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OVERVIEW

1. Efficacy and benefits of group therapy
2. Structure
3. Our role in group therapy
4. Types of Activities
5. Outcomes
6. Future Endeavors
Aphasia groups have become increasingly more popular because they offer so many potential benefits to group participants.

- Targets are related to personal and environmental aspects of life.
- Purpose is to facilitate the achievement of life goals.
- It can be used with clients of any severity of aphasia and at any stage of recovery.
- Provides a safe, beneficial social outing for individuals who no longer feel comfortable in social settings.

(Chapey et al, 2000)
Efficacy of Group Therapy

✓ Groups focus on collaborative, practical activities as well as authentic conversation.

✓ Generalization of language skills is more likely to occur when more complex language forms are targeted.
  • More complex language forms occur more frequently and naturally in conversation.

✓ Communication supports can be programmed to support specific communication genres, or favored methods of engaging with others.
  • Examples: quoting facts, relating events in amusing monologues, discussing recent events in pre-planned, scripted speech.

✓ Group therapy is a prime example of a social approach to intervention that is consistent with the Life Participation Approach to Aphasia (LPAA).

(Simmons-Mackie, et al, and Redmond, 2011)
ADVANTAGES TO GROUP THERAPY

- It gives the members a sense of community.
- Increases the variety of communicative function or speech acts (different structure and syntax, questions and statements, imperatives).
- May prevent depression or other negative consequences if started early in recovery.
- Improve psychosocial function both directly and indirectly.
- Can be cost-effective method of providing service.
- Wide array of communication partners increases generalization into other environments.
- Excellent environment for language improvisation which is dire for novel and creative language use.
- It gives the members a sense of community.
- Excellent environment for language improvisation which is dire for novel and creative language use.

(Elman and Hoover)
BENEFITS OF GROUP THERAPY FOR CAREGIVERS

Caregivers observe and learn to use multimodal strategies in conversation and also positive techniques for communicating with PWA.

Caregivers also gain perspective and a better understanding of aphasia and may become more empathetic and compassionate toward their loved one.

Caregivers provide emotional support and guidance to each other.

Caregiver can observe their loved one’s strengths in communication.

visuals, writing, iPad/tech tools

pausing, giving time to process, providing visual support with writing, etc.
THE ROLE OF THE SLP

Communication Partner and Coach

Problem Solver
- The SLP’s ultimate role should be to support communication when breakdowns occur. SLP may facilitate the group conversation at first but, the ultimate goal is for PWA to facilitate conversation/taking on a leadership role, while the SLP helps support communication repairs during breakdowns.

Reinforcer
- Giving praise and encouragement for all efforts to communicate a message.
TARGETED SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Verbal Expression
- Auditory Comprehension
- Multimodal Communication
- Conversational turn-taking
- Topic Maintenance
- Reading
- Word-Retrieval
- Writing
- Communication Strategies
HOW TO GET STARTED

Structured Activities vs. Open conversation

Frequency?

Length of time?

Clientele
Restricted enrollment vs. Open enrollment

Size?
Big groups vs. small groups or both?

Caregiver involvement?

Cost??
Clients of all severities and stages of recovery.

Meets weekly, each session is 3 hours.

Pay per monthly session and drop-in availability.

Open Conversation
(with support)

Structured expressive tasks

Big Group Conversation
• multimodal lots of visuals, etc.

Small Groups focusing on specific areas of improvement
• reading, writing, speaking, naming/word retrieval, auditory comprehension, etc.
BIG GROUP CONVERSATION

Purpose: To facilitate conversational discourse between participants who are at any level of impairment.

Ideas for Big Group Conversation:

- Begin with having members provide updates about themselves and what they've been doing.
- Connecting group members by sharing commonalities through commenting and questioning, or humor.
- Utilize specific topics that are high-interest to all members to initiate engagement.
- Provide questions that group members read aloud to target verbal fluency and oral reading.
- Promote Question formulation to facilitate social interactions with each other.

Successful topics: Travel, current events with visuals, Would you rather Questions, driving, hobbies.
FOCUS POINTS OF BIG GROUP

- Use less structure, keep it more social.

- Promote interest in social interaction and leadership/independence in communicating.

- Maintain engagement – selecting topics or themes that are high-interest for a variety of people.

- Encourage use of multimodal communication and strategies.

- Use visuals and supports of all kinds.
A variety of communication supports can allow a PWA to relate a story to others and produce more language.

**Use of multimodal communication also helps with the listeners’ comprehension.**

(Simmons-Mackie, 2013)
Communication Strategies & Tools
For People with Aphasia
University of Michigan Aphasia Program

SPEAK

GESTURE

WRITE

DRAW

PICTURE

DICTIONARY,

MAP

IPAD

Who?
Person/People

When?
Time (Day, Season, Year)

Amount/Number/Length of time

How much?
many?
long?
old?

Where?
Location/Place

Walmart

OPD

Oxford Picture Dictionary
Visuals serve as a shared communication space that can be understood by most everyone. A great resource when engaging a group of individuals at various severities.

