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Building a Strong Support System

Facilitator Notes

Main Learning Points from last session: *Pursuit of Life Goals and Dreams*

1. Having an illness does not stop people from reaching life dreams.
2. It is what we can do, not what we can't do, that makes us successful.

Review Personal Practice Options from last session.



Note

This session could be used for family/friend groups or sessions. It offers an opportunity for the participant and family to practice skill-building together.

Tips for this Session

This is the last session of this workbook, so take advantage of the opportunity to celebrate with participants. You may want to present everyone with a certificate of achievement or find other creative ways you can celebrate with participants. You may identify something special that each person did during the course of the workbooks. Everyone enjoys being singled out for individual praise.

Potential Problem for this Session

Some participants may have only the treatment team as a support network.

Possible Responses

Explain that everyone's support system changes over their lifetime. Indicate that during this session the identification of current support people, as well as what support people may be needed in the future, will be reviewed.

General Note

If you are interested in an outcomes measurement for this workbook, you may want to consider using the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS), developed by Christine Robitschek, Ph.D., the Quality of Life Index by Dr. W. O. Spitzer, 1980, or the COOP Chart for Primary Care Practices (Eugene C. Nelson, 1987).

The PGIS (Christine Robitschek, Ph.D) is a 9 question, self-report instrument that yields a single scale score for personal growth initiative. Personal growth initiative is a person's active and intentional involvement in changing and developing as a person. The PGIS consists of nine items that are rated on a Likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree. Item scores are summed to obtain a total PGI score. There is evidence that high scores on the PGIS are strongly positively related to psychological well-being and lower scores are related to psychological distress. Reliability and validity evidence has been strong. The PGIS takes about 5 minutes to complete, and there is no time limit. <http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/ppquestionnaires.htm#ASQ>

The Quality of Life Index, by Dr. W. O. Spitzer, has both a 5 topic self-rating scale and a 5 topic clinician scale, which allows clinicians to compare their impressions to a client's perception. The dimensions measured Activity, Daily Living, Health, Support, and Outlook. The clinician version measures from 0 - 2 with 0 indicating lower quality and 2 indicating higher quality of life. This instrument has been used in many studies and is considered a reliable and valid tool.

Facilitator Notes

(continued)

The COOP scales (The Dartmouth/Northern New England Primary Care Cooperative Information Project) was developed to create a system to measure health status in physicians' offices. One of the basic tenets of the charts is that the functioning of the person as a whole is more important than that of separate organ systems. You may have seen some of the graphic charts (e.g., the "face" charts to measure feelings). Other graphic charts measure daily activity levels, social activities, physical fitness, change in health, overall health, social support, and quality of life. These charts are widely used in studies and are found to have good reliability and high validity. They are rated as useful by high numbers of office staff and clients.

The editors believe these scales fit the content of this workbook well. These and other health measures can be found in McDowell, (2006).

Suggestion for Topic Introduction and Relevance to Participants

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent..."

—John Donne, English clergyman and poet (1572 – 1631),
Devotions XVII

"What does it mean when we say, 'No man (or woman) is an island?'"

(Encourage responses. If needed, prompt by asking, "What makes an island." Look for someone to say something similar to, "Surrounded by water," "Apart from the other land," or "Alone.")

"An island is separated, or apart, from the main body of land, isn't it? So this quote means that none of us, no man (or woman), is able to be separated or apart from other people. We all need support, and friendship and people who care about us."

"This is the last session of this workbook, and we are going to spend it by starting to identify and build our support systems. Look around the group. Have any of you found any supportive friendships here?"

"Let's review the main points from our last session and answer the first six questions on the Topic Assessment before we start, just to see how familiar we are with this topic."

Topic Assessment Answer Key

1. B 2. C 3. A 4. C

T – topic introduction
R – relevance to participant
I – identify objectives
M – materials for session
M – motivate to use

Review of Session 12: The Pursuit of Life Goals and Dreams



Main Learning Points of Session 12

What were the main learning points of Session 12? If you did not attend the last session, you may guess, and also write the answers as people say them:

1. Having an illness does not stop people from reaching life d_____s.
2. It is what we can do, not what we can't do, that makes us s_____l.

