

The Development of a Body Image and Normal Eating Group for Adolescents in an Eating Disorders Service

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Background

- Body image disturbance and disordered eating behaviours are core components of several eating disorders and are associated with a worse prognosis¹.
- Additionally, psychoeducation and education on nutrition are essential components of eating disorders treatment².
- A group intervention was developed combining these 2 components as an add-on to NICE concordant treatment.
- The group eligibility criteria included age 13-18 years, healthy weight-for-height, relatively stable eating disorder psychopathology and an allocated care coordinator.

Aim

- To outline the development and subsequent modification of a Body Image and Normal Eating group for adolescents that was delivered within the East London Community Eating Disorders Team for Children and Young People.

Method

A scoping review, service user consultation and review of existing CBT manuals led to the development of standardised group intervention materials³.

The PDSA cycle with mixed methodology was used to adapt the group following each group intervention.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the group was further adapted to be delivered virtually via Cisco Webex to a group of 10-12 participants.

Focus groups with thematic analysis were conducted on the final version⁴. The 4 most recent groups were evaluated using the Goal Session Rating Scales⁵ (GSRS) after each session and the Shape Concern Subscale of the Adolescent Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-A)⁶ at baseline and end of treatment.

Results

Initial Group Development

"It would be helpful to do one day on Body Image and one day on Normal Eating"

"The discussions around normal eating helped me to challenge unhelpful body image beliefs"

"The 2 topics are interconnected"

- A scoping literature review and service-user consultation identified body image concerns as an acceptable group therapy option³.
- In order to provide the opportunity to practise social eating and eating out, the group was modified to a 2-day workshop focusing on Body Image and Normal Eating.
- The addition of Normal Eating materials were well received by attendees.

Focus Group of Final Version

- Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the group was held virtually and consisted of 7 sessions held over 3 consecutive weeks. A formal service evaluation was conducted by Syrpa (2020) under supervision of Dr E. Cini and this identified the following main themes:

(i) Initial concerns and feelings about the group: Meeting new people, being in a group setting and sharing personal experiences.

(ii) Group characteristics and organisation: Introduction to the group, group set-up and group content.

(iii) Social support: Having a safe space, meeting people with similar problems and helpful group dynamics.

(iv) Overall experience and positive outcomes.

(v) Future recommendations: Advice for future group materials and attendees.

"My experience of the group was amazing due to the positive outcomes of the group; I looked forward to it every session."

"I feel like we learned from each other within the activities, and we helped each other."

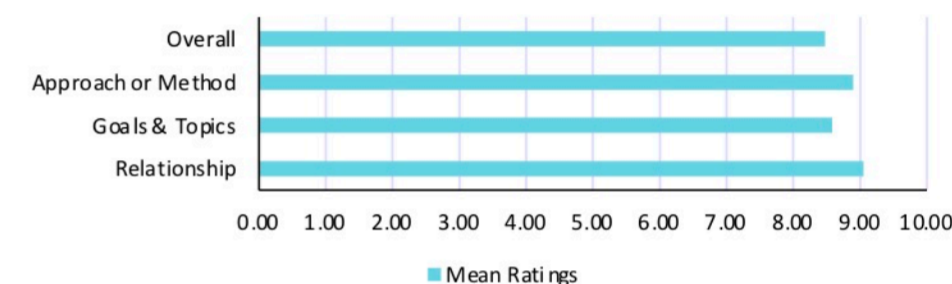
"I think it is good to touch on both body image and normal eating at the same time because they are so close when you have an eating disorder. They are almost interchangeable."

"I think altogether it was really helpful. I think that every little bit of the workshop helped. I'm not completely fixed, but it made me feel much more reassured."

Quantitative Group Outcomes

- The last 4 groups were evaluated using a GSRS, which revealed that all four categories received very good ratings: Relationship (M=9.05, SD=1.39), Goals & Topics (M=8.58, SD=1.87), Approach or Method (M=8.90, SD=1.77) and Overall (M=8.47, SD=2.14).

Group Session Rating Scale (n=56)



- Paired samples t-test between revealed no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-treatment scores of the Shape Concerns Subscale of the EDE-A, $t(14)=1.08, p=0.15$.

Conclusions

- The group intervention was well received.
- There were no statistically significant improvements on shape concerns, which could be due to the small sample size. This could also reflect that the skills taught in the group take time to be implemented (i.e., longer than 3 weeks) before one's shape concerns improve.
- Further studies with a larger sample size and a longer follow-up period would be recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of this group intervention.
- In order to capture the effectiveness of future groups, we would suggest that groups include setting individual goals at baseline and rating these pre- and post-treatment.
- We would recommend that future groups are run virtually to increase access to this group.

References

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- ⁴ Syrpa, S. (2020). Service Evaluation of a Body Image Group delivered by East London Community Eating Disorder Service for Children and Young People (EL-CEDS-CYP).
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- ⁶ Carter, J. C., Stewart, D. A., & Fairburn, C. G. (2001). Eating disorder examination questionnaire: norms for young adolescent girls. *Behaviour research and therapy*, 39(5), 625-632.