**AGPA Connect 2023 Presenter Information**

**Course Code:** 27a

**Course Title:** Dungeons and Therapy: A Theoretical Justification for Tabletop Roleplaying Group Therapy for Interpersonal Growth

**Course Times:** 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM & 2:30 – 5:00 PM

**Course Dates:** Friday, March 10

**Instructors:** Vincent Dehili

Matt King

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**Course Description:** Tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPGs) have risen in popularity over the past years with a multitude of practitioners integrating them into clinical practice. This workshop provides a theoretical justification for TTRPGs, connecting parallels to group theories while providing experiential demonstrations focusing on increasing interpersonal flexibility through the roleplaying process, highlighting themes connected to psychodrama, mentalization, and self-psychology. In addition, a simplified, modular version of Tabletop Roleplaying will be provided with guides for therapists and clients to implement TTRPGs within their counseling center.

**Learning Objectives**

The attendee will be able to:‎

1. ‎ ‎Define the theoretical foundations and connections Tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs) have ‎within the therapeutic setting and it's adaptation to young adults including University Counseling ‎Centers.‎
2. ‎Describe how to fuse interpersonal process, skill building, and personal exploration within the ‎framework of the TTRPG.‎
3. ‎Describe at least three safety tools used to assist in identifying and addressing micro-aggression that ‎may arise in group.‎
4. ‎Provide a modular free-access tool, Dungeons and Therapy, to provide a model for implementing a ‎‎"Dungeons and Dragons"-based therapeutic RPG in College Counseling Centers.‎
5. ‎Explain the necessary competencies and logistical considerations for implementing a therapeutic ‎RPG.‎
6. ‎Observe and review skills to effectively engage with co-leader dynamics within this unique group ‎therapy modality.‎

**Significant Articles:**

1. Arenas, D. L., Viduani, A., & Araujo, R. B. (2022). Therapeutic Use of Role-Playing Game (RPG) in ‎Mental Health: A Scoping Review. Simulation & Gaming, 53(3), 285–311.‎
2. GoodallA. M., & TruongA. H. (2021). Pop culture and social insertion: How can play in adolescence and ‎adulthood be “therapeutic”?. Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being, 6(1), 17-21.‎
3. Francesco Causo & Elly Quinlan (2021) Defeating dragons and demons: consumers’ perspectives on ‎mental health recovery in role-playing games, Australian Psychologist, 56:3, 256-267‎
4. Gutiérrez, R. (2017). Therapy & Dragons: A look into the Possible Applications of Tabletop Role Playing ‎Games in Therapy with Adolescents.‎
5. Antero Garcia (2017) Privilege, Power, and Dungeons & Dragons: How Systems Shape Racial and ‎Gender Identities in Tabletop Role-Playing Games, Mind, Culture, and Activity, 24:3, 232-246‎

**Agenda:**

1. Psycho-education on Role-playing Therapy within a College Counseling center (40 min, Obj 1; 3; & 4, Dehili, King, & Thombre Lecture) - Discussion of History and Theoretical Parallel of Tabletop role-playing games and other Group Therapy Modalities - Review History of D&D related to racist and microaggressions that can occur within the room. -Address specific safety tools and methods to increase cohesion & describe the three pillars of roleplay experiences.
2. Experiential Role-playing therapy groups (90 min, Obj 5, Dehili & Thombre, Demonstration groups) -Separate participants into at least two role-play demonstration groups (Experienced and non-experienced TTRPG) utilizing breakout rooms (if online) or separate tables. -Set roles, expectations, and information related to the participants individualized therapeutic goals -Engage in standardized, pre-selected role-play scenario
3. Process Discussion of differentiated leadership styles and experiences of each group with Consultant (35 min, Obj 5 & 6, King Discussion) -Return to the main group discussion (or lobby if online) -Process experiences observing the difference in experiences across groups. -Consultant (King) provides feedback to group leaders on approach, opportunities to capitalize on enhancing role commitment, and highlighting spontaneity and creativity within process.
4. Unified Group Therapy role-play combining two groups and two co-leaders. (90 min, Obj 4, Dehili & Thombre, Demonstration Group) -Combine two previous separated demonstration groups to engage in a role-play scenario led by two leaders.
5. Discussion/Q&A for unified demonstration group and co-leader dynamics (40 min, Obj 5, Dehili, King, & Thombre, Discussion) -Process experiences of the group & co-leader dynamics observed.
6. Participant Evaluations (5 min)

**Assessment Questions:**

Question 1 (include possible answers)

What kinds of microaggressions can occur when utilizing a fantasy tabletop roleplaying setting? A. Racism B. Sexism C. Both A & B. D. There are no microaggressions in TTRPGs since it is a fantasy setting.

