

Center for Cognitive Innovation

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On June 1, 2007, CET Coaches from Ohio attended the 10th Annual Cognitive Remediation in Psychiatry Conference in New York City where Dr. Flesher presented. Bottom row left to right...Alicia Snyder, Certified CET Coach, Community Support Services, (CSS) Akron, OH; Alice Medalia, Ph.D., Director of ; Sam Flesher, Director of CET Services at PLAN NE Ohio; (PLAN) Carol Falender, Certified CET Coach, PLAN; Top row left to right... Ray Gonzalez, Certified CET Coach, PLAN; Wendy Maayan, Certified CET Coach, JFSA, Cleveland, OH; and Suzanne Burns, Certified CET Coach, CSS, Akron, OH

CHANGING ROLES IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

As a beginning CET coach, I have been able to observe an early impact that CET is having on one of my clients. Doug a 50-year-old man who had his first break his early 20's. I have seen him for the last 15 months as my client. Much of our work has been focused on Doug's sadness about not being able to marry, have his own family and hold a job.

Doug began CET Group 9 last spring 2006 at my recommendation. Initially he was enthusiastic about being in the group. He found the computer work to be difficult but enjoyed the classes and found the material interesting. David dropped out after only 16 sessions. He cited another group member who was very volatile and the 40 minute drive, each way, from his home as reasons for quitting.

Only after Doug had stopped attending the group did I learn from him how intense his reaction to CET had been and why he had quite the group. He was very hesitant to try again. However, when I became one of the coaches for Group 10, offered to be his individual coach and his mother offered to drive him to the group, Doug agreed to try CET again. He also agreed to be more open about his feelings.

In just a few sessions of the group, several significant aspects of how he relates to others have become apparent in

ways they never could have in our individual work. One-on-one, Doug is a friendly, personable and warm man. Almost immediately after beginning with the CET computer work, Doug began to complain that it was too difficult, and became irritated with both coaches. He reacted to our suggestions as if we were being totally unreasonable.

Doug's difficulty in tolerating frustration and his irritation with those around him for having any expectations of him had not been evident in our individual work. I quickly understood why the coaches in the first group had found him to be so childish. Seeing this side of Doug allowed me to address these issues directly. What became apparent even at the first few sessions of the CET meetings was Doug's reactivity to others who did not respond to him the way he wanted them to. For example, Doug made a suggestion to another group member when her treatment plan was being discussed.

At our next appointment he said, "K. doesn't take me seriously, she doesn't respect me." There had been nothing about K's behavior that would have suggested that she felt that way about Doug. His reaction seemed related to K's not acknowledging his comment. He reacts like this often in group. Doug repeatedly has talked about his wish for more connectedness with others. I believe that now in CET there is an opportunity to help him see what has prevented him from getting what he wants so much.

I have found that in my role as a CET coach, I see a new side of Doug. As a social worker there had been no need to challenge him. But at our first meeting a few minutes of working on the homework and Doug was ready to stop. It was "too hard." He responded to encouragement and continued.

However, when I asked him to explain one of his homework questions further he asked me why I was being so hostile to him. I now saw why Doug struggled with his previous CET coach.

I am hopeful. Doug knows that I have and will support him so he may tolerate challenges better. Our roles have changed and he has heard that. He will probably be annoyed and irritated with me. But he knows we are in this together. Doug and I now have an opportunity to work together on some difficulties in his life that can really make a difference for him.

By Amy S. Kinstlinger, LISW, CET Coach

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The Center for Cognitive Innovation has been established by PLAN of Northeast Ohio, Inc. to focus on both disseminating CET as a proved, effective treatment and on finding, developing, implementing and disseminating NEW cognitive therapies and treatments for schizophrenia

A PROSPECTIVE CET GRADUATE: FRED WHITE

The CET clinical coaches group met today and talked about Fred White. Fred is one of a small but growing group who go through CET twice. Neither of the two coaches Amy or Sharon was present and so perhaps something was lost. Still the discussion felt very productive. Present were Ray, Carol Judy, Wendy, Djuro and Sam. Those who know Fred (Ray, Carol, Sam, and Judy) and remember him from before agreed that the Fred of 2007 was different than the 2000 version. The principle observation was that he was less energized and more passive. He seemed to be less likely to initiate conversation and interact. His behavior in the waiting room was to sit on the couch looking sleepy and not interacting. Something lost and something gained; the energy was irritating but gave him energy. When the post CET crowd is hanging out in the waiting room, Fred does not interact. When softball is canceled because of the heat, Fred does not interact with the team sitting in the waiting room. He is not as intrusive, just not there; something lost and something gained?

We watched two clips of Fred during homework six years apart. The experience was instructive. First in some ways the current Fred seemed to be more tuned in than earlier CET incarnation. In the year 2000, Fred did homework on perspective taking. He talked about doing chores in his group home. He talked about negotiating with housemates over chores and coming to an arrangement where he cleaned the bathroom and they did the dishes. According to Fred, the negotiations went very well and everyone arrived quickly at a shared understanding.

