

ISKUSTVO ONLINE TERAPIJE TIJEKOM PANDEMIJE BOLESTI COVID-19 I UTJECAJ NA ZBIVANJA U GRUPI

/ EXPERIENCE IN ONLINE THERAPY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EVENTS IN THE GROUP

Jelena Adamlje, Tihana Jendričko

SAŽETAK/SUMMARY

U kontekstu aktualnih globalnih zbivanja uslijed pandemije stručnjaci u području mentalnog zdravlja prepoznali su nužnost ponude alternativnih načina pružanja potpore i liječenja te su se mnogi prvi puta našli u situaciji provođenja *online* usluga/terapija. Rad prikazuje iskustvo u gotovo četiri mjeseca *online* rada grupe vođene u okviru izobrazbe iz grupne analize te rasvjetljuje određena zbivanja i promjene koje su se dogodile tijekom grupnog rada u virtualnom okruženju. Grupa koja se dvije godine sastajala uživo, unatoč određenim teškoćama i *acting outu* jednog člana, uspjela se prilagoditi novom *settingu* te je ostvarila napredak u radu. Rad ističe prednosti *online* terapije u smislu dostupnosti pomoći i potpore u vrijeme naglašenih potreba, kontinuiteta rada i napredovanja u terapiji do ponovnog nastavka rada uživo, ali upozorava i na izazove virtualnog *settinga* koji zahtijeva prilagodbu svih sudionika terapije, u smislu očuvanja grupnih granica, prevladavanja separacijske anksioznosti, tehničkih i komunikacijskih teškoća i drugih specifičnih pojava koje utječu na terapijski rad.

/ In the context of global events during the pandemic, experts in the field of mental health have recognized the necessity of offering alternative modes of providing support and treatment, and many of them have engaged in conducting online services/therapy for the first time. Herein we present our experience in conducting online group work over almost 4 months, which was performed as part of group analysis training and which has brought certain event and changes to light that took place during group therapy in a virtual environment. The group, which had previously met face-to-face for two years, was able to adjust to the new setting and achieve progress despite certain difficulties and an episode in which one group member acted out. This article presents the advantages of online therapy regarding the availability of help and support during a period of increased patient needs and in achieving continuity of treatment as well as progress in therapy until face-to-face meetings become possible once more, but we also describe the challenges tied to the virtual setting, which requires adjustments from all therapy participants with regard to maintaining boundaries within the group, overcoming separation anxiety, technical and communication difficulties, and other unique factors that influence group therapy.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI / KEYWORDS

online terapija / online therapy, virtualne seanse / virtual sessions, grupna analiza / group analysis

Jelena Adamlje, mag. socijalne pedagogije, edukantica iz grupne analize (Institut za grupnu analizu Zagreb), udruga Pragma, Ulica Nikole Tesle 13, Zagreb, Hrvatska, e-mail: adamlje@udruga-pragma.hr

Doc. dr. sc. prim. **Tihana Jendričko**, dr. med., psihijatar, psihoterapeut, predstojnica Zavoda za psihoterapiju, Klinika za psihijatriju Vrapče, Bolnička cesta 32, Zagreb, Hrvatska, e-mail: tihana.jendricko@bolnica-vrapce.hr

Jelena Adamlje, *Master's degree in social pedagogy, trainee in group analysis (Zagreb Institute for Group Analysis), Pragma Association, Ulica Nikole Tesle 13, Zagreb, Croatia, e-mail: adamlje@udruga-pragma.hr*

Doc. dr. sc. prim. **Tihana Jendričko**, MD, PhD, psychiatrist, psychotherapist, Head of the Institute for Psychotherapy, Vrapče Psychiatry Clinic, Bolnička cesta 32, Zagreb, Croatia, e-mail: tihana.jendricko@bolnica-vrapce.hr

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UVOD

Pandemija bolesti COVID-19 uzrokovane koronavirusom (SARS-CoV-2), zajedno s nizom epidemioloških mjera (karan-tena, samoizolacija, održavanje fizičke distance, ograničenja okupljanja itd.), već je ostavila duboke globalne posljedice. U području mentalnog zdravlja poremećaji spavanja, simptomi posttraumatskog stresa, anksioznost, depresivnost, emocionalne teškoće, razdražljivost, ljutnja, žalovanje, zbunjenost, emocionalna iscrpljenost, povećanje stope ovisnosti o alkoholu, kao i dugoročne promjene ponašanja (pranje ruku, izbjegavanje bliskog kontakta s ljudima i dr.) samo su neke su od poteškoća koje govore o opsežnom, znatnom i dugotrajnom psihološkom utjecaju pandemije i nastalih društvenih promjena (1). Potres u Zagrebu i okolici koji je koincidirao sa

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic caused by the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), together with the implementation of numerous epidemiological measures (quarantine, self-isolation, maintaining physical distance, limitations on gatherings, etc.), has already had severe consequences at the global level. In the field of mental health, sleep disorders, symptoms of post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, emotional difficulties, irritability, anger, grief, confusion, emotional exhaustion, increased alcohol addiction, and long-term behavioral changes (hand washing, avoiding close personal contacts with other people, etc.) are just some of the difficulties that indicate the far-reaching, significant, and long-term psychological influence of the pandemic and the resultant social changes (1). The earthquake that took place in Zagreb and the surrounding area, which



začetkom izbijanja epidemije u Hrvatskoj nadodao je traumatu i strah na već neizvjesnu situaciju. Sustavni odgovor društva na novonastale okolnosti mora sadržavati psihološku i psihijatrijsku pažnju te intervencije osobito usmjerene prema najranjivijim skupinama društva, uključujući i psihijatrijske bolesnike (2). Možemo reći kako su se mnogobrojne hrvatske javne, privatne i neprofitne organizacije u kratkome roku uspješno organizirale kako bi pružile odgovarajuću potporu građanima. Pritom je velik broj stručnjaka prvi put u svoju praksu uveo pružanje *online* usluga, savjetovanja i terapija, što je produbilo već prisutnu raspravu o prednostima i nedostacima, odnosno izazovima u radu u *online* uvjetima.

Kao vanjski suradnik u Klinici za psihijatriju Vrapče vodim terapijsku grupu ambulantnih pacijenata koje mi upućuje psihijatrica Zavoda za psihoterapiju. Grupnu vodim pod supervizijom, u okviru izobrazbe iz grupne analize pri Institutu za grupnu analizu Zagreb (IGA). Grupa je od ožujka 2020., sukladno uvedenim epidemiološkim mjerama, nastavila rad u virtualnom okruženju, putem video-poziva. U ovom članku iznosimo iskustvo grupne *online* terapije u trajanju od četiri mjeseca. Razmatrat ćemo utjecaje virtualnog okruženja na određena grupna zbivanja poput *očuvanja grupnih granica, prevladavanja separacijske anksioznosti, tehničkih, komunikacijskih teškoća i drugih specifičnih pojava koje utječu na terapijski rad*, te ćemo

coincided with the start of the pandemic in Croatia, introduced additional trauma and fear to a situation that was already fraught with uncertainty. A systematic response from society to the new circumstances must include psychological and psychiatric considerations and especially interventions targeting the most vulnerable parts of society, which includes psychiatric patients (2). Numerous public, private, and non-profit organizations in Croatia rapidly organized to provide adequate support to the public. This included a large number of professionals introducing online services, consultation, and therapy, which deepened the already present discussion on the advantages and disadvantages as well as challenges in working in online conditions.

As an external associate at the Vrapče Psychiatry Clinic, I am in charge of an outpatient therapy group comprising patients who are referred to me by a psychiatrist at the Institute for Psychotherapy. I lead the group under supervision, within the framework of education in group analysis at the Zagreb Institute for Group Analysis. Based on the epidemiological measures that were introduced in Croatia, the group has been working in a virtual environment via video calls since March 2020. Herein we present our experience in online group therapy over 4 months. We will discuss the effects of the virtual environment on specific group dynamics such as *maintaining boundaries within the group, overcoming separation anxiety, technical and communication difficulties, and other unique factors that influence therapy work*, and we

iznijeti vlastito viđenje rada s „*online* grupom“. Ne ulazeći u primjerenost nazivlja, seanse koje su se provodile virtualnim putem uglavnom ćemo nazivati *online* terapijom, *online* seansama ili seansama u virtualnom okruženju.

Terapijska grupa započela je s radom u svibnju 2018. godine. Grupa se trenutčno sastoji od osam članova, pet muških članova i tri ženske članice, u rasponu dobi od 23 do 52 godine, sa smetnjama iz kruga anksiozno-depresivnih poremećaja koji su kod dijela članova u kombinaciji s dijagnozom iz spektra poremećaja ličnosti. Grupa je formirana u dogovoru s predstojnikom Zavoda za psihoterapiju te psihijatrima i psihoterapeutima koji prate članove grupe na individualnim psihijatrijskim kontrolnim pregledima. Putem videokonferencijskih poziva na aplikaciji Zoom od ožujka do ljetne stanke u srpnju 2020. održano je ukupno 17 seansi, s izvjesnim nastavkom virtualnog susretanja grupe i u idućem razdoblju. Termini održavanja susreta, vrijeme i dan u tjednu, ostali su isti kao i tijekom susreta uživo.

PRIKAZ UTJECAJA PRELASKA U VIRTUALNO OKRUŽENJE NA GRUPNI OKVIR

Redovitost prisutnosti i točnost članova

Svi su članovi grupe pozdravili ideju okupljanja grupe virtualnim putem.

will also present our own view of online group work. Setting any discussion of the appropriateness of the terms aside, sessions that took place in a virtual environment will mostly be referred to as online therapy, online sessions, or sessions in a virtual environment.

