Inpatient Group Psychotherapy Plan

Planned Group Title: Stress Management

Format: 30 minutes, semi-structured format

Structure: 
- 7 minutes orientation and introductions
- 18 minutes semi-structured activity
- 5 minutes wrap-up

Size: 3-10 members.

Eligibility: All patients eligible, higher-functioning patients preferred.

Purpose: Patients suffering from mental illness requiring hospitalization constantly face many seemingly insurmountable stressors. These can be as complicated as navigating the myriad funding sources for health care or as simple as basic human interaction. This group will help foster some basic skills to assist in coping with the many stressors that patients face.

Goals: Develop and foster basic strategies for coping with stress in a practical, hands-on, interactional forum.

Topics Addressed: Recognizing stress, seeking help, communication, exerting control, problem-focused coping, relaxation, understanding and acceptance.

Scripts and Activities:

Orientation and Introductions: Hello. My name is Michael Grandner, and today we’re going to talk about stress. Before we do that, though, let’s go around the circle and have everybody introduce themselves. Please say your name. [GO AROUND THE GROUP.] OK. Now, today we’ll be talking a little bit about stress. Stress can mean a lot of different things, but mostly in means things that make you upset or worried. Let’s go around the circle and have each one of us tell the group something that causes us stress. [GO AROUND THE GROUP.] OK. That’s great. So we all have things that create stress for us. Now, what are some things that you do to help deal with stress when you get upset or worried? [GO AROUND THE GROUP.] Great. These are all good ideas. Today we’ll be talking about [GROUP TOPIC] as one way to help deal with stress.
Specific Exercises:

Recognizing Stress:

Introduction: The first step in reducing stress is to recognize when something begins to bother you and cause stress. A lot of times, something will start to bother us, and we will get upset or angry or sad and we don’t even know what’s really causing those feelings. Or we start yelling or banging things or isolating ourselves and we don’t realize why we’re doing it. And if we don’t know where those feelings or behaviors are coming from, they might start to control us and we can’t know how to fix the problem because we don’t even know what the problem is. So what we’re going to do today is to talk about how to recognize stress when it starts and figure out what is causing the stress. What do you think? [GO AROUND THE GROUP.]

Activity 1: SCENARIOS: Read a few scenarios of people in stressful situations and have the group identify what the person did in reaction to the stress and what some of the causes of stress were.

Activity 2: SHARING: Have the group each talk about (a) stresses they are experiencing right now, (b) their feelings about those stressors, and (c) what they might do about those stressors.

Seeking Help:

Introduction: Sometimes, when something is bothering us and there’s very little we can do to fix it, we need to ask for help from other people. For whatever problem comes up, there is usually someone available that can help. The problem is that sometimes it’s hard to figure out when would be a good time to ask for help, who to ask, and how to ask. So what we’re going to do today is to talk about how to figure out when to ask for help, and how. What do you think? [GO AROUND THE GROUP.]

Activity 1: SHARING: Have the group each talk about (a) situations when they have needed to ask for help, (b) situations when they knew what to do, (c) situations when they did not know what to do, and (d) reactions to leader-suggested scenarios where a person might need to ask for help.
Activity 2: RESOURCES: Have the group talk about and discuss resources that are available to them.

Communication:

Introduction: One thing that can be really stressful is when you have problems communicating with people. People may not understand what you’re trying to say, or, you may be saying something in a way that might upset other people. It can be very difficult to talk with other people in situations like that, and that can be very stressful. So one thing we are going to do today is practice some skills to help you communicate with other people in a way that helps you get your message across without upsetting the person you’re talking to. What do you think? [GO AROUND THE GROUP.]

Activity 1: PERSONAL SPACE: Have the patients enact conversations while varying the amount of space between those conversing (very close, average, very distant, etc.). Have patients describe their feelings about violations of personal space and how simply changing the distance between people can improve communication.

Activity 2: LISTENING SKILLS: Introduce the idea of listening skills and practice some skills with the patients, such as: (a) body posture and attitude while listening, (b) paying attention, (c) asking questions, (d) reflecting/ repeating, (e) making assumptions, etc.

Exerting Control:

Introduction: When we have problems that are very difficult or overwhelming, one thing that might help us feel better would be to take some control over the situation. There are a lot of things in our lives that we don’t have control over, and there are some things that we do. And sometimes taking some control makes our problems not seem so big. So what we’re going to do today is to talk about how to figure out when to exert some control, and how to do that. What do you think? [GO AROUND THE GROUP.]

Activity 1: WAYS OF EXERTING CONTROL: Have the group discuss possible ways they can exert control over various stressors. Also, discuss how they can exert control in other areas
of their life (like in creating something) that help them feel more in control of things.

**Activity 2: CHANGING A SITUATION:** Discuss various scenarios that are stressful and figure out what about those situations allow for elements of control.

**Problem-Focused Coping:**

**Introduction:** Sometimes, one of the best ways to deal with a problem is to attack that problem directly. This isn’t always possible, but what we’re going to talk about today is “problem-focused coping,” which is a special way of dealing with stress that involves identifying a problem and coming up with a plan to fix it. So what we’re going to do today is to talk about how to use problem-focused coping. What do you think? [GO AROUND THE GROUP.]

**Activity 1:** **SHARING:** Have the group each talk about (a) situations when they have had problems, (b) how to come up with a plan, and (c) suggestions for leader-introduced scenarios where a person might use problem-focused coping.

**Activity 2:** **RESOURCES:** Have the group talk about and discuss resources that are available to them.

**Relaxation:**

**Introduction:** One of the best ways to deal with stress is to learn how to relax. Relaxation helps you be able to think clearly about your stresses and reduce some of the effect they have. Relaxation can help your mind this way, but it can also affect your body, by slowing down things like your heart rate, and it can also lead to your body producing its own chemicals that reduce pain and worry. So what we’re going to do today is to talk about some ways of relaxing. What do you think? [GO AROUND THE GROUP.]

**Activity 1:** **BREATHING:** Teach diaphragmatic breathing by (a) introducing the topic, (b) explain some of the benefits, (c) demonstrate the technique, (d) instruct the patients more specifically, and (e) suggest routine breathing exercises.
Activity 2: MUSCLE RELAXATION: Teach muscle relaxation by (a) introducing the topic, (b) explain some of the benefits, (c) demonstrate the technique, (d) instruct the patients more specifically, and (e) suggest routine exercises.

Understanding and Acceptance:

Introduction: Sometimes there are things that get us down that we have no control over. In these situations, it doesn’t help to fight what is happening; sometimes being able to accept and understand what is happening and trying to figure out how to turn a bad situation into a good one is the most helpful thing you can do. So what we’re going to do today is to talk about some ways of accepting and understanding something and having that reduce your stress. What do you think? [GO AROUND THE GROUP.]

Activity 1: SHARING: Have the group each talk about (a) situations when they have had problems they could not change, (b) ways of understanding and acceptance, (c) ways of looking at things differently and (d) suggestions for leader-introduced scenarios where a person might encounter such a situation.

Activity 2: POINT OF VIEW: Discuss how changing a point of view can change the experience of a stressor.

Wrap-Up: OK. So today we talked about using [GROUP TOPIC] as a way to deal with stress. To sum up, we talked about [SUMMARY]. Let’s go around the circle and talk about what we learned. [GO AROUND THE GROUP.] Great. It looks like now we have some new ways to help deal with the stress that we face every day.

-wrap up and rules