

Self-Help Group Analysis Paper

SWK658: Clinical Social Work Practice III w/ Groups

Yolanda Jones

Self-Help Group Analysis

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The self-help group I attended was an alcohol anonymous group held via zoom through In the Rooms. In the rooms is a global online community to give recovering addicts a place to meet and socialize when they're not in face-to-face meetings. This basic concept has grown into a global online community with over 800,000 members who share their strengths and experience with one another daily. Through live meetings, discussion groups, and all the other tools In the Rooms has to offer, people from around the world connect with one another and help each other along their recovery journeys. (In the rooms)

I chose this group in hopes to seek clarity and understanding on what it means to be an alcoholic, how one maintains their sobriety and the availability of resources that may be offered and rendered to the participants. My decision to attend this group was primarily due to the impact alcohol has had on my family. My father and brother are alcoholics and have been for many years. Their consumption with alcohol has caused us to have a contentious relationship and our family functioning has deteriorated as a result. As a teenager, my dad consumed alcohol as a coping mechanism. Attending this group has enlightened me, made me self-aware of my biases towards alcoholics. Hearing the testimony of the group and they're lived experiences resonated with me and gave me hope, that if they could overcome their adversities; strangers from all backgrounds, ethnicities, cultural beliefs, ages and genders have come together to form an alliance and community of support around their battle with alcohol. I learned that It is not so simple as I thought to expect my father and brother to just stop drinking and that I may have walked out on them when they needed me the most.

The group structure was held via zoom and scheduled for one hour, 12p.m to 1p.m. At 11:57a.m there was music starting to play before the facilitator came on. The music was enjoyable and a nice touch prior to the group starting; the group began promptly at 12noon.

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The meeting topic was titled Footprints in the sand, “I don’t understand why, when I needed you the most, you would leave me”. As I pondered on the title and topic of the discussion I began to think of my father, not my heavenly father in heaven, higher power and my lord and savior, but my father in the flesh. This quote resonated with me because I felt that he left me when I needed him the most. I was five years old when he moved miles away from me. Months would go by then years before I would see him. There was no attachment or bonding between us, and I held onto anger so much so that each time I visited him I would ask why he left. He would get angry, leave out and come back drunk which added another layer to our already tumultuous situation.

It was now twelve o’clock and the group began, I grew anxious and nervous because I didn’t know what to expect and whether I would have to identify myself. I was relieved when the facilitator made the announcement and stated, “those who wish to participant can share their screen and they will go in the box”. I like that participants were given the anonymity and autonomy during this group around participation.

This was an open group with as many as three hundred and eighty people on the zoom. Once the group started the facilitator Ms. C introduced herself as a recovering addict and alcoholic, she greeted everyone and thanked us for being on. There was an option to share your screen if you wanted to go into the “box”. The box was the window in which participants who were on, wanted to share a testimony, however it appeared that the individuals who did participate may have already been a part of the group. The facilitator started off by calling out the name of the group participant in the box and asked him to begin with the reading of the AA preamble. Part of the AA preamble reads as followed: Alcohol anonymous is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for

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membership is a desire to stop drinking. Each participant identified themselves by saying their name and that they're an alcoholic. Acknowledgment appears to be the first step which all these participants exhibited. The strength and resilience exuded was truly heartfelt. I admired them all and was proud of all their accomplishments without even knowing them. Next, the facilitator asked for the twelve-step and 12 traditions to be read. The first of the 12 steps read as followed, we admitted we were powerless over alcohol that our lives had become unmanageable. The promises were read next and prayers were left at the closing of the group. The transition was so smooth it almost felt rehearsed. I guess it's because the group members who were present may attend on a daily/weekly basis and may have been pre-selected to read. They also shared their testimonies and journey around drugs and alcoholism. There were others who opted to go in the box to share they've never joined; They were celebrated and encouraged to come back.

During disclosures, participants were allotted four minutes to share on the topic and/or what they were feeling. A timer was set, and many of the speakers stayed within the time frame. The facilitator shared her testimony on the topic by sharing that she recovered from "the hopeless mind and body, layers have been peeled away as she got closer to spiritual being and she is grateful for the higher power" She continues, I'm grateful for myself today

Foot prints in the sand is a religious poem. It describes a person who sees two pairs of footprints in the sand, one of which belonged to God and another to him or herself. Speaker two reported that "I left my higher power; my higher power didn't leave me. I turned to also and went to the bottle. I drank to get drunk, I didn't drink to be cute. Speaker three disclosed that it had been 48 hours since his last drink and he was new to the group. The group celebrated him, and the facilitator had an applause button and welcomed the speaker. She asked if he needed a sponsor and he obliged, and they promptly began to encourage him that he would be connected.

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Speaker four disclosed that “the sun has come up but it’s just not as bright as it needs to be”. I took this to mean that they have made steps towards change but they are not perfect, and they will continue to keep trying and being resilient. Speaker five stated that he is two years sober, he was celebrated. He stated that “he is making piece with the person in the mirror”. Speaker six disclosed that he is an atheist and had been for a year, but stated that he finally reached out to God because he wants to stop drinking. He shared that he took a drink today and regrets it.

Today’s group leader took an Adlerian approach. She promoted equity and modeled person to person behavior. All the participants expressed their love for her throughout the group and thanked her for the platform. She was caring, listened with intent, encouraging and demonstrated the courage to be imperfect as she had challenges overcoming and maintaining her own sobriety and had an overall belief in the usefulness of the group process. The stages of the Adlerian group were highlighted throughout with encouragement, empowerment and self-awareness. Phenomenology, creativity and choice were all of what was exhibited and uttered throughout this group. The participants made decisions based on their worldviews. Whether it was because they saw a family member drink, experienced grief or did so socially.

I particularly loved the utilization of this platform and how the facilitator engaged the group. This platform fosters a therapeutic alliance, support and intervention for many of the participants that were on the call/zoom. Though there were only a total of ten speakers throughout the hour-long group, their narratives, experiences and resilience may have been empowering for those of us who were observing and listening who may have had similar experiences. The meeting was maintained with such poise, grace and respect. Every person had a chance to speak and were vulnerable and committed to change.

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I learned so much by attending such a diverse group. I am open and willing to attend family counseling to resolve my family conflict. I found this support group to be effective, organized and a huge support for those who may not have a support or anyone to talk to. The leadership style approach rendered was servant leadership style. The servant leader is motivated to listen to members, is supportive of their opinions and validates their concerns. A servant leader seeks to understand and empathize with the members. Healing, awareness and building community are some of the many concepts that characterize a servant leader. I will continue to attend these groups and can hopefully invite my father and brother to join.