The therapy group started meeting in May 2018. The group currently comprises 8 members, 5 men and 3 women aged between 23 to 52, with issues from the sphere of anxiety-depressive disorders combined with a diagnosis of personality disorder in some members. The group was formed in coordination with the head of the Institute for Psychotherapy and the psychiatrists and psychotherapists who monitor the progress of group members through individual psychiatric checkups. We held a total of 17 sessions using the Zoom videoconferencing application between March 2020 and the summer pause in July, with plans to subsequently continue virtual group meetings in the following period. The weekly schedule and meeting times remained the same as in face-to-face meetings.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE EFFECTS OF MOVING TO A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT ON THE GROUP FRAMEWORK

Regularity of attendance and punctuality among the members

All group members welcomed the idea of virtual meetings. The condition for par-



Uvjet za sudjelovanje u *online* grupi bio je da članovi imaju osiguranu privatnost tijekom trajanja seansi i pristup računalu s kamerom, što su svi potvrdili da imaju. Ipak, najšutljiviji član grupe otkazao je svoje sudjelovanje u prvim dvjema *online* seansama te je prilikom drugog otkazivanja objasnio da se ne koristi internetom za takve namjene te da će se pridružiti grupi kada ponovo budu mogući susreti uživo. U razgovoru s voditeljicom grupe otkrio je da je i inače skeptičan prema ostavljanju osobnih podataka na internetu i nepovjerljiv prema bilo kakvoj platformi na kojoj bi se grupa sastajala, ali dojam je bio i da mu je neugodno nalaziti se s grupom putem videokonferencija. Nakon dodatnog motiviranja na sudjelovanje, uz poziv na razmišljanje o prednostima naspram mogućim rizicima *online* terapije, pristao je pridružiti se „virtualnoj grupi“. No upravo je on član s najviše izostanaka s *online* seansi (6 izostanaka), a na seansama uživo bio je jedan od najredovitijih članova. Što se tiče individualnih izostanaka ostalih članova grupe, oni su izostajali jednako često ili u manjoj mjeri u odnosu na seanse uživo, u rasponu od 1 – 3 izostanaka po članu. Grupa je u svojem cjelokupnom sastavu bila na ukupno pet seansi što je jednako prosjeku seansa uživo: svi članovi grupe prisutnosti su na otprilike trećini seansi.

Participation in the online group was that members could secure privacy during the sessions as well as access to a personal computer with a camera, and all members confirmed they could satisfy both conditions. However, the quietest member of the group cancelled his participation in the first two online sessions, stating at the time of the second cancellation that he did not use the internet for such purposes and that he would rejoin the group when face-to-face sessions were possible again. In conversation with the group leader, he revealed that he was generally skeptical about leaving personal data on the Internet and suspicious towards any platform that the group might meet on, but the impression was that he was uncomfortable with the idea of meeting the group via video conferences. After providing additional encouragement to participate and consider the advantages in comparison to the risks of online therapy, the patient agreed to join the virtual group. However, he was the member with the most absences from online sessions (6 absences), although he had been one of the most regular and punctual members in face-to-face sessions. As for individual absences in other group members, absences were equal or lower than in face-to-face sessions, ranging from 1 to 3 absences per member. The group had full participation for a total of 5 sessions, which was equal to the average in face-to-face sessions, where all group members are present in approximately a third of the sessions.

In face-to-face sessions, the excuses given for being late were often traffic and the distances group members had to travel

U seansama uživo isprika je za kašnjenja često bio promet, udaljenost članova od Klinike za psihijatriju Vrapče, a isprike za izostanke najčešće su bile poslovne obveze ili privatna putovanja članova te bolesti. Slične su isprike bile i tijekom *online* seansi. U početku održavanja *online* grupe dogovor je bio da se priključujemo pet minuta prije početka grupe, kako bismo se tehnički „uskладili“. Međutim, s vremenom, kako je grupa ovladala tehničkim uvjetima, neki su članovi prestali s tom praksom te bi se u grupu uključivali u vrijeme početka grupe do desetak minuta kasnije, kao što se znalo događati na seansama uživo. Dakle, grupni otpori i *acting out* situacije na sličan su se način nastavili i tijekom *online* seansi.

Tehničke teškoće povezane s virtualnim *settingom*

Grupa je tijekom prvih dviju seansa imala najviše tehničkih teškoća, zbog prilagođavanja članova aplikaciji putem koje su se održavale seanse. Stoga je velik dio vremena na tim grupama bio posvećen usklađivanju (da se svi uspiju čuti i vidjeti). Kasnije je grupu od tehničkih poteškoća najviše ometala jeka za koju se tek nakon nekog vremena prepoznalo da dolazi od mobitela jedne članice koji je jako emitirao zvuk jer članica nije rabila slušalice.

to get to the Vrapče Psychiatry Clinic, whereas the excuses for not attending the sessions were usually work obligations, private trips, or illness. Similar excuses were also used during the online sessions. At the start of the online sessions, the agreement was to connect to the video conference 5 minutes before the start of the session to address any technical issues. However, as the group gradually mastered the technical requirements, some group members dropped this practice and joined the video conference at session start or up to ten minutes later, as was known to happen in face-to-face sessions as well. Therefore, group resistance and acting out events continued in a similar fashion during online sessions as well.

Technical difficulties associated with the virtual setting

Technical difficulties were most prominent during the first two sessions, as members adapted to the application used to hold the meetings. A significant amount of time was dedicated to resolving technical issues in these two sessions (i.e. making sure everyone could see and hear each other). The technical issues the group found most distracting later on was an echo effect, subsequently identified as being caused by the mobile phone of one of the members emitting sound at a high volume because the member did not use earphones.

Technical factors – a good Internet connection, a safe application to use for online meetings, good quality devices, headphones, and a microphone – became an



Tehnički čimbenici – dobra internet-ska veza, sigurna aplikacija za sa-stanke, kvalitetan uređaj, slušalice i mikrofoni – postaju, dakle, dodatnim elementima *settinga* grupe u virtual-nom okruženju, koji utječu na kvalite-tu i fluentnost komunikacije: npr. kada istodobno govori više sudionika, neki od njih neće se čuti; tako i jeka, preki-di u internetskim vezama i sl. ometaju razgovor.

Promjene u komunikacijskim obrascima u *online* grupi

U početku su se članovi i voditeljica donekle brinuli kako će teći komuni-kacija, kako će govoriti a da si ne upadaju u riječ, hoće li biti narušena spontanost razgovora, tako važna u analitičkom okviru. Bilo je prijedloga voditeljici „najbolje da nas vi prozivate!“ kao i „oni koji ne pričaju, neka utišaju mikrofoni“. Međutim, grupa je ubrzo shvatila da uz male prilagodbe može komunicirati bez većih teškoća. Grupa je znala komentirati kako im nedostaje neverbalni izražaj cijelog tijela kojim bi netko npr. dao znak da želi nešto reći ili da se osjeća uznemireno, uzbuđeno i slično. S druge strane, članovi bi isticali kako im ekran omogućuje da sve članove vide istodobno i izbliza čime imaju priliku proučiti izraze lica i na temelju njih zaključiti kako se tko osjeća te bi to često komentirali.

additional element of the group setting in the virtual environment that influenced the quality and fluency of the communi-cation: e.g., if multiple participants spoke at the same time, some of them would not be heard, while echo effects, interrup-tions in Internet connections, etc., could also disrupt conversations.

Changes in communication patterns in the online group session

At first, the members and group leader were somewhat worried about how com-munication in online sessions will work, how members will be able to speak with-out interrupting one another, and wheth-er the spontaneity of the conversation, which is so important in an analytical framework, would be disrupted. It was suggested to the group leader that she should indicate whose turn it is to speak and that those who are not speaking should mute their microphones. Howev-er, the group soon realized that only small adjustments were needed to achieve communication without any major dif-ficulties. Group members commented that they missed nonverbal expressions and body language involving the whole body by which members would indicate, for instance, that they wanted to say to say something or that they were feeling upset, excited, etc. On the other hand, group members also pointed out that the screen allowed them to see all the group members simultaneously and up-close, giving them an opportunity to study their

Dojam je da se trud oko toga da se svi uspiju čuti i razumjeti pozitivno utjecao na komunikacijsku kulturu u grupi: članovi više paze je li nekome omaškicom oduzeta riječ, je li zbog tehničkih teškoća nečiji komentar ostao „prigušen“, a grupa češće zastajkuje kako bi provjerila komunikaciju.

Održavanje granica u *online settingu*

Članovi su se u grupu uglavnom uključivali iz svojih domova. Povremeno bi pojedini članovi bili na poslu u vrijeme trajanja grupe, ali bi, dok je trajao tzv. *lockdown*, mogli neometano sudjelovati. Kasnije, u trenutku kada su potrebe njihova posla počele kolidirati s potrebama i radom grupe, prestali su s praksom javljanja s radnog mjesta. Povremeno bi se netko u seanse uključio i tijekom boravka u nekom drugom mjestu, tijekom godišnjeg odmora, ako bi imao uvjeta za to.

Javljanje iz različitih životnih prostora imalo je utjecaj na grupni okvir i ponašanje članova. Povremeno bi u prostor članova slučajno ulazili ukućani i ljubimci te je grupa imala prilike vidjeti likove iz njihova života o kojima se na grupi do tada pričalo i fantaziralo. Primjetno je da su u *online* obliku provođenja grupe članovi opušteniji u svojoj vizualnoj prezentaciji pred grupom: ženske članice u *online* seansama

facial expressions and use them to form conclusions on how other members felt, which they would often comment upon.

The impression was that efforts towards everyone being able to hear and understand one another positively influenced the communication culture in the group: the members were more aware of whether someone had been accidentally interrupted or if someone's comment was "muted" due to technical difficulties, and the group would take more frequent pauses to check the quality of the communication.

Maintaining boundaries in the *online setting*

Members mostly joined the online group meetings from their own homes. Occasionally, individual members would be at work at the time of the meetings, but they could participate without any issues during the "lockdown". As their work requirements eventually started to conflict with the needs and schedule of the group, the practice of joining the meetings from the workplace was abandoned. Participants would occasionally join the sessions from a different location, such as from a vacation-related trip, if they were able to do so.

Participating in the meeting from different locations and living arrangements had some effects on the group framework and member behavior. Housemates and pets would sometimes accidentally enter the space of the group members, allowing the group to witness characters from the members' lives that were previously only



znale su prisustvovati nenašminkane, manje „pedantnih“ frizura, članovi su bili manje pozorni na svoje odjevne kombinacije, povremeno bi netko bio u pidžami ili čak donjem rublju (dok je član namještao kameru, dogodilo se da je kamera prikazala donji dio tijela).

Osjećaj opuštenosti istodobno se širio i u odnosu na određena grupna pravila i granice: članovi bi ustajali sa stolca (npr. odlazili po slušalice), na trenutke bi ih netko ometao pa bi se obraćali ukućanima, ponekad bi popili gutljaj vode/kave, činilo se da su tu i tamo pogledali kakvu poruku na mobitelu ili sadržaj na internetu dok su istodobno slušali i razgovarali s grupom, jedna je članica jednom lakirala nokte (dok je grupa nije upozorila) itd. Nekoliko članova bilo je u poluležećem položaju za vrijeme trajanja seansi, na kauču, poduprto jastucima. Komentirali su kako je udobnije razgovarati u takvu položaju u odnosu na sjedenje na čvrstim stolicama, što je voditeljica shvatila kao otpor prema ozbiljnom radu te je i njezina intervencija bila usmjerena na komentar kako nas stolci podsjećaju na rad. Nakon toga član koji je najviše bio komforan tijekom grupa nastavio je sudjelovati u grupi u sjedećem položaju. Sve su to primjeri koji ukazuju na važnost još većeg usmjerivanja terapeuta na očuvanje grupnih pravila i granica što sličnijim onima u stvarnim uvjetima kako bi se očuvao gru-

talked and fantasized about. It is notable that group members were more relaxed in their visual presentation during online sessions: female participants would sometimes take part in online sessions without makeup and with less carefully maintained hairstyles, members were generally less attentive about their dress styles, and members would occasionally join in pajamas or even in underwear (this happened while a male member adjusted the camera, which showed the lower part of his body).

