

Ethical Decision-Making Process

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RECTH 5350

April 21, 2020

Scenario:

Meri is a group co-facilitator in a program that works with clients who have assertiveness issues. During one of the sessions, a female group member describes an incident in which she gave in to her teenage son's demands for money to go out with his friends, even though she could not afford it. In front of everyone, Meri confronts her, almost shouting, "Stop being such a wimpy pushover and stand up to him!"

Recognize a moral issue

The scenario above is happening at the interpersonal level and includes a few moral issues that we should recognize. Such as, the tone of voice that Meri is using, she is almost shouting at a group member. She also uses name calling by calling the group member a 'wimpy pushover' and is demanding the group member to stand up to her teenage son.

Begin your decision making:

To begin this process, we look at who is involved, or potentially involved, in this conflict. In this case Meri, the group co-facilitator, and the female group member are involved. Persons who could potentially be involved are the group member's son and the other group co-facilitator. We also look at who is affected by this. In this case, the female group member is greatly affected. It could possibly break the trust she had with the co-facilitator and ruin that therapeutic relationship that has been established. It could push her farther away from her goal of becoming more assertive. The co-facilitator who handled the scenario this way will be affected by the consequences of her actions. It could also affect the group member's son. The group member's self-esteem could be lowered to the point she never asserts herself in situations with her son, or she could become overly assertive to compensate from the co-facilitator's words.

Our obligations are to the group members to ensure their safety physically and emotionally. Also, to follow the guidelines and protocol of the facility.

Brainstorm Alternatives with Various Points of View

A. Instead of using negative words and tone of voice the co-facilitator could ask the group member a question like, “What made you feel obligated to give in to your son’s demands?” If the co-facilitator handled it this way then the trust between them would not be hindered. The group member would feel supported, and it could allow her to better reach her goals of not always giving into her son’s demands. This is a prime example of an obligation within a situation that would be both acceptable and beneficial to be terminated. Hopefully, she would find a healthier alternative as a means for interacting with her son and better build their relationship. Ultimately, the group member, her son, and other group members would benefit from this. Other group members would benefit from the discussion as it might also pertain to a situation they are dealing with. This would have been an ideal way to handle this scenario.

B. Another alternative is using the Rights Approach. This is the approach where we take into consideration the fact that everyone has a fundamental right to be respected and treated as a free, rational individual who is able to make their own decisions. Better communication skills and not shouting at the group members could be implemented here as well. This would benefit all of the group members by creating a more positive and supportive environment. In this approach the co-facilitator would still be disciplined appropriately. If this approach was taken, the client’s obligation to give in to her son’s demands may be reneged, making this approach ideal.

C. We could use a combination of the Rights Approach and the Fairness Approach. We could do this by using different words to not cause the group member to have increased self-

doubts, and to feel unintelligent. This will help the group members better reach their goals, especially when the goal is to become more assertive. The group member will benefit from this and in the long term, so will her son. Again, if this approach was taken, the client's obligation to give in to her son's demands may be reneged, making this approach ideal.

D. If we used a Utilitarian Approach in this scenario, Meri would be removed from working with this group member. Meri would also be written up for her actions. The trust that she has built with other group members who witnessed this incident could be negatively impacted. As for the group member directly involved, it could allow her to develop a new, more positive, relationship with another therapist. Ultimately, the group members would benefit from having Meri removed, Meri would learn a valuable lesson from it, and other facilitators would hopefully make the more ethical choice when in this situation, after seeing the consequences it had on Meri. If this approach was taken, the obligations that would be reneged are the facility's obligations to Meri, as well as to the client. Losing those obligations is not ideal, especially the facility's obligation to the client. The facility's number one priority should be the well-being of their clients. It would be responsible of the facility to remove Meri from working with the group members. However, it is not entirely ideal for the facility to discontinue their obligations to Meri completely.

E. Another, not ideal option, would be for the group member to decide to no longer share in the group, because they have lost trust for the co-facilitator. This will cause her to not reach her goal of becoming more assertive and can cause her to have a bad relationship with her son. If she is no longer sharing in a group she will not be getting the best treatment and it can negatively affect her well-being. This scenario would not benefit anyone. If this approach is

taken, the obligation lost would be the client's obligation to her treatment, which is obviously not ideal. We could not live with that if the client chose to discontinue her treatment.

F. The group member could decide to no longer continue their treatment. This falls back under the Rights Approach, and is not an ideal alternative. This would negatively affect the group member's relationship with her son and her own well-being. No one would benefit from this alternative approach. As RT's we have an obligation to our client's treatment and their treatment should not go away.

Look at each suggested alternative in view of obligations, ideals, and greatest good

The alternatives A-C really lend themselves to being the best options. They are ideal for all concerned because they allow for the group session to go a lot smoother and be much more beneficial to all parties involved. Meaning, the client, the therapist, the other group members, and maybe even the client's son. Everyone would get treated in a fair manner and feel good about what happened within that session. These scenarios do not lead to any dismissals of valuable and beneficial obligations, nor do they lead to the solidarity of any negative or harmful obligations. By seeing any one of these scenarios through, the client, the therapist, the facility, and the vital relationships between the three will be protected and nurtured, avoiding any disrupting or harmful events for these parties. They truly contribute to the greater good of the treatment process and well-being of this client, as well as others, and the professionals involved. Therefore, they lead to the best overall consequences and would be the best rule to live by.

Make your own decision

After considering everything above, we decided that a combination of alternative "B" and "C" would be the best. We would combine rights and fairness approaches, use calm voices,

use different words so that the client does not feel ashamed of themselves, and implement overall better communication skills. This will benefit the group member and better set her up for success in reaching her goals. The therapist would be disciplined accordingly and trained on how to better handle these scenarios. We believe that the people we respect would approve this decision and that it is absolutely a good choice.