

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 1

“I really can’t seem to get my doctor to listen to me. She keeps telling me to look at the positives of the medications I’m taking. She doesn’t seem to understand that the side effects are absolutely ruining all the other aspects of my life that I never had problems in before. I want to change doctors but I’m not sure if they are all like this.”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 2

“It is so depressing to see how my life has changed. I feel like I will never be a functional, normal person again. I’ve lost so much time and I know I can’t get it back.”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 3

“Doesn’t anyone ever feel like the whole world is just as sick as we are? I find that if I could just convince everyone to listen to me, everyone would be able to understand how I feel.”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 4

“I have all these feelings that keep overwhelming me. I’m sad about my lost relationships. I’m angry at the people in my life who have deserted me, I’m confused about my future, if I even have one, I am demoralized by society when I see anyone in the media misrepresenting my illness, I’m frustrated with a system that doesn’t seem to want me to get well, I’m...”

Continue until the facilitator stops you...

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 5

“My life has been so hard. I really feel like my mother tried her best but she had her own problems. My father was so busy working that he only saw us about 8 hours a week and that was usually when we were eating or going to bed. My sister was sick when she was little and had to go live with my aunt. My other problems really began when I was five and was told that I had a learning disability. This really affected my self-esteem...”

Continue talking about your past...

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 6

“Yesterday my mother called. I had been having a really good relationship with her but she has now started trying to encourage me to get married and have children. I have tried expressing my reluctance to this but she is so pushy and insistent.”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 7

“I can’t seem to be able to sleep these days. It’s really odd because I haven’t changed my medicine. I need to find out why but my next doctor’s appointment isn’t for another three weeks and I’m afraid I could lose my job by then.”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 8

“I just started a new job and I am so excited. On the other hand I am terrified. What if I can't do all my work, or my symptoms start showing up and people feel uncomfortable? I hate having everyone look at me like I'm crazy. But I really want to work and be part of society.”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 9

“I am going through a divorce with my spouse of ten years. We do okay until my symptoms start coming back and then she can't handle it and wants out of the relationship. Once things get better she wants me back but I can't keep doing this. I need her when I'm at my lowest points. She wants to try again but I can't do it, yet I can't seem to say “no” either. She keeps calling and showing up and being so accommodating, but I don't think it will last.”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 10

“My children are now grown and starting to show signs of their own mental illnesses. I’m really afraid for them. I’ve been trying to share my experiences to help them see their own problems but they are completely in denial.”

Structure Exercise 3: Principles of Support

Dialogue 1: Criticism, Griping, Negativity

Three group members role play people who are complaining about how frustrated they are by the day-to-day difficulties of their illnesses.

Role player 1 of 3: “My illness makes me feel unmotivated. Maybe I’m just lazy, but I don’t feel like getting out of bed half the time.”

Get a negative gripe session going.

Structure Exercise 3: Principles of Support

Dialogue 1: Criticism, Gripping, Negativity

Three group members role play people who are complaining about how frustrated they are by the day-to-day difficulties of their illnesses.

Role player 2 of 3: “I hate taking my medications because I always seem to get dizzy and light-headed, and my mouth is always dry.”

Get a negative gripe session going.

Structure Exercise 3: Principles of Support

Dialogue 1: Criticism, Griping, Negativity

Three group members role play people who are complaining about how frustrated they are by the day-to-day difficulties of their illnesses.

Role player 3 of 3: “Nobody seems to understand that sometimes I want to stay apart from my family. I don’t want to be forced to eat and do activities with them all the time”

Get a negative gripe session going.

Structure Exercise 3: Principles of Support

Dialogue 2: A Common Experience

A single role-player talks about how mental illness cuts people off from the world. (1½-2 minutes).

Talk about how you feel totally isolated and alone. Talk about how some members of your family and some friends “don’t want to talk about it.”
Reveal that even your spouse seems distant when you get symptomatic.
Relate how the system ignores your calls and pleas for help.