The relaxed attitude also spread to certain group rules and boundaries: members would get up from their chairs (e.g. to get headphones), they would be momentarily distracted by someone in their environment and would address their housemates, they would occasionally take a drink of water/coffee, would appear to occasionally view a message on their phone or contents on the Internet while talking to the group, one female member engaged in painting her nails during the session (until admonished by the group), etc. Several members were in a semi-reclining position during the sessions, on a couch supported by pillows. They remarked it was more comfortable than talking while sitting on hard chairs, which the group leader interpreted as resistance to serious work, and her intervention was aimed at saying that chairs were a reminder of work obligations. The member that was most relaxed about his reclining position during the group sessions subsequently switched to participating in a sitting position. All these examples indicate the even greater importance of the therapist's

pnoanalitički *setting*. Ako je terapeut donekle popustljiv prema članovima, izostaje pravodobno terapijsko razumijevanje nesvjesne potrebe grupe da je voditelj očuva od „izlaska“ iz njezinih ustaljenih okvira, upravo zato što je u virtualnom okruženju teže biti uronjen u grupni proces, kao što se dogodilo s prikazanom grupom, dok granice upravo tada dolaze do izražaja kao čuvari *settinga*. To je kasnije imalo za posledicu dodatno probijanje granica (npr. neki su članovi sve češće pili kavu na grupi) i višekratne rasprave o grupnom okviru.

U slučaju prezentirane grupe postoji i suprotan utjecaj virtualnog okruženja u odnosu na grupne granice: naime, grupa je i prije virtualnih seansi imala problem u kršenju grupnih normi, u smislu sastajanja u kafiću nakon terapijskih seansi (paralelna grupa). Članovi koji su prethodno imali iskustvo hospitalizacije ili dnevne bolnice, kada su se družili s pacijentima i izvan terapija, motivirali su ostatak grupe na druženje i nakon grupnoanalitičkih seansi. Druženja su shvaćali kao opuštanje i prorađivanje teških osjećaja nakon terapije uz razgovor o neobveznim temama koje se ne odnose na terapiju. Iako se o važnosti neostvarivanja osobnih kontakata izvan grupe razgovaralo na individualnim intervjuima i u raznim prilikama na grupi te unatoč tome što su određeni članovi ipak shvatili na

focus on maintaining group rules and boundaries that resemble those in face-to-face sessions in order to preserve the group analytic setting. If the therapist is somewhat lenient towards the members, there will be a lack of timely understanding of the unconscious need of the group for the therapist to prevent it from “leaving” its established framework due to the fact that it is harder to be immersed in the group process in a virtual environment, as was the case with the group described herein, and boundaries function as guardians of the setting in such circumstances. This later resulted in additional boundary breakdowns (e.g. some members would drink coffee during the group with increasing frequency) and repeated discussions about the group framework.

The virtual environment also had effects in the opposite direction with regard to group boundaries: even before starting virtual sessions, the group had issues with violating group norms by meeting in a café after the sessions (parallel groups). Members who had previously been hospitalized or spent time in the day hospital socialized with other patients outside the confines of therapy sessions, and subsequently motivated the rest of the group to also spend time together after the group therapy. They considered such socialization to be a chance to relax and process difficult feelings after therapy by discussing lighter subject unrelated to therapy. Although the importance of not maintaining contacts outside group therapy was discussed at individual interviews and on different occasions during the group sessions, and



koji način je moguća kontaminacija terapijskog učinka – u smislu da bi bilo dobro s terapije otići upravo s određenim tenzijama, neprorađenim osjećajima, pitanjima i dvojabama – grupa se nije uspjela odreći „ugode“ neformalnih druženja i grupni *acting out* nije se uspio proraditi. Analizom dinamike grupe i psihodinamičkih značajki njezinih članova unutar supervizijske grupe došli smo do zaključka da su, među ostalim, teškoće s poštovanjem granica odgađale daljnje faze rasta grupe i obrnuto: razvojne faze grupe rezultirale su održavanjem *acting out* situacija i prezentacije grupnog otpora. Naime, i nakon dvije godine terapije grupa nije u cijelosti završila proces detronizacije i ulaska u intimizaciju. U *online* okruženju neformalni susreti grupe su izostali. U tom smislu virtualni *setting* je facilitirao članovima dublje uranjanje u iskustvo *settinga* grupne analize kakav ona i traži da bi bila učinkovita, što je imalo svojevrstan utjecaj na rast grupe.

SADRŽAJ SEANSA I ODNOSI ČLANOVA UNUTAR VIRTUALNOG *SETTINGA*

Kratki prikaz sadržaja prvih 10 *online* seansi

Kako je prva grupa održana odmah nakon potresa u Zagrebu, tema grupe bila

despite the fact that certain members did understand how this can contaminate the therapeutic effect – in the sense that it may actually be beneficial to leave therapy with certain tensions, unprocessed feelings, questions, and dilemmas – the group was unable to forgo the “comfort” of informal socialization, and the group acting out was not successfully processed. Analyzing the group dynamics and the psychodynamic characteristics of its members in the supervision group, we concluded that, among other things, the difficulties with respecting boundaries had delayed the next stages in group growth and vice versa: the developmental stages of the group resulted in the acting out behavior and the presentation of group resistance. Namely, the group was not able to fully conclude the process of dethronement and enter the cohesiveness phase even after two years of therapy. The informal meetings did not take place when the group moved to the virtual environment. In this respect, the virtual setting helped group members become more deeply immersed in the experience of the group analytic setting in the form it requires to be effective, which had some beneficial effects on group growth.

SESSION CONTENTS AND MEMBER RELATIONSHIPS IN THE VIRTUAL SETTING

Short overview of the first 10 online sessions

Since the first group session took place in the aftermath of the Zagreb earthquake, the

je prorada osjećaja povezanih najviše s potresom, a zatim s koronavirusom i prilagođavanju novonastalim okolnostima. Neki članovi grupe primijetili su pogoršanje psihičkog stanja u svojim ukućana, koji inače imaju psihičkih teškoća pa su bili dodatno frustrirani i imali potrebu proraditi svoju ljutnju, bespomoćnost, razočaranje i istražiti vlastite potrebe u odnosima s tim članovima obitelji. Slijedom toga, na nekoliko idućih seansi (3 – 4) razgovaralo se o granicama u odnosima, kada reći „ne“ i kako se s time osjećamo. Teme su se s vremenom premjestile na partnerske odnose i što članovi od njih traže, je li moguće naći zrelog i odgovarajućeg partnera te jesu li veze nužno osuđene na propast ako se tražimo po „ključu patologije“. Tijekom tih seansi povremeno se pojavljivala tema seksualnosti (koja već neko vrijeme nije bila prisutna u seansama uživo), iako prilično diskretno i sramežljivo. Grupa se doticala i pitanja savjesti, grijeha prošlosti, povreda koje su članovi drugima nanijeli, želje za promjenom i promišljanjem o vlastitom napretku, moralnih vrijednosti (težnja za nematerijalnim, želja za zaštitom bespomoćnih...). Grupa je u više navrata razgovarala i o međusobnim odnosima, grupnoj dinamici, povijesti grupe.

Dakle i sadržaj grupnih seansi doticao se onoga s čime se grupa sama suočavala suočiti unutar grupe (granice u

topic the session focused on was processing the feelings related to the earthquake, the coronavirus, and adaptation to the new circumstances. Some group members had observed deterioration in the mental states of their housemates who already had mental issues, causing the group members additional frustration and a consequent need to process that anger, helplessness, and disappointment as well as explore their own needs in their relationships with these family members. Discussion on this topic was continued in several subsequent sessions (3-4), when the group talked about boundaries in relationships, how to say “no”, and about feelings related to these topics. The discussion eventually shifted to relationships with the members’ partners and what the partners expected of them, whether it was possible to find a mature and adequate partner, and whether relationships are doomed to failure if we search for partners based on a “pathology key”. The topic of sexuality came up occasionally during these sessions (which had been absent for some time in face-to-face sessions), although in a fairly discrete and shy manner. The group also touched upon questions of conscience, sins of the past, hurt that group members inflicted on others, the desire for change, and deliberations on personal progress and moral values (the striving for non-material goals, the desire to protect the helpless, etc.). On several occasions, the group discussed relationships in the group itself as well as group dynamics and the history of the group.

As we can see, the contents of the group sessions also touched upon things the



odnosima na grupi, simpatije i antipatije na grupi, mogućnost opstanka i budući razvoj grupe, potreba za zaštitom, osjećaj bespomoćnosti....) te je radije te teme prenosila na neke izvanjske situacije „tamo i ondje“. Međutim, na neki je način to bila i uvertira u buduće sadržaje i događaje na grupi.

Tijekom devete i desete *online* seanse šutnja na grupi bila je izraženija i češća, kao da je označivala traganje grupe za nečim novim u grupi – odgovorom na pitanje „što sada kada smo si dobri i znamo puno jedni o drugima“. Neki su šutnju opravdavali svojim zamorom i otporom prema virtualnim susretima: „nije im se dalo“ sudjelovati kao pri susretima uživo. Anksioznost nastalu uslijed šutnje grupa je pokušala umanjiti „prozivkama“ i to u nekoliko seansi: članovi bi poticali jedni druge da redom ukratko ispričaju što se u svakoga trenutačno događa u životu, a odgovori bi sličili na kratke, bezlične izvještaje. Grupa se trudila biti „dobrom“ grupom, punom razumijevanja i potpore jednih za druge, u kojoj nema potrebe za konfliktima (odnosno konflikti su se doživljavali kao prijatna). Grupa je bila u otporu prema novome, nepoznatome i potencijalno prijetećem. Kao da se ponovo vratila na početak rada kako bi se mogla obračunati s autoritetima.

Opisan sadržaj i pojave u dosadašnjem tijeku *online* grupe tipični su za počeo-

group was reluctant to face within the group itself (relationship boundaries in the group, liking and disliking others in the group, the survival and future development of the group, the need for protection, the feeling of helplessness, etc.), while preferring to transfer these topics to external situations “then and there”. In a way, however, this was also an overture to future content and events in the group.

