Assertive Communication Style & How To Be Assertive

EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICES (EBP): Integrated System of Care; Universal Dual Diagnosis Capabilities; Principles of Empathy and Hope; Motivational Interviewing Approach; Stages of Change Model Design; Strength Based; Skill Building; Solution Focused; Neurochemistry Based Disorders of the Brain; Symptom Identification; Symptom Management; EBP Curriculum Topics, i.e. Nutrition, Stress Management, Cognitive Behavioral, and more…

Consistency in the Group Setting

The importance of *consistency* in a treatment setting can't be overstated. This is especially true when people are placed in vulnerable situations. *Inconsistency* can, at best, increase uncertainty and insecurity for the person receiving services. At worst, unpredictability can create a sense of helplessness while simultaneously decreasing a person's development of self-reliance. In fact, all human beings benefit from a dependable approach in the treatment of chronic disorders. When a person learns they can rely on consistency, they are less stressed and more relaxed. Consistency in the group setting includes the group structure, psychoeducational material, and the approach.

Each agency or facility will have different requirements – such as group receipts or paperwork – however, consistency can still include a structure similar to the following:
1. Group members pick up: a. Clip Board, b. Paper, and c. Pencil/Pen as they enter the room.
2. Group facilitator picks up the group receipts from each person in the group, and/or the group facilitator passes out the sign-in sheet for the group members to sign.
3. Group facilitator provides a Positive Group Beginning, Consistent Psychoeducational Material, Consistent Approach, and a Positive Group Closure.

Psychoeducational Groups and Crisis Event Processing (when requested)

Notes to Facilitator(s):
1. *THE BASICS, Second Edition* meets the definitions and goals of Psychoeducational Groups, Skill Building Groups, and Cognitive Behavioral Groups.
2. Group participants who have become accustomed to Interpersonal Processing Groups – as well as staff who have facilitated them – may find it a challenge to now facilitate Psychoeducational Groups.
3. Likewise, facilitators who may have followed a more lecture-style education presentation, may find it challenging to now devote at least 1/3rd of group time to specific topic discussions and interactions.
4. Both types of groups (Interpersonal Processing Groups and Psychoeducational Groups) are extremely important, yet each has different goals and structure.
5. The structure of Psychoeducational Groups, Skill Building Groups, and/or Cognitive-Behavioral Groups in no way means that there will not be *interaction* – far from it. It just means that the interactions, discussions, and exercises will be about the topic(s) of each group.
6. Facilitators *may* – or not – still want to allow time in each group for the group member(s) to discuss a crisis that may have occurred since the last group.
7. We do know, of course, that *every* person in group is typically experiencing many challenges each and every week; however, most of these incidents are often best resolved in ways other than group time where the event does not pertain to every group member.
8. Suggested responses to a challenge, problem, or crisis can also include suggesting the person contact their primary care provider; schedule a 1:1 appointment; reschedule their next 1:1 to an earlier time; or, meet with the facilitator after group to explore options and develop a plan.
9. A facilitator would, of course, not *"grade"* an event as being worthy or not for group time. If a person requests individual time in the group, then that would be accepted as valid and time allotted at the end of the group.
10. Over time, the group begins to understand the differences between a situation, a challenge, a problem, or a crisis and can make decisions to utilize group time or continue with the current psychoeducational topic.

Prepare Professionals

Suggestions for professionals to prepare themselves for group typically includes:
1. Review all content material, appendices, and/or handouts *prior* to group to avoid a lecturing style.
2. Decide beforehand the *key points* to be covered in each group to produce flexibility for group responses, discussions, or questions.
3. Gain an overall understanding of the content so summarizing is possible in order to create an interactive facilitation style.
4. Determine the group structure to achieve the essential balance between education and discussions.
5. Check group room to be sure there are enough clipboards, pencils or pens, and markers or chalk for the board.
6. Make enough copies of any handouts *before* group.
7. Write any group content on the board *prior* to the beginning of group whenever possible.

