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SWK 658-Clinical Social Work and Groups

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Support Group Meeting Assignment

The purpose of this paper is to discuss and write my overview experience at a support group meeting. As we may know, AA stands for Alcoholics Anonymous which is a mutual aid that enables members who have an addiction to drinking but these individuals are looking on staying sober and helping other alcoholics achieve sobriety. According to Galbicsek (2020), an internet source reported that Bob Smith and Bill Wilson were the founders for creating AA on June 10th, 1935. Today, AA is known worldwide for its accomplishment in helping people to obtain sobriety. The interesting part of an AA meeting is that it is not run by a leadership team or a psychotherapist but by the actual members who have a desire to help themselves and people in the community. Anyone can be part of an AA meeting regardless of their ethnicity, religion, race, gender, age, and sexual orientation. What matters is that the members are committed to change their negative behaviors for a potential recovery.

Group Structure

Due to the ongoing pandemic related to COVID-19, I was able to participate in a virtual meeting through Zoom. The meeting was held on March 1st, 2021 in Palm Beach, Florida from 7:15 pm - 8:15 pm. While the meeting was in session there was only one host coordinating the virtual meeting. The host appeared to be polite and well-engaged that he began to announce that “Newcomers are Welcome” and reminding each member that the

AA meeting is held 7 days a week at the same time. During the meeting, there were a total of 79 members, and each of these members varied across different ethnicities and age groups. Most of the members who were in the meeting were Mexicans, Jamaicans, Guyanese, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and East Europeans. The age group ranged from 28 years old to 65 years old. As the meeting was held virtually most of the members were at their homes, and others at the park working.

Group Process

In the beginning, the host asked all of the members to introduce themselves and everyone had the opportunity to say their names and where they are from. I had the chance to introduce myself to the participants telling them that my name was Dalisa, I am from the Bronx, New York and I am currently a graduate student completing a master's degree in social work. At the time, each of the participants along with the host appeared surprised but they allowed me to be part of the meeting. After asking each of the participants to introduce themselves the host went on to the next agenda for the remainder of the night.

From 7:30 pm to 7:45 pm, the host asked some volunteers to read the daily reflections. The purpose for the daily reflections was to discuss what has been the accomplishment and goals for when they want to release their sobriety. An interesting part from the meeting that surprised me was when there was a member who reported that while being at their 3rd month of the 12th step, he would be sober in one year, but ever since he stopped drinking he has had the urge to have a sip of alcohol. The member express that alcohol is a disease that affects both physical and emotional dependence. Another, story that was impressive was with a female woman who express feeling afraid to abstain from alcohol since she suffers from a mental illness. The host advised the woman that she must

not feel afraid and that there is hope. Various suggestions given to the woman from the host was to get a sponsor, follow the 12 steps and make sure to attend the AA meeting which are held 7 days a week.

Group Application

Incorporating my understanding of what I learned throughout my participation in an AA meeting, I would like to apply what I learned from the self-help groups meeting and how effective it can be for members who have a drinking problem. There is no way for a member to feel worthless, incapable or think they won't recover from their addiction in fact there is always a solution. That is why the best way to start is with a self-help group. As a clinician, we must always look at the person environment and meet the client where they are. According to Corey (2020) cohesion reveals a deeper meaning that the group leader and the participants must do the following in a group: Perform engagement, set up agendas, go over group rules, demonstrate understanding of members concerns, discuss roles and responsibilities both leaders and group members and facilitate emotional expression and exchange (pg. 95-96). Aside from the cohesion concept, that was discussed I would like to introduce another concept in which I felt that applied to the self-help group and it was the importance of showing the here and now. The purpose for the here and now goes back when Corey explained that members must talk about their feelings to one another and not pay much attention to what is going on the group (Corey, pg. 97).

In addition other techniques that show productivity in a self-help group are trust, acceptance, empathy caring and hope. Each of these factors shows how valuable it is for a group to be productive (Corey, pg. 98).

Conclusion

In summary, attending a support group was a phenomenal experience because I was able to adhere to the meeting policies, procedures, environment and learn how to be cultural competent. As to my understanding, it is important to accept, recognize one's belief, values and culture while working with members who appear to have a substance abuse disorder.

References

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