Silences were more common and pronounced during the 9th and 10th online session, seemingly indicating the search for something new – an answer to the question “now that we have good relationships and know a lot about each other, what do we talk about?” Some members justified their silence by citing their exhaustion and resistance to online sessions: they “didn’t feel like” participating as actively as in face-to-face sessions. The group tried to reduce the anxiety that developed due to the silences by “calling out” other members to speak over several sessions: members would encourage each other to briefly describe what was happening in every member’s life, but the responses were short, unemotional reports. The group tried to be a “good group”, full of understanding and support for each other and one in which there was no need for conflicts (i.e. conflicts would be seen as a threat). The group was resisting new, unknown, and thus potentially threatening content. It was as if the group had regressed back to the starting point in order to have a reckoning with the sources of authority.

The contents and phenomena described above are common for the starting phase

tak grupnog rada te se ovdje manifestiraju kao značajke paralelne faze razvoja grupe: ako grupa nije odradila krizu autoriteta na pravi način, u paralelnoj fazi događa se ponavljanje s tipičnim pojavljivanjem konflikta koji kulminira oko 11. – 14. seanse kada se kriza treba razriješiti.

Online seanse 11. – 13.

Na 11. seansi pojavljuje se grupna fantazija koja je uvela grupu u buduću prorađu nekih negativnih transfera. U raspravi o godišnjim odmorima članova grupe i planiranju ljetne stanke nastala je fantazija da cijela grupa ljetuje zajedno. Razgovaralo se o tome kako bi se svi slagali i dogovarali oko praktičnih obveza, dok jedan član, Luka, vrlo intelektualne i narcističke strukture osobnosti, nije izjavio: „A ne, mislim da bi to malo drukčije izgledalo da smo zajedno na godišnjem. Možda bismo promijenili mišljenje jedni o drugima. Mislim da je sve krasno kada smo kratko zajedno, ali kada si s nekime 24 sata dnevno, nema šanse da ne dođe do neke trzavice.“ Netko komentira „Pa što da i dođe do trzavica, to je normalno.“ Luka naglašava: „Ljudi, nemojte me podcjenjivati!“ Na pitanje voditeljice koliko to znači da neke stvari ne možemo otvoreno reći u grupi, Luka odgovara kako ne želi pokazati svoju mračnu stranu jer kada bi do toga došlo, ne bi

of group analysis, and manifested here as characteristics of this parallel phase in group development: if the group has not processed the authority crisis phase in the right way, the parallel phase represents a repetition of the crisis with typical emergence of a conflict that culminated around session 10 to 14, when the crisis is to be resolved.

Online sessions 11-13

A group fantasy emerged during the 11th session that led the group to processing some instances of negative transference in the future. When discussing the group members' vacations and plans for the summer break, a fantasy emerged of the whole group spending summer vacation together. They talked about how everyone would get along and agree on practical responsibilities, until Luka, a very intellectual member of the group with a narcissistic personality structure, said: “no, I think it would be different if we were on vacation together. We might change our opinions of each other. I think everything is wonderful when we are together for short periods of time, but when you spend 24 hours a day with someone there's no way there wouldn't be any fights”. Someone commented: “So what if there are fights, that's normal”. Luka exclaimed: “people, don't underestimate me!” When the group leader asked to what extent this meant that some things could not be said openly in the group, Luka responded that he does not want to show his dark side, because if he did,



se pojavio na idućoj seansi zbog srama. Marta mu jasno poručuje: „Luka, isprobaj me. Ti ne možeš biti toliko loš prema meni da se ja radi toga osjećam toliko loše radi tebe“, a cijela grupa šalje poruku spremnosti da prihvati Luku u njegovoj cijelosti i naglašava kako njegove „loše strane“ ne mogu narušiti grupnu povezanost.

Na 12. seansi grupa ponovo pita Luku što je ustvari mislio pod time da ne želi grupi reći sve što misli. Luka objasni da kada bi govorio sve što mu padne na pamet, to bi bila „katastrofa“ pa se radije suzdrži – ne želi da si je na grupi s nekime na „pas mater“ te u daljnjoj raspravi poručuje grupi da kada bi si dopustio reći i učiniti sve što misli, morao bi nekoga „odalamiti“, iako nije za fizičke sukobe. Voditeljica je zajedno s još nekim članovima istaknula kako se na Luki vidi kada negoduje, ali se suzdržava od komentara pred grupom. Grupa pita Luku je li moguće na drukčiji način izraziti neslaganje i negodovanje te i ostali članovi navode kako ponekad imaju potrebu iskazati svoje frustracije na grupi, ali ističu važnost asertivnosti u komunikaciji. Komentar voditeljice: „Kada na grupi shvatimo da možemo na drukčiji način rješavati sukobe, tada to možemo prenijeti i na druge sredine«, potiče članove da uz vlastite primjere i primjere iz prošlosti grupe Luki poruče da je u redu na grupi moći izraziti se, da se na grupi može biti izravan

he would not show up on the following session out of shame. Marta voiced her disagreement: “Luka, try me. You can’t act so badly towards me that I would feel so bad because of you”, and the whole group agreed that they were ready to accept Luka and all facets of his personality, emphasizing that his “bad sides” cannot endanger the bond within the group.

During the 12th session, the group asked Luka to explain what he meant by saying that he does not want to tell the group everything he thinks. Luka explained that if he were to say everything that crossed his mind, it would be a “disaster”, so he prefers to restrain himself – he did not want to trade insults with anyone in the group, and told the group in the following discussion that if he allowed himself to say and do everything that crossed his mind he would have to “punch” someone, although he is against physical conflicts. Together with some other group members, the group leader pointed out that one can tell when Luka disapproves of something but is refraining from commenting in front of the group. The group asked Luka if he could express his disagreement and disapproval in a different way, and other members also stated that they sometimes also feel the need to express their frustrations in group but emphasized the importance of assertiveness in communication. The group leader commented: “when the group helps us learn to resolve conflicts in a different way, we can use that in different settings as well”, and group members were encouraged to share their own experiences and examples from the past

bez narušavanja međusobnih odnosa. Marta istakne: „Ja sam već rekla da mene grupa čini boljom u smislu da se ovdje ne moram suzdržavati, mogu reći što mislim, ali opet pazim da nekoga ne povrijedim... da znam da mi nitko neće uzvratiti loše i nitko me nema namjeru povrijediti, da mogu biti slobodna.« Nenad govori Luki: „Kako ćeš ti biti bolje ako ovdje ne vježbaš. Mi ti svi dajemo zeleno svjetlo da ti budemo vježbalište!“ Voditeljica je prije završetka grupe naglasila kako grupa pokazuje kapacitet za toleranciju i može dopustiti da doživi i preživi trenutke tenzije (dakle, da može *kontejnirati* agresiju).

Do 13. seanse više se puta i sve češće pojavljivalo pitanje povratka u Kliniku, u fizički prostor grupe, s obzirom na to da je epidemija u tom razdoblju jenjavala te su i tenzije grupe rasle, zajedno s maštanjem o povratku ili čak unajmljivanju nekog prostora za susrete. Otvoreno je pitanje koliko se grupa osjeća sporednom grupom u okviru programa bolnice i ostavljenom po strani, ali i koliko je teško grupi biti dispergiranom. Povremeno su se napadali liječnici, terapeuti i autoriteti koji ne znaju na vrijeme prepoznati „bolesti“ pacijenata ili se ne znaju nositi s pandemijom. Grupa mašta o tome da voditeljica grupe „sje kirom razbija barikade“ i tako omogućiti grupi da se ponovo sastane u prostoru Klinike. Voditeljica daje do znanja da razumije frustraciju grupe, ali istodob-

to show Luka that it is all right to express oneself in the group and that one can be direct without damaging interpersonal relationships. Marta said: “I’ve already said that the group makes me better because I do not have to restrain myself here, I can say what I think but I still take care not to hurt someone... since I know that no one will respond badly and no one wants to hurt my feelings, I can be free.” Nenad told Luka: “How will you get better if you don’t practice here? All of us give you the green light to use us as a training ground!” Towards the end of the session, the group leader emphasized that the group has shown a capacity for tolerance and can allow itself to experience and survive moments of tension (i.e. that it can contain aggression).

By the 13th session, the question of returning to the Clinic and face-to-face sessions came up repeatedly and with increasing frequency, given that the epidemic seemed to be winding down while group tensions were growing, together with fantasies of returning or even renting a physical meeting space. The group discussed how they felt like a group that was marginalized and abandoned within the program of the hospital, as well as the difficulties stemming from the group being dispersed. Members occasionally spoke out against physicians, therapists, and authorities who did not know how to recognize the “diseases” their patients had or how to handle the pandemic. The group fantasized about the group leader “using an axe to break down the barricade” and thus allow the group to once again meet



no propušta otvoriti nesvjesnu ljutnju grupe na nju samu, što dovodi do eskalacije u idućoj seansi.

Četrnaesta *online* seansa

Nekoliko dana prije te seanse napokon je bio dogovoren povratak grupe u Kliniku. No istodobno se tijekom tih dana dogodio ponovni porast broja zaraženih što je značilo da se vanjske grupe i dalje nisu mogle održavati u prostorima Klinike i grupa je dan prije seanse obaviještena o otkazivanju susreta uživo.

Četrnaesta seansa bila je obilježena *acting outom* u obliku Lukina izlivanja bijesa. On je već na početku seanse izrazio ljutnju rekavši kako se zasitio *online* seansi, ali i kako ga najviše ljuti to što radi nekoliko pacijenata zatvaramo sve kao tijekom prvog *lockdowna* te je nastavio s poduljim napadom na liječnike i političare. Nenad je pokušao Luki objasniti zašto je to tako, opisujući kako funkcionira zdravstveni sustav u vrijeme pandemije. Lukin bijes bio je pojačan voditeljčinim individualnim intervencijama kojima ga je pokušala potaknuti da iskaže pozadinski razlog svoje ljutnje (ljutnja na voditeljicu koju još uvijek nije izravno izražavao, uz ljutnju na nastavak *online* seansi), a onda i Tomislavovim komentarom „Ajde, vas dvojica o tome pričajte na kavi!“, kojim je htio dokončati dugačak

in the Clinic. The group leader made it clear that she understood the group's frustrations, but simultaneously failed to broach the topic of the unconscious anger of the group towards her, which led to escalation in the next session.

Online session 14

A few days before this session, the return of the group to the Clinic had finally been arranged. However, the number of infected also increased once again over the course of those few days, which meant that outpatient groups still could meet in the Clinic, and the group was notified that the face-to-face meeting was cancelled the day before the session.

