

Group Co-Leadership Self-Evaluation Paper

Jeremy Gillentine

Department of Counselor Education and Supervision, Liberty University

COUC710 Qualitative Research

Dr. Denise Daniel

October 18, 2024

Author Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to

Email: Jeremy Gillentine—jgillentine@liberty.edu

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Most of my counseling has been individual with some group along the way but not consistently. I thought for the amount of practice I have had with group counseling that I did well but certainly have plenty of room to continue to grow and improve my skills. Group is always an interesting and full of various aspects that are not always anticipated. I love the dynamics of group and the contributions of various participants both good and less than good. This 512 group was a bit different because I was sharing the concept of self-care with the group. It was also the first time I had attempted to lead a group via video conferencing which worked well, generally, but was a little different. With video you have a good grasp of the participants facial expressions but are not able to notice some of the other body language dynamics you would be able to observe in a traditional in person group.

I was able to be in Dr. Kevin Hull's 512 group that meets via WebEx of Friday mornings from 10:00-12:00 eastern time. Dr. Hull was present but allowed me the opportunity to lead the group solo. He was kind enough to do an evaluation form that is attached at the end of the document (Appendix). The class had good participation, and the topic of counselor self-care was well received. I believe this is an important topic and helped me to be more aware of my personal need to make this a higher priority. It helped me and the class to be more cognizant that self-care is a non-selfish act because we need to be well ourselves to best help our clients.

Reflection on Skills

I led with an opening that helped to focus our thoughts on self-care and utilized an opening question of: Why is this important? I had a video clip ready to open our topic but had an issue with permissions on my computer for WebEx and had to shift on the fly to moving past it. Learning to overcome technical difficulties well seems to be a key part of the utilization of video

conferencing as a teaching or counseling platform. I purposefully used personal body language techniques to demonstrate that I was fully engaged with the group. Throughout the session I made attempts to show I was tracking with each comment and tried to intentionally facilitate participant to participant interaction but have room to improve this skill. I did use questions throughout that I was intentional to frame as open to encourage group participation. One critique Dr. Hull gave was that I should leave a bit more time for some of the questions using silence. I believe I am typically better at this skill but felt a bit rushed because I believed the topic of self-care to be so valuable and yet had a limited amount of time for our group session.

In the session I made a point to share the need to include the areas of emotional, physical, spiritual, and relational in self-care routines. I introduced these and then we worked together to see the reasons for their inclusion and some potential ways to actively pursue them in our self-care time. I also introduced the idea of frequency and as a group we came to the idea that this should be a regular part of our daily routines. I used skills like paraphrasing to help participants to hear I was coming along with them in the conversation. Linking is also a valuable tool I used to try to help make clear the benefits of self-care. Throughout our conversation I took individual participants statements and either reflected the feelings or used them to draw out deeper meanings from the group.

Another technique used was to help the group members to grow from each other's comments and perspectives. I had one specific interaction where one student made some profound comments. I was able to get the other members to recall and discuss two of these points. It was a great moment of cohesion and content growth. Another critique Dr. Hull shared was that at times it felt like a lecture. I agree with his observation and hope to work on this. Part of this was the setting, platform, and topic. Lecturing was not the intent though limited use was

seemingly affective in this group. Dr. Hull reported good follow-up comments from the participants.

Reflection on Co-Leading

I will need to become more comfortable with the group counseling dynamic over video conferencing platforms. I was not uncomfortable, but I did feel slightly hindered by not being able to see the participants body to see if they were still, fidgeting, and so many other communicators that take place through body language that are taking place constantly with little awareness by most individuals performing them. Overall, it was a great session, and I felt like the participants were engaged and being benefitted through our work together. It was a joy to be able to help this group to consider the benefits of self-care. I also help them to see there is an ethical component for counselors that may be overlooked regarding self-care in the 2014 APA Ethics Code, Section C Introduction & C.2.g, and also demonstrated the necessity for student to use self-care as seen in the 2014 APA Ethics standards, Section F.5.b.

Reflection on Self

I enjoy the unknown aspect of what will someone say next and to see how I can take what is said to either reenforce it personally or encourage feedback from the group. I was able to utilize scriptures to help illustrate that this is certainly a Biblical concept that Jesus made use of and encouraged others to do likewise (Mark 1:35 & Mark 6:31). I try to be intentional and aware of the need to have a well-rounded approach to counseling in both the individual setting as well as the group setting. Dr. Hull was kind enough to point out that I included aspects of "...spiritual, emotional, cognitive, physical, and relational components and comments from the group afterwards was that it was very helpful." I look forward to future opportunities to both lead groups and to teach these skills to others.

Appendix

Group Leader Skills Feedback Form

Student Name: Jeremy Gillentine—October 11, 2024

Directions: Please provide your evaluation of your PhD's student's co-leader skill by completing this form according to the following scale:

5- effectively/consistently used skill 4-somewhat effectively/consistently used skill
3-Somewhat ineffective/inconsistent at skill 2- very ineffective/inconsistent at skill
1-n/a

	5	4	3	2	1
Attending Skills					
Opening – Able to focus group & facilitate start in timely manner	x				
Eye Contact – consistently scanning & glancing at each member in group	x				
Body Posture – Open, relaxed posture. Leaning forward when talking, leaning back when members talk on target	x				
Tone of Voice – caring, calm voice that is not overpowering or too meek	x				
Body Gestures – appropriate head nods and minimal encouragers	x				
Intervention Skills		x			
Verbal Tracking – Uses reflection comments on both content and feeling		x			
Facilitates member to member interaction		x			
Questions – Uses questions sparingly and open-ended		x			
Paraphrasing – brief, accurate rephrasing of member comments		x			
Linking – able to link feelings and content between/among members		x			
Refocusing – recognizes when group is off-topic & makes comments to refocus group					
Requests Concrete/Specific Comments – focuses members on speaking in “I” statements; being specific and concrete					
Meaning Making – able to assist members in discovering the meaning behind thoughts/emotions		x			
Focusing – able to focus group/member; does not let focus remain too long on one person; changes focus appropriately					
Use of Silence – Allows some silence in group. Does not fill silence up inappropriately		Keep working on this one			
Self-Disclosure – uses self-disclosure sparingly. Self-disclosure does not take focus off group/member					
Group Exercises – uses exercises appropriately and provides clear directions					

Feedback – able to provide honest observations of individual and group members					
Confrontation – Addresses conflict in group in timely manner					
Process Skills					
Here & Now Focus - Draws focus to interactions between/among members as happening		x			
Process Statements – verbalizes observations about group/individual member		x			
Balances focus on content verses process					
Identifies and verbalizes group/individual resistance					

Comments: Nice opening and introduction; good summaries, paraphrases, and reflections. Good examples of linking, making meaning, and reflecting back to another group member’s comments. The interest in the topic was high and there was good participation. This is due to your good introduction and well timed questions.

Things to work on: At times it felt like a lecture, which can happen when presenting a topic. This can be improved by using more silence, and inviting others to share after a question is asked. At times you moved quickly to the next question which didn’t leave time for other members to get involved. Keep questions open ended (Tell me more; help me understand; I wonder...) You had some nice examples of these but keep them going.

Overall it was great to have you and this topic is much needed. I like how you explore the spiritual, emotional, cognitive, physical, and relational components and comments from the group afterwards was that is was very helpful.

Faculty Signature: *Kevin S. Hull PhD, LMHC, RPT, CBP*