

Support Group Meeting Assignment

SWK658

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The Samson Society

The group that I have chosen to attend for this assignment is the Samson Society. The Sampson Society is a Sexual Addiction group for Christian men. Unlike SA, it is not a 12-step program but a fellowship of men in different stages of addiction. The membership ranges from those who have long overcome their past struggles to new members in situations where they and their families are currently dealing with the repercussions of addiction.

Group Structure

Joining the Samson society involves an initial screening process. The group is conducted via zoom, so this initial meeting is used to screen out any security issues. One of the core tenets of the group is confidentiality. Cameras must be on at all times, and you must be alone in a quiet space for confidentiality. Once this initial meeting is completed, you can join any of the multiple meetings the society has every day.

The group also provides psychoeducational books, videos, podcasts, and discussion boards. The group also encourages linking up with a "Silas," their version of a victorious accountability partner. This group promotes the specific goals for counseling groups stated by Gerald Corey "To clarify one's values and decide whether and how to modify them." (Corey, n.d., p. 6) Each member comes to the meeting looking for fellowship, openness, and hope. Each

meeting has very descriptive and humorous names that meet each week simultaneously. I joined a meeting on February 8th at 8 pm. The meeting ended promptly at 9:30 pm.

The meeting I joined consisted of 8 adult men. The ages were between 40 and 70. All the men had families. Some were still together. Others were not. The men were from different parts of the country and grew up differently. The ethnicity was all white males, although that is not by design. The group was encouraged to see a Latin male in the group. They were exceptionally warm and encouraging. The group had a leader but with a co-leader that seemed to be in the rotation. As stated by Charles Zastrow, "During meetings of the group, co-leaders can help each other in doing the tasks associated with leading a group." (Zastrow & Hessenauer, 2018, p. 87) The advantages of having a co-leader in the group were on display in this session.

Group Process

Each group would have a central topic of discussion after the ground rules, initial greeting stages, and welcoming new members portion of the group was completed. The main topic of discussion is randomized from hundreds of options. The topic would be one word selected and expanded from that word in a conversation. An example would be "Father" The group would discuss from there. However, behind each topic would be the more important topic of sexual addiction. Each member was encouraged to speak, but questions were asked to the group rather than the individual. Some members were more vocal than others. The leader would introduce a new question when there were awkward silences in the group.

Initially, the meeting started with humor and showed that some of these members had been in fellowship for a significant time. Others seemed like they were still getting their footing in the community. The leadership and grounded members encouraged fellowship and participation without being overbearing. Once things started progressing, many members were open and honest. The level of transparency in the group breeds more transparency from other members. The men in the group showed vulnerability and frustration with circumstances at times. No judgment or advice was given. "I "statements are another tenet of the group. Leaders and other members should have empathy and compassion for vulnerable members.

Group Application

As someone who has been the Director of Groups for the last four years at Fordham Manor Church, I see a lot of good in this group's ideology, function, and structure. In my experience, the application of this group to address Sexual Addiction in the love of Christian males is highly needed today. One of the biggest failures of the men in the church is the inability to overcome SA and the inability to be transparent, be educated, or even address the issue. So, I am grateful that this group is attempting to make changes in the lives of its members.

The leaders modeled for the group many skills, such as active listening, questioning, confronting, supporting, and empathizing. Modeling is an essential and subtle strategy in directing a group of any size, especially men. The group was able to mimic this behavior for one another. This is an indicator of a mature group in the differentiation stage of development of the group founded by Garland, Jones, and Kolodny.(Zastrow & Hessenauer, 2018, p. 19)
Alternatively, the performing stage is described by Tuckman (Zastrow & Hessenauer, 2018, p.

20). In this stage, members have more autonomy and authority over what takes place in a group because of the support from leadership and the group's comfort. This is the place a facilitator hopes his group can function in, especially in an open group. This allows for the growth of future facilitators.

The leadership approach that I observed in this group was democratic. Charles Zastrow described, "In contrast, democratic leaders seek to minimize involvement and participation of every member in all decisions affecting the group and attempting to spread responsibility rather than concentrating it."(Zastrow & Hessenauer, 2018, p. 77) The leader spread the reading of rules around to members and used the members' input to guide the group's direction. As a critic of this style for this meeting, there were moments when the group seemed stagnant and directionless. Zastrow would also mention the same description of democratic leadership (Zastrow & Hessenauer, 2018, p. 77). All styles have their strengths and weaknesses.

The program itself provides a servant leadership model. Providing others who have been through the same trials as others to help provide those in the fight comfort and time. This is in line with the teaching given by the Apostle Paul to the church in Corinthians "If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer."(Nelson, 2019, bk. 2 Corinthians 1:6) This style of leadership has been an effective style for believers in all contexts.

Overall it was an excellent experience, and I plan to recommend this group to those who need that help. The leadership provided clear structure and guidelines. There was no doubt that the leadership intended to love and encourage members. Those who have been together for a while felt like family. It was inviting. Little moments like inside jokes made someone want to be in what everyone else knew. All this was done while being inclusive and throwing jabs at this

new member about his affinity for New York sports teams. This was an effective way of bringing an outsider in. In short, Great group.

Reference

- Nelson, T. (2019). *NKJV, Wiersbe Study Bible, Hardcover, Red Letter, Comfort Print: Be Transformed by the Power of God's Word* (W. W. Wiersbe, Ed.). Thomas Nelson.
- Zastrow, C., & Hessenauer, S. L. (2018). *Empowerment Series: Social Work with Groups: Comprehensive Practice and Self-Care* (10th edition). Cengage Learning.