Get Your Group On!
Facilitating Psychoeducational Groups in Schools
Welcome & Logistics

- Thanks for watching when you have so many other responsibilities to attend to! I appreciate YOU and all you do for students!
- The slides are very detailed in order to be self-explanatory when you use them on your own to create your groups.

Let’s get started!!
Introductions

- Bilingual school counselor in Title 1 public schools (ES & MS) since 2008
- Author of several counseling and ESL books
- Adjunct professor of school counseling at Angelo State University
- 2017 winner of Texas CREST award & 2018 finalist for Texas SCOY
- MS in Counseling, BS in Education (grades EC-8)
  - Gen ed & ESL resource teacher for 13 years, US & Bolivia
  - Also taught English pedagogy at teacher’s college in Mozambique
Contact me at:

- WEBSITE I maintain - schoolcounselorstephanie.com
- INSTAGRAM where you can see pics of my counseling program in action - schoolcounselorstephanie
- EMAIL - stephanie@schoolcounselorstephanie.com
- FACEBOOK groups for counselors -
  - The Mental Health Marketplace
  - The Great State of Texas School Counselors
Presentation Format

1. Introductions
2. A Quick Word about Advocacy
3. Professional Development Information
4. Q/A
Psychoeducational Groups Start with Advocacy!

• For school counselors, group counseling may need to begin with advocacy.

• Take non-counseling duties off your plate so you have time to run groups.

• Transition your program from “random acts of guidance” to a comprehensive school counseling program. ( Took me 10 yrs! )

When your counseling office gets 67 schedule change requests the first day of school...

We out!

Some tips to get you started....
Psychoeducational Groups Start with Advocacy!

- I will just briefly touch on these tips- email me to learn more on the ideas below.

  - Have weekly meetings with your campus admin to:
    - Share SC duties per ASCA National Model or state model: Stephanie Talks School Counseling!
    - Share your time-spent data- use EZ Analyze, etc.
  - Work with your admin to gently decrease non-counseling duties: The Art of Saying No Gracefully.
Psychoeducational Groups Start with Advocacy!

- Gently and professionally **discuss ASCA’s Duties chart**- identify problem areas and brainstorm solutions.

- Let this guide you in your school counseling duties!

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### Appropriate Activities for School Counselors

- Individual student academic program planning
- Interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests
- Providing counseling to students who are truant or absent
- Providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems
- Collaborating with teachers to present school counseling core curriculum lessons
- Analyzing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement
- Interpreting student records
- Providing training with suggestions for effective classroom management
- Ensuring student records are maintained as per state and federal regulations
- Supporting the school principal identify and resolve student issues, needs and problems
- Providing individual and small group counseling services to students
- Advocating for students at individual education plan meetings, student study teams and school attendance review boards
- Analyzing disaggregated data

### Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors

- Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students
- Coordinating cognitive, aptitude and achievement testing programs
- Signing excuses for students who are truant or absent
- Performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences
- Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed
- Teaching choices when teachers are absent
- Computing grade-point averages
- Maintaining student records
- Supervising classrooms or common areas
- Keeping clinical records
- Assisting with duties in the principal’s office
- Providing therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders
- Coordinating schoolwide individual education plans, student study teams and school attendance review boards
- Serving as a data entry clerk
Learning Objectives

• **Objective 1**- The participant will identify the *characteristics*, advantages, and limitations of psycho-educational groups.

• **Objective 2**- The participant will identify critical steps in the *planning* stage of facilitating a psycho-educational group.

• **Objective 3**- The participant will explore various group counseling *activities* that they can use in their own psycho-educational group sessions.

• **Objective 4**- The participant will employ effective techniques for *ending* the group and continuing to support group members after the group ends.
Definition of Psychoeducational Groups

Psychoeducational groups (PEGs) help members to gain information and develop skills for challenging situations through education-based techniques.

Objective 1- The participant will identify the characteristics, advantages, and limitations of psycho-educational groups.
Characteristics of PEGs

• Emphasis is on teaching and learning.
• Activities are structured and content is group-specific.
• Group leader usually facilitates discussions of the material.
• Members build skills to overcome problems.
• Members share/develop coping skills.
• Members develop behaviors to successfully navigate new/difficult situations.

