

Creative Interventions and Activities Clearinghouse

Growing Roots: Incorporating Nature Into Groupwork

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Purpose:

The purpose of this creative intervention is to help clients increase connection to self, others and the natural world. The group plants their seeds together at the initial counseling session. Over the course of the sessions the group will cultivate their plants together, mirroring the growth process of the group members and the group as a whole. The plant is a living metaphor for the growth and transition of leaving the group.

Materials Needed:

Variety of plant seeds (ones that require less maintenance are preferable); potting soil; large spoons; wide shallow container with holes/slits on bottom; tray, larger than container; paper towels/ newspaper; popsicle sticks; large plastic bag.

Procedures:

Present the activity to the group, explaining that they will be planting seeds together and taking care of them over the course of the group. If the group is of an appropriate age/developmental level, direct them to work together to follow the directions on the board without any help from the group leader. If this would not be appropriate, let them know they can ask for assistance from the leader. Distribute the seeds, giving a description of the different plant characteristics and asking the group members to choose a few seeds of a plant they identify with. (Example: aloe vera plant is strong and resourceful)

Cover the bottom of the container with one layer of paper towels/newspaper, fill the container with soil leaving ½ inch of space at the top. Place the seeds ½ inch apart in the soil and cover with a small layer of soil. Mark where your seeds are with popsicle sticks with name written on them, spray the container with water, cover with a plastic bag. When planting is done, the group brainstorms rules for taking care of the plants over the course of the group. Group leader can offer suggestions, such as how often to water plants.

During last group session, group members paint pots and plant one of their seedlings in their pot. Fill decorated pot three quarters full with soil. Cut soil around seedling, leaving about 1½ inches of soil surrounding seedling. Place seedling in the pot and cover it with enough soil to cover the roots of the seedling. Spray newly planted seedling with water. The group brainstorms a plan to take care of their seedlings, leading into a discussion of how to take care of themselves now that they will no longer have the group for support.

To modify this activity with individual clients, use a smaller tray for the seeds and work together during the first session to plant seeds the client chooses, as a way to start building the therapeutic relationship. Replanting the seedling/s in their own decorated pot during the last session can be a great way to process termination.

Some clients may experience anxiety about getting dirty. It can help to have gloves available and aprons to put over clothing.

Process Questions and Follow-Up:

During the first session, encourage group members to think about what came up for them during the activity.

How was it to work together planting the seeds?

What did you like about planting with the group?

What didn't like about planting with the group?

What worries and concerns do you have about your plants?

What worries and concerns do you have about being part of this group for the next ...?

How was it to create rules together about caring for your plants?

During the last session, encourage group members to think about what the process was like to watch their plants grow together and what they are thinking/feeling about taking their plants home and leaving the group.

What was your favorite part of having these plants?

What was it the experience like to take care of the plants as a group?

What are some similarities between your plants growth and your personal growth?

What are your worries and concerns about taking care of the plant by yourself?

What are your worries and concerns about taking care of yourself without the group as a support?

What are some ways you can take care of yourself now that you are moving forward?

What have you learned about yourself throughout this process?

Practice Setting:

School