The 14th session was marked by Luka acting out by erupting in anger. As soon as the session started, he expressed his anger by saying that he had had enough of online sessions and that he was angry everything was being locked down because a few patients, just like during the first lockdown, and talked against doctors and politicians for a long time. Nenad tried to explain to Luka why this was taking place, describing the functioning of the healthcare system during the pandemic. Luka's anger was exacerbated by the group leader's individual interventions through which she tried to encourage him to express the unexpressed reasons for his anger (the anger at the group leader that he was still not expressing directly, in addition to anger due to the continuation of online sessions) and also by Tomislav's comment: "Why don't the two of you talk

dijalog Nenada i Luke. Luka je napao Tomislava: „Sori, što želiš reći da su ovo nevažni razgovori? Ako je meni to važno, zašto ja o tome ne bih pričao? Pa meni su mnogi tvoji komentari trivijalni, samo ti to nisam davao do znanja.“ Luka i dalje nije odustajao od svoje potrebe razgovora o temi te u trenutku kada mu je voditeljica ukazala na to da ga je grupa strpljivo slušala, ali i da je dobro da se na grupi svi možemo izraziti kako se osjećamo, Luka je planuo: „Meni je stvarno više dosta. Meni ovo nema smisla, ja ne mogu više biti na grupi. Već neko vrijeme ima puno stvari koje me živciraju na grupi, ali ne želim ih reći. Ja više ne mogu ovdje biti. Ovdje sjediti sat i pol – bezveze!“ Zaprijetio je izlaskom iz grupe, što grupa nije doživjela kao stvarnu prijetnju, već ga je zajedno s voditeljicom pozvala da progovori o stvarima koje ga ljute. Tek nakon rasprave o tome kako je tko koga doživio na današnjoj grupi Luka je priznao da je danas bio ljut na mnogo stvari, među ostalim, na grupu i voditeljicu. Prije kraja izjavio je da on ne vidi grupu kao cjelinu, nego kao „skup pojedinaca“ te mu je smiješno kada voditeljica o grupi govori kao o zasebnom entitetu.

Online seansa 15. – 17.

Na idućoj seansi tijekom prorade *acting outa* Luka je uspio izraziti svoje

about this over coffee!”, with which he tried to end the long dialogue between Nenad and Luka. Luka attacked Tomislav: “Sorry, are you trying to say these conversations don’t matter? If this is important to me, why wouldn’t I talk about it? I’ve thought many of your comments were trivial, but I didn’t say anything”. Luka did not stop trying to continue talking about the topic, and when the group leader pointed out that the group had listened to him patiently but that it is good if everyone can express how they feel in group, Luka burst into anger: “I’ve really had enough. This doesn’t make sense any more, I can’t attend group therapy any more. For some time now there have been many things that irritate me in the group, but I cannot talk about them. I can’t be here anymore. Sitting here for an hour and a half – it’s pointless!” He threatened to leave the group, which the group did not see as a real threat and instead, together with the group leader, invited him to talk about the things that make him angry. Only after the discussion on how group members perceived one another during the current session, Luka admitted that he was angry at many things today, including the group and the group leader. Towards the end of the session, he said he did not view the group as a whole but rather as a “gathering of individuals”, and that he finds it silly when the group leader talks about the group as a distinct entity.

Online sessions 15-17

While processing his acting out during the next session, Luka managed to ex-



primjedbe na grupu na smireniji način. Voditeljici je poručio kako njezin pristup ponekad doživljava „nacističkim“ u smislu da određuje što se na grupi smije, a što ne smije govoriti (npr. kada skreće pozornost sa sadržaja na odnose i procese u grupi). Nakon što je voditeljica istaknula kako je za grupu esencijalno razgovarati o međusobnim odnosima i doživljajima, Luka je izjavio da je tek sada shvatio kako su na grupi i sami odnosi „lječidbeni“. Grupa je imala potrebu i na sljedećoj seansi prorađivati temu međusobnih odnosa, na koji način može komunicirati iskreno i asertivno, a Luka je iskazao svoju namjeru da se pokuša prilagoditi grupi. Uslijedila je posljednja seansa prije ljetne stanke koja je protekla u pozitivnome tonu.

Opisani tijek događaja koji je eskalirao *acting outom* bio je posljedica različitih utjecaja i čini se da je za prezentiranu grupu imao prijelomnu ulogu u njezinu rastu u toj fazi rada. Rastuća separacijska anksioznost zbog nemoćnosti susreta uživo te nastavka virtualnih seansi, anksioznost zbog vanjskih okolnosti i neizvjesnosti njihovih ishoda te problemi unutar grupe – otpor prema konfliktima i međusobnim konfrontacijama, problemi s grupnim granicama – utjecali su na člana koji je manifestirao bijes kumulativno i osobito intenzivno tijekom 14. seanse. Voditeljica je, umjesto sa-

press his objections to the group in a calmer way. He told the group leader that he sometimes perceives her approach as “fascistic” in the sense that she decides what the group is and is not allowed to talk about (e.g. when she directs attention away from the contents of discussion and towards the relationships and processes in the group). After the group leader emphasized that it was essential for the group to talk about the relationships and experiences within the group, Luka said he was only now realizing that the relationships themselves are “healing” in group therapy. The group felt the need to process the topic of group relationships on the next session as well, discussing how to communicate sincerely and assertively, and Luka expressed his intent to try to adjust to the group. This was followed by the last session before the summer break, which ended on a positive note.

The course of events described above escalated with an instance of a member acting out, which was the consequence of various influences and which seemed to have a crucial role in the growth of the group in this stage of treatment. The growing separation anxiety due to not being able to meet face-to-face and continuing the virtual sessions, anxiety due to external circumstances and their uncertain outcomes, as well as problems within the group – resistance towards conflict and confrontations, issues with group boundaries – had a cumulative and especially strong effect on the group member who expressed his rage during the 14th session. The group leader, instead of containing

državanja agresije i usmjerivanja na grupu, intervencije usmjerila individualno čime je potencirala unutarnju napetost člana. No grupa je potvrdila svoj kapacitet *containinga* te je uspjele prevladati rizičnu situaciju na način da ju je iskoristila za pronalazak novog smisla grupnog rada za kojim je tragala. Uz to, promjena *settinga* grupu je potaknula na vraćanje na simbolički početak njezina rada te je tijekom opisana četiri mjeseca imala priliku ponovo proživjeti grupne procese, krize i faze koje nije do kraja razriješila u seansama uživo.

RASPRAVA

Doživljaj grupnog *settinga* u virtualnom okruženju

Izostanak stvarnog prostora koji ujedini članove u grupno iskustvo te izostanak kruga unutar kojeg se članovi promatraju u cjelokupnoj svojoj fizičkoj pojavi, uključujući kontakt „oči u oči“, predstavlja znatnu promjenu *settinga* kod prelaska u virtualno okruženje.

Prednosti su *online settinga* dostupnost terapije članovima i u uvjetima u kojima to ne bi bilo moguće u redovitom *settingu*, što omogućuje kontinuitet i povećava mogućnost prisutnosti članova (u slučaju pre-

the aggression and focusing on the group, performed individual interventions, which exacerbated the inner tension in this member. However, the group affirmed its capacity for containment and managed to overcome this risky situation by using it to find the new purpose it had been seeking in group therapy. Additionally, the change in the setting encouraged the group to symbolically return to the starting phase of group therapy and use the 4 months described above to relive the group processes, crises, and stages that had not been fully resolved in face-to-face sessions.

DISCUSSION

Experiencing the group setting in a virtual environment

The lack of a physical space uniting the members in a group experience and the absence of the group circle in which members can fully observe one another's physical appearance, including making eye contact, represent a significant change in setting when moving to a virtual environment.

The advantages of the online setting are the availability of therapy, including scheduling which would not be possible in the regular setting, which on the one hand allows for improved continuity and increases patient attendance (in the group presented herein, this was not the case due to the group resistance described above, the unfinished de-thronement process and entry into the



zentirane grupe to nije bio slučaj zbog spomenutih otpora grupe, nedovršenog procesa detronizacije i ulaska u fazu bliskosti). S druge strane, komforno pristupanje grupi *online* putem potencijalno je i ometajuće jer omogućuje članovima da do posljednjeg treća obavljaju druge aktivnosti. Time su zakinuti za prijelazno, pripremno razdoblje (npr. spremanje za grupu, put do fizičke prostorije grupe) u kojem se psihološki pripremaju na seansu. Fizički prostor, putovanje do terapije i natrag te sjedenje u krugu dio je redovitog ritma, terapijske rutine, odnosno predstavlja strukturalne konstante analitičkog okvira (3) koje imaju svoje značenje u terapijskom procesu: pružaju osjećaj sigurnosti i povjerenja, omogućujući terapijski proces. U psihoanalizi se taj osnovni grupni okvir uspoređuje sa „psihološkom kožom“ koja omogućuje kontejniranje kaosa (3, 4, 5, 6). Stoga čežnja za povratkom na susrete uživo i grupne lamentacije oko toga, iako se mogu shvatiti kao otpor grupe, s druge strane predstavljaju razumljivu, stvarnu i opravdanu frustraciju koja podsjeća članove na narušenost terapijskog okvira i „normalnosti“ prijašnjeg načina života koji su pružali osjećaj sigurnosti, stabilnosti i relativne kontrole. Nemogućnost ostvarenja toga, kao i neizvjesnost kada će do toga uopće doći, povećava

cohesiveness phase). On the other hand, the leisurely approach to the sessions fostered by the online setting can be potentially distracting, since it allows group members to perform other activities until the last moment. This denies them the experience of the transitory period of preparation (e.g. preparing for the group, travelling to a different physical location, etc.), which allows group members to psychologically prepare for the session. The physical space, commuting to therapy and back, and sitting in a circle are all part of the regular rhythm and routine, representing the structural constants of the analytical framework (3) that have their role in the process of therapy: they provide a feeling of safety and trust and enable the process of therapy to take place. In psychoanalysis, this basic group framework is compared to a “psychological skin” that allows the containment of chaos (3, 4, 5, 6). Therefore, the desire to return to face-to-face sessions and the group lamentations on this topic can be interpreted as group resistance on the one hand, but can also be seen as representing an understandable, realistic, and justified frustration that reminds the members both of the disruption to the therapy framework and of the “normalcy” of their lives before the pandemic that provided them with feelings of safety, stability, and relative control. The inability to restore the latter and the feeling of uncertainty about when that will be possible results in increased anxiety and tension, which can later manifest and escalate in different ways during sessions if the group does not feel sufficiently safe and supported,

anksioznost i napetosti koje se mogu različito manifestirati i eskalirati na grupi ako se grupa ne osjeća dovoljno sigurnom i poduprtom, osobito od terapeuta. To nas pitanje dovodi do ne-strukturalne komponente analitičkog okvira koji uključuje ljudske elemente interakcije, osobito one koji se odnose na terapeutovo prihvaćanje, razumijevanje, anonimnost, interpretaciju i dr. (3). Terapeut ostaje važnim dijelom stabilnog *settinga* svojom pouzdanom prisutnošću i terapeutskom ulogom (7). Wotton također ističe kako, ako se želi prevladati tjeskobu koja dolazi s promjenom, nešto mora ostati predvidljivo. Naglašava kako se s promjenom lokacije održavanja grupe (i drugim neočekivanim događajima na grupi) može razviti strah od gubitka i dezintegracije (8), a Nitsun upozorava na prisutnost elemenata antigrupe u sličnim situacijama koje uzrokuju tjeskobu od potencijalnog raspada grupe, čak i kod visoko kohezivnih grupa te koji može voditi grupu u destrukciju, tj. u razvoj antigrupe (5). Koliko god taj proces bio težak za grupu i voditelja, ako je dobro kontejniran, dopušta i mogućnost ozdravljenja (8).