Structure Exercise 3: Principles of Support

Dialogue 3: People in the group face illness issues that make them feel powerless

Two group members complain about problems related directly to having a mental illness.

Role player 1 of 2: “These meds I have to take make me feel powerless. I can’t control the side effects and I have to keep switching meds because none of them seem to work,” etc.

Get a negative gripe session going.”

Structure Exercise 3: Principles of Support

Dialogue 3: People in the group face illness issues that make them feel powerless

Two group members complain about problems related directly to having a mental illness.

Role player 2 of 2: “I feel out of control when my emotions run away with me. I’ll get really up or really down and have impulses to spend money I don’t have, or, if I’m depressed, urges to hurt myself,” etc.

Structure Exercise 4: Emotional Stages

Role Play 1: Confusion and Denial in Stage 1

Do not disclose the title.

Role player 1: Say that you're still confused about your diagnosis, that sometimes you don't feel mentally ill at all. Wonder out loud if you're in denial and just don't want to face reality. Maybe you could stop taking your meds and everything would still be okay.

Continue in this role as the facilitator goes through the Structure.

Structure Exercise 4: Emotional Stages

Role Play 2: Resentment and Anger in Stage 2

Do not disclose the title.

Role player 2: Say that you are very angry – angry at yourself for not being “normal,” at your relatives for not understanding you, angry at the system that doesn’t work, angry at the whole world. Be really mad and fed up.

Continue in this role as the facilitator goes through the Structure.

Structure Exercise 4: Emotional Stages

Role Play 3: Grief and Understanding in Stages 2-3

Do not disclose the title.

Role player 3: Say that it's your third psychotic break and that you wake up every day with the worst feeling. It's certain you have schizophrenia; you just don't know if you can bear to face it. Appear very sad.

Continue in this role as the facilitator goes through the Structure.

Processes Exercise: Tough Topics

Role Play 1: You have problems with excessive alcohol use and recently got arrested with a DWI (Driving While Intoxicated) offense.

Do not disclose the title.

“I have a dual diagnosis – alcohol abuse along with my mental illness. I’ve really been trying recently to stay sober, but last Saturday night I was out with some friends I should have stayed away from. We went to one bar after another and I fell off the wagon big time. I knew I shouldn’t drive home, but I was too drunk to think rationally. So, I got behind the wheel and nearly hit another driver! A police officer pulled me over, gave me a Breathalyzer test, and now I have to appear in court for a DWI.” Be ready to say a bit more about this in the discussion that follows. Continue in this role as the facilitator goes through the Structure.

Processes Exercise 1: Tough Topics

Role Play 2: You have been struggling with depression, and have a suicidal episode.

Do not disclose the title.

“Last Thursday I checked into a hotel room and – I was feeling so horrible I sat with all of my meds in my hands for a couple hours. I couldn’t stand my depression another day. I was so terrified... Deep down I don’t think I wanted to die, but the depression and the despair were so awful, killing myself seemed like to only way to escape the pain. Finally, I realized that I couldn’t go through with it and drove home. But the thoughts haven’t completely left me. I’m still struggling.”

Processes Exercise 1: Tough Topics

Role Play 3: You became manic and were nasty toward children.

Do not disclose the title.

“I’m so ashamed of how I treated my kids the other day. I hadn’t been taking my mood stabilizer because I missed my highs – big mistake, because I was really getting manic and irritable. They were fighting over something while I was trying to make dinner and in a sudden burst of anger I yelled at both of the kids – much louder than I had intended to. I really felt out of control and I was afraid I would become violent and start hurting them.”

Processes Exercise 2: Group Wisdom

Role Play 1: A member experiences issues with confidentiality and advanced directives for the first time.

Do not disclose the title.

