GENERATIONS HELPING DOROT GENERATIONS HELPING

SESSION 5

# Difficult Situations in Trauma Support Groups

## What makes this situation difficult?

*Choose all that apply.*

*If there is ever a physical safety, legal or health concern, please refer to DOROT policy.*

a. Personal feelings
   - i. Powerlessness
   - ii. Personal history trigger
   - iii. Fear (safety, something happening in group, failure)

b. Group dynamics
   - i. Explosive communication
   - ii. Shut down/withdrawal
   - iii. Scapegoating
   - iv. Aggression (emotional)
   - v. Trauma contagion
   - vi. "Standstill" because of one member's sharing

c. Individual member
   - i. Trauma dumping
   - ii. Competitive war stories
   - iii. Dissociating
   - iv. Aggression towards another member or you: name it, appreciate it, contain/ask about needs
   - v. Emotionally overwhelmed
   - vi. Suicidal ideation (Know your agency policy first!)
   - vii. Passive-aggressive/snarky undermining
   - viii. Help rejector
   - ix. Monopolizer: *(cont. on back)*

ix. Monopolizer:

- *WHAT?* Jumping in to begin, long narratives, resist efforts to make space, respond to others' narratives with self/no concern for others, rambling narrative lacking affect
- *WHY?* Unaware, thinks they're supposed to, anxious, baseline social functioning, family dynamics, uncomfortable with silences
- *HOW?* No shaming!
  - "You've been working hard today in group, let's give you a break and see how others are doing."
  - "Why are we letting Shrek do all of the work tonight?"
  - "Shrek, let me pause you for a moment. We are very interested in your story tonight, but I sense the group is getting a bit lost in the details. Can you briefly summarize what you wish to communicate to us as a group?"
  - "Shrek, can you let us know what you would like to get from the group as you describe the situation? How can we be helpful?"
  - "Shrek, thank you for sharing so much of your story with us. Let's check in and see how others in the group are doing today."

## Things to Keep in Mind

1. Remember that every behavior was a survival strategy somewhere else *(compassion!)*
2. Difficult behaviors often mask more difficult emotions underneath *(also compassion!)*
3. Ask yourself: is this about the group, or is this bringing up something for me? *(self-reflection)*
4. Do not label people, use gentle and direct words to label behaviors.
5. Be mindful of cultural differences impacting group communication.

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