

Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness Clinician Quick Guide

Preparing for SST Group Sessions

- ✓ Review SST Group Session Sequence (next pg)
- ✓ Review skill in SST book (starting p. 193; including reading rationale, becoming familiar with steps, reading sample role play scenarios, and special considerations)
- ✓ Copy handouts with skill title and steps only
- ✓ Prepare and copy homework sheets
- ✓ Assign leaders to primary and secondary (if have two leaders). Discuss tasks and roles related to primary and secondary group leaders (below)
- ✓ Prepare room (e.g., chairs in semi-circle facing board, prop flip chart/dry erase board).
- ✓ Check audio recorder settings and conduct a test recording (if applicable)

(Handouts and other resources available at the VA SST website)

http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/training/social_skills.asp

SST AND RECOVERY

Always keep in mind that Social Skills Training is a Recovery-Oriented Treatment. Therefore, in every session you should encourage the recovery-oriented nature of SST through statements such as:

Hope: “Practicing skills can help improve your interactions with others!”

Self-direction: “What role play scenario would *you* like to practice today?”

Individualized: “What goal is important *you*?”

Empowerment: “The more you practice, the easier this will come to you.”

Strengths-Based: “You have such a great tone of voice!”

Peer Support: “What did you all [group members] like about his role play?”

Respect: “Thank you for your participation today. It’s always nice to have you in SST.”

Responsibility: “It’s up to you to use these skills in your lives!”

Note About the Very First SST Group:

For your very first group you will also want to add to beginning of the agenda:

1. **Introductions** of group leaders and group members
2. Review of **group purpose and structure** (You may need to repeat this in subsequent groups as well)
3. Discuss **group expectations**
4. Provide the opportunity for group members to **share individual goals** with the group
5. You will **not Review Outside Practice** in the very first group as the group members will not yet have been assigned practice prior to starting the group.

Sample Group Expectations

(with recovery-oriented sample presentation)

-Please stay on the group topic. (“Staying on the group topic will help make sure we have time for everyone to practice.”)

-Only one person may speak at a time. (“Only one person speaking at a time promotes respect for what everyone has to say.”)

-No name-calling or cursing. (“No name-calling or cursing. Let’s work together to make sure that Social Skills Training group is a positive experience for everyone.”)

-No criticizing or making fun of each other. (“No criticizing or making fun of each other. It’s important to remember that feedback in SST focuses on what people do well.”)

-No eating during group. (“Please no eating during group. We have found that eating in group can distract from practice and people giving meaningful feedback.”)

-Please turn cell phones off or onto silent during group. (“Turning off cell phones helps show respect for each other’s time and efforts in the group.”)

Detailed SST Group Session Sequence

(AFTER THE FIRST SESSION)

INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION

WELCOME ALL MEMBERS AND REVIEW THE PURPOSE OF THE GROUP.

REVIEW OUTSIDE PRACTICE: Reinforce any efforts toward practice! Briefly problem-solve any barriers to practice.

ASK: Who had an opportunity to use the skill outside of group?

ASK: How did you [each group member] do with using the steps of the skill?

STATE: "Great job!" "Nice work!" for any efforts to use the skill.

NOTE: You may need to repeat the skill if group members struggled with outside practice.

NEW SKILL REVIEW AND PRACTICE

RATIONALE: First try to elicit the rationale from the group. If you state a rationale first, make sure it is brief and allows ample opportunity for the group members to contribute.

ASK: Why is this skill important?

ASK: What can make this skill sometimes difficult to do?

ASK: Can someone give a specific example of a time when they used the skill or when it would have been important to use it?

STATE: Considerations about the skill that the group did not state that was listed in the Bellack et al. book curricular skill sheet rationale for the skill (e.g., this skill is also important because...). Summarize the rationale.

STATE: Each one of you try to think of a situation when you have or will have to do [the skill], which might be good a scenario to practice today. Try to think of a situation in which using this skill will help you move forward on your personal goal for the SST group.

STEPS OF THE SKILL: Collaboratively, yet briefly, generate a rationale for each step of the skill.

ASK: Who will read the first step? (Have a member read each step of the skill)

ASK: (After each step) Why is this step important? What would happen if you didn't do this step? What is an example(s) of how to do that?

ASK: If group members have any questions about the steps of the skill.

MODEL: Do the model with your co-leader as the role play buddy. Make it brief and relevant to the members' lives.

STATE: What scenario will used be in the model and that the group members should watch you (primary facilitator) do the skill.

REVIEW THE MODEL WITH GROUP MEMBERS:

ASK: If you successfully completed each step.

ASK: What the members liked about each step/the role play.

