themes



- Loss
- Asylum Process
- Cultural Adaptation
- Grief and Mourning
- Anger/Frustration
- Role of Faith/Religion
- Coping Mechanisms
- Psycho-education

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Coping Mechanisms – Engagement in Treatment

Ex. Francophone African Support Group (in press)

Matching group participants and non-participants from January 1, 2008 – January 1, 2010 (age, gender, religion, time in US, language capacity, immigration status)

Francophone Group members accessed:

Significant:

More psychiatric services: $p = .015$
More individual therapy sessions: $p = .034$

Trending toward significance:

More social services: $p = .055$
More legal services: $p = .084$

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Roles of Facilitator

- Creating environment conducive for sharing
- Facilitating discussion among members while maintaining safe, respectful environment
- Identifying and verbalizing central themes put forth by group members
- Calling attention to pertinent group processes
- Ensuring that members leave with a sense of shared growth and progress



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Challenges for Facilitators



- Maintaining flexibility
- Being knowledgeable about the multifaceted effects of torture and refugee trauma
- Ability to work with co-facilitators
- Maintaining individual patient confidentiality
- Avoiding secondary trauma and burnout

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Community-based group Interventions

Collaborative Approach

Co-creation of:
Areas of focus/need
Rules/norms/expectations



Photo by Hadja Kalle

Logistical considerations

- Transportation
- Childcare
- Scheduling
- Resources
- Food?



Original art by Hadja Kalle

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Distance Supervision/Consultation

Task Sharing/Capacity Building

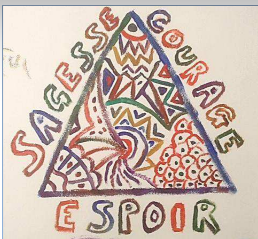
- Consistency
- Supervisory Support
 - Readings
 - Psychoeducation
 - Best Practices
- Oversight and communication
 - Group Facilitators – Direct Supervisors
 - Direct Supervisors to Consultant
 - Group Facilitators with Consultant
- Challenges
 - Logistics
 - Resources
 - IT infrastructure



Photo by Hadja Kalle

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Group Member's Guiding Philosophy



Original art by Hawthorne & Emery Smith

How does one
change (or at least
survive) the world?

“Wisdom, Courage,
and
Hope”

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