

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 1

“I can’t seem to get my nurse to listen to me. He keeps telling me to look at all the positives of the medications I’m taking. He doesn’t get that the side effects suck. How do I get him to listen to me?”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 2

“It is so depressing to see how my life has changed. I feel like I’ll 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 I talked to my mother. I’ve been having a good relationship with her but now she’s started pushing me to take classes and plan for my release so I can live the way she wants me to live out there. I’ve told her that I don’t want what she wants but she is so pushy.”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 7

“I can’t seem to sleep these days. It’s weird because I haven’t had any of my meds changed. I need to find out why but I’m not scheduled to see the psychiatrist for another month and I’m afraid I could get worse by then.”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 8

“I’m scheduled for release soon and I am so excited. On the other hand I am really worried. What if I can’t get a job, or I do get a job and my symptoms start showing up? And then what if that affects my work? I hate having everyone look at me like I’m crazy. But I really want to work and be a part of society.”

Structure Exercise 2: Strategy Practice

Role Play 9

“My relationship with my girlfriend has suffered since I ended up here. We do okay but she’s worried about my mania coming back and her not being able to handle it. When things are good she wants me but I can’t keep doing this. I need her when I’m at my lowest. She wants to keep trying but I can’t do it, yet I can’t seem to say ‘no’ either.”

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 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, 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 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 away from others. I don’t want to be forced to hang around with other people 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 I’m emotional. I’ll get really up or really down and have impulses to borrow commissary that I don’t have the money to pay back, or if I’m depressed, I have 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 1: Hot Potatoes

Role Play 1: You have problems with excessive alcohol use and recently got in trouble because of it.

Do not disclose the title.

“I have problems with alcohol. I really want to stay sober but last week one of the guys on my unit had a batch of hooch. One at a time the other guys were going to hit it. They all looked at me and I ended up going in and getting some. I got caught coming out of the men’s room just as a correctional officer was doing rounds. He smelled the hooch and I got busted. Now I have a major report and I’m going to end up getting put in lock up.” *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: Hot Potatoes

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

Do not disclose the title.

“Last Thursday I was sitting in my cell. I had about two weeks’ worth of meds saved that I had cheeked. I also thought about hanging myself with sheets. I couldn’t stand my depression another day. Killing myself seemed like the only way to escape the pain. Finally I realized I couldn’t go through with it so I fell asleep. But the lack of hope hasn’t gone away totally. I’m still struggling.”

Processes Exercise 1: Hot Potatoes

Role Play 3: You became manic and almost became violent towards others.

Do not disclose the title.

“I’ve been cheeking my meds because I missed my highs – big mistake, because I was really getting manic and irritable. I heard some people talking loudly during dinner and in a sudden burst of anger I yelled at both of them – much louder than I 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 for the first time.

Do not disclose the title.

“My parents called the institution and ended up being put in touch with my mental health provider. My mom said that my provider talked about how I was doing and the times I was in mental health observation and a lot of other things about my mental health. It made me worried that my provider would feel it was her right to share this information with them, like she was in control more than me or even the doctor. What if she decides I need a change in my meds? I feel like she can do whatever she wants and I have no control over it.”

Processes Exercise 2: Group Wisdom

Role Play 2: A seriously ill member can't get treatment.

Do not disclose the title.

“Things are going downhill really fast. The voices are really loud, saying awful things. I'm afraid to leave my cell, so a friend had to walk me to group tonight. I'm starting to wonder if my food is poisoned so I'm afraid to eat. I sent a kite to mental health but they just told me to tell them if it gets worse. What do I have to do? Starve until I get help? This is a horrible way to treat people who need help.”

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.

"I have a parole board hearing coming up. I've been before them twice and they denied me for the same reason. I've done the groups and classes that they want. I'm scared about going up and getting denied again. Even worse, no one seems to want to help me because they've gone through hearings eight or nine times and they think I'm being sensitive because I only went through this twice."

Be ready to say a bit more about this in the discussion that follows.

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 1

“Every time I end up in mental health observation, I feel this attitude from the staff, like I’m to blame for what happened to me. They make me feel guilty. And then when I come out, I feel the same judgement from everyone else, like I’m weak. I don’t know what to think.”

