

CCCC Peer Group for I2I Abuse

Meeting date: 10/23/2014

12 individuals participated in the first peer group, we started out with opening the floor to the individuals to talk about any experiences that they had as victims of abuse. 7 of the individuals spoke of abuse that they endured in their past. Most were victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and/or a combination. This was not abuse that occurred at day program or that they are presently experiencing. This was abuse that occurred in their past, all of them knew their abusers. They were family members or significant others. As they told their stories they all supported each other with kind words, advice, tears and hugs. Although this peer group started with the intent to talk about I2I abuse, it was important to let them tell their stories, it helped many of them open up to the group and it taught many of them compassion for others and that things that happen to us in our past does assist in shaping who we are in the present. It affects present relationships, anxiety with meeting new people, and the need to protect others when they see someone is hurting them.

We then focused on what they did to get out from the situations they were in. Most either told someone they trusted about the abuse or contacted the authorities. This led us into our next discussion topic of what can you do to prevent abuse or stop abuse from reoccurring. They all had great ideas and spoke freely. The #1 response is that having someone they trusted enough to talk to about what was happening to them. We talked respecting yourself and that you have rights to your own body and no one has the right to violate that. We talked about boundaries and relationships. We also talked about being assertive and standing up for yourself and the importance of the word "NO".

As we got further into this topic we talked about vulnerability and what that means. We also talked about reporting abuse and why it is important. When talking about I2I abuse at program most of the individuals felt that they have been victims as well as abusers to their friends or peers for a variety of reasons. The #1 spreading rumors when they were mad at each other, # 2 fighting over boyfriends and girlfriends (jealousy), #3 fighting over friends, and #4 clicks. We went through different scenarios touching on all of the focus areas. First we would run through scenario show the wrong way to handle the situation and then we would run through the scenario again and show the right way to deal with the situation. It was great to see them work together and help each other through each process. They were also supportive of each other.

When talking about reporting, we focused on who to report to and the importance of reporting immediately. We also talked about who all needs to be involved in the reporting process, victim's assistance and the debriefing process.

We also talked about cell phones and the social media since this has been a growing problem. Mostly we are finding that the issues are occurring outside of program via cell phones and social media and then it is carrying over into [program the next day. This is how a lot of the rumors get started and feelings get hurt. Not only the two that are fighting with each other are involved but now all their friends are involved and have picked sides. This can become a big issue really fast. When asked if any of the group has witnessed this, most stated that they have been victims and abusers with this issue. Again we played out different scenarios and talk about the wrong way and the right way to handle the situation.

The consensus of the group was that they felt comfortable with their staff to talk to them when they are having issues at program, and would like to be able to sit down with those they have problems with and work out the problem before it becomes too big and other issues occur such as name calling, physical fighting, etc.

At the end of the meeting, 10 individuals stated that they felt the meeting really helped them and they felt supported by staff and their peers. The individuals that told their stories were glad that they did so and felt glad to open up in a safe place. 8 individuals said that they would attend more meetings if offered and would encourage others to attend.

We intend to have a meeting each month and look into allowing for open discussion, group counseling, picking 1 topic each month to focus on related to abuse and the reporting process and provide training when necessary for both victims and abusers.

Question that were asked:

1. How they feel about being abused:

Felt helpless

Wanted to die during the abuse

Felt trapped

Pain is still there, have good days and bad days in regards to the memories

Suffer from PTSD

Feel messed up

Sometimes hate their selves that they let it happen

Have flashbacks

Feel people don't listen

Counseling only helped to a point

After the meeting words from the individuals:

Love the group and wan to see more

Having a support system of family and friends is important

Being able to have staff they can trust to talk to

Getting abuse awareness out there

Looking in the mirror and giving a pep talk to yourself that you are strong and you are worth it

Telling my story makes me feel like a survivor

Love coming to this program and having friends and staff that listen to me