

Final Integrative Paper

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## Integrative Paper Part I

Conducting a men recovery group for substance abuse and mental health. This group is an open group and is a 12-class module that are similar and reference the Twelve- Steps Program. The key concept to our approach is to create an environment where clients feel safe to share their experiences and process their feelings. The space allows clients to learn from each other's journey, challenges, and strengths. The group is also a way for clients to form relationships and connections to give a sense of community and reduce isolation through the process. The approach in the group is to also assist client to analyze though process and how it can lead to relapse or recovery. The facilitator helps clients be aware of how thoughts and emotions prompt behaviors. The group also process how the continues cycle of behaviors lead co-occurrence of substance abuse and habits. As the facilitator my role is to facilitate the topic and the discussion by addressing open ended questions, process emotions and thoughts with clients. It is also my role to validate, use affirmation and empathized with clients as feelings and personal experiences are share. It is crucial that as a facilitator I also confront behaviors when needed and acknowledge client's strengths. The role of the group members is to be active participants in the class and engage in discussions, provide their own opinions, keep their participation in "I" sentences. It is necessary for clients to respect other members opinions and experiences. All participants are encouraged to read a portion of the material that is being shared to allow participation at that level as well, if they feel comfortable with reading. During the group silence is consider golden, as a facilitator I allow silence in the room. The group has the therapeutic goal of helping client understand addiction, mental health, and recovery process. It helps client be aware of how many different factors play a crucial role in recovery or relapse. During the group sessions one of the objectives is to help clients recognize strengths, challenges and apply them in

## Final Integrative Paper

a way that can sustain their individual goals in recovery. Sessions are all very different and trauma is one of the key components that always comes up at each meeting. As the facilitator my role is to help clients be aware how trauma and mental health diseases are connected to behavior and the choices, we make as individuals. Some of the techniques use in the groups is CBT, Motivational Interviewing, and Brief Solution Focus to address some of the different scenarios that might play out during the sessions. Some of those can be, clients that disclose past traumas, dysfunctional relationships, sexual abuse, previous relapse, sexual exploitation, prostitution, undocumented status, rejection, sexual orientation content, depression, anxiety, abandonment, and grieving. The developmental task of the therapeutic goals is to create an environment that promotes unity and a sense of belonging through learning from each other. During the forming stage clients are introduced to the group, the group norms, the objective, and purpose of it. It is imperative for us to create a structure environment and building trust within the members. During the storming stage we as a group face different opinions, disagreement and the program perspective changes for some clients. During this stage clients will display different behavior regarding the limitations of the program phase they are in, as the facilitator some redirections, empathy and words of affirmation will be needed to get clients to refocused in their goals. The norming stage in the group looks like gaining the trust to disclose more confidential information, clients being reoriented to the group's goal and mechanisms. Clients at this stage form more cohesive relationships with the group's member and the facilitator. During the performing stage clients get to be more focused on their recovery process, they become more aware of their goals and how to work towards them. They get to develop a more stable and trust relationship with all members of the program. The adjourning stage might look different to us because it is an open group, it makes our termination process look different. Clients in our groups are moving to a

## Final Integrative Paper

different phase and that marks the termination process. Clients are part of a house meeting where they are officially congratulated and informed that they are moving to another phase within the program. Clients are provided with words of encouragement by the clinical team, the community life team, the program director, and some members of the group. Clients are provided with new set of schedule and activities that suits their new phase in the program. Even though clients are not going to be attending the group anymore, they keep the same individual counselor as they move along the process.

