iv. Strengthening Social Support

The counselor needs to make special efforts to increase the support the client receives from his/her family and friends. By providing a supportive family environment and helping him/her to become aware of the warning signs, family members can be of valuable assistance in preventing relapse.

Introducing the clients to self-help groups is very helpful. Apart from providing a readymade support base of non-drug using peers he/she also gets to meet appropriate role models who cope with life without drugs or alcohol.

Conclusion

It is not possible to treat alcohol and drug problems without addressing relapse issues. The counselor plays a key role in helping clients recover from relapse and reestablish their sobriety. The early period of sobriety can be difficult and the counselor needs to appreciate every progress made and support him/her through difficult times with messages of hope and optimism. In a way the counselor walks with the client as a guide, identifying pitfalls - some evident and some hidden - and teaching him/her much needed coping skills to overcome or sidestep each of them.
...and behavior patterns can be noticed before the client actually takes alcohol/drugs again. However, relapse prevention programs can also be conducted for about 1 to 2 hours per week and last for a few months. The program module includes lectures to present facts, group therapy and counseling sessions. Assignments or workbook activities can also be used to enhance effectiveness. Role-play sessions on refusal skills, assertiveness and communication skills are particularly useful. Depending on the treatment center’s resources, particularly the availability of skilled staff, the frequency, duration and the impact of the program can be decided. It is, however, extremely important to document efforts made to evaluate effectiveness.

Four Components of Relapse Prevention

A relapse prevention program essentially covers four major areas: insight into the relapse process, identifying the relapse triggers, recognizing the warning signs and strengthening the resolve to abstain.

L. Stabilization

As part of stabilization, medical assistance may be necessary to ease withdrawal symptoms and help the client become drug-free again. As the first step in recovery, the client needs help to deal with the inevitable stress. Counseling sessions may be needed to sort out issues and get the client to focus on the task at hand - establishment of abstinence.

Planning a Relapse Prevention Program

Relapse prevention programs can be conducted on a regular basis. The program can be conducted on an individual or group basis for 4 to 5 hours each day and run continuously for 4 to 7 days. However, relapse prevention programs can also be conducted for about 1 to 2 hours per week and last for a few months. The program module includes lectures to present facts, group therapy and counseling sessions. Assignments or workbook activities can also be used to enhance effectiveness. Role-play sessions on refusal skills, assertiveness and communication skills are particularly useful. Depending on the treatment center’s resources, particularly the availability of skilled staff, the frequency, duration and the impact of the program can be decided. It is, however, extremely important to document efforts made to evaluate effectiveness.

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