

CHARLES SLACK/EILEEN NEWTON SLACK AIC-POSITIVE PRISON PROGRAMS

TRIAD GROUP WORK AT WINLATON YTC.

"Triad" problem identification group meetings are based upon the theory that rehabilitation is produced in three-role social situations, called Triads - (a) the person with the problem now; (b) the person who used to have the problem but now does not; (c) the people who have never had the problem or who had it so long ago that it doesn't matter (teachers, Staff, volunteers, etc.) who guide the get-together.

Daily (five days per week) group meetings of all Residents are guided by one or more Staff. Joining the group, forming the third role, are former Residents or advanced Residents who clearly display responsible, mature norms and values. This "Ex" role is as important as the other two roles in establishing positive norms in the group.

GOALS OF TRIAD GROUP MEETINGS. a) to identify individual problems, b) to discover alternatives to problem behaviours, c) to overcome brooding or keeping silent about problems, d) to share personal discoveries, e) to help one another find a healthier, more responsible integration of the self.

TRIAD GROUP MEETING PROCEDURE. Groups are run by the teenagers themselves with guidance by Staff Group Leaders. Meetings begin promptly when the teenaged Moderator asks members to share with the group ways in which they have helped another person and/or been helped during the past 24 hours or so. Next, the Moderator calls for members to volunteer to identify (list) problems. The problems are noted by a group Secretary (Resident youth) in a Minutes Book. Members normally do not discuss more than one problem at a time. Persons who personify solutions to problems (called "Ex's") are encouraged to help those who have the problem. For example, a Resident who has been free of drugs for a significant period may personify the solution to a "drug problem." This member will be encouraged to help another youth who now has that problem.

Five minutes before the session is over, the Moderator (youth), guided by the Group Leader (adult) asks for a summary of the group's discussion from the Secretary (youth) who has been keeping minutes. The session ends as promptly as possible after one hour. Informal discussion continues with reminders to the members regarding confidentiality.

STAFF TRAINING IN TRIAD GROUP WORK. Training sessions for Staff are held weekly on Monday afternoons, 2:30 - 3:30 PM, under direction of the Deputy Manager/Programs. These sessions are attended by all available section, teaching and executive Staff who are involved in the Triad Group work.

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The main emphasis of these sessions is the teaching and sharing group-work techniques and review of the week's Triad meetings. Weekly Triad Feedback sheets are used to monitor Triad Groups for evaluation and feedback.

CONFIDENTIALITY. Group work would not be effective if leaders or members betrayed confidences. Group leaders (Staff) are instructed to respect the confidence given by members (Residents) and Residents are reminded to do the same.

CONFIDING INFORMATION TO AUTHORITIES. The question arises as to what should be done when a teenager confides information of value to the Courts, Police or other authorities. Winlaton follows a common practice, not unique to Winlaton. First, every teenager is told that, in general, what is said is to be confidential. Second, every youth is told that, when any statement is made which the Staff Leader thinks should go into the Minutes (recorded by another youth) or of which others in authority should be informed, the Staff Leader will seek permission from the youth to have that information transmitted (with informant's identity protected if necessary). Over the years, nearly all youth have been found to agree with Staff Leaders. When they don't, other resources are employed (Mini-Triads, Hearings). In practice, breaches of ethical obligations either to youth or authorities, are minimal.

CONFIDENTIALITY IN GROUPS OF REMANDED YOUTH. Youth awaiting court appearance may not want to talk about anything relating to their hearing. Since minutes (recorded by another youth) could be subpoenaed, Staff Leaders are instructed as follows:

- A young woman is required to be physically present in each Triad Group meeting which is held where she lives at Winlaton unless excused by the Section Youth Officer for stated reasons. The group members are not required to say anything but are encouraged to participate. Each member's contributions are welcome.

- Each youth is there to help others in her own words, with the idea that, in helping others, she helps herself the most. (Triad concept).

- Participation means listening as well as talking. If in a particular session, no youth volunteers to discuss problems, then The Group Leader discusses general issues such as trust and helping one another.

MINI-TRIAD METHOD.

A special Mini-Triad meeting may be called any time to improve Staff-Resident dialogue or assist a Resident to express herself. In particular, Mini-Triads are used to control self-damaging or disruptive acts. The following description was compiled by an "Ex" with Mini-Triad experience.

