

Workshop

„Peer group intervention“ *Country examples*

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Structure of presentation

- Features of peer group interventions
- Findings in the literature
 - Aims & outcomes
- Selected country examples
 - Austria
 - UK (Scotland)
 - Australia
- What is needed?

Features of peer group interventions

- Subject
- Target population
- Setting
- Moderation
- Exclusion/inclusion criteria
- Other

Aims of peer support groups based on the literature

- Provision of
 - information
 - emotional support
 - coping skills

Outcomes of peer-group intervention based on the literature

- ❑ Enhanced self-identity and acceptance of caregiving role
- ❑ Improving self confidence
- ❑ Increased knowledge of the illness
- ❑ Adoption of new coping skills
- ❑ Support and empowerment
- ❑ Social climate of the group

Outcomes of peer-group intervention based on the literature cont.

- Identifying available family support resources, finding out that other children exist with the same problems, reducing isolation
- Sharing of successful and unsuccessful caring experiences
- Ability to identify own feelings and to express these, improve communication within the family

Outcomes of peer-group intervention based on the literature cont.

- Resulting in savings and cost effective with regard to :
 - Decreased level of family burden
 - Improvements in patients' psychosocial health and functioning,
 - Decreased re-hospitalisation
- Stable use of mental health services over follow-up period

Limitations of peer-group intervention

- ❑ Low or irregular group attendance
- ❑ Negative pressure from dominant members
- ❑ Over-expression of intense and negative feelings

Country examples

- Austria
- UK
- Australia

→ activities and their potential impact

Austria

HPE

Hilfe für Angehörige Psychisch Erkrankter

Assistance for Families of People with a
Mental Illness

Examples from Austria (HPE)

- ❑ Self help group for adult children of parents with a mental illness in Vienna
- ❑ Self help group for adult children of parents with a mental illness, of partners and siblings of individuals with a mental illness in Innsbruck, Tyrol (group for children only is planned)
- ❑ Self help group for adult children of parents with a mental illness in Salzburg
- ❑ Group sessions for small children of parents with a mental illness - JOJO

Adult groups in various Austrian regions

- ❑ Existence since
- ❑ Members
- ❑ Age: about 20-30 years
- ❑ Moderation/Supervision by professional
- ❑ Introductory/selection interviews
- ❑ Structured or flexible
- ❑ Sufficient demand (partially waiting lists)
- ❑ Participant bias?

Outcome

*Perceived benefits by participants**

- Having a **point of contact**/ someone to turn to/ a safety net
- Not feeling alone anymore, experiencing **solidarity and comfort**
- **Meeting individuals in comparable situations**
- Talking to **somebody who listens and understands** (no pity)
- Learning to **address and talk about burdensome topics**
- **Exchanging thoughts, experiences and information**
- **Learning more about oneself**
 - Structuring of own thoughts
 - Distancing oneself from personal problems
 - Hearing different viewpoints, learning from others



Outcome

Perceived benefits by participants cont.

- Receiving **suggestions for coping strategies and problem-solving techniques**
- Becoming **more confident** by seeing how other group members cope and lead successful lives
- Being **prodded into action** (e.g. start tackling a problem)
- Acquiring a **greater understanding for and acceptance** of the illness of the parent
- Increasing **knowledge about mental illnesses**
- Experiencing **support** before and during **difficult situations and crisis**



Outcome

Benefits of professional moderation

- Receiving professional **guidance and supervision**
 - Prevention i.e. early detection of upcoming problems is facilitated, giving the option to react accordingly
- Being provided with **information**
- Being **placed in an appropriate group** (composition)
- Approaching **topics** in a structured way
- Being part of a whole **network** (HPE)

JOJO

UK (Scotland)

Orkney Young Carers, Scotland

- ❑ Children and young people caring for someone in their family affected by a disability, mental illness, substance abuse
- ❑ Peer group support
- ❑ Currently: 29 young carers aged 6-17 registered
- ❑ Free monthly activity sessions for young carers: junior and seniors
- ❑ Furthermore: one to one support, referrals to specialists, Scottish Young Carer's Festival

Australia

- PATS, Victoria
- Koping, Queensland

PATS, Victoria, Australia

- ❑ Group peer support programme for young people
- ❑ Free of charge
- ❑ Developed in 1996
- ❑ Early intervention programme
- ❑ 8 week group programme
- ❑ Covers a range of topics: education, coping, feelings, dealing with stigma
- ❑ Ongoing activities and opportunities to become involved after finishing the programme

Impact i.e. Outcome

- Following involvement in the PATS program, young people reported significant reductions in depressive symptoms, risk of homelessness and stigma.

Koping, Queensland, Australia

□ **Koping Adolescent Programme (KAP)**

- Peer-based support programme for young people from the ages of 12-18 years with a parent with a mental health problem
- Opportunity to access peer support and information and to develop helpful coping strategies
- 3 day peer support programme run over 4 weekends
- Participation is free and confidential

□ **Koping Resources: DVD, CD ROM**

- Manual and DVD providing information about other young people's experiences, ways of coping and how to get help

What is needed

- **More evidence** on effectiveness of peer group interventions on caregivers/on service users
- Greater **awareness and sensitivity** among stakeholders and policy makers
- **Funding**
- Greater **awareness** among potential participants (target population): Age-specific interventions
- **Early interventions** (health promotion, prevention and also care)

What is needed cont.

- ❑ **Information and transparency**
- ❑ **Reducing stigma/** tabu attached to the topic
- ❑ **Creativity** to use new technologies effectively and to pilot new approaches
- ❑ Professional **training** for group leaders
- ❑ **Embedding peer groups** in whole system structure i.e. other services offered

Thank you for your attention!



Goldstein

"This is a second opinion. At first, I thought you had something else."