**Written Visuals**
- Supporting comprehension with written visuals of key words being spoken.

**Visuals through photographs**
- Visual Scene Displays (VSDs) – portray situations, places, or experiences that show relationships and interactions with people.

**Visual Tools that provide accessible ways of communicating for individuals who are more verbally restricted:**
- Maps
- Calendars
- Number lines/timelines
- Picture Dictionary
- Remnants (menus, brochures, programs, billfolds)

(Simmons-Mackie, 2013)
• Not stimulating
• No situations, interactions, or any action being displayed

“Portrays situations, places, or experiences that show relationships and interactions with people.”

(Simmons-Mackie, 2013)
Barriers: A picture of a guard dog outside Mexico City taken by D'Arcy Vachon.

A father saved his son. A fan instinctively stretches his arm to deflect the lethal trajectory of the stick as it flies wildly towards his son's oblivious face.

A pair of red squirrels prepare for the Easter break as they fill their shopping trolley with eggs. The Easter preparations were captured by photographer Geert Weggen in his garden in Bispgarden, Sweden.

Sunday: "This is Joseph, our cat, lazing the day with my wife, Anita, and daughter Ida. For Joseph, every day is a Sunday." – Leonardo Fugoso
Purpose: To break participants into smaller, specialized, groups based on abilities and points of interest.

Ideas for Small Groups:
- Toastmasters
- Role-Playing
- Reading Group
- Writing Group
- Introductions
- Problem-Solving
- Word-Retrieval Activities
- Social Greetings
- Functional Situations
- Social Situations
TOASTMASTERS

Purpose: Focuses on communicating fluently and effectively in challenging situations.

Simplified Toastmasters group:
- Participants each prepare and present a short speech in front of peers.
- Each speaker selects 2-3 personal goals to focus on for each presentation. These goals change weekly.
- They are then provided with feedback from group members.
- Each speaker reflects on their own performance by completing a self-evaluation.
- Whole group engages in a general discussion after each presentation to discuss strengths and areas of improvement.

- Length of speech varies per participant.
- For clients who have more difficulty with verbal expression, topics that are functional and familiar are more appropriate. For higher-level clients a time pressure and novel topics can be utilized.
- Promote use of multimodal strategies to convey messages during times of communication breakdown.
By evaluating their performances they take ownership and gain insight into their deficits and how to better themselves.

Group members help support one another through the peer-rating by supporting each other and problem-solving to become better speakers.

Provides positive yet realistic feedback from others who also have aphasia.
INTRODUCTIONS

Purpose: To practice functional daily communication tasks, help build confidence and feel more socially assimilated.

Participants are provided with visual prompts for introducing a variety of people including family members, friends, themselves, pets, each other.

Advantages:
• Carry-over into the big group conversation
• Socially appropriate and highly functional in daily interactions
• Critical skill in any environment
ROLE-PLAYING

Purpose: To help with verbal expression, word-finding, conversation skills, auditory comprehension and reinforce the need to use multimodal communication in daily situations.

- Functional role-play
  - Introductions
  - Social Situations
  - Disagreements
  - Phone conversations

- Self-Evaluations

- Video record for self-reflection and discuss strategies that could have been used.
ROLE-PLAYING EXAMPLES

You’ve hired someone to clean your home. Explain to the worker which rooms need to be cleaned and what you want him/her to do.

You are visiting a local animal shelter because you want to get a dog. Speak with someone at the shelter about the dog you’d like to get. Explain what qualities you are looking for in a dog and ask questions about the dogs available.
You have just ran into a friend whom you haven’t seen for several years. Tell him/her what you’ve been doing during that time and find out something about him/her.
How Did You Do in the Conversation?

1. How do you think you did?

1. Poor
2. Fair
3. Good
4. Very Good
5. Excellent

2. What did you do the best? Please check "Yes" or "No".
   a. Speaking
   b. Using strategies: gestures, writing, drawing, facial expression, repeating, etc.
   c. Maintaining eye contact
   d. Listening to the other speaker
   e. Verification of conversational partner’s message
FOCUS POINTS

Toastmasters

- Opportunities to expand expressive skills
- Utilize multimodal communication in daily tasks
- Increase awareness of their strengths and areas of improvement
- Build self confidence and motivation to engage in social interactions outside of the group
- Allows opportunities to be a role-model to others

Role-Playing

Introductions
GENERAL OUTCOMES

✓ Promotes successful communication in a social setting.
  ▪ Some PWA will never accept their limitations/challenges caused by their aphasia and continue to focus on pre-stroke abilities.
  ▪ Others are able to embrace their limitations and make adjustments to have fulfilling lives.

✓ Group therapy can help shift the focus (even if temporarily) from their own deficits, to helping others in the group.

✓ Can increase self-confidence in their own abilities compared to other PWA.

✓ May promote altruistic behaviors towards other PWA.
Some things to consider:

- Some type of informal pre-post evaluations
- Reading group
- Technology Group
- Incorporation of ADLs (cooking activities, games, etc.) into group activities
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