

Date: 2/9/23

Network: Inter-Group Association of A.A of New York, INC

Time: 12:30 PM

Place: First United Congregational Chapel: 121 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Group Structure:

The group support meeting I decided to attend was Alcoholics Anonymous. The physical environment was calm, and laid back. I did not sense any sensations of fearfulness, or shyness. Quite the opposite actually. It felt like everyone was eager to be there, and it was a place curated for them to be able to breathe ,let their hair down, a place to feel accepted and vulnerable. There were about 15 people present in this meeting including the facilitator, Rick. The group meets at First United Congregational Chapel in Brooklyn, New York. The general description of each member varies; The youngest member was 25 years old and the older member was about 70 years of age. There were more females than males present. The majority ethnicity was White, and there were a few African Americans. When it comes to leadership there was only one facilitator, which makes sense since the ratio was 15 to 1. It is important to note that the group was open, meaning that anyone is able to join. I chose an open group instead of a close group because I am just a one time visitor, and I figured it would make more sense of me to do so.

Group Process:

What emotions did you observe and how did other members respond to the expressed emotions?

The group began just like any other group usually does, by the speaker introducing themselves first. Ricky is the facilitator and he mentioned that his pronouns are he/his/him. Ricky was chill

and calm when he introduced himself first. Since this was an open meeting and there were new faces in the group (like me) he shared a little about himself and how he came to Alcoholics Anonymous and how he now facilitates a group. He shared that he feels that he is living for a greater purpose now and that he wants to present an opportunity for other individuals to experience healing and health. After he introduced himself, we went around the group, and as an ice breaker, we said our name, and the latest thing that brought us joy. I like this prompt because, despite the heaviness that being a part of Alcoholics Anonymous can be, we can still focus on the little things that have and bring us joy.

After the ice breaker, Ricky passed the floor over to an individual who for confidentiality reasons I will not mention her real name. This woman was around the age of 25; she mentioned how she thinks it is important for vulnerability to take its course in the healing and recovery process- That really stuck out to me. She proceeds to tell her story about her struggles with alcohol. It started at age 14, and she mentions that Alcoholism runs in her family and that her healing journey has made her realize this. She informs us that her mother struggles with drinking but she is not sure if her mother would ever actually acknowledge that it is a problem. The individual took us back to her early adolescence and mentions that she would use drinking as a way to cope. She says that she deals with social anxiety, and with a great deal of insecurities, and never feeling like she is good enough. She would use social drinking as a way to be part of a social group, because she said she has always long for connection. As she was wrapping up her story, we all clapped, and Ricky thanked her for her honesty, and mentioned how grateful he was to have her as a member of this group. He opened the floor for us to give words of encouragement to her, or to have a time to say how her story makes us feel.

I have personally never dealt with Alcohol addiction, but while being in the group, I found myself trying to put myself in their shoes. After hearing her story, and seeing how mostly everyone was encouraging her, that inspired me. Of course, as we were learning in class, everybody is different, and there were a few people who were timid to speak and were more to themselves.

What I noticed about other people's emotions are that they were also feeling seen, and heard. When the women presented her story many were actively listening (of course there were some who were looking around). When she concluded and Ricky opened up the room for group talk, many encouraged her, applauded her for her vulnerability, and strength. Many knew her name so I am assuming they have built rapport with each other. What really stuck out to me is how she said in her story that she "longed for connection" and would use alcohol for connecting. She did say how she still deals with things and that healing is not linear but that she takes her journey day by day.

Group Application:

When applying what I experienced in the AA group to what I am learning in class through my readings, I noticed that the facilitator, Ricky, did abide by some basic multicultural backgrounds. Before we could even assume someone's self-identifying gender, he let everyone introduce themselves and their pronouns so that we do not accidentally address them wrong. According to Corey (2015), he mentions how assumptions are likely to affect the practices of a group counselor. Ricky, led and allowed for any assumptions to end regarding gender and how to address one another. Corey, also goes on to discuss the importance that presence has in a group, not only within the facilitator but with the members as well. "If leaders recognize and give

expression to their own emotions, they can become more emotionally involved with others”, Corey (2015). I saw this come into play, when the women finished sharing, Ricky followed up by expressing his gratitude for her, and affirmed her. This flowed into the other members because this set the tone for encouraging, and building each other up.

Groups have a process and those processes can be categorized into stages; from my opinion I think this group was in stage 4: the working stage. This stage involved a time of cohesiveness and productivity. Furthermore, this stage allows for characteristics of trust, acceptance and empathy to manifest. That is what happened during this session. As mentioned before, the majority seemed to know each other; there was also a spirit of comradery.

References:

Corey, G. (2015). *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*. Cengage Learning.