

New England MIRECC Peer Education Center

Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital

200 Springs Road, Bedford, MA 01730

Understanding Mental Health Conditions from a Recovery Perspective

Seminar Vignettes for Group Discussion

Vignette #1:

Stephanie is a 33 year-old White female OEF/OIF/OND Veteran who is receiving treatment services in the local VHA facility's Outpatient Mental Health Clinic where you are working as a peer specialist. Stephanie's psychiatrist referred her to your peer support group two weeks ago to gain additional support and encouragement. Your peer support group uses readings from *The Recovery Workbook* as part of the structure. During today's peer support group, you notice that Stephanie is having difficulty staying on topic and periodically looks over her shoulder at the wall behind her. Your group's co-facilitator finally asks Stephanie how she is doing. Stephanie responds that she is concerned that she is unable to see the door behind her and is thinking about her past experience of trauma. She notes that she is trying to push her concerns and memories out of her mind, but she finds it hard to do so. In addition, Stephanie shares that she experiences difficulties in many social situations for similar reasons.

Questions about Vignette #1:

1. What impairments do you believe that Stephanie is experiencing? What dysfunction and disability might also be present?
2. As a peer specialist, what could you do to help you better understand what Stephanie is going through?
3. What peer support interventions might you use to help Stephanie address the difficulties that she is experiencing?
4. What resources might you refer Stephanie to for additional support?

Vignette #2:

Jerome is a 63 year-old African American male Veteran who is enrolled in the local VHA facility's inpatient residential treatment program where you work as a peer specialist. Jerome has attended your Wednesday afternoon peer support group for the past month. Over that time, he has shared stories about his previous experiences with crack cocaine, heroin, and alcohol. He also mentioned in passing that he has experienced many traumatic things over his lifetime. Jerome reported that, for the past few months, he has had trouble sleeping and feels unmotivated to do anything with his life. You have also learned from other program staff that Jerome has failed to sign out of the program before leaving the program for appointments on several occasions, has been angry with staff, and he is currently on probation with the program and at risk of discharge.

During your most recent peer support group meeting, you notice that Jerome is quieter than usual and does not make eye contact or show any emotion on his face. Another group member asks Jerome what he is looking forward to in the coming months. Jerome eventually responds, stating that he is not looking forward to anything and does not see much point in talking about it.

Questions for Vignette #2:

1. What impairments do you believe that Jerome is experiencing? What dysfunction and disability might also be present?
2. As a peer specialist, what could you do to help you better understand what Jerome is going through?
3. What peer support interventions might you use to help Jerome address the difficulties that he is experiencing?
4. What resources might you refer Jerome to for additional support?

Vignette #3:

Marisa is a 22 year-old bilingual Latina Veteran who is receiving services in the local VHA facility's Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC). Her therapist referred her to you for individual peer support mentoring. Marisa states that she is having difficulty navigating the VA health care system and getting her needs met. During your first mentoring session with Marisa, she reports that she did not sleep at all this past weekend, but she did not feel tired either. Marisa is an artist. She said that she was able to paint three portraits, clean her entire house, and put away seasonal decorations this past Saturday, all without feeling the least bit tired. Despite feeling productive, Marisa shares that her partner complains about her staying up all night and has distanced himself emotionally from her over the past month. Marisa expresses feeling confused about this change in her relationship. She also wonders why the VA health care system does not move faster to connect her with services that she wants since she is able to get all her work done without sleeping a wink.

Questions for Vignette #3:

1. What impairments do you believe that Marisa is experiencing? What dysfunction and disability might also be present?
2. As a peer specialist, what could you do to help you better understand what Marisa is going through?
3. What peer support interventions might you use to help Marisa address the difficulties that she is experiencing?
4. What resources might you refer Marisa to for additional support?