

Processing compliance-decision in group therapy programme for smoking cessation

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OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this survey is to identify the transactions in a treatment pathway, mainly in the context of group therapy for smoking cessation (Italian model of "GFT") using the Transactional Analysis method in order to improve the formation and the point of view of tobacco operators and group trainers.

The analysis of the patterns in communication and relationship between operators and smokers make us possible to identify the transactional single messages that build what we define "transactional-compliance-decision process" built by the group and each participant.

We analyse transactions by which each member of the group reach a own decision in compliance with..." (e.g. with my real needs or with therapy group rules or with the therapist sentences).

RESULTS

We've found that the majority of transactions useful to reinforce a constructive and egosyntonic (referring to the social therapy contract)"compliance-decision process" come from transactions connected and facilitated by specific Adult and Parental-Child positions of the group therapy operator. These transactions make the dialogue Adult-Adult easier, enhance "permissions" (useful to reach new decisions), and empathize an emotional decision in the Natural Child of the participant. The results of this study contributed to set out

25 specific exercises in order to improve and facilitate the transactional style of the operators within these groups. The majority of the 25 exercises proposed in this article is stated starting from the transaction of one of the group members and giving short and concise instructions to the operator.

We attended three group therapy programmes regarding smoking cessation (63 patients, 27 F, 36 M). Every transaction has been carefully recorded by psychologists trained to identify their quality with an observation model. This model aims at collecting verbal and non-verbal contributions, according to the reading model and the Transactional Analysis language. Egosyntonics and egodystonics contributions regarding the therapy contract have been recorded by transcription. We've recognized Positive Adapted Child communications as "I'm OK" messages: by these we accept rules "in compliance with...". Negative Adapted Child transactions express an "I'm not OK" message: the person over-adapts to others and tends to experience such emotions as depression, unrealistic fear and anxiety.

METHODS

Transactional Analysis

Transactional analysis is a social psychology developed by Eric Berne, MD (d.1970). Over the past four decades Eric Berne's theory has evolved to include applications to psychotherapy, counseling, education, and organizational development.

Transactional Analysis (or TA as it is often called) is a model of people and relationships. TA is a very common model used in therapy and there is a great deal written about it.

Ego States

Eric Berne noticed that human personality is made up of three "Ego states" each of which is an entire system of thought, feeling, and behavior from which we interact with each other. The Parent, Adult and Child Ego states and the interaction between them form the foundation of transactional analysis theory. These concepts have spread into many areas of therapy, education, and consulting as practiced today.

Transactions

Transactions refer to the communication exchanges between people. Transactional analysts are trained to recognize which Ego states people are transacting from and to follow the transactional sequences so they can intervene and improve the quality and effectiveness of communication.

Contracts

Transactional analysis practice is based upon mutual contracting for change. Transactional analysts view people as capable of deciding what they want for their lives.

Transactional Analysis: effective communication

To effectively communicate with a patient in the Adult Ego state means that the psychologist/therapist has to develop dialogue directed at the Adult Ego state.

CONCLUSIONS

The study suggests that the "GFT therapeutic group programme" is effective mainly because of transactional Adult and Child support among the participants, in addition to the importance of auto-perception of the Parental support given by the Operator; the Operator provides a lot of regular, direct and mutual eye-to-eye transactions where the parental authoritative message (but not authoritarian) is delivered.

Compliance is not only an action of adherence, it doesn't mean acquiescence. The effective decisional process, though aroused by the operator, normally responds to an autonomous process that activate Parent and Adult Ego States, and only partially the Adapted Child of the participant.

Child Ego may involve physical or verbal language such as a whining voice or excuses for not taking a smoking cessation decision as directed. On the other hand, starting a sentence with "You need" or "You'd better" sends an authoritative parent message. An example of an Adult statement for patient counseling is "This your decision is to be taken every 6 hours" instead of "You need to take this decision every 6 hours." While the differences seem minor, they may generate different psychological reactions.

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