Master Guide & Master Tips to Professionals

Note: *The Master Guide* (located at the beginning of Volume I & II) and the *Master Tips to Professionals* (located at the back of Volume I) have many topics to assist in the group process like Master Tip #39: Suggestions For Managing Handouts For Groups (pages Master Tips 64-67). Other tips include:
1. Master Guide: Interactive Style (pages Master Guide 10-11)
2. Master Tip #1:   Suggestions for Beginning Group (pages Master Tips 1-4)
3. Master Tip #3:   Empathetic Treatment Approach (pages Master Tips 7-9)
4. Master Tip #4:   Promoting Hope (page Master Tips 9)
5. Master Tip #5:   Maintaining a Consistent, Nonjudgmental, and Positive Attitude (pages Master Tips 10-13)
6. Master Tip #12: Responding to Requests for Copies of APPENDICES (pages Master Tips 27-29)
7. Master Tip #13: Depth of Psychoeducational Content (pages Master Tips 29-30)
8. Master Tip #14: Group Closure Suggestions (pages Master Tips 30-31)
9. Master Tip #16: Motivational Interviewing (pages Master Tips 31-32)

Present Curriculum/Topic

1. It is extremely important that each group participant leave every group with more Psychoeducation than they came in with – which may also include discussing a "familiar topic" yet with a "present-day" focus. Psychoeducational Groups are designed to provide education about all areas related to the management of Substance Use Disorders and Psychiatric Disorders. Psychoeducational Groups are not Interpersonal Processing Groups – even though interaction and processing the particular *psychoeducational topic(s)* is essential to individualizing the topic(s) or skill(s) presented.
2. It is recommended that a minimum of 1/3rd of group time be devoted to interaction (therapeutic counseling *topic* discussions). This can be accomplished – depending on the individual style of the group facilitator(s) – by any "present education-interact/discuss – present education-interact/discuss" combination while still structuring the group to include the curriculum/topic education to be covered.
3. The presentation of material will, of course, be modified by the facilitator to match the functioning skills of group participants. It is important to note, however, that *THE BASICS, Second Edition* was written in a conversational language while taking into consideration a wide-range of symptom acuity and severity. Persons with co-occurring psychiatric and substance disorders benefit from learning about their disorders and how to manage them, as do all individuals with any chronic disorder(s). Each group participant will retain what is meaningful to them at the present time.

Group Beginning Suggestions

A positive group beginning (and ending) is extremely important. There are many ways to begin (and end) a group in a positive way. Suggestions to choose from can include:
1. Reading the Thought For The Day from a meditation book. (Note: Meditation books that also contain an index at the end of the book – such as *Easy Does It* – are helpful in choosing a specific reading that matches the topic(s) presented in group like Self-Esteem.), *or*
2. Reading an inspirational or humorous curriculum handout from *THE BASICS, Second Edition*, *or*
3. Practicing a deep breathing or a stretching exercise, *or*
4. Sharing of one thing that each person is grateful for today, *or*
5. Sharing of one positive thing that he/she did that contributed to their recovery in the past few days, *or*
6. Reading an AA Slogan with a brief explanation or AA/NA/Dual Recovery inspirational reading.
* Recommended Beginning: Breathing Exercise (located on page Master Tips 3)

Practice Curriculum/Topic

Practicing subject material is the best way participants can internalize and personalize the curriculum content. Practice includes the group interactions, worksheets, exercises, handouts, and content discussions.

Assertive Communication Style & How To Be Assertive
Volume I; Subject Three; Pages: Subject 1-54 – 1-58

Based on a 2-Hour group: Two 50 minute segments	Time-Frame
Group Beginning	**20 Minutes Total**
Positive group beginning (suggestions are located on the previous page).	5 Minutes
1. Brief Group Introductions: (Note: The *interactions* in a psychoeducational group are discussions about the *topics*, not interpersonal processing or case management questions which do not apply to the entire group.) a. Ask the group members to tell the group their name. b. Welcome any group members who are new to this group or phase. 2. Crisis Processing (when requested and optional): a. Ask the group if anyone has experienced a crisis since their last group, and if they need/want additional time in this group to discuss it, i.e. what happened, how they managed the crisis, and/or explore options and develop a plan. b. Let the person(s) know that you will allow time at the end of this group for them to share their experience and receive support from their fellow group members.	10 Minutes
<u>Summarize Introduction of the Group Topic and Why It's Important (Subject 1-54):</u> Assertive communication is an honest and appropriate expression of one's feelings, opinions, and needs. It does *not* mean a person does all the talking and it doesn't mean that it's all right to be hurtful even if a person *is* being honest. It *does* mean communicating what you need or want in a clear way, respecting your own rights and feelings, and the rights and feelings of others. Today we will talk about the traits of assertive communication and how to be assertive.	5 Minutes

Assertive Communication Style & How To Be Assertive; Volume I; Subject Three; Pages: Subject 1-54 – 1-58

Psychoeducation Part I: Topics & Focus	Pages & Location	Presentation Suggestions	Time-Frame
Assertive Communication Style	Subject 1-54	1. Discuss the traits of assertive communication listed in the table below. 2. Use the explanations of each located in the text.	30 Minutes
		1 GOAL **2** TECHNIQUES **3** BELIEFS **4** BODY LANGUAGE **5** RESULTS	
Challenged in the Area of Assertiveness	Subject 1-55	Ask the nine questions located in the text.	
Benefits of Assertive Communication	Subject 1-55	Summarize the information in the table located in the text.	
Individual Rights of Being Assertive	Subject 1-55	Summarize the information in the table located in the text.	

