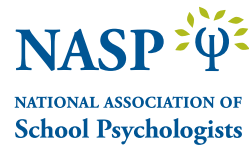




Workshop 2 (3rd Edition, 2019)



4340 East West Highway
Suite 402
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-657-0270
www.nasponline.org

Handout 29: Generic Student Psychoeducational Group (SPG) Lesson Plan

1. Introduction



- a. Introduce yourself to the adult caregiver (typically the teacher) who is responsible for group supervision and explain why you are there.
- b. Introduce yourself to the students who are a part of the group (e.g., state your name, position, where you typically work).
- c. Explain to students that you are on the crisis response team and why you are there.
- d. Briefly share your understanding of the crisis event. If possible, have a script prepared by the Incident Command System's Planning Section.
- e. Explain group rules. Say that if the students have questions, they need to raise their hand and wait their turn. Depending on the nature of the event and the characteristics of the group, it may also be appropriate to tell students that some questions may need to be addressed individually after the group has ended.
- f. Explain that participation in the group is voluntary and that they will be allowed to leave if they do not want to participate. Identify for students a safe, nonthreatening area on school grounds where they can be given adult supervision if they choose not to participate.
- g. To document attendance, use a sign-in sheet for secondary classrooms or take role using the teacher's attendance sheet in primary classrooms.

2. Answer Questions About the Crisis and Dispel Rumors



- a. When judged to be developmentally appropriate and helpful, discuss carefully screened newspaper, video, and/or social media accounts of the crisis. Ensure that such depictions are accurate and minimize the risk of further vicarious trauma. Directly address rumors and let students know what information is inaccurate.
- b. Ask the students if they have any questions about the crisis. Be sensitive to developmental level and realize that developmentally immature students are most likely to have a distorted view of the event and its consequences.
- c. Answer students' questions about the crisis. Be prepared to repeat facts several times. Crises are overwhelming and difficult for students to understand (in particular developmentally immature students).
- d. If some crisis facts are confidential, say so, and share what facts you can. Remember to tell students the truth! Do not give inaccurate information (e.g., if crisis-related dangers are still present, acknowledge this reality, then tell them the concrete actions being taken to keep them safe. Let students know what they can do to be safe).
- e. Be prepared to say "I don't know."
- f. Make the distinction between facts, inaccurate crisis rumors, yet-to-be-answered questions about the crisis event, and information that needs to remain confidential. Especially when working with adolescents, be sure to give a logical reason why some crisis details need to be kept confidential.

3. Prepare for Crisis Reactions



- a. Describe common crisis reactions. Acknowledge that people experience and react to crises differently. Encourage students to respect a range of reactions (both their own and their classmates'). For example, some students may be angry, some may cry, and still others will display nervous laughter. A list of common reactions is provided in the table below.
- b. Describe the warning signs of severe crisis reactions (e.g., significant and impairing dissociation, hyperarousal, reliving of the crisis event, phobic avoidance of crisis reminders, severe depression, psychotic symptoms, suicidal and homicidal ideation, substance abuse by others and self, or extreme inappropriate anger toward others).
- c. Acknowledge that severe reactions, while possible and understandable, are rare. Most students can anticipate that their reactions are not signs of mental illness (rather, they are common reactions to an abnormal event).
- d. Describe how to get help in addressing crisis reactions, both in school and in the community. Such guidance should always include enlisting the assistance of a caregiving adult.
- e. Express optimism that, with time and talk, most students (if not all) will feel better. Though they will always remember the event, crisis reactions will lessen.