Advantages of PEGs...(Plus a few disadvantages)

- Decreased symptoms of mental health problems, especially anxiety/depression, can occur.
- Members gain better access to community resources.
- Improved self-esteem and increased knowledge can result for client.
- **Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.**
- A mix of challenging group members can cause disruptions and/or some cannot be successful in a group due to personal and interpersonal issues.

Our DVMS Group Logistics...

- **6-8 45 minute sessions**
  - some groups max out at 6 sessions (anger management, etc.)

- **5 to 8 members** is an ideal number of group participants
  - **smaller** groups- teen boys or anger management
  - **larger** groups- stress management
Our DVMS Groups

- Anger Management
- Stress Management
- Grief & Loss
- Friendship
- Culture Explorers

- Changing Families
- Boys Empowerment & Conflict Resolution
- Girls Empowerment & Conflict Resolution
- Academic Achievement
- Social Skills
Planning a Psychoeducational Group

Now that I know what a psychoeducational group is, where do I begin?

Objective 2- The participant will identify critical steps in the planning stage of facilitating a psychoeducational group (PEG).
Planning Your Group

Complete these tasks in order, 2-4 weeks before group. I will just briefly review this list now because we will discuss them in detail in the next slides...

- Based on needs assessment/referrals, decide on group members; use a group roster.
- Meet briefly with potentials- orient them, gage interest, give/collect permissions.
- Schedule group and inform need-to-know staff.
- Plan 1st session/make pretest.
- Update student status on group roster.
Group Binder

The binder is a way to prep and organize your group session materials. Keep a Group Binder that contains:

• your **Group Notes** sheet
• students’ **schedules**/teachers
• signed **permission** forms
• any **handouts** you will use in a session

I’ll now briefly show my group binder that has all the templates above inside, we will discuss each template next...
Needs Assessment/Group Referrals

There are counseling needs assessments all over the internet that you can access and modify for your group. At my school, we just communicate the following brief request to staff, students, and families to compile our group referrals roster.
Needs Assessment/Group Referrals- An Example

The DVMS Counseling Office will be starting our Fall 2017 counseling groups. We can run the following groups as needed: a stress management group, a changing families group, a grief group, an exploring US culture group for Newcomers, a conflict resolution/making friends group, a social skills group, an academic achievement group, and an anger management group. If you would like to add yourself, your student, or your child to these groups, please send counselors the student’s ID# and the preferred group topic/s. We’d like this info by next Monday (Sept 18th) so we can start the process of getting parental consent. Thank you!
Group Criteria

Have defined expectations for the students in group these expectations should be based on data.

• **Determine data-based group criteria** that students on the group referrals list must meet in order to be enrolled in a group (example below)

• **During group, work with students on whatever criteria got them into group** (possibly through goal setting/achievement).

  ✓ Group Criteria #1: Student is failing at least 2 classes.
  ✓ Group Criteria #2: Student has at least one In School Suspension referral.
  ✓ Group Criteria #3: Student has had at least 1 crisis incident.

Adapted from ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, 2016
Orientation Meeting & Permission

• Pre-group orientation session:
• Meet individually with each prospective group member to explain/generate interest in the group topic and logistics.
• Distribute the permission form.

❖ In school settings, have a parent/guardian sign the permission form for each member in your group.
Group Notes Sheet

Plan each session using the Group Notes sheet.
Making Group Passes

Here are some easy steps so you don’t have to spend hours writing out passes!

• Cut/tape these copies together with a group pass note attached.
• Get two copies of the student’s schedule.
• On colorful paper, photocopy half the number of passes you’ll need for this student, and cut the copies in half.
• Repeat the three steps above for all other group members.
• Paperclip a stack of passes together for each session, with one pass for each group member.
• Hand out one paperclipped stack on the day of the group session.
SESSION ACTIVITIES

Now my group is set up and ready to go...what do I do IN the sessions?

Objective 3- The participant will explore various group counseling activities that they can use in their own psycho-educational group (PEG) sessions.
Session Activities: In the Beginning

Here is a list of beginning activities - we will discuss them in detail in the next slides...

- Warmup Puzzles
- **Purpose of Group**
- Pretest
- Group Rules & Consequences
- **Ice Breaker/Get to Know Each Other Activity**
- Group Evaluation
In the Beginning: Warmup Puzzles

Warmup puzzles are great for group members to do as they’re waiting for others to enter and the group session to start.

