

# Are We Really Running This Group Again?

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# Who is your presenter?

Isabel Restrepo, LMSW (Pronouns: She/Her/Hers)

- Graduated from Fordham University with my MSW in 2011
- I've worked in PROS programs for the past 10 years.
- I worked for Goodwill PROS Rebound in Queens as an Employment Specialist for almost 8 years
- I've been the Director of the PROS program at The Bridge in New York City for going on 3 years.
- Prior to getting my MSW I worked different psychiatric and residential facilities in NJ and NY for several years.
- Intersections: Queer, Latinx, GNC, Lived experience with MI

# WORKSHOP AGENDA

- Rate your current "facilitator agility"/ability to pivot on the spot
- Discussion of what has and hasn't worked for you
- Real examples of adapting groups to meet current participant needs
- Tips and Tricks for keeping groups fresh
- Discussion of Facilitator as Educator
- Discussion of Facilitator as Improv Performer

RATE YOUR  
FACILITATOR  
AGILITY NOW

Rate your own level of agility or ability to pivot on the spot in a group on a scale of 1 – 10.

1= Lowest agility level

10= Highest agility level

# QUESTIONS

- What are some ways that you have already pivoted on the spot in your work?
- What has worked?
- What hasn't worked?

# REAL EXAMPLES OF ADAPTING TO MEET PARTICIPANT NEEDS

- Parenting Group fail/Family Group win
- Coping With Isolation Through Connections group turned into the perfect place for a discussion on acknowledging privilege as it relates to empathy.

# TIPS AND TRICKS

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GAME DAY CHANGES

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REFRESH CONTENT PERIODICALLY

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GUEST SPEAKERS

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CONTINUING EDUCATION

---

ACKNOWLEDGING COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

---

COMPLEX OBSERVATION

---

TEAM BRAINSTORM MEETINGS

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FACILITATOR SWAPS

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ASK YOUR PARTICIPANTS

# TIPS AND TRICKS: GAME DAY CHANGES

Just like in professional sports, sometimes changes need to be made on "game day" in order to be most successful. In our cases, game day means the day that you are actually going to deliver the group service, and the changes made should address the current needs of group participants.

We are taught to prepare weeks ahead of time for our groups and we write curricula that guide us through the group cycle. **HOWEVER**, that doesn't mean you can't tweak things, or change content, or adapt your plan based on who actually showed up to your program today!

Take a look at who came into the program space before you run your group. Based on who is present you may want to make some adjustments to your plan for the group (e.g DV survivor shows up in program space, or everyone who showed up that day was in the group last cycle).



## TIPS AND TRICKS: REFRESH CONTENT PERIODICALLY

- Find new YouTube videos or TED Talks instead of playing the same ones from last group cycle
- Find new articles instead of using the same ones from the past four group cycles
- Find new handouts
- Think of new fun ways to demonstrate skills
- Think of fun activities for participants to actually engage in hands-on
- Spend at least half an hour each week further developing your groups

# TIPS AND TRICKS: GUEST SPEAKERS

This is where your networking skills will come in handy.

Most of us know "experts". Do you have a friend who is a librarian? Why not have them come speak about jobs at the Library, or how to take out a library card, or resources that group members can access at the library? This is just one example of an "expert" you may know.

Do you know of a colleague or former classmate who specializes in something related to a group you are running? Call them up! See if they will guest speak!

You can also contact other organizations who do presentations on various topics that may be relevant to your participants.

# TIPS AND TRICKS: CONTINUING EDUCATION

- ATTEND AS MANY CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES OR TRAININGS RELATED TO THE ISSUES OF FOCUS IN YOUR GROUPS AS YOU CAN.
- ATTEND AS MANY TRAININGS ON GROUP FACILITATION AND CURRICULUM BUILDING AS POSSIBLE.

## TIPS AND TRICKS: ACKNOWLEDGEING COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

Explicitly name the collective traumas that we are all experiencing in your groups. They are thinking about it, so we should be talking about it! This is how we meet current needs. Below are some of our present day collective traumas.

- COVID
- Isolation
- Death and loss
- Political turmoil that prompts safety concerns
- Racism and racial tension etc.

This is a way to make this week's group session different than the group with the same topic that you ran 12 weeks ago. Everything else about the content can be the same but just bringing current events and collective traumas into the discussion changes the group enough that they can get something new out of the group even if they are repeating it.

# TIPS AND TRICKS: COMPLEX OBSERVATION

- Simply observing and acknowledging "what's happening in the room", and what participants are doing and bringing with them into the session is valuable and can generate discussion and lead to new information coming out. This makes this group session different than the one you ran 12 weeks ago with the same title.

# TIPS AND TRICKS: TEAM BRAINSTORMING

- Periodically hold team brainstorming sessions where the entire staff comes up with ideas for new groups or for how to make existing groups better or different.

# TIPS AND TRICKS: FACILITATOR SWAPS

- Has the same facilitator been running the same anxiety group since 1992? Change that.
- The person who ran the anxiety group for the last 10 group cycles can switch with the person who has been running the anger management group for the past 10 cycles.
- With a new facilitator comes a new perspective and approach. A new facilitator may know of different information that wasn't previously presented and may bring new excitement and energy to the group. If the facilitator is bored then the group will be bored. If the facilitator is interested in what they are talking about it will show and make for a better group.

# TIPS AND TRICKS: ASK YOUR PARTICIPANTS

- End of cycle group service evaluations
- Ask for feedback in community meetings about group topics and services that they are interested in or that they feel they need.
- Speak to your participants in one-on-one sessions about what is and isn't working for them in terms of groups and if there is a need that isn't being met by groups



# FACILITATOR AS EDUCATOR

- A HUGE PART OF THE ROLE OF FACILITATOR IN A PSYCHIATRIC REHABILITATION PROGRAM IS TO BE AN EDUCATOR.
- ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION TO LEARNING STYLES?
- YOU HAVE MULTIPLE TOOLS AND OPTIONS FOR IMPARTING KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION
- ARE YOU PHRASING THINGS IN MULTIPLE DIFFERENT WAYS FOR MULTIPLE DIFFERENT KINDS OF LEARNERS AND FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE HIGHLY EDUCATED AS WELL AS FOR THOSE THAT ARE NOT?

# FACILITATOR AS IMPROV ACTOR

- ALL THE WORLD IS A STAGE AND WE ARE ALL ACTORS
- PLAYING IMPROV GAMES IN YOUR FREE TIME WITH FRIENDS AND/OR AS AN ACTIVITY WITH COLLEAGUES IS A GREAT WAY TO WORK YOUR "PIVOTING" MUSCLES.
- IMPROV GAMES MAKE US THINK ON OUR FEET AND ADAPT TO AN EVER-CHANGING SITUATION OR SCENE.
- YOUR ABILITY TO ADAPT AND MODIFY AS YOU GO WILL ENHANCE THE GROUP EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE
- <https://www.hooplainpro.com/improv-exercises-games-formats.html?fbclid=IwAR277Abc-ek5EUpTszOXB83b9LbpnlZUSNIEgODMfTx17cUB5bcuYHnBs>

Questions?



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