

GDC Session #6

Self-Help Groups

Objectives of Session

1. Identify barriers to and benefits of participating in self-help groups (AA, NA, CA).
2. Provide information about the structure, format, and “tools” of 12-step programs.
3. Identify how following the 12 Steps aids recovery from cocaine addiction.

Methods/Points for Group Discussion

1. Use a discussion format to review the clients’ answers to the handouts and the educational material for this session. Write the major points on a chalkboard or flip chart, if desired.
2. Ask group members to share their own experiences related to this material, as it is reviewed.
3. Before discussing benefits of self-help groups, ask group members to share what they don’t like about 12-step programs, based on their personal experiences or beliefs. Some of their answers may include:
 - Some people in NA or AA really aren’t trying to change or get well.
 - It is difficult to open up and share personal information, such as information about a cocaine problem, with others, including other cocaine addicts.
 - I don’t like other people, such as sponsors, telling me what to do to change.
 - I don’t like following a structured program such as the 12-Step programs of AA, NA, or CA.
 - I don’t like to take the time to go to meetings or to attend them.
 - Meetings make me feel like using cocaine or other drugs.
4. Then, ask the group members how self-help groups have helped their recovery from drug use in the past or can help them now. The counselor may offer the following as possible benefits of self-help groups:
 - The most important and encouraging fact about self-help group attendance is that the cocaine addict is not alone. Recovery is a “we” process in which people recovering from addiction help each other by sharing hope, strength, and support.
 - No one else can do the addict’s work during recovery from drugs, but there are others who can provide support and guidance, especially those who have been able to stay drug free.
 - There are numerous support groups for addiction that are based on the spiritual program of AA’s 12 Steps and 12 Traditions (i.e., NA, CA, Overeaters’ Anonymous, Gambler’s Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, etc.). There are also many support

groups for families and significant others such as Codependents Anonymous (CODA); Al-Anon, for families of alcoholics; Nar-Anon, for families of drug addicts; Alateen, for teenagers of alcoholics; Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA); Gam-Anon, for families of gamblers; O-Anon, for families of overeaters, etc. Some addicts may find help in other support groups for addiction such as Women For Sobriety, which supports women's sobriety through emotional and spiritual growth; Rational Recovery, a self-help group that uses a cognitive approach that emphasizes empowerment; or Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART), which uses cognitive-behavioral strategies to build motivation, promote adaptive coping and problem solving, and encourage lifestyle balance.

- The only requirement for membership in a support group is a desire to change an addictive behavior.

5. Discuss the following about self-help programs.

■ **Types of Meetings**

- One in which one person shares his or her story of addiction and recovery.
- A discussion meeting in which members discuss one of the 12 Steps or 12 Traditions or other recovery-related topic such as guilt, gratitude, relapse, acceptance, etc.
- An open meeting, which is for recovering and nonrecovering people.
- A closed meeting, which is for recovering people only.
- A step meeting, which focuses on one of the 12 Steps.
- Big Book or Basic Text discussion meetings.
- Men or women only meetings.
- Gay and lesbian only meetings.
- Special group meetings (for doctors, business people, individuals with psychiatric disorders, etc.).
- Noon time, midnight, and candlelight meetings.

■ **Format of Meetings**

- Meetings usually last 1 hour. The time before and after a meeting provides clients with an excellent opportunity to talk to other recovering people.
- Meetings often open with a reading of the 12 Steps, Preamble, or How It Works. (See AA literature, e.g., "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions," Bill W., 1985).
- Recovery-related topics are suggested during discussion meetings. People discuss the topics or whatever else is on their minds.

■ **Frequency of Meetings**

- In the early stages of recovery, many treatment programs advise cocaine-addicted individuals to attend 90 meetings in 90 days. This is because the first 90 days of recovery represent the most difficult recovery period, with the highest relapse rates. By attending meetings so frequently during this period, the cocaine-dependent individual learns how to manage cravings and desires for drugs, deal with problems that may contribute to relapse, and develop relationships with other sober individuals.

- However, some addicted individuals will not be able to attend daily meetings because they have work or family commitments. Nonetheless, all group members should be encouraged to attend meetings and learn about the 12-Step approach to recovery.