- They are located free all over the Internet, especially Pinterest.com. Photos of Pinterest mandalas on next slide!
- Find stress/anger worksheet activities at therapistaid.com
In the Beginning: Warmup Puzzles (Continued)
In the Beginning: Pre/Posttest

- Give to members the first and last session of group
- Crucial for data collection!
In the Beginning: Group Rules & Consequences

**Group Rules**
- Only say helpful comments.
- Don’t tell others what is said in the group.
- One person talks at a time; no side conversations.
- Use the bathroom before or after group only.
- Name-calling is not allowed.
- Don’t touch someone else’s stuff.

**Consequences**
- Private Warning
- Removal from Group
In the Beginning: Group Evaluation

Here is a photo of group members in the Girl World group doing the group evaluation.

Use the group members’ responses to the Group Evaluation each week to plan/adapt your next session.
Session Activities- In the Middle

Here is a list of middle activities - we will discuss each in detail in the next slides...

• Group Discussion
• Rules Review
• Introduce Bibliotherapy
• Skill Work Related to Group Theme
• Play Games (to apply skill work)
• Homework Assignment/Homework Shareout
• Group Evaluation
In the Middle: Group Discussion

This is an opportunity for students to bring up issues they want to discuss. Use these guidelines/question:

- “Who has something they’d like to discuss relating to (group topic)?”
- Address any recently occurring discipline/academic problems.
- Keep discussions under 10 min; DON’T let them take over entire session.
In the Middle: Skill Work

Skill work is the “meat” of the group session. The next slides have different skill work lesson plans that you can use in your own groups.

Examples of Skill Work Activities:

- Role Plays
- Organizational Skill Minilessons
- SMART Goal Creation
- Art Projects
- Coping Skills Application
- Relaxation Strategies

Here’s the mini SMART goal poster now I use with students in groups.
Skill Work Example: Conflict Resolution Role Play

• Show the Four Steps to Conflict Resolution; discuss each step.
• Ask group members how they have already used these steps in their lives.
• The group leader should model each of the steps for the group while a volunteer kicks the group leader’s chair as the “bothering” action.
• Discuss how steps one through three should only be used in minor conflicts; tell group members that anytime someone threatens them or puts their hands on them, they should go straight to step four.
• Role play each conflict resolution step. Have a group member pick a conflict situation card and read the card to the group leader, who will then act out the card behavior in order to “bother” that group member. The group member will practice using the four steps to deal with the bothering.

Here’s my “I” message poster that goes along with this activity.
Skill Work Example: SMART Goal Creation Minilesson

- Tell group members that they will now use their current grades to create a SMART goal about improving grades.
- Briefly explain what a SMART goal is by pointing out what each of the capital letters stands for on the SMART Goal Poster.
- Show group members how to create a SMART goal to improve their grades by modeling each of the SMART Goal Creation Steps (next slide) using an example grade printout and the “think-aloud” strategy.
- After you model each step, hand out a note card to each group member and have them follow the SMART Goal Creation Steps to create, check, and share their own SMART goal to improve their grades. Then, collect the goal note cards; give group members a copy as a reminder the next day.
SMART Goal Creation Steps

1. If you haven’t already done so, start by displaying the SMART Goal Poster on the following page and briefly explain what a SMART goal is by reviewing the SMART goal components on the poster.

2. Show group members how to create a SMART goal to improve their grades by modeling each of the following steps using a grade printout example in the same format that your group members will have.

3. After you model each step, hand out a note card to each group member and have them follow the same steps to create their own SMART goal to improve their grades while you circulate and assist.

4. Next, have each group member read their goal aloud to the group while the group checks each goal to make sure it is SMART. To do this, after a member reads their goal, you should read each SMART goal component off the SMART Goal Poster (next page) while the group members give a thumbs up if the goal incorporates that component or a thumbs down if it does not incorporate the component.

5. If the group determines that a group member’s goal does not incorporate one (or more) of the SMART components, ask the group how the group member should modify their goal so all components are included. Choose a proficient group member to help the struggling member change their goal, if necessary.
Skill Work Example: Cyberbully Art Project

- Define relational aggression and ask group members how relational aggression occurs on the Internet, smartphones, social media, or computers.
- Discuss that this is called cyberbullying and then hand out “Strategies to Avoid Cyberbullying.”
- Read the strategies together in round-robin style.
- Tell group members that they will each be making a sign to show others how to avoid or handle cyberbullying.
- Make various art materials available to the group, such as markers, crayons, chart or poster paper, magazine clippings, glue, scissors, etc. It is a good idea to show group members an example of the cyberbullying avoidance sign first so they will have an idea of what they are creating.
- Group members should choose their favorite anti-cyberbullying strategy from and create a sign with a title, picture, and the strategy sentence to inform their peers about cyberbullying.
- Decide as a group how to display the signs.

