

Breaking the Cycle of Addiction: An Eight Week Curriculum for Working with Adult Alcoholics

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Breaking the Cycle of Addiction presents an eight week curriculum for working with alcoholics. The curriculum brings together experts in the various systems that the member is a part. To make the group as effective as possible it contains; accountability groups, the pharmacology of addiction, family roles, coping life and empathy skills, a victims panel, a social justice outreach to juveniles program, and a focus on life after the group.

Keywords: Curriculum, Evidence-Based Practices

Group Purpose and Dynamics

Breaking the Cycle of Addiction (BCA) is an organization intent on aiding alcoholics in recovery alcoholics through promoting healthy living and empowering them by providing skills and knowledge. BCA created a curriculum which effectively looks at the various systems that affect the clients. The group is facilitated by Jacob Campbell, who brings in experts for the different days activities.

Individuals that desire to attend BCA groups need to go through a short interview process. The interview process is to discuss the applicants expected participation in the group, cost, and confidentiality of the group. For the program to work, the participant must desire move past their alcoholism. The group itself contains 10-14 male or female participants. The group is closed asking each member to complete the entire eight weeks and disallowing new members. Each of the eight sessions last two hours, and progresses the group members in a logical order. This logical order follows the process laid out in empowerment theory.

Hipilito-Delgado and Lee (2007) depict empowerment theory as three separate elements that move in a sequential pattern for restoration. The first element is the individual gaining a **critical consciousness** in which the participant gains awareness. This consciousness affects the members gain recognition of their addiction, desire to break the addiction, and grasp the fact that they are not alone. Each of these characteristics are included in the curriculum. The members connection with other individuals with similar struggles often acts as the most powerful aspect of this. The second element is constructing a **positive identity**. Those with addictions often have negative self perceptions and perceptions of

the world. The curriculum is designed to empower the participant to learn a new identity through training, teaching, skill building, and the discussions. The third element moves from micro and mezzo skills to macro skills by having the affiliate partake in **social justice**. To give the group an avenue of reaching out, they work with a group of juveniles who have been charged with a variety of alcohol related charges.

Curriculum

Each of the week's curricula matures from one week to the next in a logical order giving the participant the ability to effectively break their cycle of addiction. The assortment of curricula is presented by experts in the field. The curriculum is different each week, but also addresses consistent themes and activities.

- **Week 1:** Introduction, Goals & Accountability Groups
- **Week 2:** Pharmacology of Addiction
- **Week 3:** Family Roles
- **Week 4:** Coping & Life Skills
- **Week 5:** Learning to put Yourself in Others Shoes
- **Week 6:** Victims Panel
- **Week 7:** Juvenile Outreach
- **Week 8:** Where do I go From Here?

Week one is a time for the members to become introduced to the group, to talk about the group's purpose, and activities. It is also an introduction into creating goals. Goals are taught using the SMART method. The first week also addresses the accountability groups that will be used every week. During every meeting the large group will break up into a small group of two or three members. During the small group discussions they will be asked about their goals, recovery issues, and keeping up with sobriety.

Week two, the pharmacology of addiction is a presentation and discussion about bio-psycho-social effects of addiction. *Week three* focus's on family roles, and the described family roles of dysfunctional families. This session's deliberate

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heart is for the members to look both into their past family history, and current family situation. The self evaluative aspect of this week causes the members to see their identity in a new way. The roles that are described are; scapegoat, hero, lost child, and mascot.

Weeks four and five both are skill teaching days. *Week four*, coping & life skills concentrates on internal thinking skills and external coping mechanisms. During week three the participants are given a reflection activity to be accomplished prior to the next weeks meeting. Attachment number one is the reflection form used. During the session participants dialog regarding the importance of thinking about their thinking, and skills to improve their thought life. Coping skills are presented as a tool belt. Each method used to cope with assorted aspects of the members life is described as a tool in their tool belt. These tools can be negative skills such as anger, drinking? etc. They can also be positive skills, such as talking about problems, exercise? etc. *Week five*, learning to put yourself in others shoes, teaches empathy skills.

Learning these empathy skills positions the participant to be prepared for *week six*. Week six brings in a victims panel to talk about individuals stories. Le (2003) in discussing victim's panels states that research looking into the effectiveness of victims panels has been mixed. Regardless of this fact, there is a lot of evidence backing up the use of victims panels. This week also tends to be one of our heavier sessions and a longer debriefing stage.

Week seven is the juvenile outreach and the social justice portion of the program. After presenting and talking with the juveniles, the group moves into the final week. *Week eight*, "Where do I go From Here?" wraps up the group. Its focus is discussing how the members can keep their sobriety after the group is finished. This will also be a time that the members of the group will have the opportunity to discuss the effectiveness and satisfaction levels of the group process.

Attachment number two is a sample of the advertisements that BCA has published and distributed to multiple agencies. Attachment number three provides in detail an outline of the eight week curriculum.