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SETTING UP MINI-TRIADS. Either the Resident with the problem or a Staff may see the need. All three roles (Resident, Staff, Ex) know why they are there. Staff and Ex discuss the purpose, clarifying the situation and not setting up a "two against one" battle. We are dealing with people's feelings.

PROCEDURE AND ROLES. The Resident may be articulate enough to start. On the other hand, she may be shy, scared or rebellious.

The procedure should start on a safe, tangible, gentle level without rushing into deep or threatening confrontations. Brick walls must melt, pent-up anxiety and aggression subside. (But don't take too long.)

In Mini-Triads, the Ex plays a more active role than in the larger Group Triads. In fact, the Ex is really the Group Leader rather than the Co-leader.

Mini-Triads are an opportunity for the Resident to communicate with the Ex. Staff are present as a witness - to throw a third light on the situation. Since Staff have daily contact with the Resident, they verify the Resident's story. Also, Staff Leaders gauge the interaction between Resident and Ex to see if it is getting too heavy. Power struggles between Ex and Staff are sorted out prior to Mini-Triad since they detract from its purpose.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN RESIDENT AND EX. During this type of Mini-Triad, Staff joins in with extra experience when needed.

IF WALLS REMAIN UP, Resident may not articulate situation. If the Ex can pick up on the Resident's fear or shyness, then the Ex may begin to relay her/his own story for identification. Once identification has been established, the dia/trialoge can begin.

If walls are real solid, then maybe discussion should turn to "why the walls?" Staff can help. Confrontation should be avoided.

MINI-TRIAD ENDING is not abrupt but winds down so that the Resident doesn't walk away feeling over-exposed, defensive or upset.

AFTER MINI-TRIADS, notes are taken of outcomes: see a counselling agency, contact so and so, buy a book, arrange a second Mini-Triad... Notes are followed through with the Resident and Staff.

Staff and Ex discuss the Triad. The Resident expresses feelings about her experience. Later, Staff check regarding effects and outcomes. Ex's check to see if follow-up Mini-Triads are desirable.

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EVALUATION QUESTIONS. Was the particular Ex suitable? Was the particular Staff suitable? If not, should the Mini-Triad be repeated with a different Staff and Ex?

HEARINGS.

Winlaton has three types of Hearings to handle Resident's alleged misconduct, recurring bad feelings and annoying behaviour. These are: HEARINGS, GRIEVANCE HEARINGS and SERIOUS INCIDENT HEARINGS. All three have the same objective: to provide due process in a rational forum for examining facts and stating consequences for troublesome events.

GRIEVANCE HEARINGS are called for alleged major offences committed by a Winlaton Resident. Examples: striking a Staff, setting a fire.

SERIOUS INCIDENT HEARINGS are set up to deal with cases where Staff think the behaviour of a Resident has endangered the Resident herself or others, or has damaged property. Serious incidents include suicide attempts, vicious fighting, attempted drownings, drug abuse, sexual assault and premeditated or continuous vandalism.

ORDINARY HEARINGS are called quickly to alleviate escalating pressure, anger and ill-feeling. Staff may request a Hearing on a Resident or a Resident may request a Hearing on another Resident. A Hearing is always a triad (three parties present), never a one-on-one situation. At least two Staff are present at Hearings unless the Hearing is between two Residents, in which case one Staff may preside. When two Staff are present because the Resident is in difficulty with an adult, effort is made to have the third Staff, or adult Monitor, be someone trusted by the Resident.

A Hearing may be voluntary or involuntary - depending on the situation. Residents and Staff participate in hearings to avoid troubling situations and brooding on unresolved bad feelings.

ORDINARY HEARING PROCEDURE. A Hearing may be called by anyone toward anyone else, person or group, regarding any issue having a potential basis in fact and feeling. The process begins when the aggrieved says to the other, "I am calling for a Hearing with you." In practice, limits are occasionally placed on frequency to prevent abuse but, since Staff are always present, triviality is not an issue; Staff can usually direct a Hearing toward deeper levels.

In Hearings, each party has a say. To ensure fairness, the party requesting the Hearing has, without interruption, his/her say first. This party signals when finished by stating "That's my Hearing about you." Next, the party answering the Hearing has his/her say without interruption. The proceedings are then opened for general discussion.

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Hearings are always continued until a point of resolution and satisfaction is felt by all three parties. This monitoring or guiding is done by adult Staff (or in some cases, a mature youth). "Consequences" (sanctions, penalties and rewards) are decided by the Monitor. A Plan of Action always comes out of each Hearing. The Plan is always followed up.