Here are some student examples of it…
Skill Work Example: Muscle Makeover

This strategy involves a clenching and releasing of the major muscle groups. It’s a muscle relaxation exercise that members can do anywhere!

1. Sit upright in your chair.
2. Scrunch up your entire face like you just smelled something really bad.. Hold for 5 seconds and then let your entire face relax into a calm expression. Repeat four times.
3. Clench your fists as tight as you can and hold for 5 seconds, then release. Repeat four times.
4. Push your arms out at about a 35 degree angle from your body, stretching them as far as you can. Hold for 5 seconds and then release to let your arms fall gently at your sides. Repeat 4 times.
5. Push the soles of your feet into the floor as hard as you can, holding onto your chair or desk for leverage. Hold for 5 seconds and release, relaxing your legs. Repeat four times.
6. Curl your toes inside your shoes as tight as you can, holding for 5 seconds. Then release your toes to lie flat in your shoes. Repeat four times.
Another Example of Skill Work
Session homework is important because it gets group members to apply the strategies that they’ve learned and practiced in group.

- **Homework Assignment** - give an activity for members to practice outside of group, related to session skill work.
- **Next Session Shareout** - discuss the homework assignment given in the former session.
In the Middle: Using Bibliotherapy in Group

• Use a book on the group topic.
• 5-10 minute read aloud in each session.
• Appropriate for any age.
• Ask discussion questions like:
  • What is the problem in the story? Tell me about a problem in your life.
  • What is the solution? What kinds of solutions do you like?
  • Does anyone in the story change? Tell me about someone you know who changed.
In the Middle: Bibliotherapy Favorites
In the Middle: A Bibliotherapy Resource for You!

- Letters to a Bullied Girl, by Olivia Gardner
- Oops! The Manner Guide for Girls, by Nancy Holyoke
- Stargirl por Jerry Spinelli (English/Edición en español)
- Habla/Speak por Laurie Halse Anderson (English/Edición en español)
- Amigas de Nunca Jamás por Kiki Thorpe
- Stress Can Really Get on Your Nerves, by Trevor Romain
- True or False? Tests Stink, by Trevor Romain
- Testing Miss Malarky, by Judy Finchler
- Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!, by Dr. Suess, Jack Prelutsky, and Lane Smith
- Hot Stuff to Help Kids Chill Out, by Jerry Wilde

- Tear Soup/Sopa de Lagrimas: A Recipe for Healing After Loss, by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen
- What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?, by Trevor Romain
- A Child’s/Teen’s Simple Guide Through Grief, by Alexis Cunningham
- I Miss You: A First Look at Death, by Pat Thomas
- I’ll Always Love You, by Hans Wilhelm
- When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief, by Marge Heegaard
- Fire in my Heart, Ice in my Veins: A Journal for Teenagers Experiencing a Loss, by Enid SamuelMontando Burbujas, por Lori Lite
- Cómo Superar los Miedos y Preocupaciones: Una Guía para Niños, por J. J. Crist
- Como Superar las Preocupaciones, por Daniel Grippo y R. W. Alley
In the Middle: Favorite Games

• Cool It!
• Stereotype Trashball
• Stress Demolition
• Bingo- Coping Skills, Feelings, Great Grades, etc.
• Jenga
• Reach for the Stars
• The Talking, Feeling, Thinking, Doing game
• Apples to Apples

*The first four are my own games that I created.*
Send out a note to remind group members to prepare and practice for the next group session by:

- Completing session homework.
- Applying the skill learned to everyday life.
- Can include their SMART goal.

EXAMPLE NOTE:

Good Morning!

Don’t forget to organize your school papers (placing them in your binder) and clean out your backpack tonight. Also, keep writing in your planner every day so you are ready for group tomorrow! Make sure you keep working on your goal of passing your class so you can talk about your success in group. Please arrive to group on time.