“I was in the hospital recently. My family kept coming to visit while I was still feeling terrible and I didn’t want to see anyone yet. It would have been okay for the hospital to inform that I was there, but they ALSO could have been told that it was my wish not to have visitors until I was feeling up to seeing people. This makes me really worried that if I’m in the hospital again and the doctors want to give me electroshock but I don’t want that, will they do it anyway? Is there any way for my wishes to prevail?” Be ready to say a bit more about this in the discussion that follows.

Processes Exercise 2: Group Wisdom

Role Play 2: A seriously ill member can't get into the hospital.

Do not disclose the title.

“Things are going downhill fast. The voices are really loud, saying awful things. I'm afraid to leave the house alone – that's why my friend brought me. I'm starting to wonder if my food is being poisoned, so I'm kinda afraid to eat. My family called the crisis team but they said if I am not actively “homicidal or suicidal” they can't take me to the hospital. What do I have to do? Starve until I get the help I need? This is a horrible way to treat people who need hospitalization!” Be ready to say a bit more about this in the discussion that follows.

Processes Exercise 2: Group Wisdom

Role Play 3: A member is frustrated because he or she can't get help from the system.

Do not disclose the title.

“The system is sabotaging everything they do to help me. In spite of all my problems for a while I refused to go to the clinic because I didn't care what happened to me. Finally, I saw I needed ongoing care, but now no one at the agency is offering any help. Since sometimes I can't get it together to actually go to the program they seem to think “no-show” means I don't want help. They keep scheduling me for 9:00 a.m.! How am I supposed to get there so early? I can't get them to recognize my needs.” Be ready to say a bit more about this in the discussion that follows.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 1

“I don’t know what to think. Did I miss something? Am I somehow responsible for this? Every time I end up in the hospital, I feel this attitude from the staff... like I’m to blame for what happened to me. They make me feel so guilty.”

Structure/Process to Use: Principles of Support

This comment relates directly to guilt/blame.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 2

“Well! I came here to talk about my problems, which are considerable and find that you are limiting the time people can talk. I thought this was a Support Group, not some business meeting! You’re doing this all wrong.”

Structure/Process to Use: Group Guidelines

A member of the group is confrontational, disrespectful.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 3

“I just don’t think there’s any solution. I’ve been so down lately I can’t take care of my apartment and my landlord is about to throw me out. I keep getting into the situation of having to look for another place, and then get thrown out all over again. And I don’t want to live in a group home. I want to live by myself and be independent – but I’m ready to throw in the towel and give up.”

Structure/Process to Use: Problem Solving

This person is at the “end of the rope” and needs some new options to consider.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 4

“My medications are really frustrating me. I’m just out of patience because it seems like I’ve finally gotten some control over my symptoms, but these meds are starting to make me gain weight and on top of that, I can hardly get up in the morning because I’m so sedated. This really doesn’t help my self-esteem.”

Structure/Process to Use: Group Wisdom

Everyone has had their patience tried and can talk about constructive ways to handle it.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 5

“I’m about at the end of my rope. No matter how much I want a better social life, nothing seems to work. I have no real friends, hardly ever go out, and my days are so empty. I want to have friends and even a love relationship, but I feel so socially inept and too depressed to go out most of the time. And my self-esteem is rock-bottom.”

Structure/Process to Use: Problem Solving

This person has “tried everything” and “nothing works.” He or she is discouraged.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 6

“You know, I’m beginning to think that my diagnosis is probably right. I feel so depressed and can’t even function. But my spouse won’t face it... He or she says it’s just laziness and that I should get off my butt and get a job.”

Structure/Process to Use: Emotional Stages

This person is coming out of Stage 1 and the spouse is still in Stage 1.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 7

“I went on a job interview and it went pretty well. I even thought they might offer me the job. Then the woman who interviewed me gave me an application to fill out. One of the questions asked if I’d ever been in psychiatric treatment. I didn’t want to lie, but I was pretty sure I wouldn’t get hired if I told the truth. Do companies have the right to hire or fire on that basis – or even ask in the first place?”