■ **12-Step Programs**

- Bill W. and Dr. Bob founded AA in 1935.

■ **Sponsorship**

- Sponsors mentor people new in NA/AA and provide a tremendous amount of support.
- Sponsors can teach you how to use the 12-Step program of recovery.

■ **12 Steps**

A 12-step program is a spiritual approach to recovery that endorses working through a series of 12 steps. Provide groups members with a list of the 12 Steps and ask them to read and discuss the Steps. Encourage members to discuss the Steps that they are working on. The Steps are summarized below for discussion, if desired.

- **Steps 1 through 3**—Suggest that to be free of the obsession to use drugs, we have to admit that we can't control the obsession, and we are powerless over an addiction; we have to trust in some power that is greater than ourselves.
- **Steps 4 through 9**—Outline a plan of self-assessment, and rebuild broken relationships.
- **Steps 10 through 12**—Become rigorously honest in our daily lives and build a spiritual foundation for ongoing recovery.

■ **Readings and Writings**

■ **Sharing Telephone Numbers**

GDC Session #6 Handouts

1. "Self-Help Groups." Adapted from *Group Drug Counseling Participant Recovery Workbook*. Holmes Beach, FL: Learning Publications, Inc., pp. 13-14.
2. "The Serenity Prayer and the 12 Steps of Recovery."

Suggested Educational Videos

1. Living Sober Video F: *Building a Recovery Network & Sponsorship*. Gerald T. Rogers Productions, 1000 Skokie Blvd., Suite 575, Wilmette, IL 60091, 1-800-227-9100.
2. *Twelve Steps*. Gerald T. Rogers Productions, 1000 Skokie Blvd., Suite 575, Wilmette, IL 60091, 1-800-227-9100.

GDC Session #6, Sample Handout #1

Self-Help Groups

A combination of professional treatment and participation in a self-help group often provides the most effective recovery program for addiction. Self-help groups can offer you encouragement and support, and they can help you understand that you are not alone and that many others struggle with addiction problems.

The most popular and widely available self-help programs are those based on the 12-Step approach to recovery. There are many different groups based on the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, such as AA, NA, CA, OA, GA, Al-Anon, Ala-teen, Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA), Codependents Anonymous (CODA), etc. This approach offers a spiritual perspective on recovery that has helped many people bring their lives back into a healthy balance.

Self-help groups based on other approaches to recovery may also be available. There are groups such as Rational Recovery, SMART Recovery, Women for Sobriety, and programs such as Dual Recovery Anonymous and Double Trouble for those who also suffer from a psychiatric illness. Ask your therapist or counselor for information about these self-help groups. Discuss your concerns, questions, or experiences with self-help programs.

1. List what you don't like about self-help groups.

I don't like having to make a commitment to go to meetings.

People tell you what to do; I hate being told what to do.

I don't like the cliques.

Going to meetings makes me more accountable for my sobriety.

2. List the benefits of regularly attending AA, NA, CA, or other self-help groups.

Being around sober people will help me learn ways to avoid using drugs when I want to get high.

It'll help me stay on track and catch problems early.

I'll be connected to people who know what it's like to have an addiction to cocaine.

I'll be around people who want me to recover, not those who want me to get high.

3. How many AA, NA, CA, or other self-help meetings do you attend each week?

3

(Explain your answer)

I go to recovery group each week and work full time so three meetings help me stay closely connected to the program.

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4. List ways in which a sponsor can help you.

A sponsor can help me work the 12 steps and understand the program.

A sponsor can also help me when I have strong cravings to get high.

A sponsor can teach me the ropes about recovery.

A sponsor can help me see when I'm fooling myself and taking the easy road to recovery

5. List ways in which working the 12-Step program can aid your recovery.

Step 1 can help me remember how bad cocaine addiction messed up my life.

It can help me become more honest and accept that I can't control my drug use.

6. List other helpful support groups.

Nar-Anon for my family.

GDC Session #6, Sample Handout #2

The Serenity Prayer and the 12 Steps of Recovery

The Serenity Prayer

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

The 12 Steps of Recovery

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrong.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all the defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of the steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice the principles in all our affairs.