Overview

- Context: NIU and Counseling & Consultation Services
- History of Transpire
- Group member concerns
- Best practice and reality
- Challenges for Transpire
But first, a disclaimer…

► We are not experts *(pause for audible gasps)*
► We plan to share our experiences with co-facilitating a therapy group for trans clients
► Our hope is that you benefit in some way from learning about our experiences
► Cool? Cool.
NIU LGBT Context

- Rural university
- Student body of 21,000
- Starting in 2006, The Advocate recognized NIU on national listing of LGBT-Friendly Colleges & Universities
- Gender & Sexuality Resource Center
  - Provides leadership & professional development, campus and community engagement, advocacy, and promotes social justice
  - LGBT Ally & Trans Ally Training Programs
  - Transitions social group for gender non-conforming & trans identified students
Counseling & Consultation Services

- One of four counseling centers at NIU
- Offers individual & group therapy (Archer & Cooper, 1998)
  - Group therapy enrollment has increased this year from last year
- Provides 24/7 crisis services
History of Transpire

- First iteration: Out of the Box
- Second iteration: Transpire
Common Concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Students</th>
<th>Transpire Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Depression</td>
<td>• All the usual suspects, plus…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anxiety</td>
<td>• Dysphoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Substance use</td>
<td>• Sexual orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eating disorders</td>
<td>• Coming out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic struggles</td>
<td>• Passing &amp; living “stealth”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adjustment</td>
<td>• Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationships &amp; sexuality</td>
<td>• Discrimination &amp; oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Suicidal ideation &amp; self-harm</td>
<td>• Institutionalized transphobia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Loss of relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Additional financial burdens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Health &amp; navigating the health care system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sexual victimization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So...How did we approach these concerns within the context of group?
Best Practice and Reality

- Dearth of formal training for working with trans clients (Heck et al., 2015)
  - Self-education through books, online resources, conferences, etc.
- Competencies for working with trans clients (ACA, 2010)
  - 103 competencies over 8 domains
Best Practice and Reality

- Facilitator Competency \( (ACA, 2010) \)
  - Awareness of and degree of own gender identity development
  - Awareness of own beliefs about gender
  - Awareness of privilege (e.g., White, cisgender, class) \( (Patton & Reicherzer, 2010) \)
  - Support and advocate roles, rather than “gatekeepers” \( (Singh & Burnes, 2010) \)
  - Need to remain current on a rapidly changing literature & culture
Best Practice and Reality

- Safety and Confidentiality
  - Individual therapy, group therapy
  - Interactions outside of group
Best Practice and Reality

Recruitment & Screening

- Explain group therapy, group’s purpose (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005)
- Screening questions address PGP, preferred name, gender identity, degree of disclosure to friends & family, etc. (Donatone & Rachlin, 2013)
- Gauge potential member appropriateness (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005)
- Strive for balance of trans men and trans women (Dickey & Lowey, 2010)
  - Inclusion of genderqueer students (Singh & Burnes, 2010)
- Small community
Best Practice and Reality

- Sessions
  - Identifying treatment goals
  - Group cultural norms (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005)
  - Addressing “unproductive” behaviors
  - Personality disorder traits
  - Balancing process with support
  - Misgendering & other mistakes
Challenges for Transpire

- Ideally closed group, but really an open group
- Artificial breaks between semesters
- Members at various stages of transition
Questions? Comments?
Thank you for your kind attention
Resources

- Glossary of gender terms: http://genderqueerid.com/gq-terms
- World Professional Association for Transgender Health: www.wpath.org
- Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf
- Trans Folx Fighting Eating Disorders: http://www.transfolxfightingeds.org/
Selected References