Correct Answer 1

C. Both A & B. D&D publisher has acknowledged the tendency to categorize certain races (e.g., Orcs, Drow, Tieflings, etc.) as being dark-skinned savages, as well as sexist tropes with "Hags"

Question 2 (include possible answers)

How much experience is necessary for clients and/or therapists to have in playing Tabletop Roleplaying Games for it to be an effective group therapy modality? a. None. Many students and therapists reported having a meaningful, impactful experience engaging in Tabletop Roleplaying therapy with zero experience in tabletop role-playing experiences. b. 2-3 years of experience. c. 30-40 hours of watching other players engage in the TTRPG. d. At least 60 hours of engaging as a player is necessary before leading a Tabletop Roleplaying Group.

Correct Answer 2

A. None. Many students and therapists reported having a meaningful, impactful experience engaging in Tabletop Roleplaying therapy with zero experience in tabletop role-playing experiences.

Question 3 (include possible answers)

What theoretical modalities most closely related to the principles of Tabletop Roleplaying Group Therapy? a. Psychodrama b. Mentalization c. Self-Psychology d. All of the Above

Correct Answer 3

D. All of the above. Psychodrama's focus on Spontaneity, Creativity, Role Theory, and Action Theory parallel various factors activated within TTRPGs in addition to Mentalization, Intersubjectivity, and Mindfulness practices of Equanimity.

Question 4 (include possible answers)

What is the best way to lead a TTRPG group therapy session? a. Plan for every encounter and interaction in advance before group begins. b. Give each player binary choices to keep them on a rigid track. c. Provide a frame for the members to navigate opportunities for spontaneity and creative expression utilizing improvisational techniques a majority of the session. d. Dismiss players ideas if it goes outside of your planned plot.

Correct Answer 4

C. Provide a frame for the members to navigate opportunities for spontaneity and creative expression utilizing improvisational techniques a majority of the session.

Question 5 (include possible answers)

(T/F) Co-leaders are not recommended for Role-Playing Therapy Groups due to both leaders needing to have extensive knowledge of the story and plan for the session.

Correct Answer 5

False.

Question 6 (include possible answers)

What is one important item to review when setting up the frame for tabletop Roleplaying Therapy Groups? A. Discuss safety tools and procedures if a client becomes highly emotionally activated by a microaggression or content in session. B. Nothing. Encourage members to hold an open mind as they explore the process and learn the rules and standards of play naturally. C. Have each member share their most beloved fantasy story or character. D. Discuss the experiences each person has with acting experience.

Correct Answer 6

A. Discuss safety tools and procedures if a client becomes highly emotionally activated by a microaggression or content in session.

Question 7 (include possible answers)

What kinds of clients should never take part in Tabletop Roleplaying Therapy? a. Victims of interpersonal violence or trauma b. Neurodivergent folx who are diagnosed with ADHD and/or Autism. c. Trans or folx with identify as part of the LGBTQ+ Community. d. All clients can partake in TTRPGs, continued awareness and sensitivity should be paid to each members' intersubjective needs, and the use of safety tools should be provided to a meaningful group experience.

Correct Answer 7

d. All clients can partake in TTRPGs, continued awareness and sensitivity should be paid to each members' intersubjective needs, and the use of safety tools should be provided to a meaningful group experience.

Question 8 (include possible answers)

Role-playing Therapy group leaders play what role as a therapeutic game master? a. Storyteller b. Improvising each Non-player characters voice, story, and interact with the player characters. c. Providing pride and reinforcement for interpersonal goals practiced by members in session. d. All of the above

Correct Answer 8

d. All of the above

Question 9 (include possible answers)

Story lines and the content within the TTRPG group therapy session should come from which source? a. Only the Therapeutic Gamemaster. b. Only from the group members ideas and actions. c. It should be a shared narrative creation interconnecting ideas from the therapeutic game master and the members of the group d. It should be obtained from pre-written adventures and strictly adhered to by all parties without any additions or iterative details.

Correct Answer 9

c. It should be a shared narrative creation interconnecting ideas from the therapeutic game master and the members of the group

Question 10 (include possible answers)

What are the strict rules which must be followed in order to effectively run a Tabletop Roleplaying therapy group? A. No talking unless spoken to by the therapeutic gamemaster B. All rules and frames should be flexible and non-binding based on the intersubjective needs of the players and group. C. Players (group members) must always adhere to their originally set goals. D. Therapeutic Gamemasters must always have the rules memorized to recite to players when debating content.

Correct Answer 10

B. All rules and frames should be flexible and non-binding based on the intersubjective needs of the players and group.