

LTCS BEST PRACTICE CATALOG SUBMISSION

Project Title: MYSTERY THEATER

Function Category:

Patient Focused Organization Structures
Sub-category(s): Care of Patient Heading: Programming

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The following Items are available regarding this Best Practice:

LESSON PLAN AND PROTOCOL

1. SELECTION OF PROJECT PROCESS AREA:

We provide treatment to a population with many negative symptoms and other symptoms which impede appropriate interpersonal skills. We are always looking for creative and effective ways to help our clients improve their interpersonal functioning. We wanted to create a group which teaches awareness and sensitivity to alternate communications styles through techniques which involve facial affect, body language, intonation, and imitation.

2. UNDERSTANDING EXISTING CONDITION WHICH NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

For a variety of reasons, based both on their mental illnesses and on society's reactions to them, clients are often out of touch with their own and with others emotional affect. Many clients tend to be quite inhibited in expressing any emotions except when "out of control," and they tend to isolate and avoid social interactions. They are also likely to be passive and/or inappropriate in many varied situations. Our goals in the creation of this intervention were to help clients' access their own creativity through various techniques allowing them to gain a sense of confidence in many environments and social situations; and to teach clients to combat and ameliorate their own negative symptoms of mental illness.

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3. ANALYSIS

Informal assessments of clients and of currently provided interventions and educational opportunities demonstrated the need for new ways to help clients achieve the above goals. The creators of this group desired and were provided the opportunity to experiment and explore alternatives to didactic/traditional groups and therapies.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

The course was designed to teach the participants basic techniques and provide various settings and modalities which would involve the clients in *in vivo* dramatic experiences. Selected dramatic situations were utilized to provide the clients with experience in portraying a profusion of emotions and communications styles. These included puppetry, video, scene writing, costuming, improvisation, basic dramatic techniques, and performing and directing original (client written) and other dramatic material.

5. RESULTS

Through the progression of the group, clients demonstrated increased confidence in the group setting, awareness of themselves, and the beginning of the development of the ability to identify and empathize with others' feelings, thoughts, and experiences. Mystery Theater provides the opportunity for clients to a "try on" a persona or role that might not be ego-syntonic.

6. LEARNING

The use of drama proved an effective way to enlist client involvement in action vs. listening. Clients needed modeling of affect and body language, and with this modeling showed real gains in their understanding and behavior. They also required clear help in the identification of emotional interaction vs. plot and script. The group was expanded from one hour weekly to two consecutive hours to permit more time for making props, scenery, and costumes.