Fred's presentation seemed to conveniently free of the perspectives of the other housemates. One got the impression that these other people were concerned only with meeting Fred's needs. Fred's coach Janet asked him if he were telling the whole story. Fred surprised her by, grabbing her finger. He did that twice as he revised his homework to say that he experienced trouble getting the dishes done his housemates were upset. Suddenly there was a whole new perspective that had been sanitized from the first version.

Fred in 2007 was not at all as flat as the assembled expected him to be. Apparently his waiting room persona had not carried into the group that day. His homework topic was rigidity. This topic precedes the "perspective taking" homework from 2000 group in the curriculum by a few weeks. Fred talked about plans that been canceled and how he had failed to adapt and did nothing instead.

He spoke cogently about how in a similar situation he would have instead watched a movie with his housemates. Fred was articulate. He listened and responded to the coaches. All this was in sharp contrast to the person that we knew from the waiting room. Here, in the second time around he was more grounded than in the first.

Wendy, who has the advantage of not knowing Fred, astutely observed that the formal structure of the group seems to bring out the best in Fred. Perhaps for this reason, Fred can continue to take college classes, but seems lost just interacting in the waiting room. She also observed that Fred's account of his social activities was a lot more like collecting of individual activities than some ongoing schedule like participation in a chess club. Fred even now seems better at talking than listening. He seems interested in other people means to meeting his needs rather than because others are really interesting.

Judy noticed a glimmer of something else. He saw Jack, a CET graduate, in the waiting room that he used to play tennis with. He had fallen out of touch with Jack and went on for sometime about how he missed hanging out with Jack. Could this be a spark of real interest in another human being?

The meeting moved to discussion Fred's future. In the best of all possible worlds, Fred's gains in the formal CET setting will carry over to the more messy informal aspects of life. Perhaps one way this can happen in the pairings he has in the computer sessions. Fred has already shown some ability to bond with and encourage a computer partner. The individual coaching sessions could be turned into "paired coaching sessions." This would give the coach a chance to get Fred to relate to the other trainee.

Relatedness can be encouraged. PLAN of Northeast Ohio also offers lots of opportunities for informal encounters. Fred participates in the social recreational activities. Informing Maggie and Daryl of Fred's difficulty of connecting informally, will probably allow them to strategize on ways of getting him to interact and listen more. Likewise, the staff at Fred's residence may be allies in getting him to listen more and connect with others. Having non-CET staff in on Fred's CET goals may be the best way to synergistically advance his recovery. The goal will be to move Fred from a series of discrete activities to a more meaningful set of ongoing roles that will outlive his CET experience.

By Sam Flesher, Ph.D., Director of CET Services

Time Management in CET

On June 27, 2007 the CET clinical team met to view a tape of Group 10. The focus was a Condensed Message exercise that had become more than a little chaotic. With the advantage of stopping and starting the video for discussion we were able to watch the dynamics unfold slowly. We observed a number of things that the coaches had not noticed during the actual group. We will call the team members Karla and Geoff.

First it became clear that the exercise was too challenging for at least one of the team members and probably both. Karla had difficulty reading the article and getting the gist. She also had a hard time listening to her partner. Geoff was doing a better job of understanding but became frustrated when he felt unheard both by the Sam (the coach) and Karla. As a result he became defensive and even a little intimidating. At one point he suggested that he and Sam meet in the basement for a confrontation. All of this excitement had effects on other members of the group. Some wanted to leave both because of the late hour and the negative affect.

Second, the team members did not completely understand the task of finding three main points before writing the 10 word message. This was true in part because the team had not been asked to do this the previous week when the Condensed Message exercise was first done. It was also not made clear in the induction for this particular team.

Third, the logistics of where the pair was seated did not contribute to their teamwork. They had remained in the group circle rather than reseating themselves in the front of the group to do the exercise.

The coaches drew a couple conclusions:

It was early in the life of the group to use the Condensed Message exercise. This exercise is better suited for later when the concepts of Convergent/Divergent Thinking and Perspective Taking and have been covered.

The Sound Byte exercise is a more appropriate exercise for this stage of the group. It should be the second exercise in the course of the group.

Additionally, group members benefit from having progressed more on gist extraction when this exercise is done later in the group. It is important to keep in mind the Goldilocks Syndrome: not too much, not too little (difficulty). The Condensed Message exercise was 'too much' for the group at this stage.

The clinical staff also talked about time management. One reason the exercise became chaotic was that time was limited. Group members were anxious about time because they were adjusting to a later start and finish time. This was complicated by the fact that the group started even later due to the interruption of having visitors in the group. The coaches were aware of the time pressure and this affected their attention to clinical issues.

Time management in CET groups is an ongoing problem. One coach pointed out that at her agency groups run for two hours with a break. Sam indicated that the same procedure was being followed in all the Pittsburgh groups. Such an adaptation may be a good way of making certain that enough time is left for the exercise and feedback. In the absence of such a change, coaches will need to devote attention to time management in the group.

By Sam Flesher, Ph. D. & Sharon Shumaker, ACSW

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