## CBT

The CBT approach is the main approach use to work with clients in the treatment group for recovery. This approach is applied to help clients recognize patters of unhelpful thoughts that prompt particular behaviors. CBT is a reliable approach to be implemented in treatment groups for addictive behavior because it helps facilitate topics related thought process, emotions and behavior. It is crucial to use CBT in our program because of the nature of the groups we offer and the goals it entails to server faithfully. The lessons for this group are very well structure to change and rewire the way participants see, perform and execute behaviors. One of the main goals of the group is to change the thought process that has an impact on behaviors. Interfering such sequence, allow clients to stop the cycle that has led them to relapse or substance use. Participants become aware of the chronological sequence of thought, feeling/emotion and behavior and are able to initiate change. For instance, Manuel thought about his family that is in another country, this thought always gets Manuel to feel lonely which leads him to abuse cocaine to deal with unbearable feelings. “The focused of the intervention is primarily on distorted thinking patters, which are sometimes called thinking errors or cognitive distortions. These maladaptive thinking patterns and the beliefs that drive them are believed to be source of

## Final Integrative Paper

unwanted feelings that lead to problematic behavior”. (pg. 510) CBT also allows the facilitator to process with clients the different factors that play a role on their addictions. It facilitates for the instructor and clients to talk about other ways to channelize the particular feelings, emotions and thoughts that can lead to the behavior in question. Using this approach can help the facilitator to also work with the clients’ passed traumas that are perpetuating the thought, feelings and behaviors that are harmful in the client’s life.

The treatment group I facilitate once the behavior is identified through CBT the process recognizing the roots, feelings or emotions behind the behavior is established. Once the behavior is identified the facilitator assist the client to explore ways to improve the behavior in question. As the facilitator, one of the ways I can apply CBT to facilitate the change in behavior is by exploring with clients’ other behaviors that can replace the ones in question. “Cognitive-behavioral therapist work with clients to identify unwanted, unhealthy, or self-destructive thoughts, beliefs, feelings, or behaviors, they often discover common cognitive distortions or thinking errors that contribute to and support these thoughts, feelings, and behaviors”. (pg. 514) We also explore new ways to regulate or channelized emotions to avoid the behavior than was previously displayed. For instance, If Manuel tends to get angry during long lines and when he is angry, he usually has to punch something, by using CBT Manuel can replace the result behavior by walking away or doing breathing exercises. Manuel can also recognize that waiting on a line fuels his anger and we can work on how he perceives the situation to change the thought process. CBT can also facilitate the process of exploring perceptions to interfere and target the automatic process of unwanted behaviors. This approach can also support exploring with clients conscious and unconscious behavior that might be interrupting the recovery process and to allow them to make changes.

### Motivational Interviewing

As a facilitator of an addictive treatment group Motivational Interviewing approach can be essential in the process of working with clients and assisting them on how to meet their goals. This approach offers a framework to work with clients effectively as a facilitator; It also allows clients to see themselves in the situation they are in. Motivational Interviewing can provide an effective way to help client to work with their motivation towards a goal. As a facilitator this approach allows me to help clients resolve ambivalence and find their own motivation which are the main behaviors that clients are presented with in a treatment group. Even though in our program clients had made the decision to make a change, majority of the time clients are still stock in the ambivalence stage consciously or unconsciously. Once the ambivalence and motivation parts are reconciled through a process of evocation, this approach opens the door for CBT implementation to start.

Motivational Interviewing allows for a partnership to be established between the facilitator and the client. It can provide the instructor with a guidance of how to collaboratively work with clients by using empathy, respecting their autonomy, open-ended questions, using affirmations, acceptance, genuineness, authenticity, equality, client's autonomy (asking for permission before providing advice and information), encouraging and supporting clients' language. According to, Moyers (2005), certain behaviors can damage the relationship being established. "Likewise, direct confrontation is proscribed within an MI approach, as behaviors such as giving advice without permission, warning, and explicitly directing clients because these behaviors are seen as inconsistent with an approach that attempts to minimized client resistance". Motivational interviewing promotes an environment where clients feel safe to share and not judge by the

## Final Integrative Paper

situation, they are in. It motivates clients to address those behaviors they have been wanting to change. According to (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003; Horvath & Bedi, 2002). “Being understood and accepted are an essential part of the healing process.” Motivational Interviewing encourage clients to feel as an important part of the process and allows an atmosphere of collaboration not of power seeking. As a facilitator by applying Motivational Interviewing, I can meet clients where they are at and create an environment that promotes and support change. The addictive behavior population in general can benefit tremendously by applying motivational interviewing to group session and individual session to create a trust relationship and make progress in the process of being sober. In our particular program encouraging change and helping client to find motivation within the different phases is one of the main targets to obtain, Motivation Interviewing approach can support that process effectively.

