Single-Sessions for Trauma Survivors

TAMFT
AUSTIN 2019
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INTRODUCTIONS
Challenges to commonly held beliefs

- Many survivors are not psychologically debilitated by their traumatic experience.
- Many survivors experience “post-traumatic growth.”
- Many survivors are not interested in, or feel the need for, long-term help.

Agenda

- Why are we interested in single-sessions?
- The prevalence and effectiveness of single-sessions
- Why single-sessions for trauma survivors?
- How to make single-sessions work for trauma survivors

WHY SINGLE-SESSIONS?
Three Common Research Findings

• The most common number of service contacts that clients attend is one, followed by two, followed by three irrespective of diagnosis, complexity, or the severity of their problem.
• The majority (often about 75% percent) of those people who attend only one session, across a range of therapies, report that the single session was adequate given their current circumstance.
• It seems impossible to predict who will attend only one session and who will attend more.

Let’s Pretend That You Accept These Findings:

• How would you conduct the first session?
• How would you redesign your service system?

3 Types of Single-Sessions

- Patient initiated
- Therapist initiated
- Mutually agreed beforehand
  - By Appointment
  - By Walk-in
Improvement Rates in Psychotherapy

The rates of improvement for more than 2,000 people in weekly psychotherapy and for 500 people who did not receive psychotherapy. Clearly, psychotherapy accelerates both the rate and the degree of improvement for those experiencing psychological problems.


Community Health Counselling state-wide contact data

Total Contacts
42,771 (2004-5)
40,822 (2003-4)
31,613 (2002-3)

Victoria, Australia 2002-2005
The Band Aid is an inexpensive, convenient, and remarkably versatile solution to an astonishing array of problems. In their history, Band Aids have probably allowed millions of people to keep working or playing tennis or cooking or walking when they would otherwise have had to stop. The Band Aid solution is actually the best kind of solution because it involves solving a problem with the minimum amount of effort and time and cost.

Malcolm Gladwell, The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference

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Research Evidence

- Significant and long lasting improvement for most clients, irrespective of presenting concerns or severity of clients. This includes reduced distress, problem improvement, increased sense of agency, increased hope.
- Clients who attend single-session services are similar to those who attend ongoing counseling services.
- Very high levels of client satisfaction with single-sessions have been demonstrate.
- Change occurs more rapidly than most of us expect.
- Clients are less likely to use expensive services (e.g., ERs) and miss less work.
- Men use walk-in services more often than women.

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Single-Session Mindset

- We need to know less about the history of the complaint and the history of the client than we think.
- The greatest opportunities for change come in the earliest stages of treatment.
- Therapy is a form of consultation.
Single-Session Principles for Clients who Have Experienced Traumatic Events

- The client is in charge
- Choices
- Time management: a collaboration with client
- Slow down, listen, observe
- Why now?
- What does the client want?
- Accept what the client says

Resources, strengths, what's going well, commendations

Future oriented questions

Normalize reactions

Promote small change

Show empathy

The question of "why"?

Dealing with risk issues

Consider descriptive words other than "trauma"

The PTSD diagnosis: pros and cons

Access community resources

We Want Clients to Leave With...

- A sense that they've been heard
- Increased hope; decreased stress
- Increased awareness of strengths and resources and how to make use of them
- Perhaps a new way to think about a problem
- Perhaps a "next step" for addressing a problem
- A positive experience with psychotherapy