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Identifying the Changes

Facilitator Notes

Main Learning Points:

This is the first session. Every session except this one will begin with a review of the Main Learning Points from the last session.

Tips for this Session

1. As this is the first session in this workbook, you may have people who do not know each other. In that case, take the time for introductions, starting with yourself.
2. Consider using the “telephone game” as a group activity to illustrate changes in perception. Set up two lines and have each line play the telephone game where a message is whispered into the ear of the first person to pass on to the next person in line. When the message gets to the end of the line, have each end person restate the message. Talk about how the message changes depending how each person hears and processes the message. Point out the common misperceptions.
3. You may want to write on the board or a flipchart the dictionary definitions of some words that the participants will be reading and seeing.
4. If you use the suggestion for topic introduction, you may want to have paper and a pencil or pen for each person on their chair or desk.

Potential Problem for this Session

When psychiatric symptoms first emerge, it is often difficult, and sometimes impossible, for the person who is experiencing the symptoms to recognize and understand what is happening. The individual usually attempts to make sense of the changes that are occurring within a framework that they know and understand.

Possible Responses

1. Express compassion for their courage in facing their challenges.
2. Reinforce that they will be able to learn about their illness.
3. Reassure that, together, you will explore the facts and consider different explanations.

General Tip

Don't forget to smile—in this important first session and in every session. If participants see that you are pleased to be here, any anxiety they have may be alleviated a bit sooner. Let the participants be able to tell by looking at you that you are pleased to be together and that the following sessions will be a good experience for everyone.

Suggestion for Topic Introduction and Relevance to Participants

(Have a photograph of an object, such as a flower or a piece of fruit. Use a cover sheet so that the photograph can't be seen unless you show it. Ask each person to come to the front as his or her name is called to look at the photograph, and, without saying anything, return to his or her seat and sit quietly. After everyone has seen the photo...)

“Please write what you saw in the photo. When you finish, fold your paper in half and I’ll pick it up. Then please sit quietly, without talking.”

(When everyone is done)

“Let’s look at what you saw.”

(Flip through their responses and summarize them. Most people will write just one word, for example: “Flower.” A few may be very precise, writing something similar to, “A pink carnation in a clear glass vase that’s sitting on a yellow tablecloth.”)

“Did everyone see the same thing? No, we didn’t. Some people saw only a flower. Others also saw colors. Some people saw the vase and the tablecloth in addition to the flower. Everyone saw the exact same photo. Any ideas on why there were differences in what we saw?”

(Listen, encourage, and reply to responses.)

“Today we are going to start understanding those differences in people’s perceptions—how things register differently in our brains. This matters because how we perceive something has a lot to do with how we communicate and function. The title of this session is ‘Identifying the Changes.’ How might a session about this be helpful?”

“Let’s answer the first six questions on the Topic Assessment before we start, just to see how familiar we are with this topic.”

Topic Assessment Answer Key

1. D 2. C 3. A 4. C

T – topic introduction
R – relevance to participant
I – identify objectives
M – materials for session
M – motivate to use

Topic Assessment



Mark one: Pre Post

Your Score:
+ ____ out of 4

Directions:

1. Read each question carefully.
2. Read every answer before marking one.
3. Mark only one answer to each question.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Which of the following is correct?

- A. Everyone's brain should work perfectly.
- B. Everyone can control how their brain works.
- C. People who have a mental illness are always ill.
- D. Everyone's brain makes mistakes sometimes.

2. People who see the world differently:

- A. Always know they are ill.
- B. Never know they are ill.
- C. Are often uncomfortable and confused at first.
- D. Must change all their future goals and plans.

3. Everyone perceives things a little differently.

- A. True
- B. False

4. When a person experiences major changes in how they perceive the world:

- A. They need to be in a hospital.
- B. They must take medicine.
- C. They might benefit by talking with someone they trust about the changes.
- D. They should keep it to themselves because it will eventually go away.

Topic Assessment



5. I feel I am confident that I understand what has happened to me with my illness.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Unsure

6. This information is important for me to know.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

At the end of the session, answer these questions before turning in this paper:

7. This session helped me.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. What I liked about this session: _____

9. How this session could have been better for me: _____

Identifying the Changes

Objectives for this Session

1. Identify a simple description of how the brain functions.
2. Understand that no one's brain works perfectly.

What in the World!

How does anybody make sense of the world we live in? The simplest answer is, “Through the five senses. We see, hear, taste, touch, and smell what’s going on around us. That is how we know what’s going on in our world.”