### Solution Focus Brief Therapy

The nature of the group I server is diversity in beliefs, strengths, challenges, goals, personalities, behaviors, passed experiences and other. Even though some strategies such as CBT and Motivational Interviewing are excellent resources for all our phases across our program; there are many clients that those approaches might not benefit them as much during a specific time in the process. Some of our clients had relapsed after being in sober for 30 years, 20 years, 10 years, etc. Sometimes some of our clients just need to be reroute and provided with support to get back on track. Solution Focus Brief Therapy help me as a facilitator to serve that population that already had at a particular moment conquer and mange their addiction. These clients just need the reinforcement and to refocus again on their resources, values and strategies that already work in the past to reach their goals. During group sessions clients have the opportunity to talk

## Final Integrative Paper

about their previous experiences, things they like, strengths and areas of challenge. I used that moment to emphasize their strengths to help them be aware of those resources they have. For example, we had a class where clients were asked to write how they see themselves. It was interesting to see that many of them did not describe qualities and values that me as the facilitator got to know about them. One of the participants asked me, how do you see me?? I prompted as a helper, serviceable and as a person who is always willing because you constantly offer to help. I provided to all participants with values I saw in them and how I came about to know those. Participants were surprised because they never thought about themselves that way. They were looking at themselves by their weakness and not by their strengths. After this activity in the class, we went over the strengths that we have that we do not see at times. This class deepen our relationship and I saw a change in the participants behaviors. Solution Focus Brief Therapy also allow the facilitator and the client to focus on the solutions, not on the problem by helping clients find their strengths. As the facilitator conducting some of the classes for the program, majority of them are oriented to empowering the client. By helping them to be aware of their strengths, we promote a safe environment and the grow of a collaborative relationship. It is crucial to work with client in their strengths to build clients' confidence. "The role of the counselor is to help clients recognize the resources they already possess, such as resilient, courage and ingenuity" (pg. 421) It is imperative as a facilitator in this group, to motivate clients to work on the factors that are prompting the wanted results and assist them on keeping their focus in their strengths. Solution Brief Therapy can also provide a great support on equipping clients with problem solving techniques to face different challenges, behaviors, thoughts, and emotions that they might face during the recovery process.

## Integrative Paper Part II

During this class and group assignments I learned a lot about myself, as a professional, as a student, as a client and as leader or facilitator of a group. I consider I took this class in the perfect time since I am conducting my last semester of internship in a men transitional program working with the addictive behavior population that is seeking recovery while battling homelessness. Having to experience various position every week for class and utilizing different approaches, I was able to experience practice form different perspectives and different techniques. I believe that I am a team player, receptive, vulnerable, willing to listen and to relearn were factors that allow me to work with my classmates in an effective way. I recognize I am a democratic leader and that I like to allow people to voice their opinions and empathize with them. I realized I have a talent to bring groups back to the original topic and try to keep control of an anxious crowd. I can say that the majority of the group activities we had felt real to me, and I was able to relate to the character in the practice. I believe I conducted a lot of observations even during class to analyze behaviors and use them for personal practice. All the different scenarios helped me to relate with the situations other people might be experiencing. I was also able to learn that there are situations that don't exist in my reality, but that they are real to others. I was able to learn to ask myself questions about others' situations and question myself on how would I assist someone with this scenario in real life??? I believe the practice brought a lot of questionings that were good and great because I was able to grow. I was able to recognize my weakness as well during some of the activities. I realized that there were traumas to reconciled with myself. Being a primarily Spanish speaking student with a particular background experience, with struggles and feeling not understood at times made me feel as a real client. I was able to experience how a client feels when a professional fail to know them, their struggles, limitations and strengths. I