References

- Hipilito-Delgado, C., & Lee, C. (2007). Empowerment theory for the professional school counselor: A manifesto for what really matters. *Professional School Counseling, 10*(4), 327–332.
- Le, C. P. (2003). Confronting drunken drivers: Effectiveness of victim panels is debated. (2003). *Seattle Post – Intelligencer*, A 1.

Self Talk Reflection

Attachment: # 1

Self talk is the way we process events in our lives (what we think when something happens). Please take time for self reflection on how you think about events that happen in your life. Circle your answer.

I. Do you participate in negative thought patterns (1 = never | 10 = always)?

A. **All or nothing:** seeing things in extremes, e.g. always do your best, no one likes me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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B. **Labeling:** giving yourself labels that have an all-or-nothing quality, e.g. "I'm a loser".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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C. **Filtering:** paying close attention to some points and not others, e.g. "All I think about is my pain".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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D. **Rigid expectations:** have lots of rules, e.g. "I should always give 100%".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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E. **Self focus:** blaming oneself, e.g. "I'm being punished for being ill".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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F. **Psychic reasoning:** assuming one always knows how things will turn out, e.g. "I'll always be ill and in pain".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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G. **Emotional reasoning:** relying on feelings to interpret reality, e.g. "I feel so useless - I am useless".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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H. **Helplessness:** feeling feelings and self esteem are controlled by outside factors, e.g. "I can't help feeling scared".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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II. Do you participate in positive thought patterns (1 = never | 10 = always)?

A. **Middle-ground thinking:** see things in balance, some good/some bad, e.g. I did well to walk to the mailbox today.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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B. **Describing:** objective observations that notices details, e.g. I am 20 pounds overweight.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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C. **Openness:** try to see the Big Picture, e.g. The audience did not ask questions but did seem interested in what I was saying.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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D. **Flexible expectations:** things do not always go your way, e.g. I can not go to the concert but I can listen to it on the radio.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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E. **Human-focus:** you are not responsible for everything, e.g. I am not at fault for my husband's bad moods.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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F. **Experimental attitude:** try things to see if they work, e.g. I'll tell my husband about my feelings instead of avoiding my feelings.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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G. **Reality-reasoning:** relying on evidence, not feelings, e.g. I made a little progress today.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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H. **Empowerment:** taking control of feelings and self-esteem, e.g. I will be less anxious if I remember I did this before and nothing terrible happened.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Attachment: # 2



BREAKING THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION

**For more
Information**

<http://bca.org>

WEEK 1

- Introduction, Goals & Accountability Groups

WEEK 2

- Pharmacology of Addiction

WEEK 3

- Family Roles

WEEK 4

- Coping & Life Skills

WEEK 5

- Learning to Put Yourself in Others Shoes

WEEK 6

- Victims Panel

WEEK 7

- Juvenile Outreach

WEEK 8

- Where do I go From Here?

EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

Eight Week Short Agenda

Breaking the Cycle of Addiction

- I. Week 1: Introduction, Goals & Accountability Groups**
 - a. Name game introduction
 - b. Discussion about groups
 - i. How do you feel about participating in this group?
 - ii. What other types of groups have you participated in?
 - iii. What are your goals for participating?
 - c. Introductory information (session dates, times...etc)
 - d. Goals, using the SMART method
 - e. Purpose and focus of the Accountability groups
 - f. Accountability group meeting
 - g. Debriefing
- II. Week 2: Pharmacology of Addiction**
 - a. Brain Reaction Game
 - b. Pharmacology Aspect of Alcohol & addiction
 - c. Bio-Psycho-Social affects of addiction
 - d. Accountability group meeting
 - e. Debriefing
- III. Week 3: Family Roles**
 - a. Paper genogram / family outlook activity
 - b. Family roles (i.e. family hero, scapegoat, mascot, lost child... etc)
 - c. Accountability group meeting
 - d. Debriefing
 - e. Give Self Talk Reflection Homework
- IV. Week 4: Coping & Life Skills**
 - a. Open the group & discuss last weeks homework (Self Talk Reflection)
 - b. Other coping skills
 - i. Skills described as a tool belt
 - ii. Negative tools
 - iii. Positive tools
 - iv. How do we learn new skills for our tool belt
 - c. Accountability group meeting
 - d. Debriefing
- V. Week 5: Learning to put Yourself in Others Shoes**
 - a. Empathy Discussion
 - b. Large group discussion about goals (triumphs & hardships)
 - c. Accountability group meeting
 - d. Debriefing
- VI. Week 6: Victims Panel**
 - a. Accountability group meeting
 - b. Victims panel
 - c. Debriefing
- VII. Week 7: Juvenile Outreach**
 - a. Share stories or what works, struggles with juveniles at end of time
- VIII. Week 8: "Where do I go From Here?"**
 - a. Group wrap up
 - i. Where at in recovery process
 - ii. Maintenance after leaving group
 - iii. Evaluation of goals
 - iv. Evaluate group itself