Osim promjene neposrednog fizičkog okruženja, ne treba zanemariti ni izostanak šireg fizičkog okruženja unutar kojeg se održavala terapijska grupa, u slučaju prezentirane grupe to je bila Klinika za psihijatriju. Kako

especially on part of the therapist. This issue brings us to the non-structural component of the analytical framework that includes elements of human interaction, especially those related to the therapist's acceptance, understanding, anonymity, interpretation, etc. (3). With their reliable presence and therapeutic role, the therapist represents an important element of a stable setting (7). Wotton also emphasizes that, if the anxiety that comes with change is to be overcome, something must remain predictable. He emphasizes that a change in location for group therapy (and other unexpected events in the group) can lead to fear of loss and disintegration (8), whereas Nitsun pointed out the existence of anti-group elements in similar situations that can cause anxiety related to the potential disintegration of the group, even in highly cohesive groups, and which can lead the group to destruction, i.e. to the development of an anti-group (5). On the other hand, no matter how hard this process of change may be for the group and the group leader, if it can be well-contained, it holds the potential to achieve healing within it (8).

In addition to changes in the immediate physical environment, we must also consider the lack of the broader physical environment in which the group therapy took place, which was the Psychiatry Clinic in the case of the present group. As Nitsun pointed out, the organization within which an analytical group is held also has a constant effect on how the group perceives itself in searching for its identity (5). All members of the presented group



ističe Nitsun, organizacija unutar koje se održava analitička grupa ima konstantan utjecaj na to kako grupa doživljava samu sebe u potrazi za vlastitim identitetom (5). Svi članovi prezentirane grupe bili su ambulanti pacijenti, od kojih su neki u prošlosti bili uključeni u dnevnu bolnicu ili su neko vrijeme bili hospitalizirani. Neminovno je da su se članovi grupe percipirali u kontekstu patologija i uloge pacijenata (5) te je prelazak na *online setting* proizveo separacijsku anksioznost, u smislu osjećaja odvojenosti od Klinike, osjećaja odbačenosti i zanemarenosti koji su se manifestirali u napadima na Kliniku i pitanjima zašto se zabranjuje održavanje grupe u prostoru Klinike. To je imalo i svoj pozitivan utjecaj, u smislu da je grupa dobila priliku osamostaliti se u odnosu na Kliniku, shvatiti da ima vlastite okvire i da funkcioniše kao zaseban entitet.

Vraćajući se na novost koju donosi virtualni okvir grupe – u njemu se grupa manifestira kao mozaik sličica (lica) na ekranu, a prvi put svaki član može promatrati sebe tijekom seanse. Ekran postaje posrednikom u uspostavi kontakta na grupi te je on, osim osobe i njezina prostora, fizički realniji od ostalih članova grupe. Teško je sveobuhvatno opisati na koji način takva percepcija grupe mijenja naš odnos s grupom: osjećamo

were outpatients, some of whom had previously been hospitalized or attended the day hospital. It was unavoidable for some members of the group to perceive themselves in the context of their pathologies and in the role of the patient (5), which led to the online setting causing separation anxiety in the sense of separation from the Clinic and feelings of abandonment and neglect that manifested in attacks on the Clinic and questioning the decision to prohibit group meetings in the physical space of the Clinic. On the other hand, this also had a positive influence by giving the group an opportunity to achieve independence in relation to the Clinic and realize that it has its own framework and can function as a distinct entity.

Returning to the novelty brought on by the virtual setting, one might say that the virtual setting results in the group manifesting as a mosaic of images (faces) on the screen, and members are suddenly able to see themselves on the screen during the session. The screen becomes an intermediary in achieving the contacts within the group and is, in addition to the person themselves and their surroundings, itself more physically real for the participant than the other members of the group it shows. It is hard to holistically describe the way in which such change in perception alters our relationship with the group: do we feel more powerful because other people are simply little "boxes" and thus less of a threat than when we meet them face-to-face, especially since we meet them on our "territory", i.e. from the safety of our home? Is it easier to talk about oneself and

li se moćnijima jer su osobe „kućice“ manja prijetnja nego kada ih susrećemo licem u lice i jer ih susrećemo na „svojem terenu“? Je li lakše govoriti o sebi i drugima dok znamo da nisu sve oči uprte u nas ili ne znamo gledaju li nas? Je li teže uspostaviti prisnost s osobama putem interneta nego uživo? Koliko smo suzdržani u smislu čuju li nas ostali članovi kućanstva? Imamo li osjećaj da nismo u stvarnoj grupi, nego je riječ o nekom surogatu što nam daje veću slobodu ponašati se kako se inače ne bismo ponašali na grupi? Koliko činjenica da se grupa održava na ekranu pruža osjećaj da je ekran okvir grupnih granica i pravila pa si u osobnom prostoru dopuštamo izići iz njih, kako su na neki način poručili članovi prezentirane grupe objašnjavajući zašto piju kavu tijekom *online* seansi?

Nepostojanje kontakta „oči u oči“ potiče regresiju i slobodne asocijacije, pridonosi smanjivanju otpora i pristupanju nesvjesnome (9, 10). U *online settingu* nema kruga, ali se „kućice“ izmjenjuju iz seanse u seansu pa i unutar iste seanse, i to različitim rasporedom kod svakog pojedinog člana. Uzimajući u obzir Matte-Blancovu ideju o „nesvjesnom okviru grupe“ i simetričnom razmišljanju koje je svojstveno području nesvjesnoga u kojem nema kontradikcija ni drugih ograničenja (područje slobodnih asocijacija),

others without everybody staring at us, or at least without us knowing whether we are being watched? Is it more difficult to establish intimacy with others over the internet than in face-to-face meetings? How much do we restrain ourselves because other members of our household might hear us? Do we feel we are not in a real group but rather in some sort of surrogate, giving us greater license to behave as we would not otherwise dare to behave in the group? How much does the fact that the group “takes place” on a screen create the feeling that the group boundaries and rules are framed by the screen, thus giving us license to overstep those boundaries in our personal space, as some members implied when explaining why they drink coffee during online sessions?

The lack of eye-to-eye contact encourages regression and free association and contributes to a reduction in resistance and in accessing the unconscious (9,10). There is no group circle in the online setting, but the “boxes” change from session to session and even during the course of a single session, with every member seeing a different arrangement. Considering Matte-Blanc’s idea of the “unconscious group setting” and the symmetrical way of thinking that is characteristic of the space of the unconscious, where there are no contradictions or other limitations (the space of free associations), which are delineated in the circular seating arrangement in the group session (11), we might ask whether something similar takes place in the virtual setting, itself a non-physical, non-static space, in which the spontaneous changes



a koji se ocrtavaju u kružnom rasporedu sjedenja na grupi (11), možemo postaviti pitanje događa li se slično i u virtualnom *settingu* koji je sam po sebi nefizički, nestatičan prostor, a spontano izmjenjivanje „rasporeda“ kućica na ekranu dodatno podsjeća na područje nesvjesnoga (san, fantazije) u kojem je sve moguće. Autori navode i kako je zbog nedostatka dijela neverbalne komunikacije, gubitka određenih subliminalnih percepcija i informacija projektivna identifikacija u *online* uvjetima osiromašena, dok su snažnije projekcije (negativni transferi) i agresivnost (9). Opisano iskustvo prezentirane terapijske grupe može potvrditi ove navode. Promjena *settinga* facilitirala je neke procese i fenomene u grupi koji inače ne bi (tako skoro) došli do izražaja tijekom susreta uživo.

Postavlja se pitanje koliko se voditelj (što se dakako može odnositi i na određene članove grupe) u *online* sesansama doživljava manje „vidljivim“, odnosno manje „strašnim“ ili „superiornim“ nego u stvarnom prostoru, kada ga članovi osjećaju fizički blizu. U virtualnome *settingu* članovi su neokupirani time gdje će sjesti u odnosu na voditelja te kako se uz njega osjećaju što može pridonijeti lakšem oslobađanju na grupi. Članovi grupe imaju svoje preferencije pozicionirati se u krugu u odnosu na voditelja ili druge

in the arrangement of the “boxes” on the screen provide an additional reminder of the space of the unconscious (dreams, fantasy) in which anything is possible. The authors also indicate that partial absence of non-verbal communication and the loss of certain subliminal perceptions and information leads to reduced projective identification in the online setting, with a simultaneous increase in projection (negative transference) and aggression (9). The online group experience presented herein confirms these claims. The change in setting facilitated some processes and phenomena in the group that would not have otherwise been expressed (so soon) in face-to-face sessions.

Another question that arises is to what extent is the group leader (and of course also perhaps certain group members) perceived as less “visible” or “superior” in online sessions as compared with a physical space, where they are in close physical proximity to the members. In a virtual setting, members are not preoccupied with where they will sit in relation to the group leader and how they feel in the group leader’s presence, which can facilitate sharing in the session. Group members have preferences regarding where they sit in the circle and their location in relation to the group leader and other members, which indicates their relationships: insecure members seeking protection will attempt to sit in proximity of the group leader, whereas ambivalent members will be more likely to sit across from the therapist (12). The reduction of the “power” of the group leader in the virtual

članove grupe, što govori o njihovu odnosu prema njima: nesigurni članovi, kojima je potrebna zaštita, tražit će blizinu voditelja, a ambivalentni članovi vjerojatno će sjesti nasuprot voditelju (12). Umanjivanju „moćnosti“ voditelja u virtualnom okruženju dodatno može pridonijeti činjenica da voditelj ima manje utjecaja na neke elemente grupnog okvira s obzirom na izvanjske okolnosti (8), od kojih su neki u većoj mjeri nepredvidljivi u odnosu na okolnosti grupe koja se sastaje uživo: voditelj može i ne mora prepoznati sve tehničke teškoće s kojima se grupa susreće, ne može uvijek jamčiti da će svi članovi jednako kvalitetno sudjelovati u grupi (ponovo zbog tehničkih uvjeta) i sl. Prema iskustvu prezentirane grupe, šutljivom članu bilo je lakše otvoriti se „na ekranu“, dok je uživo isticao da ga sputava ne samo broj članova grupe nego i prisutnost voditeljice.

