SWK456/556 GENERALIST PRACTICE WITH GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

Diversity and Difference, The Strengths Perspective and Empowerment Model

The Strengths Perspective

◦ Saleebey (2013) identified six key principles for the strengths perspective (pp. 17–21):

◦ *Every individual, group, family, and community has strengths*: Social workers must view clients as competent and possessing skills and strengths that may not be initially visible. Social workers should also explore useful resources in client families and communities.

◦ *Trauma and abuse, illness, and struggle are challenging, but they may also present opportunities:* Clients can not only overcome difficult situations but also learn new skills and develop positive protective factors. Individuals exposed to a variety of trauma are not always damaged beyond repair.

◦ *Assume that you do not know the upper limits of clients' capacity to grow and change and take individual, group, and community aspirations seriously*. Too often, professional "experts" hinder their clients' potential for growth by viewing client-identified goals as unrealistic. Instead, social workers need to set high expectations for their clients so that the clients believe they can fully recover and that they can achieve their goals.

The Strengths Perspective (Continued)

◦ *We best serve clients by collaborating with them*. Playing the role of expert or professional with all the answers does not allow social workers to appreciate their clients' strengths and resources. The strengths perspective emphasizes collaboration between the social worker and the client.

◦ *Every environment is full of resources*. Every community, regardless of how impoverished or disadvantaged, has something to offer in terms of knowledge, support, mentorship, and resources.

◦ *Caring, caretaking, and context all matter*. The strengths perspective recognizes the importance of community, the inclusion of all members in society, and working for social justice. This principle is premised on the idea that caring for each other is a basic form of civic participation.

The Empowerment Model for Practice

◦ Video: See the posted video under Lessons, Week 3 on E360 for a short video that helps connect the empowerment model of practice with the strengths perspective.

Group Pre-Planning Process

◦ **<u>Group norms</u>** are informal expectations about of how group members should act and interact. They identify what behaviors are acceptable or not; good or not; right or not; or appropriate or not (O'Hair & Wieman, p. 19).

◦ As a group begins to go about their assigned work, it is important that the members discuss explicitly their expectations and create a set of group ground rules. **Ground rules** are explicit, agreed-on description of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.

◦ Keep in mind that ground rules may need to reflect the context of virtual meetings.

◦ From: http://textbooks.whatcom.edu/cmst245/chapter/group-norms/