Skill Building Exercise and Discussion – Suggestions for topic discussion:

To the Group:
1. How did you answer these questions about challenges in the area of assertiveness?
2. Are you challenged in the area of assertive communication?
3. Remember, almost everyone is challenged in the area of assertive communication unless they have learned *how* to be assertive – which most people haven't – because communicating assertively is actually a *learned skill*.
4. What comments do you have about the benefits of assertive communication?
5. What comments do you have about the individual rights of being assertive?

Break

10 Minutes

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Psychoeducation Part II: Topics & Focus	Pages & Location	Presentation Suggestions	Time-Frame with Crisis Processing	Time-Frame without Crisis Processing
Reasons People Are Not Assertive	Subject 1-56	State the reasons shown in the table below.	15 Minutes	20 Minutes

1	ASSERTIVE SKILLS HAVE NOT BEEN LEARNED	4	AFRAID OF REPRISALS	7	DON'T WANT TO ROCK THE BOAT
2	FEAR OF HURTING SOMEONE'S FEELINGS	5	TRYING TO PLEASE OTHERS	8	LOW SELF-CONFIDENCE
3	FEAR OF DISPLEASING OTHERS	6	FEAR OF NOT BEING LIKED	9	FEAR OF BEING ABANDONED

How to Be Assertive	Subject 1-56 – 1-57	1. Summarize one paragraph. 2. Discuss the first four of the ten points of "How to Be Assertive." 3. Use the explanations located in the text for each.

1	ASSERTIVENESS TECHNIQUES	3	CLARIFY
2	USE "I" STATEMENTS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY	4	BE AWARE OF BODY LANGUAGE

Skill Building Exercise and Discussion

To the Group:
1. What comments do you have about the reasons people are not assertive?
2. Which ones apply to you personally?
3. Have you made progress in working through some of these reasons – like "trying to please others?"
4. Which specific area would you like to make progress on in the future?
5. How will you begin? When will you start?
6. How are you doing in these particular areas of assertive communication?
7. What area(s) have you been successful in?
8. Do you think the more you practice – the more comfortable a new skill becomes?
9. What assertive communication skill will you begin to practice next?
10. Is there a person you can begin to practice with first? A sister, friend, group members, others?

Psychoeducation Part II: Topics & Focus (Continued)	Pages & Location	Presentation Suggestions	Time-Frame with Crisis Processing	Time-Frame without Crisis Processing
How to Be Assertive (continued)	Subject 1-56 – 1-57	1. Summarize one paragraph. 2. Discuss the next six of the ten points of "How to Be Assertive." 3. Use the explanations located in the text for each.	15 Minutes	20 Minutes

5	ROLE PLAY	8	THINK ABOUT FEELINGS	
6	WATCH YOUR TIMING	9	ENCOURAGE YOUR PARTNER TO DESCRIBE REAL FEELINGS	
7	AVOID PUSHING THE "HOT BUTTONS"	10	EVALUATE HOW YOU ARE DOING AS YOU PRACTICE	

Practice, Practice, Practice!	Subject 1-58	Summarize two brief paragraphs.

Skill Building Exercise and Discussion

To the Group:
1. How are you doing in these areas of assertive communication?
2. What area(s) have you been successful in so far?
3. Do you think the more you practice – the more comfortable a new skill becomes?
4. What assertive communication skill will you begin to practice next?
5. Is there a person you can begin to practice with first? A sister, friend, group members, etc.?

Crisis Processing

Time-Frame

1. Ask the group member(s) to tell the group what happened.
2. Explore options and/or develop an immediate plan for coping.
3. Allow the group to offer support.

10 Minutes

Group "Paper Work"

Time-Frame

Group participants fill out Group Notes.

5 Minutes

Group Closure

Time-Frame

The recommended INSPIRATIONAL HANDOUT is "*The Rules for Being Human*" located at the back of Subject One. Presentation suggestions include:
1. Read the handout to the group, *or*
2. Hand a copy to a group member and ask the person to read aloud to the group, *or*
3. Give a copy of the handout to each group member to take home and for someone to read aloud in group.

5 Minutes

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