Uočeno je da su se određeni otpori prezentirane grupe „prelili“ i na virtualni prostor (izostanci, kašnjenja, probijanje grupnih granica). Istodobno, pojavili su se novi otpori poput faza šutnje koje su bile češće i dulje tijekom virtualnih seansi te se činilo kao da je u virtualnom prostoru nekada bilo teže započeti temu u odnosu na seanse uživo. Razgovor bi se često razvio tek prije kraja seansi, što su i sami članovi primijetili te neizrav-

environment is also caused by the fact that the therapist has less influence on some elements of the group framework affected by external circumstances (8), of which some are more unpredictable compared with the circumstances in a face-to-face group meeting: the group leader may or may not recognize all the technical difficulties encountered by the group, he cannot guarantee that all members will have the same level of group participation (once again due to technical difficulties), etc. According to the group therapy experience presented above, a reticent member found it easier to open up “on screen”, and he claimed to have been held back in face-to-face sessions both by the number of group members present and the presence of the group leader.

We have seen that certain elements of group resistance in the present group “overflowed” into the virtual space (absences, tardiness, violating group boundaries). New types of resistance emerged as well, such as periods of silence that grew increasingly longer and frequent during the virtual sessions, making it seem as if it was sometimes harder to broach a topic in the virtual setting in comparison with face-to-face sessions. A conversation would often develop only towards the end of the session, which the members noticed themselves and indirectly pointed to it as a group resistance to therapy work (the self-critical comments from the group would be something like “once again we’ve waited until the last 15 minutes of the session to start talking about an important topic!”). They



no isticali to kao grupni otpor prema radu (komentari grupe na vlastiti račun grupe bili bi „opet čekamo s nekom važnom temom onih 15 minuta prije kraja!“). Potom su se međusobno nukali da ranije krenu s pravim radom grupe, za što im je trebalo neko vrijeme, ali i hrabrost da progovore o međusobnim odnosima. Članove je na točnost i redovitost najviše motivirao kvalitetan rad grupe (osobito nakon *acting outa* na grupi).

Iako bi širenje granica trebalo postati materijalom za analizu kao i bilo kakvo kršenje grupnih pravila (9), kod nekih se terapeuta pojavila dvojba koliko tolerirati širenje granica ili inzistirati na pravilima kada su u pitanju *online* grupe (13). Ako bi u prezentiranoj grupi nešto zaista remetilo grupni rad, grupa ili voditeljica upozorili bi na to. No početno toleriranje ponašanja članova kojima su širili grupne granice i propust da im se vrlo jasno naglasi značenje grupnog okvira u kontekstu promjene *settinga* na neki su način predstavljali štetnu gratifikaciju grupi kao i permisivnost terapeuta koja može prouzročiti neharmoničnosti i nejasnoće u terapiji (6). Upravo zbog te prirodne tendencije širenja granica u virtualnom *settingu* odgovornost je na voditelju da grupi istakne elemente grupnoanalitičkog okvira prilikom samog prelaska u virtualno okruženje. U literaturi se ističe važnost jasnog

would subsequently encourage each other to start real group therapy work earlier in the session, which took them some time as well as some courage in talking about their relationships with one another. Good group therapy work was the main motivating factor for members to attend the sessions regularly and punctually (especially after the acting out event).

Although expanding boundaries and any violation of group rules should become the object of analysis (9), some therapists have expressed uncertainty about how much tolerance to extend to boundary expansion and how strongly to insist on adherence to rules during online sessions (13). If an issue truly interfered with the therapy, the group or the group leader would point it out. On the other hand, initial tolerance for the behavior of group members that pushed the group boundaries and failing to very clearly emphasize the importance of the group framework in the context of the change in setting represented a type of harmful gratification of the group and permissiveness on part of the therapist, which can cause disharmony and lack of clarity in the therapy (6). Due to this natural tendency towards expanding boundaries in the virtual setting, the group leader bears the responsibility of emphasizing the elements of the group analysis framework during the transition to the virtual environment. The importance of a clear and safe group framework is emphasized in the literature, both when establishing the group and during different changes in the group framework. (4, 5, 6, 8, 14). Van

i sigurnog grupnog okvira, prilikom uspostave grupe i prilikom različitih promjena u grupnom okviru (4, 5, 6, 8, 14). Van Der Kleij ističe važnost svakog detalja u *settingu* kao preduvjet funkcioniranja grupe, imajući na umu kako je opstanak grupe konstantno u pitanju. Ističe kako članovi grupe mogu okolne prijetnje doživljavati znatno benignijima u odnosu na ono što one stvarno jesu, a on ih naziva „lebdećim duhovima“ koji okružuju grupne granice (14).

S druge strane, određena veća opuštenost članova prezentirane grupe koja ne predstavlja znatno probijanje grupnih granica čini se da je pridonijela većem osjećaju povezanosti i prihvatanja kao što je povećanje slobodnih asocijacija, lakše dopiranje do nesvjesnih sadržaja u članova grupe inače nesklonih fantaziranju na seansama i iznošenju snova, dakle po tom pitanju donekle inhibirane grupe. Komentiranje izgleda, seksualne fantazije povezane s osobnim prostorima članova i asocijacije koje su iz toga proizašle i sl. neizravno su otvorile nove kanale interakcija u grupi. To je donijelo određeno olakšanje na grupi da se „smije“ biti onakvima kakvi jesmo kao i da drugi s nama dijele slične fantazije.

Kohezija i matriks grupe

Što se u virtualnom *settingu* događa s kohezijom ili matriksom grupe? U slu-

Der Kleij emphasized the importance of every detail in the setting as a prerequisite to the functioning of the group, bearing in mind that the survival of the group is constantly under threat. He points out that group members can perceive surrounding threats as much more benign than they truly are, and calls them “floating ghosts” that surround the group boundaries (14).

On the other hand, a certain amount of increased relaxation in the present group that did not entail a significant breach of group boundaries seems to have contributed to a greater feeling of interconnectedness and acceptance, resulting in increased free association and easier access to unconscious contents in group members who were otherwise not prone to fantasizing and retelling dreams during the session, i.e. in a group that was somewhat inhibited in that respect. Commenting on the appearance of others, sexual fantasies and associations related to the personal space of group members, etc., indirectly opened new channels of interaction in the group. This led to a certain relaxation in the group and the feeling that they were “allowed” to be who they are and share similar fantasies with one another.

Cohesion and the group matrix

What happens to cohesion and the group matrix in a virtual setting? In the present group, the lockdown, i.e. the forced social isolation and the fears and anxi-



čaju prezentirane grupe situacija *lock-downa*, odnosno prisilne socijalne izolacije, strahovi i tjeskobe uzrokovani neizvjesnošću događaja (koronavirus, potres) – u početku održavanja *online* seansi – vidljivo su utjecali na oduševljenje idejom nastavka susretanja grupe, na prisnost članova i potrebu za međusobnom potporom, o čemu izvješćaju i drugi terapeuti (7, 13). Grupa je u vrijeme *lockdowna* bila i jedan od rjeđih socijalnih događanja u životima članova, što je bio dodatan čimbenik uzbuđenja članova prilikom susreta. Sa smirivanjem situacije s pandemijom u članova se pojavila želja za ponovnim susretima uživo te su često isticali kako im u *online* seansama nešto nedostaje, barem dio onoga što su dobivali uživo. Opisivali su to potrebom za osobnim susretom, kontaktom „oči u oči“, fizičkom blizinom ili zagrljajem, dolaskom u zajednički fizički prostor i sl. Stoga je razumno pitati se je li jedino u bliskom kontaktu prisutna ona „živa energija“ (ili grupnoanalitičkim rječnikom, matriks grupe) koja struji između osoba, snažno ih povezuje (učvršćuje koheziju) i daje „živost“ grupi? Određena istraživanja dokazuju da ljudsko srce ima svoje elektromagnetsko polje (višeputo jače od mozga) koje se može detektirati na udaljenosti od jednog metra od ljudskog tijela te da magnetski valovi srca utječu na ljude oko nas, s obzirom na

ety caused by the uncertainty created by current events (the coronavirus and the earthquake), initially had a clear influence on the enthusiasm members showed regarding continuing group meetings online, on the feeling of intimacy among members, and on the need for mutual support, as has also been reported by other therapists (7, 13). During the lockdown, the group was also one of the fairly rare social events in the lives of its members, which was an additional factor causing excitement during the meetings. As the situation with the pandemic seemed to calm down, members started expressing their desire to once again meet face to face, and they would often comment that something was missing in the online session, at least a part of something that they would get from face-to-face sessions. They described this as a need to meet in person once again, meeting face-to-face, experiencing physical proximity or a hug, coming to a shared physical space, etc. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether it is only in close contact that we can find that “living energy” (or the group matrix, in the terminology of group analysis) that flows between persons, binding them firmly together (strengthening cohesion) and giving “liveliness” to the group. Certain studies have demonstrated that the human heart has an electromagnetic field (several times stronger than that of the brain) that can be detected at a distance of 1 meter from the body, and that magnetic waves from the heart influence the people around us, given that they carry

to da prenose informacije o našem osjećajnom stanju, a te se informacije dekodiraju na nesvjesnoj razini (15). To su važne informacije za terapijski proces u kojem se zbiva emocionalna prorada i za čiju su uspješnost važni razvoj kohezije, koherencije i matriksa. Kako se govori o mogućnosti održavanja isključivo *online* terapija (bez prethodnih susreta uživo), postavlja se pitanje mogu li njezini sudionici uopće postići jednak stupanj bliskosti te ostvariti dubinu i kvalitetu terapije kakve bi dostigli u seansama uživo (9). Ta pitanja zasigurno zaslužuju nastavak istraživanja i raspravu.

Vraćajući se na početno pitanje, ako su elementi grupe poput kohezije i matriksa prethodno razvijeni, *online setting* ne bi ih trebao (znatno) ugroziti, što potvrđuju iskustva različitih *online* grupa (7, 13). Potvrđuju to i teorijske spoznaje o koheziji koju shvaćamo kao „nevidljivu silu koja drži članove na okupu“ (16) i matriksu koju se, među ostalim, opisuje kao „grupnu dušu“, nevidljivu mrežu grupe, „imaginarni grupni prostor u kojem se događa komunikacija članova (17). U *online* okruženju izostaje vidljiv, opipljiv dio grupe, ali njezina „duša“ itekako je prisutna. U jednom smo trenutku *online* grupu usporedili s vezom na daljinu te se postavljalo pitanje koliko smo motivirani ustrajati u takvu obliku rada u određenom (neizvjesnom) razdoblju. Unatoč

information on our emotional state, which is decoded at an unconscious level (15). This is relevant for group therapy in which emotional processing takes place, the success of which depends on the development of cohesion, coherence, and the group matrix. When discussing group therapy being conducted exclusively online (with no prior face-to-face meetings), we must ask ourselves whether participants in such groups would ever be able to achieve the same level of intimacy and achieve the depth and quality of therapy that is possible in face-to-face sessions (9). Such questions surely deserve further research and discussion.

