**Memory Skills Group: Session 1**

**Session Plan**

**About the group**

* *Welcome participants to the group*
  + Explain that the group is for individuals who report difficulties with their memory
  + Important that we have realistic expectations that the group is not about ‘getting rid’ of our memory difficulties
  + The group will offer skills and information that will help us to manage these memory difficulties
* *Group Aims*
  + Have aims of the course displayed on flipchart paper and talk through each one of these with the group.
  + Explain that the course will take place over 6 sessions, each lasting an hour and a half
* *Group overview*
  + Have course overview displayed on flipchart paper and talk through each one of these with the group
  + Explain that the sessions will consist of taught materials, discussions and exercises.
  + Each member will be expected to complete ‘out of session work’
    - Discuss the importance of being patient with ourselves when learning and trying out new skills as this takes time and may require some practice before it is mastered.
    - Explain that if anyone is having any difficulties with any aspect of the course they can speak to a facilitator afterwards or call the number provided in the workbook.
  + Hand out workbooks and explain that all out of session work along with an overview of each session is included in these.
* *Housekeeping*
  + Emergency exits
  + Toilets
  + Inform participants we will be having a break for tea & coffee

**Introductions**

* *Activity*
  + Hand out pens and split group into pairs.
  + Ask participants to introduce themselves to their partners and spend 5 minutes getting to know each other
  + Ask each other the questions on page 5 of workbook. They can make notes if they like (for the questions and extra info)
  + After the 5 minutes, participants introduce their partner to the group and feedback their responses to the questions on page 5
* *Expectations*
  + Open discussion with group and ask for any expectations they may have or what they would like to achieve from attending the group.
  + Write expectations on flipchart paper during discussion
  + Facilitators be mindful about whether expectations can be met by the group and allow these thoughts to guide discussion. (I.e. is this a realistic aim for the group?)

**Group Rules**

* *Introduce reasons for setting group rules*
  + Explain that during the group we hope that you can share thoughts, ideas and experiences and feel supported by each other. So to ensure that the sessions run on track and everyone feels comfortable, it is good to have a few ground rules.
* *Set group rules*
  + Rules to be generated by the group and written out on flipchart paper by facilitator
  + Ensure the following are on the rules
    - Confidentiality- what is discussed by group members should stay within the group
    - Sessions are time-limited; facilitators may at points need to ask group members to finish a discussion or exercise and to move on. This is not to be rude, but just to ensure we fit everything in!

**Pre Group Measures**

* Explain that participants will be asked to complete measures now and at the end of the course. This to monitor any general changes following the group, and to ensure that the group is meeting its’ aims.
* Individual responses will not be identifiable. The front sheets will be used to match pre and post measures but will then be removed and shredded.
* Whilst these measures are being completed, one facilitator to make teas & coffees for group for the upcoming break

**Break (15 mins)**

**An Overview of Cognitive Functioning**

* Whilst going through each section…
  + Ask participants to refer to workbook pages 7 onwards so that they are receiving the information both visually and auditory.
  + Have big posters on show
  + Whilst offering explanation, refer to manual and workbook as guide
  + Use questions to guide discussion (e.g. does anyone feel they relate to this? Can anyone think of a task they do daily that uses this cognitive ability?)
* What are cognitive abilities
* Attention
* Information Processing
* Executive Functioning
* Memory
  + There is not a page for this one. Explain that the term memory is used to describe the process through which people acquire information through their senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell), store and recall that information. There are lots of different types of memory, which require many thinking abilities.
  + Explain that we’re going to look in more specific detail at memory during session 2.

**Brief Introduction to Mindfulness**

* What is it?
  + Ask the group is anyone is familiar with mindfulness?
  + Explain that it is a technique that can help us to recognise those times when we are on autopilot and bring ourselves back to the present moment
  + And a way of focusing our attention on the here and now rather than getting caught up in thoughts about the past or worries about the future
  + Helps us to take a non-judgemental stance on our environment, our thoughts, feelings and behaviour
* In what way is it helpful?
  + Reduces stress & anxiety
  + Improves mood
  + Good for memory and general wellbeing
* Mindfulness in our sessions
  + Explain that from next week we will be practicing mindfulness in each session and will explain more about the benefits of mindfulness as we go along
  + You might find it a bit different at first especially if it’s something you have not done before, but once you have done a few exercises you should find it easier

**Out of Session Work & End of Session**

* Ask participants to turn to the ‘memory self-assessment form’ in the workbook. Talk through each section of the form and ask participants to complete this prior to session 2.
* Explain benefit of this practice task (e.g. to think about individual needs)
* Let participants know that all the information we have discussed in today’s session is in the workbook, so participants can read over it in their own time.
* Ask a participant to summarise what we have covered during the session today.
* Ask if anyone has any questions following today’s session
* Thank participants for attending the group.