

New England MIRECC Peer Education Center

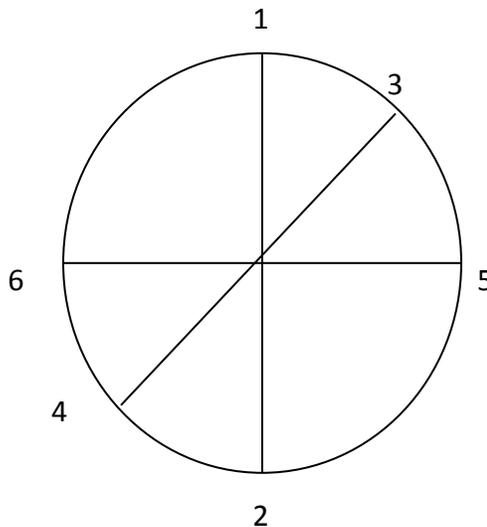
Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital

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Part II of Peer Support Group Facilitation Skills: Dealing with Challenges in Groups

Peer Support Group Facilitation Skills Group Practice Exercise

Diagram of Seating Structure



Each number on the circle diagram represents a group participant and where the individual should sit in relation to the other group participants.

Instructions: The objective of this exercise is to provide an opportunity for the training participants to practice facilitating a peer support group and receive feedback about their facilitation skills. Encourage the participants to use what they just learned during the session presentation and practice the skills and strategies that were discussed.

*Break the training participants into small peer support groups (Group #1, 2, 3, 4) that each have six members. ** If possible, have the groups meet in different rooms so that the groups do not distract one another. Have the group members arrange themselves in a circle.*

***Note: The recommendations about the number of groups and number of participants per group can be altered based upon the needs of the current training class.*

The training participants will take turns working in pairs to co-facilitate their peer support group about recovery. Each person should co-facilitate the group with the person sitting across from

him/her in the circle. Each co-facilitation pair should be given 20 minutes to facilitate part of a one-hour peer support group.

Before the practice exercise begins, the training session presenters should secretly select one training participant from each of the small groups. Pull those individuals to the side privately before they leave to meet with the other participants in their small group. Inform the selected training participants that they are being asked to create a challenge in their peer support group during the course of the practice exercise. Assign each of the selected training participants to agitate their small peer support group in one of the following roles that were discussed earlier in the training session: (1) problem-solver; (2) side-tracker; (3) person in crisis; (4) dominator; (5) disrupter; or (6) person who is quiet throughout the group (nothingness). The point of this is to see if the co-facilitators will notice the challenging situation and address it appropriately during the peer support group practice exercise.

One of the training session's presenters should be present in each room to observe the group members' interactions for the hour and keep the time. The observer should use the provided "Practice Exercise Feedback Sheet" to keep notes about each pair of group co-facilitators. At the end of the practice exercise, the observer should provide positive feedback and constructive criticism for areas for improvement and growth for each of the training participants regarding their group facilitation skills.

Group Facilitation Practice Exercise

1. Group members #1 & #2 (seated across from one another) will co-facilitate the beginning of the peer support group (first 20 minutes).
2. Group members #3 & #4 (seated across from one another) will co-facilitate the middle of the peer support group (next 20 minutes).
3. Group members #5 & #6 (seated across from one another) will co-facilitate the end of the peer support group (last 20 minutes).
4. The observer provides positive feedback and reflects on areas for continuing growth for each of the six group members who took turns co-facilitating the peer support group during the practice exercise (approximately 20 minutes). Also, the observer should provide a little time for the training participants to share their thoughts in relation to what they experienced during the practice exercise.