Sincerely, Ms. Lerner
Groups: Favorite Reads

- *Brief Counseling that Works* by Gerald Sklare
- *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*
- *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* by Gerald Corey
- *Get Your Group On! Multi-topic Small Group Counseling Guides* by Stephanie Lerner
- *Sending Students Soaring: A Trauma Informed Group Counseling Guide* by Stephanie Lerner
- *Braving the Wilderness* by Brene Brown
- *The Coddling of the American Mind* by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt
Ending Groups

Objective Four - The participant will analyze effective techniques for ending the group and continuing to support group members after the group ends.
Session Activities: In the End

Here is a list of ending activities- we will discuss each in the next slides...

- Warmup/Group Discussion
- Rules Review
- Finish Bibliotherapy Book
- Homework Shareout
- **Ending Announcement (if next session or current session is last)**
- Skill Work
- Main Ideas Review & Posttest
- Group Experience Evaluation
In the End: Main Idea Review & Posttest

- **Review**: Chart students’ most important points they learned in **group** → should reflect posttest statements.
- **Members complete posttest**: read posttest statements to them, no changing pretest answers.
In the End: Group Experience Evaluation

Students complete this evaluation (template in binder) in the last session to give us data on how helpful the group was to them and how we can make the group sessions better for future group members.
Many students grieve at the end of group and a party/award ceremony can mask these feelings, rather than using group skills to address and communicate about this grief.

- Other points to consider:
  - A healthy goodbye is important part of final session.
  - Parties can get pricey.
  - What do students want to do in final session?
In the End: Followup Session

Occurs 1-2 months after group ends to check on members’ experiences post group. Here are the followup session steps:

• Review rules.
• “What issues or recent situations do you want to discuss relating to the group topic?”
• Review main strategies related to group work.
• Have members practice strategies.
• Play a game to apply group topic information.
Data

The longer version of this presentation includes a 6 part data plan that you can find on the resources page of my website. You can also email me with group data questions.
Additional Thoughts: Modifications

Another resource for you to use back at your work place...

• If you are not picking up group members yourself right before group starts, have a plan for members who can’t remember to get themselves to group even though you just sent them a pass or reminded them.

• For these forgetful group members, I assign another member to pick them up→ask a member who has the same class or class nearby to bring the forgetful group member with them to group.

• If group members are too young to do some of the reading/writing activities: try reading aloud/dictating, use prewritten stems, shorten lists of strategies, etc.
Additional Thoughts: Resistant Group Members

Another resource for you to use back at your work place...

If the student does not want to learn the group skills, is disruptive to the group, or cannot follow the group rules, a PEG may not the appropriate intervention for them.

- **Other supports for resistant students** - individual, outside referrals, mentoring

- **When you encounter a resistant member:**
  1. Meet with them privately to explore the reason for resistance.
  2. Decide on a solution together → solution may be achieved through group modifications (partner work, pre-group reminders, shortened session, etc.) or individual sessions with more flexibility and privacy.
Let’s Review…

So, a brief review of the 4 main topics we covered in this presentation today:

• What makes a group *psychoeducational*
• The steps needed to *plan* your group
• Counseling *activities* for groups
• *Ending groups* and *future support* for group members

Now, think about if you have questions or comments about anything we didn’t cover because we’ll address that next…
Contact Info - Stay in Touch!

- WEBSITE: schoolcounselorstephanie.com
- INSTAGRAM: @schoolcounselorstephanie
- EMAIL: stephanie@schoolcounselorstephanie.com
- FACEBOOK:
  - The Mental Health Marketplace
  - The Great State of Texas School Counselors

Any questions?
Any questions?

If you’d like this presentation for your school or district, contact me at: stephanie@schoolcounselorstephanie.com

Also, remember to join our Facebook group at the link, Mental Health Marketplace, if you are interested in destigmatizing mental health issues!
Who is a...

- School Counselor?
- School Psychologist?
- Teacher?
- Administrator?
- Social Worker?
- Licensed Professional Counselor?
- Behavior Specialist?
- What Other Professions are Here?
Psychoeducational Groups Start with Advocacy!

Turn to your neighbor and tell them if you need less non-counseling duties in order to have time for running groups!

When your counseling office gets 67 schedule change requests the first day of school...

We out!
REMOVED INTERACTIVE WORK

OUR DVMS GROUPS SLIDE: Now, turn to your neighbor and tell them what kind of group you would like to try out!

GROUP NOTES SHEET SLIDE: Now turn to your neighbor and tell them the planning step that you think will be most challenging for you.
Shareout

Tell your neighbor what session activity you are most excited to try!
Take Away

Now, tell us one thing you will do related to group counseling when you get back to your campus or place of work!