Common Initial Crisis Reactions			
Emotional		Cognitive	
Shock	Depression or sadness	Impaired concentration	Decreased self-esteem
Anger	Grief	Impaired decision-making ability	Decreased self-efficacy
Despair	Irritability	Memory impairment	Self-blame
Emotional numbing	Hypersensitivity	Disbelief	Intrusive thoughts or memories ^b
Terror or fear	Helplessness	Confusion	Worry
Guilt	Hopelessness	Distortion	Nightmares
Phobias	Loss of pleasure from activities		
	Dissociation ^a		
Physical		Interpersonal/Behavioral	
Fatigue	Impaired immune response	Alienation	Avoidance of reminders
Insomnia	Headaches	Social withdrawal or isolation	Crying easily
Sleep disturbance	Gastrointestinal problems	Increased relationship conflict	Change in eating patterns
Hyperarousal	Decreased appetite	Vocational impairment	Tantrums
Somatic complaints	Decreased libido	Refusal to go to school	Regression in behavior
	Startle response	School impairment	Risk taking
			Aggression

Note. *Psychosocial Issues for Children and Adolescents in Disasters*, by A. H. Speier, 2000; and *Disaster Mental Health Services*, by B. H. Young, J. D. Ford, J. I. Ruzek, M. Friedman, and F. D. Gusman, 1998.

a. Examples include perceptual experience, such as “dreamlike,” “tunnel vision,” “spacey,” or on “automatic pilot.”

b. Reenactment play among children.

4. Teach Students How to Manage and Cope With Crisis Reactions



- a. Discuss stress management techniques. A list of common strategies and adaptive coping strategies is provided below.
- b. List people that students can talk to (e.g., parents, teachers, counselors, and friends).
- c. Remind students of the mental health resources that are available in their school.
- d. Discuss how returning to a normal routine is a positive coping strategy after a crisis and how coming to school helps manage crisis reactions.

Stress Management Resources and Adaptive Coping Strategies

Stress Management Resources

1. Emotional Wellness/Stress Management New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services
 - <https://www.oasas.ny.gov/wellness/stress.cfm>
2. Stress Management: Using Self-Help Techniques for Dealing with Stress, HelpGuide.org
 - <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-management.htm>
3. Stress Management Tips, WebMD
 - <https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management-relieving-stress#1>
4. Stress Tip Sheet, American Psychological Association
 - <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-tips.aspx>
5. Healthy Lifestyle: Stress Management—Stress Basics, Mayo Clinic
 - <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/stress-management/basics/stress-basics/hlv-20049495>
6. Learn to Manage Stress, MedlinePlus
 - <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001942.htm>
7. Manage Stress, HealthFinder
 - <http://healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/health-conditions-and-diseases/heart-health/manage-stress>
8. The American Institute of Stress
 - <http://www.stress.org/>
9. Just for Teens: A Personal Plan for Managing Stress, American Academy of Pediatrics
 - https://www.aap.org/en-us/professional-resources/Reaching-Teens/Documents/Private/Personal_plan_handout.pdf

Adaptive Coping Strategies for Dealing With Traumatic Stress Reactions

1. Talk with others who have had the same crisis experience.
2. Ask an adult for help coping with difficult feelings.
3. Take care of your basic needs for food, water, sleep, and hygiene.
4. Express yourself through writing and drawing.
5. Incorporate physical exercise into your routine.
6. Avoid alcohol and drugs.
7. Maintain normal routines and rituals (e.g., going to school, extracurricular activities).
8. Surround yourself with support (e.g., partners, pals, and pets).
9. Pursue your passions (don't feel guilty about finding pleasure in life).
10. Practice stress management techniques (e.g., deep breathing, yoga, meditation).
11. Embrace your religion, spirituality, or other helpful belief systems.
12. Enjoy nature (get outside and play).
13. Find ways to laugh (but allow yourself to cry).

5. Close the Lesson



- a. Give a brief summary of what was discussed.
- b. Reiterate available mental health resources (provide a handout, if possible, or post on the school website for easy availability).
- c. Consider assigning (with the teacher's permission) a homework, journal, or reflection assignment wherein students would write out their own personal stress management plan.
- d. Thank the students (and the teacher) for the opportunity to be with them.

Note. Adapted from "Psychoeducational Group Cheat Sheet: A Lesson Plan for Mental Health Response Team Members Only," by C. Conolly-Wilson, 2010, Waukegan, IL: Waukegan Public Schools. Adapted with permission.