

Support Group Meeting

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Group Structure

I attended an Alcoholics Anonymous support group meeting called Foundation 45 that works to provide rays of hope to the people of Cedar Hill and the greater Dallas community struggling with alcohol and substance abuse disorders. The group consists of twelve members guided by two licensed clinical social workers. The group meets every Tuesday and Thursday at two P.M for two hours at the Cedar Hill Community Center in Dallas, Texas. The Foundation 45 Support Group offers adults over 18 an environment to share their struggles and success with alcohol and substance abuse disorders. The group consists of eight men and four women. All the members are between 18 and 42 years old, six Caucasians, four African Americans, and two mixed-race individuals. The group counselors are a male and a female of Caucasian descent. The group holds physical and online meetings held twice weekly via Zoom at two o'clock in the afternoon. The group has discussions on topics relevant to alcohol and substance abuse, such as acceptance, anonymity, anger, and asking for help, among others.

Group Process

At the beginning of the session, each group member introduced themselves and shared their reasons for attending group therapy. They also discussed their progress and mentioned obstacles and setbacks since the last meeting. The members were seated in a circle, with the therapist on opposite sides of the room. The group leader outlined the session objectives, which included a review and discussion of members' evaluations, a review of members' self-monitoring logs concerning their goals, discussing and evaluating members' strengths and protective factors, and giving instructions and assignments for the next therapy session. The group leader asked each member to provide a general overview of their alcohol and substance use that past week.

The members were expected to share if they had seen any significant changes or if they handled a difficult situation without using any drugs or alcohol. After the member narrated their experience, the group leader asked the other members their opinions on the changes made by other group members. After reviewing every member's self-monitoring logs, the group progressed to goal evaluation.

The group leader encouraged the members to help review each member's goal forms. He then allowed each of them to make short remarks on each other's goals. Some members had abstinent, while others had low-risk limited drinking goals. In the discussion on abstinence, the group leader asked each member to share why they stopped using alcohol and other drugs. The group discussed the personalized feedback handouts of each member. This helped to compare the data from the member's personal alcohol use with normal drug and substance use levels. The members were then allowed to comment on their personalized feedback. The group leader then explained the importance of keeping personalized feedback handouts.

During the group therapy session, some clients expressed anger and guilt as they narrated their experiences and progress in the past week. Most of them voiced shame for being unable to control their urges to indulge in alcohol and drug use. A few of them expressed relief from attaining their short-term goals of sobriety. Although there were mixed feelings during the therapy session, the group members were supportive. They helped each other understand that therapy is a process that requires time and commitment, and they were there for each other no matter the situation. This helped ease the tension that was slowly building up among the group members.

Group Application

Part of proper and healthy recovery from alcohol and drug use is being in the right environment and surrounded by the right people. People are usually cautious about joining group therapy at first. Speaking about one's problems with a group of people is generally frightening. However, most people are surprised after engaging in group therapy since they benefit tremendously. Group counseling has become essential for the management of common drug addictions. This is due to its practical nature of treating more clients at a lower cost. Group counseling allows clients to benefit from more hours of treatment at a lower price. In group therapy, the clients learned that they are not alone in the journey to sobriety. It is common for people with alcohol use disorders to feel isolated, depressed, and ashamed. Many addictions stem from a history of trauma which victims may have hidden for a long-time and self-medicate with drugs to relieve stress. Others may have done things they are ashamed of due to their addiction. Nevertheless, shame is usually isolating. It may make one feel alone and worthless (Corey, 2015). People participating in group counseling are often relieved to discover that they are not alone and that others have had similar experiences, and they can finally talk about it.

In addition to knowing that you are not alone in the journey to sobriety, group counseling helps someone to be connected with others. Social connections are essential in overcoming alcohol and substance use. Individuals with substance abuse disorders present with other mental health conditions predisposing them to isolation and shame, aggravating the initial condition. Building a genuine connection with others struggling with substance abuse can help individuals restructure their lives by finding a new purpose. Group counseling equips clients with skills essential to attaining their treatment goals. A shared experience usually unites group members with addiction; each person brings their perspective to help each other improve (Zastrow, 2018). The clients are exposed to multiple viewpoints and coping strategies.

References

- Zastrow, C. (2018). (10th ed.). Social work with Groups: A comprehensive work text. Belmont,CA: Thompson/Brooks Cole.ISBN-13: 978-1285746401; ISBN-10: 1285746406
- Corey, G. (2015) (9th Edition). Theory and Practice of Group Counseling. ISBN-13: 978-1305088016; ISBN-10: 130508818