## Final Integrative Paper

realized through some experiences that I want to be genuine with my clients. I found myself also recognizing that there are a lot of areas where growth is needed as a professional. For example, I learned that I want to master better different approaches I was not familiar with such as the existential, Gestalt and Adlerian approaches. As a group leader I realized that as a Social Worker it is imperative to be resourceful, understand the population you serve and be aware of the reality of the community/individual you are working with can help us better assist clients. I also understood that knowing about society, the things that are happening, knowing laws and regulations in your area of expertise can be useful when working with clients. I consider that it was a learning journey with great value, and I believe it has a preparation for the real world.

Our group activities helped experience hands-on examples of different approaches and how can they be implemented in real life. I consider that being in a group helped me understand groups better and how to engage with participants at different levels. By conducting many different groups, I started to feel more comfortable not only working in groups in class but also with the group I did my internship with. I learned through this process that one of the challenges for me at times is confronting clients to process emotions. I used to be afraid of client's reaction while confronting them with harmful thinking; I happened to be the Social Worker for a similar scenario in class. I was playing the role of a Social Worker for a group of students that were experiencing anxiety due to school violence and it was challenging to address the students, acknowledge their frustrations, confront their behavior at that moment and bringing them back to find solutions.

One of my personal goals was to learn how to facilitate groups, not to educate in the traditional sense. It was a rough process because I have a calling to teach and everything I do, I do it teaching. Understanding the role of a facilitator in a treatment /process group was a hard

## Final Integrative Paper

experience. Being exposed to different groups in class helped me understand the difference between teaching a topic and facilitating a group where the goal is the group to treat the group. In other words, there is not one expert in the subject, we are all expert in the subject. Once I learned the difference in roles, functionality, and approach, I was able to be more effective in class groups and my internship groups. My plan is to continue to grow in this area is to join more groups, watch more videos about how to facilitate groups. I would also like to conduct observation to different groups dynamics to learn more strategies to become proficient at facilitating groups. I believe some countertransference that I might need to work on is understanding silence. Sometimes I used to feel that I was not being heard or paid attention to which made me feel insecure. I had learned that silence is golden and that it is necessary to understand what silence means at a particular moment. I also believe that as a person that like to see results because it motivates me and makes me feel that I am being effective; experiencing clients' relapses and feeling that progress is not being made can get me discouraged or upset. I am working at reminding myself that clients' choices at times do not mean that the work has not been done effectively. I also remind my self that it is not about me, but about the clients (their limitations, strengths, struggles, goals, etc). Through this experience, I also refined some skills that are needed to work with client such as being genuine, transparent, to relate with clients, empathize and utilizing client's strengths to elicit change. I am planning to continue to grow in this area at my place of work which is an after-school program and a summer camp working with low-income families. I believe these skills can help me establish collaborative relationships with parents, meet them where they are at and use the strength perspective to encourage change.

The personality of my group was genuine, I feel that we were so honest about the things we were living at the moment, that we just use real life issue for the role plays. Our experience was so real

## Final Integrative Paper

that I got to learn about real life situations my classmates dealt with. For example, some of my class members expressed fearing the police abuse being that they are part of the group that is usually involved in those types of incidents. Another classmate expressed her family being racist, closedminded about racism and how that has affected her family. I consider that we all interacted with one another in a natural way, and I observed that classmates kept their opinions real about the different topic we discussed in class.