Structure/Process to Use: Group Wisdom

An encounter with resume gaps/employment quandaries is a common experience for group members.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 8

“I don’t see why you’re complaining about what sounds like minor depression. I have psychotic symptoms – I’ve heard threatening voices and thought people were trying to kill me! You have it good compared to me.”

Structure/Process to Use: Group Guidelines

This person is not being very empathetic.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 9

“I had a chance to work part-time in my dad’s business, but I couldn’t even respond when my parents suggested it to me. I just don’t want to do anything. Just getting up every day is about all I can handle. I feel so worn out.”

Structure/Process to Use: Principles of Support

This is most likely illness related behavior (lethargy, lack of motivation).

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 10

“Just lately, I’ve been feeling like I’m finally handling my illness pretty well. I know how things work at the mental health center and how hard trying to get through all the paperwork to get services can be. I really wish there was some way I could help other people learn what I have already so they don’t feel so alone and confused.”

Structure/Process to Use: Emotional Stages

This person is relating acceptance and expressing Stage 3 feelings of desire for action.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 11

“I’m trying to go back to work part-time, since I want to supplement my SSI – but it’s tough going. I’m frustrated because it’s so hard for me to get up and make it to the job on time and I easily get paranoid that my coworkers are talking about me.”

Structure/Process to Use: Principles of Support

This is an example that points to the principle of aiming for better coping skills.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 12

“Last Thursday I checked into a hotel room and – I was feeling so horrible I sat with all of my meds in my hands for a couple hours. I couldn’t stand my depression another day. I was so terrified... Deep down I don’t think I wanted to die, but the depression and the despair were so awful, killing myself seemed like to only way to escape the pain. Finally, I realized that I couldn’t go through with it and drove home. But the thoughts haven’t completely left me. I’m still struggling.”

Structure/Process to Use: Tough Topics

This person is relating a traumatic event.

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 1

Say that you are very angry – angry at yourself, at your relatives, angry at the system that doesn't work, angry at the whole world. Be really angry and fed up.

Emotional Stages

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 2

Talk about having to be hospitalized against your will, how terrible it was to be placed in that position, how you fear that there is a permanent strain on your relationship with your family.

Tough Topics

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 3

Get back into your saga. Be the person who can't stop talking about all the stuff that happened in the past.

Group Guidelines

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 4

Say that you're still confused about your diagnosis, that sometimes you don't feel ill at all. In fact, maybe you should stop taking your medication. Wonder out loud if you're in denial and just don't want to face reality.

Emotional Stages

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 5

Complain and criticize – say that your relative scolds and nags you all the time, that he or she says you are totally unmanageable, and is generally rude to you, etc. Be really negative.

Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 6

Relate that last week you were feeling so horrible that you sat with all your meds in your hands for a couple hours. That you couldn't stand your depression another day. That you were so terrified that killing yourself seemed like the only way to escape the pain. Finally, you realized that you couldn't go through with it, but the thoughts haven't completely left you – far from it.

Tough Topics

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 7

Talk about how your relatives refuse to educate themselves about mental illness and seem to blame you for your condition instead of helping you to cope. Sound really discouraged.

Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 8

Talk about how awful everything is, how everything is going wrong, how no one knows what to do about anything, how terrible it is to think this situation will last the rest of your life - awfulize, awfulize, awfulize.

Group Wisdom

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 9

Talk about feeling alone, how shocking it is to realize how many people “fall away” when you have a mental illness, how totally isolated your life has become.

Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 10

Be the person who “knows it all,” has all the pat answers, who thinks there is only one way to do things, who is condescending towards others in the group.

Group Guidelines

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 11

Say that there's something you don't understand. You'd like to try a new anti-depressant because the one you're on just doesn't seem to be working any more, but your doctor won't listen to you.

Group Wisdom

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 12

Be the person whose pain is worse and troubles are worse because you don't respond to treatment.

Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 13

Talk about how bad your sleep is. Claim to not be sleeping at all and be defensive about it. Get a little agitated about how bad your sleep is. Repeat over and over again how you have tried everything and just cannot sleep.

Group Wisdom

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 14

Talk about wanting to date. Talk about enrolling in a dating service and answering personal ads. Talk about how lonely you've been and how you want to have a partner. Talk about how this affects your life day to day.

Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 15

Talk very fast and a little loud about how you want to enroll in a part-time education program (you choose the subject) in addition to returning to work next week. Explain that you've been out on leave for 3 months and how you plan to go to school and work once your leave is up at the end of this week.

Group Wisdom

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 16

Talk about how worried you are that you may not come out of an episode that you feel coming on. Talk about how you fear getting “stuck” in an episode of depression and how you worry that the episode won’t end and you won’t find your way out of it.

Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 17

Talk about looking for a job and getting an interview. Talk about how anxious you get at the thought of interviewing. Talk about your concerns about returning to work. Be equally fearful of getting the job as not getting it.

Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 18

Talk about how fatigued you feel. Talk about getting enough rest but still feeling as if you do not have the energy to be equal to the tasks of cleaning house, doing the dishes, catching up on laundry, etc. Talk about how guilty this makes you feel.

Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 19

Get back into your saga. Be the person who can't stop talking about all the stuff that happened in the past.

Group Guidelines

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 20

Talk about having no feelings, about feeling kinda “like a robot” and just going through the motions of living life. Describe how lively you used to be before you got sick and how you just can’t seem to feel anything like you once did.

Emotional Stages

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 21

Tell the group how tired you are of sitting here week after week and listening to people whine and whine about the same thing over and over again. Tell folks they should handle their illnesses more like you do. Act as if you have all the answers.

Group Guidelines

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 22

Talk about the fact that you are wearing an ankle bracelet and that you were only let out of your house tonight because you are coming to a support group. Be very vague about why you are in trouble with the law. Complain about how home confinement is really boring. Sound really sinister.

Tough Topics

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 23

Talk about the latest in a series of medical problems that you've brought to group every week for the past 6 months. Mention every problem in great detail. Go on and on about the details. Talk about how misunderstood you feel and how nothing is working. Say you feel like you are out of options.

Problem Solving

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 24

Tell the group that you are starting to feel like you have begun to make sense of your life as a person who lives with mental illness but that your spouse/partner keeps dwelling on the way you were before you got sick. Express your frustration at this “mismatch” and how much you wish he or she would “just get it.”

Emotional Stages

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 25

Talk about having gained a lot of weight on the medication you are taking and how well the medication is working for you. Express frustration at the “trade-offs” you have to make in order to feel mentally healthy. Talk about how worried you are about your physical health.

Group Wisdom

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 26

Say how embarrassed you are to be coming to a group for people with mental illness and how you'd just die of shame if anyone found out you were a member. Say that you are different from everyone else here because you "just have depression."

Group Guidelines

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 27

Be really down and discouraged. Talk about how hard you've worked at your recovery and how you seem to have hit a wall. Explain that your medications aren't working as well as you'd like and that you're afraid you're not going to find ones that work better. Sound really disheartened.

Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 28

Be a total jerk. Challenge the facilitator: ask what makes him or her so special and why he or she thinks he or she should be the leader. Tell the group you'd make a better facilitator. Ask the group to join a group you're going to start.

Group Guidelines

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 29

Talk about how difficult it has been to find a dentist that accepts your insurance. Be outraged that your dental and other medical care is substandard now that you are disabled. Ask the group for ideas on how to get what you need.

Group Wisdom

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 30

Talk about your upcoming family reunion and how apprehensive you feel about going. Tell the group that you don't know how to handle questions like, "What do you do?" and "Do you have any kids yet?" Get really sad as you talk about this. Start crying and stop talking.

Emotional Stages