

# Implementing SST in Individual Sessions

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# Individual social skills training

- “Can be used either to supplement group-based training or alone” Bellack et al., p. 75
- Bellack, A.S., Mueser, K.T., Gingerich, S., & Agresta, J. (2004). *Social Skills Training for Schizophrenia: A Step-by-Step Guide*. New York: Guilford Press.

# Why Do Individual SST?

- Useful for
  - People who are reluctant to come to a group– to prepare them to join the group
  - People who have difficulty participating in a group setting
  - People who can't make the SST group time
  - Tackle personalized situations in order to increase generalization of skills to the community
  - People who want to do intensive work on a specific social skills domain
  - Maintenance
  - As a technique to enhance other types of psychotherapy (e.g., CBT, Interpersonal Therapy)

# Format of Individual SST

- Format may depend on whether the individual SST is a supplement to the group or alone.
- Start with an introductory meeting
  - Review rationale of individual SST
  - Review goal (s) and format of sessions
- Duration and frequency of the individual SST sessions depends on the individual's goals.
- One approach is to start with 3-5 meetings and then reevaluate based on progress the frequency and duration of planned sessions. Individuals can return for boosters or 5-session blocks as situations in their lives evolve.

# What's Done in Individual SST

- Content depends on purpose
- Can focus on gearing up to integrate with an existing SST group
  - If group is ongoing, make sure the Veteran in the individual sessions receives training on the same skills that are taking place in the group so he/she will be up to speed when rejoining.
- Can focus on specialized skills based on an individual's needs and preferences

# Examples of Individual SST that is Personalized to a Veteran's Needs and Goals

- Female, wants to be more assertive with her live-in significant other
  - Worked on refusing requests, expressing angry feelings, compromise and negotiation
- Male, symptoms of depression and feelings of worthlessness kept him from participating in SST groups
  - Worked on skills for starting and maintaining conversations, connected social skills with improved mood
- Young adult, wants to get a job
  - Worked on vocational/work skills

# Individual SST on a longer-term basis

- Suggested enhancements
  - To avoid repetition, invite others to serve as the confederate in role-plays
  - Practice skills in the community
  - Add content as needed to put SST in the context of the Veteran's life experience. Can include psycho-education, stress management, methods for coping with persisting sx., etc. and how SST helps with all of these.
- SST can either be the main therapy or one of the strategies a clinician employs in individual work.

# IVAST

- In Vivo Amplified Skills Training (IVAST)
- Clients participate both in an SST group and also have a case manager who helps them implement SST skills in the community.
- The case managers help the clients adapt the SST skills to their environments.
- The case manager offers encouragement and reinforcement for successful generalization of skills to the community.



# IVAST

- Evaluations of IVAST have reported that compared to participants attending SST groups alone, participants in IVAST condition over a 2 year period had
  - higher levels of interpersonal problem-solving skills
  - greater social adjustment
  - better quality of life

# IVAST REFERENCES

- Glynn, SM, Marder, SR, Liberman, RP, et al. (2002). Supplementing clinic-based skills training for schizophrenia with manual-based community support: effects on social adjustment of patients with schizophrenia. American Journal of Psychiatry, 159, 829–837.
- Liberman, RP, Glynn, S, Blair, KE, et al. (2002) In vivo amplified skills training: promoting generalization of independent living skills for clients with schizophrenia. Psychiatry, 65, 137–155.

# SST in Individual Psychotherapy

- “While cognitive behavior therapy also has become an evidence-based treatment for residual psychotic symptoms, few clinicians or investigators have recognized the importance of social skills in this modality's reliance on behavioral assignments and “experiments.” Social skills training is implicitly involved in instigating favorable outcomes in both cognitive behavior therapy and interpersonal therapy, but more explicit integration and adaptation of skills training methods in these therapies holds promise for improving their impact in schizophrenia”
- From (Kopelowicz, A., Liberman, R.P., & Zarate, R. (2006). Recent Advances in Social Skills Training for Schizophrenia. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 32(S1), S12–S23, p S21.).