I was able to appreciate that at the first group activities we had, we struggle at deciding who was going to play which role. It was hard to point out a Social Worker for the activity, there were times when people did not want to be the Social Worker. However, once we got comfortable with that process and we already knew that the role play was part of every class activity; we were able to just transition naturally into the role that was assigned to everyone. I learned that the functionality or malfunction of a group can be displayed in many ways, but I realized that structure is tremendously important for groups. It sets the atmosphere for the group and the relationships that will grow from it. I can say that class rules and norms are an important part of group meetings, and that they allow for participants and facilitator to have a respectful, conversations and relationship. Having the rules clear for the group allows client to keep confidentiality and create a safe environment for growth. Through this experience I was able to learn some extra rules that are helpful to incorporate them in groups and use them to set healthy boundaries. I also learned that the questions we ask are very important because those questions will lead the conversation with our clients. Depending on what question we ask and how we frame them, we will get the information that we need to get to know our clients, to learn about their experiences, issues and how to help them. In other words, the questions we ask determine the relationship and the work that we will do with our clients.

## Final Integrative Paper

I believe that our group went through different stages and even though some of us knew each other from other classes, we probably never worked together as much or at all. The way we were selected by the professor was spontaneous, I am sure some people within the group probably wanted to work with particular classmates that were not in their particular group. I believe that is a realistic part of some groups in real life. I consider we were a diverse group specially in culture and backgrounds. I consider that my group for class was a good example of the larger world, and it also represented the issues in society when it comes to racism. I believe that some of our group members were very active, and some others were more like a quiet type. During the second session, I still observed some uncertainty of who played which role and trying to fall into place within the group. I started to notice that around one-two members of the groups stand in a particular role to decide who was going to play the Social Worker role or what kind of participants everyone was going to be, etc. I did not observe a storming stage, however, I do believe certain classmate expected certain response or engagement from particular members which led to some minor discomfort behavior in my opinion. In the norming stage, I observed that we started to become closer by the 4<sup>th</sup> activity in groups and our intimacy as a group grew stronger; the group became more cohesive towards each other during the activities and new their members by heart. The group entered the performing stage when we developed a better understanding or even discover strengths in our classmates that we did not know previously. For example, we were able to recognize the strengths in one of the classmates to speak for the group because she is a natural speaker; It helped us to work more effectively as a group and understand the strengths of each person in it. I believe the adjourning stage, did not took place for our group. However, the professor went over some points on the last class we had and reviewed the final

## Final Integrative Paper

assignment material. He indirectly set the atmosphere of class coming to an end and discuss the end of the master's program journey for most of the students in the class.

I believe my group developed trust little by little, I consider that by the 4<sup>th</sup> session we trusted each other more and we were able to open with each other and use our own experiences for role plays. I consider that the formulation of goal was in a way established, but it changed every week due to the different task we had to accomplished for every group activity. I consider that the professor had an impact in our group because he would usually play the role of the most difficult participant. I believe the professor participation brought up a good challenge because that is how it plays out in the real world sometimes. I consider that the shifting of roles every week at the beginning kept us wondering who a particular role had not done, who did it last time, etc. However, I feel that having those shifts in roles helped us all experience different positions and roles which led us to learn from both perspectives. We as a group did not experience conflict, I believe as we did more sessions the weekly process for group activities became smoother. We as a group did not experience resistance, but I learned that when dealing with groups with different perspective we should always encourage a conversation with the purpose to get to an understanding or common ground. We learned how to address participants that create conflict, that want to disturb the group process and that want to overtake the role of the facilitator. I consider the group activity with Jane was helpful because we practice on how to redirect group members with conflictive behaviors. I believe the turning points for my group was becoming so genuine in our role plays and always adhering to conduct the group activity as instructed where turning points for me to learn and grow in the career. I believe having different group activities and techniques helped us learn approaches that we either did not know about or we needed a better understanding on them. By using groups techniques, I learn more about how to run group

Final Integrative Paper

and facilitate them. I consider that it also helped me grow in understanding how to effectively work in group with other participants. I consider that facilitating groups is an area I would like to learn more about and get more practice on

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