Returning to our original question, it seems that if the group elements such as cohesion and the group matrix have already been developed the online setting should not (significantly) endanger them, as has been confirmed by other reports of online group therapy sessions (7, 13). This was also confirmed by theoretical insights on cohesion, which is understood as a “invisible force holding group members together” (16), and the group matrix which is described as, among other things, the “soul of the group”, the invisible web of the group, and the “imaginary group space in which communication between members takes place” (17). The visible and tangible aspect of the group is absent from the online environment, but its “soul” is certainly present. At one point, we compared the online group with a long-distance relationship, discussing how motivated we were in continuing that form of therapy for an unknown pe-



frustraciji članova, svi su bili za nastavak *online* terapije te je vidljiva važnost koju grupa ima u životu članova kao i njihova međusobna povezanost i osjećaj pripadnosti grupi. Očito je da je grupa u svojoj *online* „fazi“ (poticana *online* susretima ili unatoč njima?) napokon uspjela ostvariti novu grupnu koheziju koja je donekle bila narušena ulaskom dvaju novih članova pola godine prije prelaska na virtualni *setting*.

Grupni proces i rast grupe u *online settingu*

Jesu li susreti uživo u početnim fazama psihoterapije esencijalni da bi ona kasnije mogla nastaviti sa svojim procesom jednako kvalitetno i u virtualnom okruženju na način da susreti uživo predstavljaju onaj najraniji odnos majka – dijete koji je temelj kasnije separacije (9), pokazat će se zasigurno u budućnosti, kada će se vjerojatno proširiti praksa psihoterapije koja se provodi dijelom i isključivo *online* putem. U literaturi se navodi kako istraživanja potvrđuju učinkovitost *online* terapije bez obzira na vrstu psihoterapijskog pristupa te pokazuju da ona uspješno ostvaruje uvjete prisutne u tradicionalnom okruženju (uživo), ali i da su nužna dodatna istraživanja u tom području (16).

Do početka virtualnih seansi prezentirana grupa imala je svoje trenutke

riod of time. Despite frustration among the group members, everyone expressed a desire to continue group therapy, and the significance the group had in the lives of its members was clear, as were their connections with one another and sense of belonging to the group. It was clear that the group had finally been able to achieve a new group cohesion during its online phase (because of or despite the online format?), the cohesion having been previously somewhat shaken by two new members joining the group half a year before moving to the virtual setting.

The group therapy process and group growth in the online setting

Whether face-to-face meetings are essential in the early phases of psychotherapy in order to allow its processes to advance at the same level of quality in a virtual setting later on, with face-to-face meetings representing that earlier mother-child relationship that is the foundation of the subsequent separation process (9), will certainly become clear in the future, when the practice of psychotherapy is likely to expand to being partially or wholly conducted online. Studies reported in the literature have confirmed the effectiveness of online therapy, regardless of the psychotherapeutic approach, and have shown that it successfully fulfils the conditions present in the traditional (face-to-face) environment, but further research in this field is also clearly necessary (16).

manjih i većih konflikata, ali se uglavnom ustručavala, čak i na poticaje voditeljice, razrađivati međusobne odnose, doživljaje i davati povratne informacije koje bi mogle dovesti do neslaganja i sukoba u grupi. Grupa je isticala svoju solidarnost i empatičnost kao najvažnije vrline te nije bila spremna prihvatiti konflikt kao integralni dio grupnog iskustva nužnim za njezin rast i razvoj (18). Dakle, koherencija grupe još nije bila razvijena kroz toleriranje, prevladavanje i integriranje različitosti. Anksioznosti i frustracije uzrokovane, među ostalim, promjenom *settinga* i vanjskim okolnostima omogućile su veći prodor negativnih transfera unutar grupe, uključujući i opisani *acting out* te veću mogućnost konfrontacije među članovima što je rezultiralo novom razinom povezanosti članova, većom vjerom u grupu, dubljom iskrenošću, odnosno razvojem koherentnih odnosa. Grupa je iz potencijalno prijetećih događaja uspjela oblikovati novi smisao zajedničkog iskustva (8), a osjećaj da se konflikt može proraditi na kvalitetan način ojačao je članove u uvjerenju da mogu izreći svoje potrebe u grupi te da neće biti kažnjeni ako pokažu svoju „mračnu“ stranu, što omogućuje korektivno emocionalno iskustvo i posljedično promjenu ponašanja unutar i izvan grupe. To predstavlja dragocjenu spoznaju za grupu

Before starting virtual sessions, the presented group had its moments of greater and smaller conflicts, but was mostly reluctant, despite the urging of the group leader, to process relationships and experiences within the group and provide feedback that could lead to disagreement and conflict in the group. The group expressed its solidarity and empathy as its foremost virtues and was unwilling to accept conflict as an integral part of the group experience that is necessary for its growth and development (18). Thus, group cohesion had not yet been established through tolerating, overcoming, and integrating differences within the group. Anxiety and frustrations caused by, among other things, the change in the setting and external circumstances allowed a greater breakthrough of negative transference within the group, including the acting out described above as well as a greater capacity for confrontation among members, resulting in a greater intimacy between members, increased faith in the group, and deeper sincerity, i.e. the development of coherent relationships. The group was able to use potentially threatening events to find a new purpose in the group experience (8), and the impression that conflict can be processed in a healthy way strengthened the members' belief that they can express their needs in the group and that they will not be punished for showing their "dark" side, which allows corrective emotional experiences to take place and consequently change the behavior within and outside the group. This rep-



i za samog člana koji je manifestirao *acting out* (19). Grupa se usmjeravanjem na međusobne odnose uspješla odmaknuti od razgovora o „ondje i tamo“ na „ovdje i sada“. Osim toga, prethodno su članovi redovito imali potrebu tražiti „zvijezdu večeri“, kako su to sami nazivali, odnosno člana koji će biti u fokusu pojedine seanse, što je naglašavalo individualne intervencije grupe. Povratna informacija nakon seansi u kojima bi do izražaja došli međusobni odnosi redovito bi bila kako su takve seanse najzanimljivije ili najproduktivnije.

Kritike usmjerene autoritetima i voditeljici grupe tijekom *online* seansi, potencirane frustracijom zbog izostanka susreta uživo, bile su važne za umanjivanje simbiotskih potreba grupe u odnosu na voditeljicu, za koju su članovi povremeno isticali kako im nedostaje da bude više aktivna, da daje izravne odgovore i povratne informacije na problemske situacije članova. Grupne intervencije članovi često su doživljavali nečim što nije od velike važnosti. Dok su do *online* susreta napadi na voditeljicu bili rijetki, sada su bili češći i intenzivniji, bilo na izravnoj ili neizravnoj razini, što je također imalo svoj utjecaj na usmjerenje članova na grupu kao cjelinu, proces u kojem je grupa zaostajala u odnosu na očekivane faze razvoja analitičke grupe (18).

resented a valuable insight both for the group and the member that acted out (19). By focusing on its internal relationships, the group was able to shift from talking about “then and there” to “here and now”. Additionally, the members had previously showed a tendency to search for the “star of the night”, as they themselves called it, i.e. a member who would be the focus of a given session, which emphasized individual interventions in the group. Feedback after sessions in which relationships in the group came to the fore always indicated that these sessions were considered to be the most interesting and most productive.

Criticism aimed at the authorities and the group leader during the online sessions was aggravated by frustration at the lack of face-to-face meetings, but was instrumental in reducing the symbiotic needs of the group in relation to the group leader, of whom the members would occasionally say that she should be more active and provide direct answers and feedback to the members' problems. Group interventions were often perceived by members to be something of minor significance. Before the online sessions, attacks on the group leader were rare, but they became more common in the online environment both at the indirect and direct levels, which also influenced members to focus on the group as a whole, a process in which the group had been lagging with regard to the expected stages of development in an analytic group (18).

Virtualno okruženje facilitiralo je procese za koje se moglo očekivati da će se početi događati u prezentiranoj grupi u toj fazi rada.

ZAKLJUČAK

Članak se dotaknuo nekih aspekata terapije u *online* okruženju, no svakako bi bilo važno provesti daljnja, iscrpnija istraživanja pojedinih elemenata grupne analize (okvira, grupnih fenomena, grupnog procesa i dinamike), koja bi produbila razumijevanje utjecaja promjene *settinga*, kao i specifičnosti rada s grupom u *online* okruženju. S obzirom na to da je *online* terapija zaživjela diljem svijeta brže nego ikad, zasigurno će perspektive mnogobrojnih praktičara i teoretičara grupne analize u idućem razdoblju obogatiti raspravu o *online* terapiji i njezinoj učinkovitosti u odnosu na terapiju uživo.

Nastavak grupnog procesa u virtualnom okruženju plodonosno je iskustvo koje je drukčije u svojem obliku jer ima specifične izazove (tehničke prirode, očuvanja grupnih granica, povremenog pada motivacije članova i anksioznosti oko opstanka grupe, tenzija koje proizlaze iz toga...), ali koje na jednak način predstavlja priliku za rast i razvoj grupe ako se izazovi i prijetnje dobro adresiraju, kontejniraju i postanu dijelom grupnog procesa.

The virtual environment facilitated processes that were to be expected in this stage of the therapy in the presented group.

CONCLUSION

This article has touched upon some aspects of therapy in an online environment, but further, more exhaustive research on individual elements of group analysis (the framework, group phenomena, group processes and dynamics) would certainly be significant and would deepen our understanding of the influence of setting changes as well as the specific characteristics of group therapy in an online setting. The perspectives of different practitioners and different theoretical approaches in group analysis will surely enrich the discussion of online therapy and its effectiveness in comparison with face-to-face therapy in the future, given that online therapy has become more prevalent than ever around the globe.

Continuing the group process in a virtual environment is a fruitful experience that is different in form and presents specific challenges (of a technical nature, in preserving group boundaries, occasional drops in motivation, anxiety about the survival of the groups and resulting tensions, etc.), but which simultaneously represents an opportunity for the growth and development of the group if the challenges and threats are addressed properly, contained, and integrated in the group process.



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