Session 25: Making New Friends

Goals of Session

■ Help clients understand the need to surround themselves with supportive, abstinent friends.
■ Help clients learn how to determine whether people they meet will be appropriate friends.
■ Help clients explore new places and ways to meet people and make friends.

Handout

■ RP 25—Making New Friends

Presentation of Topic (15 minutes)

1. Understanding the Important Role Friends Play in Recovery
Sometimes when clients enter treatment, they expect to stop using substances but maintain old friendships with people who still use. Clients who are serious about living a substance-free life will need to find new friends who can be supportive of their recovery. Relationships with friends help shape individuals. Being around people who are committed to recovery and people whose lives are balanced and fulfilling has a positive effect on clients, especially those who are new to abstinence and recovery. Perhaps the most important role friends can play for clients in recovery is to be a resource for support and strength. However, clients also rely on friends for fun activities that are an important part of recovery.

2. Recognizing That Behavior Change May Be Necessary for Clients To Make New Friends
Friendships are built on common interests. Many clients entering treatment will have had friendships that were based primarily on substance use. Some clients’ social skills for making new friends might be rusty. Clients who are reluctant to seek out new friendships will gain confidence and self-assurance as their recovery progresses. The counselor should remind clients that friendship is a two-way street. In addition to looking for support from friends, clients can benefit from being a good friend to others in recovery or to new people they meet.

3. Exploring New Places and Ways To Meet People and Make Friends
The counselor should encourage clients to attend 12-Step, mutual-help, or spiritually oriented meetings; try to make abstinent friends; and find a sponsor. Clients also should be encouraged to resume old hobbies or activities that they allowed to languish or explore new interests. Taking a class, joining a club or a gym, and volunteering are good ways to meet people with whom clients can form meaningful friendships. The counselor should remind clients that personal friendships and business dealings with other clients in group are not recommended, especially early in recovery.

Handout and Focused Discussion (45 minutes)
Clients should be given time to complete the handout before the discussion begins. Clients should not be forced to comply if they find it difficult or uncomfortable to complete the handout in the group.
The handout is primarily a tool for discussion. The counselor steers clients away from reading their responses and encourages them to converse about the issues the handout raises. The counselor ensures that all clients have an opportunity to participate.

- Go over handout RP 25—Making New Friends.
- Ask clients whether they have friends from before they entered treatment who will be good friends to keep now that they are in recovery. What qualities do these friends have?
- Ask clients how the friends they used substances with affected their lives.
- Ask clients whether they have spoken with friends with whom they used to use substances. What have they talked about? Have clients severed these friendships? Tried to maintain them?
- Ask the recovering co-leader to share his or her experience with friends during the transition from using to recovery. Did any of the former friendships last?
- Ask clients how they met new people and made friends while they were abusing substances. Will they be able to meet new nonusing friends in the same ways?
- Ask clients what qualities they look for in a good friend. What role do acquaintances play in clients’ lives? How is this different from the role friends play?
- Ask the recovering co-leader to discuss personal changes he or she made to find new friends after entering treatment.
- Have clients discuss ways to meet new friends.

**Open Discussion (30 minutes)**
The counselor should carry over from the previous discussion any important issues that have not been addressed fully. Although it is important for clients to be able to speak about what is on their minds, the counselor should make sure that the session’s topic has been explored completely.

Five minutes before the end of open discussion, the counselor should ask clients to share briefly their experience of doing the homework from the previous session. The counselor can decide how detailed the followup on homework should be. The goal of asking is not to discover which clients have not done the homework but to encourage clients to work on their recovery between sessions and to share that work with the group.

**Homework**
Have clients identify three things (other than attending 12-Step or mutual-help meetings) that will help them meet new friends.
A blessed thing it is for any person to have a friend: One human soul whom we can trust utterly, who knows the best and worst of us, and who loves us in spite of our faults.

Anonymous

Relationships are very important to the recovery process. Friends and family can offer strength and help us understand who we are. The relationships you establish can support or weaken recovery. It has been said, “You will become like those people with whom you spend your time.” Use the following questions to help you think about your friendships.

Do you have any friends like the one described in the poem above? If yes, who are they?

Have you become like the people around you? In what ways?

What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?

Where can you make some new acquaintances who might become friends?

To whom are you a friend?

What behaviors do you need to change to be better able to have honest relationships?
Session 26: Repairing Relationships

Goals of Session

- Help clients understand the need to repair relationships by making amends.
- Help clients understand that making amends must go beyond stopping substance use.
- Help clients prepare to address people who refuse to forgive.

