

Instructional Module: IM6

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#1 – DESCRIPTION: For clinical at Aspire of Texas: Fire Sky Ranch for Men, I arrived an hour before noon and walked in on them finishing a meeting. I was able to sit in until that meeting was finished, then was escorted around the property, and shown everything they have and do for the men being treated there. I learned that everyone who worked there is has, or is working on, a master's degree, and the owner himself is a licensed counselor. There were also ten guys there going through the program, all which were at various stages within the program. Most of the time during clinical, I sat in the back of the group room, listening to how their meetings progressed and watching the guys speak on their own experiences with things. I did chime in when I was asked any questions and whenever my input was requested on something, but I just sat back and listened. Each member of the group was given a chance to speak and plenty of questions were asked and discussed within the meetings. Just in the one afternoon that I was able to be there, various breakthroughs were made in only two meetings.

#2 – FEELINGS: Coming into this clinical, honestly, I did not really see the reasoning behind us being there. I did not know or understand what it was we were supposed to be gaining from this experience and felt very close-minded to the experience. Coming into the meeting, I had feelings of judgement towards the guys that were there taking part in the program, because half were drug addicted and the other was alcoholics. I have always perceived those kinds of people in a certain light and not really had any sympathy or remorse for them. After hearing what they had to say, though, and listening to their experiences and stories, I found myself feeling guilty and reconsidering my very biased feelings towards them. I began to feel sorrow and empathy for most of the guys in the meeting room, because a lot of them were pre-disposed to the things they are now addicted to and had truly little control over choosing their own life paths. They were all just handed a bad card in life and needed help finding a way out.

#3 – EVALUATION: One of the best things I was able to see by sitting in on this program, was the way the guys spoke to and about one another. They were all very respectful and understanding of their different circumstances, even though they all had vastly different personalities and were all in quite distinct stages of their lives. Hearing how compassionate they were when listening to another member talk about their stories and how quick they all were to jump in and provide advice or words of encouragement was remarkable. The hardest part about sitting in on the program, was hearing some of the awful things these guys have had to go through and not being able to speak on it, myself, or offer any kind of support. That was very difficult because, as an outside observer, you want to step in and help in any way possible, but also are not licensed in any way or have a background in dealing with those kind of situations, so setting in and speaking up, you might say or do something wrong that could hinder their healing, instead of aid it.

#4 – ANALYSIS: Honestly, I felt like, through this whole clinical, I did not really have anything to apply from it, other than therapeutic listening and communication. Unlike most rehabilitation clinics and facilities, Fire Sky Ranch treated the men equally and liked they were actual people, not just their diseases. I spoke to the owner, and he said that most facilities have a kind of conveyor belt approach to treating their residents. Everyone is treated the same with the same treatment and, most of the time, around the same medications. With this different approach, each client is treated individually, while also getting the benefits of group therapy. They have their own psychiatrist, nurse practitioner, and ensure every man who enters their program is individually screened and treated appropriately. The clients had remarkably similar situations, but they were also different and unique in their own ways. Yes, they all concluded that they were all addicts and many of them had the same path that led them to where they are today, but the circumstances in between varied vastly.

#5 – CONCLUSION: I do not think there was any one single way in which I could have made the experience better, other than, communicated with the residents more than I did. I admit to being nervous and holding myself back from talking to them out of fear I may say the wrong thing and upset them in some way. I also did not want to overstep any boundaries they had in place at the ranch. The staff was perfect in making sure I knew where everything was and told me repeatedly to make myself at home and was readily available to answer any questions I had about their day-to-day life. All the gentlemen staying at the facility were also very welcoming and appreciative of my arrival, so I do not think there is

anything they could have done to make my experience any better than it was. The main thing I learned from this event is not to judge people based off what they may or may not be diagnosed with Addiction is a disease that affects all diverse kinds of people, wether they be company owners or young adults just finding their way in life.

#6 – ACTION PLAN: Overall, this situation really opened my eyes and my mind to the various aspects of psychiatric medicine. When you first think about psychiatric medicine, there is a massive stigma around it, and I let it cloud my judgement when it came to what to expect form this experience. That is one thing I will be changing should I be in this position again in the future. I will not place a preconceived idea on someone because of their diagnosis. Most of the men in this program are average people who looked and acted just like me. They just had a much different story. As far as professional practice goes, everything discussed within the walls of the facility were on a need-to-know basis and that was made clear upon my entry. HIPPA is taken very seriously here and is not broken unless the patients decide to share what they are going through to those on the outside, such as their family and friends.