But does everyone perceive (meaning “to experience the world using the five senses”) things the same way?

For example, a small group of people are waiting for a bus. Does each of them see the bus exactly the same when it

pulls up to the curb? Does the man who’s wearing glasses see the bus the same as the woman who has great eyesight? Does the woman with a bad cold and stopped-up nose smell the bus exhaust fumes the same as the person next to her who doesn’t have a cold? Does the young mother whose baby is crying notice as many things as someone who is not distracted?

To make this even more complicated, everyone who is watching the bus arrive is filtering it through their personal views of the world and their memories. Suppose we hear the brakes on the bus hiss when it pulls up to the curb. A man who works as an auto mechanic might hear this sound and think that the brakes sound like they are in good working order. On the other hand, a small child might get very scared when they hear the hissing sound.

We all see the world a little differently depending on the experiences we have had in our lives and our perceptions of what is going on around us. Certain qualities that we’re born with can also affect how we see the world.

The brain is the organ that brings together our five senses, perceptions and memories. These make up our individual awareness and understanding of what’s going on in the world. Although we do not fully understand exactly how the brain works, we do have a basic understanding of how our thoughts, feelings, and views tend to guide our daily lives.

Main Learning Point #1

People perceive and experience the world differently.

Use Your Head! (Your Brain, Actually.)

We use our brain to understand our world and to help us make decisions every day. We usually do this with our brain getting information from the world through our basic senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting. Once this information enters the brain, we use more than 100,000 brain cells called neurons, along with brain chemicals called neurotransmitters, to process the information to help us understand our world. Even though all of us have similar feelings and often share similar experiences in life, no two brains see the world exactly the same.

To illustrate how we can hear and understand things differently, let's do an exercise. Form two lines. The first person in each line will be handed a written statement which is to be whispered into the ear of the next person in line. The second person will then whisper the statement to the third person in line, who will, in turn, whisper it into the fourth person's ear, and so on. When passing the information along, the statement can only be said one time. When the message gets to the last person, he or she will tell the group what he or she heard and write it on the board. Finally, the original statement will be written on the board. We will talk about how the message was changed as it was passed along.

Main Learning Point #2

No brain works perfectly.

No Brain Works Perfectly

The exercise we did is just one example of how we get information and how our brains may interpret it. Given that the brain uses more than 100,000 connections for carrying messages, it is easy to understand that no brain works perfectly all the time.

When our brain misinterprets the surroundings over and over, we may become uncomfortable and even confused about what is going on around us. We may have to work even harder to understand things that other people who do not have a mental illness might understand very easily. Our perceptions may be very different from what we have experienced in the past.

To help understand these changes, it is important to figure out when you first noticed something different. Maybe it was:

- A different thought.
- A different or strange feeling.
- A big mood change.
- An unusual reaction.
- Anxiety or discomfort in being someplace or being around others.
- An experience with one of your five senses that you never had before, like hearing, seeing, or smelling things you didn't understand.

No Brain Works Perfectly

(continued)

To help you identify and recognize when these changes might have occurred, fill out the “Identifying the Changes” exercise. Keep in mind that since everyone sees the world differently, there are no right or wrong answers to the statements below and on the next page.



Identifying the Changes Exercise:

I first noticed something being different on _____.
(When)

I was at _____ when it happened.
(Where it happened)

I remember I felt _____

(What experienced that was different)

I thought _____ might be a reason for the way I felt.
(Seeking an answer)

When Different Perceptions Get Uncomfortable

Differences can make life more interesting!

Sharing how we feel with people we trust can help us recognize and identify individual perception changes that are causing problems.

Main Learning Point #3

Being open with people we trust can help us if we are having changes in perceptions.

Review & Moving Forward



The *main learning points* of this session are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Move Forward – Choose a Personal Practice Option

It's important to practice new knowledge and skills. What will you do between now and the next session? Please choose one option from the list below:

- 1. STUDY.** I am going to reread my handout at least once.
- 2. SHARE.** I will share my handout with someone in my support network. I will ask _____ to read it and talk with me about when I first noticed changes in my perceptions.
- 3. INSIGHT.** I will talk to _____
(insert name of someone your trust who knows you well) and ask him or her if he or she noticed any changes in my behavior recently.
- 4. OTHER:** _____

Take an **“Extra Step Forward”** (optional)

- 5. WRITE.** I will write about changes that have become problems for me. I will figure out what I might do to fix it.

If there is time left before the end of the session, you might talk about your personal practice goals. How will you **remember** and **complete** your goal by the next session?