

Using 12-Step Peer Support Group: Voices of Recovering Social Workers

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Abstract

This poster describes recovering social workers' insights about the use of 12-step peer support group to manage the complex process of personal recovery while working in addiction treatment agencies.

Participants shared valuable accounts related to participation in 12-step peer-support group as an important and significant aspect of their recovery process. For instance, the social networking with other peers was a crucial component in 12-step that significantly helped guiding participants in their recovery.

Introduction

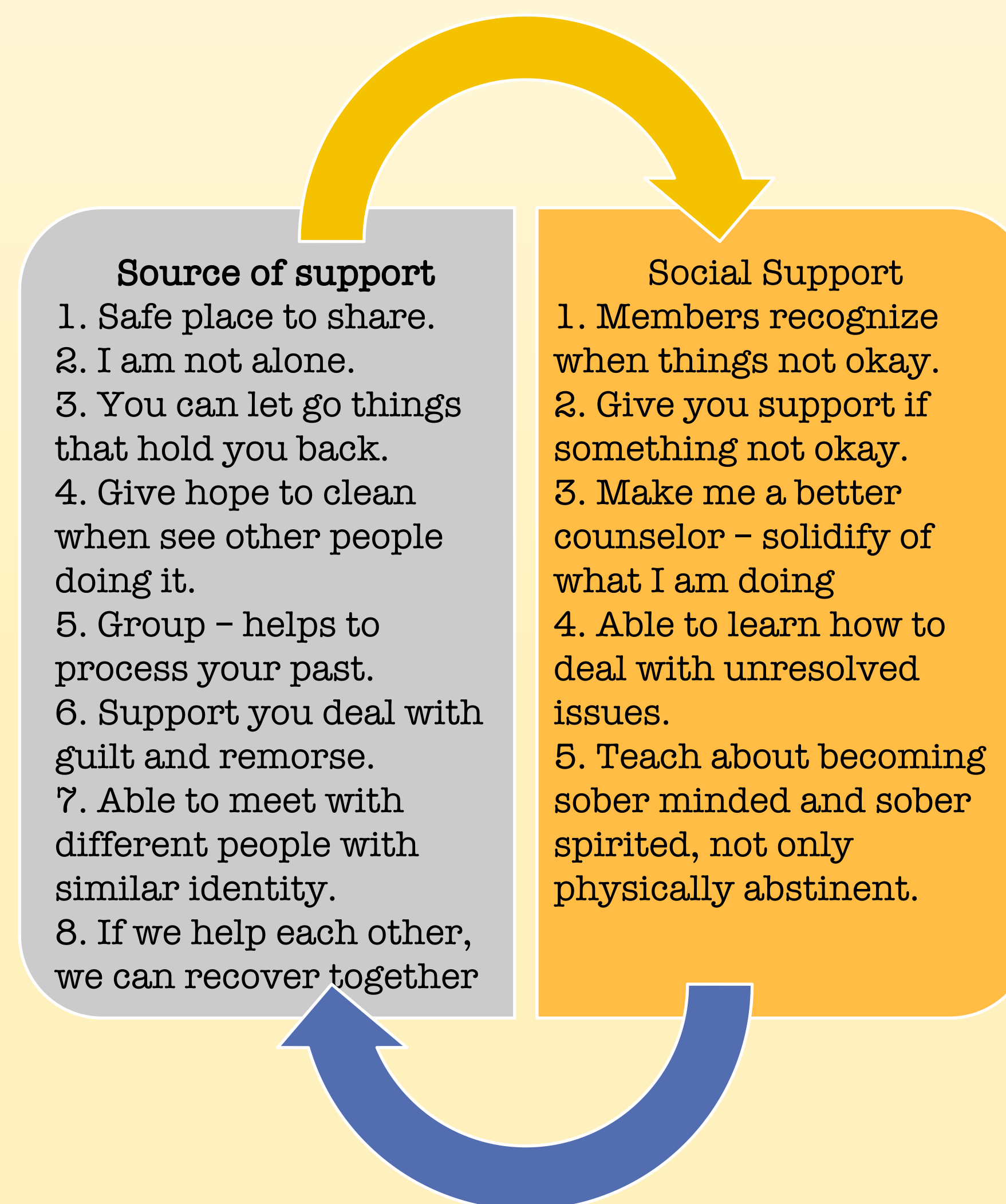
- Recovery from substance use disorder is a unique characteristic of social workers working in addiction treatment agencies (Simons et al., 2017). Fialk (2018) estimated that approximately 60% of people in recovery from substance use disorder working in addiction-treatment agencies.
- There are still limited studies that have explored the lived experiences of individuals in recovery working as social workers in addiction treatment agencies.
- This poster describes recovering social workers' insights about the use of 12-step peer support group to manage the complex process of personal recovery while working in addiction treatment agencies.

Methods

- A qualitative approach enabled the generation of in-depth knowledge on this topic based on the reports of addiction counselors in long-term recovery.
- The narrative inquiry approach was used to facilitate participants' abilities to narrate detailed life stories.
- A combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques was used to recruit participants.
- Data was collected through one in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interview with each participant. I recorded all interviews, transcribed each interview verbatim, and then analyzed the content based on Fraser's (2004) guidelines for narrative research.

Data Analysis

The sample in the current study comprised of 18 recovering social workers. Of the total 18 respondents, 10 (55%) were Caucasian, six (33%) were African American, one (6%) was Hispanic, and one (6%) was Native American. Twelve were male (67%) and six (33%) were female.



Results

- Participants' narrations revealed active engagement with recovery 12-step recovery network as an effective strategy that helped them to sustain their long-term recovery while working as social workers.
- Regular attendance in 12-step meetings provided them with an opportunity to meet and socialize with others who were also in recovery, including talking and sharing new perspectives of recovery.
- Another benefit of attending 12-step meetings with many participants was an opportunity to gain knowledge that they could apply while working with clients in the addiction treatment field, including ways to setting up healthy expectations for others.

"I learned from the 12-step meetings not to put expectations on others. I learned that my boss is not always going to be right, and that I am not always going to be right. It's not a battle that I will fight and win. So, I apply the step that I've learned from the 12-step meetings in order to stay in the recovery, to stay sane at my work, and for me not to become one of the relapse statistics."

Conclusion & Discussion

- Respondents reported being actively engaged with a 12-step program as a support to sustain recovery. In the literature, 12-step group members' willingness to share their recovery experiences with others was part of fulfilling their service (Freimuth et al., 2008; Hipolito et al., 2011; McCall et al., 2001).
- A social support received from 12-step members served as important factors to reduce recovering social workers' burnout, similar to study from Maslach et al. (2001). Findings from the current study shed light on self-care practices among recovering social workers that was studied to a lesser extent in earlier research (Vilardaga et al., 2011).
- Another important implication for social work education focuses on utilization of, and active engagement with, 12-step programs as part of continuity of care and sustenance of recovery.
- Introducing a 12-step syllabus into social work education involves creating an awareness of its philosophy, along with EBPs such as CBT, MI, group therapy and other therapies.

Citations

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