Handout

- RP 26—Repairing Relationships

Presentation of Topic (15 minutes)

1. Acknowledging Past Behaviors for Which Amends Should Be Made

As discussed in RP session 24, clients first must admit to themselves that they have a substance use disorder and that it has control over their lives. Another aspect of recovery is clients’ acknowledgment that they have hurt the people close to them because of their substance abuse. In addition to clients’ being honest with themselves about the hurt they have done to others, clients must rebuild the relationships that were broken as a result of their substance abuse. Clients who have attended 12-Step meetings may be familiar with the process of acknowledging that amends must be made; this process constitutes Step 8 of the 12 Steps.

2. Exploring Ways To Make Amends and Repair Relationships

Stopping substance use, entering treatment, and staying abstinent are difficult. Some clients may feel that by accomplishing these things they have done enough work toward repairing their damaged relationships. By themselves, these things are not sufficient. Clients must speak with the people they have wronged, acknowledge the harm they caused, and explain that they have entered treatment and are in recovery. For some people, clients’ taking responsibility for the harm they have caused will be enough to repair past damage. Others may not be so quick to forgive. Clients may have to work with the people they have hurt to restore relationships. As discussed in RP session 12, restoring trust can be an arduous process.

3. Forgiving Oneself and Others

The damage done to relationships by substance use disorders is not a one-way street. Friends and loved ones do hurtful things to the person who is abusing substances, too. Clients should be prepared to forgive people who have hurt them, even if the people are not ready to acknowledge the hurt or apologize for it. Clients should work to let go of grudges and resentment; bitterness is a dangerous emotion (like anger) that can act as a trigger for relapse. To leave bitterness behind, clients must be able to forgive themselves for their past behaviors. They cannot change the past; once they have entered treatment, made amends, and resolved not to make the same mistakes again, clients have done all they can do to address past mistakes.
Handout and Focused Discussion (45 minutes)

Clients should be given time to complete the handout before the discussion begins. Clients should not be forced to comply if they find it difficult or uncomfortable to complete the handout in the group. The handout is primarily a tool for discussion. The counselor steers clients away from reading their responses and encourages them to converse about the issues the handout raises. The counselor ensures that all clients have an opportunity to participate.

- Go over handout RP 26—Repairing Relationships.
- Ask clients to whom they need to make amends.
- Ask clients what they need to make amends for.
- Ask clients to discuss the difference between apologizing and making amends.
- Ask clients how they plan to handle a situation where someone is still angry and refuses to forgive them.
- Ask the recovering co-leader to share his or her experience with going to people to make amends. How did the co-leader handle people who refused to forgive and accept him or her?
- Ask clients how they are prepared to make amends. Beyond apologizing, what else might they have to do to repair relationships?
- Ask the recovering co-leader to share the various ways he or she went about making amends.

Open Discussion (30 minutes)

The counselor should carry over from the previous discussion any important issues that have not been addressed fully. Although it is important for clients to be able to speak about what is on their minds, the counselor should make sure that the session’s topic has been explored completely.

Five minutes before the end of open discussion, the counselor should ask clients to share briefly their experience of doing the homework from the previous session. The counselor can decide how detailed the followup on homework should be. The goal of asking is not to discover which clients have not done the homework but to encourage clients to work on their recovery between sessions and to share that work with the group.

Homework

Have clients list one person to whom they need to make amends and the measures they will take to repair the relationship. Clients can use their journals or pages 18 and 19 of their Client’s Treatment Companion.
Friends and family of people who are substance dependent often get hurt as a result of the substance abuse. People who are substance dependent often cannot take care of themselves and certainly cannot take care of others.

As part of your recovery, you should think about whom you have hurt. You should also think about whether you need to do anything to repair the relationships that are most important to you. In 12-Step programs this process is called “making amends.”

**What are some of the past behaviors you might want to amend?**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

**Are there things you neglected to do or say when you were using that should be addressed now?**

________________________________________________________________________

**How are you planning to make amends?**

________________________________________________________________________

**Do you feel that being in recovery and stopping the use of drugs is enough?**

________________________________________________________________________

Making amends does not have to be complicated. Acknowledging the hurt you caused while you were using substances will probably help reduce conflict in your relationships. Not everyone will be ready to forgive you, but an important part of this process is beginning to forgive yourself. Another aspect of repairing relationships involves your forgiving others for things that they did when you were using substances.

**Whom do you need to forgive?**

________________________________________________________________________

**What resentments do you need to let go of?**

________________________________________________________________________