Personal Practice Option Review:

What personal practice option(s) did you choose?

Did you complete your personal practice yet?

1. **Yes.** How did it go? _____

2. **No.** What got in the way of completing your practice?

If you still plan to complete your practice, when will you do it?

3. **I didn't choose a personal practice option.**

Topic Assessment



Mark one: Pre Post

Your Score:
+ ____ out of 4

Directions:

1. Read each question carefully.
2. Read every answer before marking one.
3. Mark only one answer to each question.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Having a support group is a sign of weakness.

- A. True B. False

2. My support system may include:

- A. Only my treatment team.
B. Just my family.
C. Anyone that I decide can help me.
D. My prescriber and nurse only.

3. Building a good support system can make me stronger.

- A. True B. False

4. I need to have some contact with my support system:

- A. Every day.
B. Once a month.
C. Even when everything is going well.
D. Only during emergencies.

5. I am confident I have a solid support system.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree Unsure

Topic Assessment



6. This information is important for me to know.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree
Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly
Agree |

At the end of the session, answer these questions before turning in this paper:

7. This session helped me.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree
Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly
Agree |

8. What I liked about this session: _____

9. How this session could have been better for me: _____

Building a Strong Support System

Objectives for this Session

1. Identify 1 reason for having a strong support system.
2. Name 2 current support people you have and their roles in your life.
3. Develop a plan to secure 1 new support person.

A support system is a group of people that helps us along in life. Sometimes the members of the group can give direct help, advice, or just support us when we need a little extra understanding during difficult times in our lives. Everyone can benefit from a good support system. Having a support group is not a sign of weakness. In fact, it can help you be stronger.

Main Learning Point #1

Having a good support system can make us stronger.

Everyone has different members in their support system and that is to be expected. However, to make the best use of your support system, you need to identify who is on your list.

The following outline is set up so you can identify who your support people are, what relationship you have with them, and the times when it is best to contact them. You may want to place this list where it is easily accessed in your home. Examples of where you will see it easily are on the refrigerator or by the phone. Also a copy can be carried in your wallet or purse in case you want to call someone when you are away from home.

Your support system may include:

- All or several family members.
- All treatment team members.
- Friends.
- Bosses or co-workers.
- Neighbors.
- Clubs and organizations, such as NAMI, AA, and others.

Building a Strong Support Team (continued)

Suggested reasons to contact members of your support system:

- Emergencies.
- Symptom or mood changes, including changes in sleep patterns.
- Socialization.
- Work issues.
- Church or religious group activities.

Once your support system is in place, plan to make contact with everyone on the list every now and then to make sure nothing has changed, such as their phone number or address. It is also very important to speak with people in your support system when everything is going well and you do not need anything. This can keep your relationship secure and the support system strong.



Main Learning Point #2

It is important to make regular contact with the people in your support system.

Fill out the following *Support System Emergency Sheets*. You may need to fill in all the details later, but you can start by identifying who you want to include on your list.

Support System Emergency Sheet



Emergency Number: 911

Emergency mental health number _____

My support system

When to contact

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone #: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone #: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone #: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone #: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone #: _____

Address: _____

Review & Moving Forward



The *main learning points* of this session are:

1. _____
2. _____

Move Forward—Choose a Personal Practice Option

It's important to practice new knowledge and skills. Although this is the last session in this workbook, you may still want to practice this important subject. Please choose one option from the list below:

- 1. STUDY.** I am going to reread my handout at least once.
- 2. SHARE.** I will share my handout with someone in my support system. I will ask _____ to read it and talk with me about it.
- 3. PLAN.** I will take my *Support System Emergency Sheet* and finish filling it out. I will make a copy so I can put one in my wallet or someplace that I can keep it with me. I will post the other one at my home where I will see it every day. I will also post a copy of my *Recovery Plan Worksheet*.
- 4. OTHER:** _____

Congratulations on completing this workbook.