GROUP MEMBER ROLE PLAY: SET UP

ASK: Questions to develop a specific role play scenario before you start (e.g., Have you had to use this skill recently? How can you use this skill to move forward with [your personal goal]? Do you have a situation coming up in which you might need to use the skill?)

Detailed SST Group Session Sequence

(continued)

GROUP MEMBER ROLE PLAY: **SET UP** (continued)

STATE: Suggestions for the scenario related to the group member's goals or real-life situations if he/she cannot come up with an idea. Try to avoid using the scenarios written in the book unless they are relevant to a particular individual.

STATE: The scenario and check the accuracy with the group member before starting the role play. Make sure the scenario is brief, relevant to the skill, and at an appropriate level of complexity (if not sure, start at low complexity and build up). Make sure the role play buddy also understands his/her role in the role play.

STATE: Remind the other group members to watch the role play and notice how the group member does the steps of the skill. Make it clear to the group what the scenario is and what the role of the role play buddy is before the role play starts.

GROUP MEMBER ROLE PLAY: **SKILL PRACTICE**

NOTE: Have each group member do 3 role plays. Each group member should do the same personally relevant scenario for all 3 role plays.

NOTE: Provide a clear beginning and end to each role play.

NOTE: If the group member did the skill absolutely perfectly the first time increase the challenge for the 2nd and 3rd role plays.

GROUP MEMBER ROLE PLAY: **POSITIVE FEEDBACK**

NOTE: Be specific! For each step, ask at least one of the following and expand the questioning as needed:

ASK: What specifically did you like about the role play?

ASK: What did you like about how he did [a particular] step?

ASK: How did you know she was doing that step?

ASK: What did he or she say for that step?

ASK: What did you like about his or her nonverbal behavior (e.g., eye contact)?

STATE: The facilitator should provide specific, positive feedback as well leaving ample opportunity for the group members.

GROUP MEMBER ROLE PLAY: **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

NOTE: Make only *1 or 2 specific* suggestions for improvement.

ASK: For suggestions from the group on what he/she can do "even better".

STATE: If no one has any, you come up with one.

NOTE: You can always look at non-verbals for shaping. (e.g., eye contact, fidgeting, posture, tone of voice, speed). Also for verbal behaviors, consider if they could be more concise.

END OF SESSION:

OUTSIDE PRACTICE: Help each group member generate specific assignments relevant to their goal(s). Ideally, the members can use the scenario they practiced in group for outside practice.

ASK: Members to write down their practice plan on their outside practice sheet.

NOTE: Make sure you leave adequate time for this through good time management during the group.

STATE: Thank the group members for their presence and participation in SST!

Brief SST Group Session Sequence

Welcome and set agenda

Step 1. Review outside practice (for sessions other than the first session)

Step 2. Establish a rationale for the skill

Step 3. Briefly have members share a relevant experience or rationale

Step 4. Explain the steps of the skill

Step 5. Model the skill; review with members

Step 6. Have a group member role play*

Step 7. Elicit and provide positive, then constructive feedback

Step 8. Have the member role play again

Step 9. Elicit and provide positive, then constructive feedback

Step 10. Repeat role play again and elicit/provide positive feedback

Step 11. Repeat Steps 6-10 with each group member

Step 12. Develop outside practice assignments

***(you should begin Step 6 about 15 minutes into a 50-minute group)**

Roles of Primary and Secondary Facilitators in SST Sessions

Welcome Group and Set Agenda: **Primary**

Step 1. Review outside practice: **Primary**

Step 2. Establish a rationale for the skill: **Primary**

Step 3. Briefly have members share a relevant experience or rationale: **Primary; Secondary can briefly contribute as appropriate**

Step 4. Explain the steps of the skill: **Primary leads reading/discussion of steps; Secondary can briefly contribute as appropriate**

Step 5. Model the skill; review with members: **Primary demonstrates the skill and Secondary is role play buddy; Primary leads review of model**

Step 6. Have a group member role play: **Primary assists Veteran in role play set up and makes sure the Veteran is clear on the plan; Secondary is role play buddy**

Step 7. Elicit and provide feedback: **Primary leads feedback including providing and eliciting feedback from group members; Secondary provides feedback as appropriate**

Step 8. Have the member role play again: **Primary helps set up the role play and makes sure the Veteran is clear on the plan; Secondary is role play buddy**

Step 9. Elicit and provide feedback: **Primary leads feedback including providing and eliciting feedback from group members; Secondary provides feedback as appropriate**

Step 10. Repeat role play again and elicit/provide feedback: **Primary helps set up the role play and makes sure the Veteran is clear on the plan; Secondary is role play buddy; Primary leads feedback including providing and eliciting feedback from group members; Secondary provides feedback as appropriate**

Step 11. Repeat Steps 6-10 with each group member: **Same roles as in Steps 6-10**

Step 12. Develop outside practice assignments: **Primary**