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 I have a lot of, and now you’re 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

“The longer I’m in here, the more I find myself sliding into behavior that is going to cause me problems. It’s so easy to get caught up with one group or another and lose my identity. I know what I should be doing but find it extremely difficult to say no to others. Can anyone in the group who has been here for a while tell me how to survive but not lose touch with myself?”

Structure/Process to Use: Group Wisdom

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 4

“My medications are frustrating me. I’m 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 tired. 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

“My granddaughter was seven years old when I was arrested. She’s 25 now. I spoke to her when she was growing up and she always asked me when I was coming home. Now when I call her she’s either too busy or out. She has her friends, she’s grown up, has a daughter of her own. How do I start a relationship with her when I get out?”

Structure/Process to Use: Group Wisdom

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 6

“You know, I’m beginning to think that my diagnosis is probably right. I hear voices a lot and that affects my mood and ability to function – that’s what got me here in the first place. But my mom won’t face it...she says I’m just fooling around and that I should stop blaming my problems on other things.”

Structure/Process to Use: Emotional Stages

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

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 7

“I’m going to be released soon but I worry about getting a job. My record’s going to make it hard enough, but what about my diagnosis? What if the interviewers ask if I have a psych history? I don’t want to lie. 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

Group members may have experience looking for jobs with the added difficulties of having a criminal history and a mental health diagnosis.

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 friend released from prison after serving 21 years. After he was out for about nine months, I heard he was found face down in a drug den from a heroin overdose. While he was in prison, he spoke about his religion day and night and how it helped him and others. He had a really positive attitude, but somehow when he was released, he slipped. I’m getting near my release date and I’m scared. If it happened to him, will it happen to me?”

Structure/Process to Use: Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 2: Hearing Cues

Role Play 10

“Lately, I’ve been feeling like I’m handling my illness pretty well. I stay informed about my treatment plan but I know how hard it can be to figure all of this out. I really wish there was some way I could help other people learn what I did 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 just got into one of the work programs....but it’s tough. I’m frustrated because it’s so hard for me to get through the day and to do the jobs I have to do. I get paranoid that the other people 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 week I tied my sheets into a noose. I was ready to end it. I stared at it for what must have been hours. I don’t think I want to die, but living hurts so much. I undid the sheets and just went to sleep, but I can’t stop thinking about doing it. I keep wondering if today’s the day.”

Structure/Process to Use: Hot Potatoes

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 the experience of being arrested when you were manic, how terrible it was to be placed in that situation, how you fear that there is a permanent strain on your relationships outside, how you don't know how you're going to make it through the rest of your time here.

Hot Potatoes

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 when your relative visits/calls, he/she scolds and nags you all the time 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 cheeked meds in your hands for a couple hours. That you couldn't stand your depression another day. Finally, you realized that you couldn't go through with it, but the thoughts haven't completely left you – far from it.

Hot Potatoes

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’re incarcerated, 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 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 the nurse 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 how lonely you've been and how you miss your significant other on the outside. 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 when you're released, you're going to apply for college in addition to returning to work. Talk about how your time incarcerated doesn't matter and you're ready to tackle everything.

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 your upcoming parole board hearing. Talk about how anxious you get at the thought of appearing in front of the board. Talk about your concerns about being released. Be equally fearful of being granted parole as not being granted parole.

Principles of Support

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 18

Talk about how tired you feel. Talk about getting enough rest but still feeling as if you don't have the energy to do anything. Talk about how you want to be better about practicing your religion but can't because you're so tired. 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 it's your second time being arrested during a manic episode. Talk about how ashamed and confused you are and that you don't know if you can take another sentence. Sound very frantic and depressed.

Hot Potatoes

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 23

Talk about how angry you are that you have this thing called “a mental illness.” Talk about how unfair it is that your life turned out this way and that you miss the days when could rely on having predictable moods and reactions.

Emotional Stages

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 getting proper medical care is, especially since your back's been hurting. Be outraged that the medical staff is not paying attention to you. Ask the group for ideas on how to get what you need.

Group Wisdom

Cue Exercise 3: Using Cues

Role Play 30

Talk about how your parent, who is your only source of support, is in bad health and not expected to live much longer. There is nothing you can do to help since you will not be getting out. Tell the group that you can't handle it when other people begin talking about their parents. Get really sad and stop talking (or start crying).

Emotional Stages