

## How a BP group can be used as part of the treatment process with patients diagnosed with a psychotic disorder.

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Case history of a patient diagnosed as having Schizophrenia.

He has been in weekly individual therapy along with sporadic BPgroup work with my husband, Michael, since 1998. He joined my established, advanced, ongoing BP group 2 years ago and that is what I will be reporting on.

Richard is a 42 yr. old single male diagnosed with Schizophrenia and a secondary diagnosis of OCD. His symptoms started when he was a senior in HS and while in college he had 2 psychotic breaks with hospitalizations lasting 2 and 5 weeks. He eventually graduated with a BA in music, has not been hospitalized for 20 years, and lives at home with his supportive mother.

Significant event in his childhood- when Richard was 12 years old his father committed suicide in the family home at the age of 38. Richard had lived with an alcoholic, rageaholic, self-medicating bipolar father who terrified him. There is a strong family history of mental illness on father's side. His mother was passive and very afraid of Dad and unable to protect Richard and is brother from Dad's rage and mood swings.

Currently Richard is stabilized with medication, Clozorel and Wellbutrin. He has never married and has no children. He successfully works as a music teacher in a school and performs with different musical groups. He recently wrote and produced a play, and writes short stories.

When he started group his overall goal was to change his view of himself from being sick to being normal, to feel more confident, happy, and not be socially isolated.

He presented himself as quiet, shy but insightful and afraid to feel his rage. He talked openly about his illness, his fear of going too far and becoming crazy like his father, and how much he hated and feared his illness. I was very aware of his illness and was careful not to push him with his group work; I let him determine how much and how far he could go. At first he would only touch on his anger on Level III and then he would back off. He felt supported by the group's compassion for having to deal with his illness,

he gave the other members a new perspective on their own problems and they had a lot of respect for Richard.

Eventually, he felt safe enough to feel and release his kill rage for Dad killing himself and leaving him alone at the age of 12, with his younger brother and mother. He felt Dad's rage in himself, his terrorist, the part of him that was like Dad. He also worked on his fear of his sexual feelings. He had very negative introjects re. having witnessed the sexual aggression that Dad demonstrated toward Mom. He treated her like she was an object with no emotions.

He worked on his hearing negative voices when he was overly stressed and tired. He did this by learning to set boundaries and say "NO" to his boss and Mom, and to work on giving up being the caretaker, nice guy. His voices would occasionally appear due to his anxiety before a performance. When he felt them coming he would talk to himself using the positive affirmations he learned in group attitude work, "I'm Ok and I can do it, I have my own good voices now". He reports never hearing voices in group or workshops.

He works on facing the pain of his life instead of running from it- the shame he lived with when he returned to school after his Dad's suicide. His guilt for taking his anger out on his younger brother by fighting with him. For several weeks he worked on "I am choosing light over darkness, I have a good life, I can make my own decisions, I am not my father, I am taking on my demons".

He is a very motivated patient because his wish to be as normal as possible is constantly pushing him to work and to change. He often works on how much he hates his illness. His OCD which manifested itself as a fear of germs and was causing continuous hand washing, has decreased to the point that it can be considered in remission.

His most recent significant change came after he attended a 2-day Workshop led by Skip, on Deepening Mat Work. He learned to work with the Five Phases of Mat Work, developed by Skip and Marilyn Ellis. He reports that at the WS he learned how to take in love and affection, and release emotions on a deeper level than ever before. His comfort level increased around physical closeness with women and he reports being more connected to his body and the group members. Now, the group members are asking him to work and he is seen as one of the experienced members, he is more assertive

in group; is self directed, smiles, is more animated, very insightful and gives helpful feedback.

Currently he is working on wanting to have a close relationship with a woman and working to change his negative introjects: “I can be close to someone and not be trampled on, my sexual feelings are OK; I am not you Dad, and I am a sexual man.” He recently realized his biggest fear re. being in a relationship with a woman is that he would become rageful and abusive, like his Dad was toward his Mom.

By being in group he is able to get his basic needs met and thus function at a much higher level. He was asked to summarize what the group has done for him and this is what he wrote;

- 1) BP Group provides a frequent opportunity for connection; schizophrenics often suffer lives of isolation due to the difficulties of their symptoms.
- 2) BP Group can relieve stress through emotional release, thus decreasing stress-induced hallucination and anxieties.
- 3) BP Group can combat the flat affect common to schizophrenics by bringing emotion to the surface.
- 4) By including schizophrenics into groups with clients not suffering this illness, it can provide a sense of “normalcy”, a sense of being “just like everyone else”; many schizophrenics wish only to live in a healthy, mainstream fashion.