

TITLE

Group Work with Individuals with Chronic Cancer

CONTINUING EDUCATION HOURS

4 hours

GOALS

People are living longer with cancer due to advancements in diagnostics, treatment, and technology. As people live longer, psychological well-being becomes an increasingly important concern for them. This class will enhance the group work skills of clinicians who are interested in or who are currently leading support groups for those living with a chronic cancer. We will begin with a historical review that will emphasize the convergence of the social work movement with group theory. All facets will be discussed when considering developing and leading a group. This includes: group formation, screening, open vs closed groups, size, co-facilitation, duration and the beginning, middle, and end phases. Leadership, structure, and group dynamics will be examined using case examples and attendee participation to highlight the issues facing people living with a chronic cancer. The effect of the deterioration or death of group members on both the facilitators and the other members will be discussed. Countertransference, self-care and resiliency will also be explored.

CLASS OUTLINE

1. Introduction: Rationale for group interventions for people with chronic cancer
2. Background
 - a. History
 - b. Evidence base
3. Formation of Groups
 - a. Reasons for a group for individuals with chronic cancer
 - b. Goals for a group for individuals with chronic cancer
 - c. Structure:
 - i. Open vs. closed groups
 - ii. Homogeneous vs. heterogeneous group
 - iii. Size
 - d. Duration, length and frequency of sessions
 - e. When to start/terminate a group
 - f. Practical considerations
 - i. scheduling sessions
 - ii. location
 - iii. use of food
4. Screening
5. Process
 - a. Addressing pertinent topics
 - i. dealing with the healthcare system
 - ii. dealing with loved ones

- iii. disease progression
- iv. disclosure
- v. finding meaning in life
- vi. employment
- vii. entitlements
- viii. advance directives
- ix. loss
- x. coping with uncertainty
- xi. dying
- xii. death
- b. Introducing new members
- c. Managing the group:
 - i. when a member is ill, dying, has died, or terminates
 - ii. dealing with anxiety
 - iii. anticipatory grief
 - iv. loss
 - v. identification with the dying member
 - vi. gossiping
 - vii. misinformation
 - viii. silences
 - ix. uneven participation
 - x. conflict
 - xi. patterns of behavior affecting the group
- 6. Leadership
 - a. Characteristics of leaders
 - b. Co-leadership vs. individual leadership
 - c. Speaking with a group member outside of the group
- 7. Countertransference
- 8. Self-Care

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Social workers who have taken this course will:

1. Understand the value of a support group for individuals with chronic cancer
2. Be able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a variety of structural and functional characteristics of groups
3. Have an awareness of the topics that often arise in a group for individuals with chronic cancer
4. Recognize the characteristics that are important for group leaders to possess
5. Gain understanding of the potential countertransferential issues that can be evoked by group members
6. Learn the importance of self-care while working with groups