Session 8: Truthfulness

Goals of Session

- Help clients understand that substance dependence and truthfulness are irreconcilable states.
- Help clients acknowledge that truthfulness will not always be easy.
- Help clients understand that continued truthfulness is integral to successful recovery.

Handout

- RP 8—Truthfulness

Presentation of Topic (15 minutes)

1. Understanding That Substance Dependence Is Based in Unreality and Recovery Is Based in Truth

Substance dependence represents an escape from the realities of life, a flight from responsibility, and a denial of consequences. Maintaining a substance-abusing lifestyle requires people to lie and make excuses continually. Entering recovery represents the first step toward acknowledging the truth of substance dependence. To be successful, recovery must continue to be grounded in truth. This means not just that clients acknowledge that they have a substance use problem but also that they make a commitment to behave truthfully with the people in their lives.

2. Understanding the Difficulties Posed by Truthfulness

Often it is hard for clients to be honest with themselves about their substance abuse. Having taken the step to enter treatment and be truthful with themselves, they now face the more daunting task of being honest with those around them. Being honest with friends and loved ones can be harrowing. Clients risk driving away friends and alienating family members when they give an honest account of their actions while they were using. Clients may be embarrassed to admit their actions. Loved ones may be offended by clients’ blunt approach to truth telling.

The RP group is a good place for clients to get used to telling the truth. Other group members may take offense, but that, too, provides good practice for addressing the responses of family members and friends.

3. Understanding That Recovery Cannot Be Successful Without Truthfulness

If clients choose to be in treatment without being totally truthful, they have not committed fully to recovery. It is as if by continuing to deceive and be less than truthful, these clients are holding back, refusing to become involved fully in their 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 8—Truthfulness.
- Ask clients to make an honest assessment of the ways they were dishonest when they were using. Encourage them to look beyond obvious lies and discuss ways in which they misled people or let them believe something that was not true.
- Discuss the limits of truth telling. What types of things should clients be sure they are always honest about? Are there situations in which it is all right not to be completely honest?
- Ask clients to think about the consequences of telling the truth to friends and family members. Does the prospect of doing so upset them?
- Ask the recovering co-leader to discuss his or her experiences of telling the truth to friends and family members.
- Ask whether clients are experiencing difficulty telling the truth in group.
- Ask what problems clients have encountered. What positive experiences have come from being honest?

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
Encourage clients to speak truthfully about their substance abuse with a friend or family member before the next RP group meeting.
During Substance Dependence
Not being truthful is part of substance dependence. It is hard to meet the demands of daily living (relationships, families, jobs) and use substances regularly. As you become more dependent on the substance, the activities that are necessary to obtain, use, and recover from the substance take up more of your life. It becomes more and more difficult to keep your life on track. People who are substance dependent often find themselves doing and saying whatever is necessary to avoid problems. Telling the truth is not important to them.

In what ways were you less than truthful when you were using substances?


During Recovery
Being honest with yourself and with others during the recovery process is critically important. Sometimes being truthful is very difficult for the following reasons:

● You may not seem to be a nice person.

● Your counselor or group members may be unhappy with your behavior.

● You may be embarrassed.

● Other people’s feelings may be hurt.
Being in treatment without being truthful may make everything you are doing a waste of time.

**How has truthfulness been difficult for you in recovery?**

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Being partly honest is not being truthful. **Do you ever**

Decide to let someone believe a partial truth?  Yes ___ No ___

Tell people what they want to hear?  Yes ___ No ___

Tell people what you wish were true?  Yes ___ No ___

Tell less than the whole truth?  Yes ___ No ___

**Attending groups, attending meetings, going to a hospital, and going to a counselor are wastes of time and money without truthfulness.**

**Recovery from addiction is impossible without truthfulness.**