MAIN PURPOSES OF HEARING are to a) teach emotional expression, b) provide arena for ventilation, c) provide feedback from peers, d) provide an orderly process for settling disputes and setting up positive plans of action, e) prevent build-up of frustration, f) provide an understandable participation-paradigm or pattern for the judicial process, g) provide Staff with another management tool.

TIME LINES

Daily Triad groups at Winlaton YTC have been running for roughly eleven and a half years. November 1976 through March 1977 constituted a start-up period. Since April 1977, group-work has been in full force although other aspects of the program were added later.

NUMBERS OF PARTICIPANTS

Unfortunately, Winlaton does not tabulate numbers of individual participants in Triad programs. Approximations of these numbers could be, but have not yet been derived. All we can say at present is:

1) The number of admissions to Winlaton YTC since 1976 has ranged from 650 (87/88) to 1150 (80/81). The total admissions from July 76 to June 88 was 10,381.

2) The number of times individuals were admitted to Winlaton over the years has not been tabulated from the admission data. All we can do is estimate that the average number of admissions per individual is somewhere between two (bottom estimate) and, say, five or six (as a top estimate). The number of admissions for an individual is, of course, the number of times a person returns (recidivates) to Winlaton plus one.

3) If the average number of admissions per individual is as low as two, then the total number of participants in Triad Group Work has been about five thousand. If the number is five, then the total number of participants would have been one thousand. Unfortunately, the only statement one can make at the moment is terribly unsatisfactory statement that somewhere between one thousand and five thousand young women have participated in the program since it started.

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4) Beginning in July 1979, persons were tabulated, however, when sentenced, that is, convicted of an offence as opposed to just being Wards while residing at Winlaton. The number of persons sentenced each year ranged from 19 (79/80) to 47 (82/83). The total number (01 July 79 to 30 June 88) was about 300. Of course, some of these have served more than one sentence at Winlaton, in which case they would have been tabulated more than once. All we can say is that no more than about three hundred sentenced young women have participated in Triad Group Work since July 1979.

5) Even though we only have, at this point, a vague idea of how many persons participated in Triad Group Work at Winlaton, we can make a definitive statement: since Winlaton is the only Youth Training Centre in Victoria which provides secure facilities for young women, it follows that every incarcerated female in Victoria, age 12-17, participated in Triad Group Work since the program began in 1977.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Needless to say, if the program outcomes are to be evaluated, evaluation must begin from scratch. Careers of cohorts of young women will need to be ascertained and recorded. Comparison groups must be defined and their careers recorded. To prevent bias, the evaluation effort should be done without the active participation of the Program Designer and Institution Manager, certainly without their influence.

PROCESS VARIABLES. Certain process variables, as opposed to outcomes, have been evaluated (21). In 1979, an analysis of absconding rates showed a significant decline after introduction of the Triad Group Work. At the same time, inmate assaults on staff were tabulated for seven assaulters. The data indicated that in every case, fewer assaults were committed after Group Work than would have been expected if the total assaults by these assaulters were distributed evenly over time spent in the institution. Comments from staff who witnessed the changes produced by Group Work also supported the conclusion that the method was successful in reducing aggression and improving the social atmosphere in Winlaton Youth Training Center. Similarly, "seriously damaging fires" (arsons) dropped to zero after introducing Group Work.

PROGRAM REVIEW. Prior to conducting a full-scale evaluation of the Triad methods as applied to Winlaton Youth Training Centre, we recommend undertaking a program review. An important element of the review could be a broadside search for persons who have been influenced by the program or have an opinion to share. Such a review could provide a foundation for more rigorous evaluative efforts.

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OTHER PROGRAMS MADE POSSIBLE. When hostility and violence in Residents were reduced to a manageable level, many other ancillary programs could be introduced. Examples are: Advanced Triad Groups which meet every Wednesday evening to provide self-help for outsiders with problems, AA/Alanon/Narcotics Anonymous meetings, and an intensive Visitors Program involving the Winlaton Community Support Group, Monash Social Involvement Group, Youth for Christ etc. Winlaton also supports dozens of other educational, rehabilitative and social activities designed to assist Residents. Some of these ancillary programs endure, others accomplish limited objectives and fade. All serve to bring the community into the institution. A list of current programs is provided in Appendix A.

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