

# Family Support Groups

- Activity
- Presentation
- Additional Information

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## Objectives

- **Knowledge**

Providing information about the functioning of support groups for the families of addicts.

- **Attitude**

Understanding the positive role of support groups.

- **Expected outcome**

Understanding the need to initiate family support groups.

- **Lesson plan**

Similarities between the diseases of HIV/AIDS and addiction.

Activity 1      Working as a group.

Presentation      What are family support groups?

Presentation      What can a new member expect in a meeting?

Activity 2      Sharing by members of family support group.

Presentation      What does the family learn by attending family support group meetings?

Presentation      Important slogans of family support groups.

Presentation      Benefits to families of HIV affected patients.

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### **Similarities between the diseases of HIV / AIDS and addiction (Transparencies for Presentation)**

- Both addiction and HIV/AIDS are stigmatized diseases. Hence, no empathy from the outside world.
- Due to stigma, this problem is kept a 'family secret' and hence no support from the extended family or friends.
- Both the patient and the family deny the problem and minimize its impact.
- In both instances, there is an unwillingness to change one's behaviour in spite of problems.
- Both the problems affect not merely the individual, but the entire family as well.
- Pre-occupation with the problem combined with lack of support results in neglect of the family.

In the field of addiction, family support groups have been of great help in reducing the pain of family members. Worldwide Al-anon has helped millions of people to lead qualitative lives. However, for the families of HIV infected persons, the family support group is still in the making. The principles followed by support groups for the families of addicted individuals can be utilized to create support groups for families of HIV infected people also.

## Activity 1 - Working as a group

### **Purpose**

To recognize the need for working together and supporting one another.

### **Materials needed**

#### **Several articles in a basket**

Sarees

Envelops and addresses

Pens

Tables

Beads of different colors

**Time needed** 10 minutes.

**Methodology** 'Honey bees'

### **Steps**

1. Ask five participants to form a group.
2. Ask the group to collectively perform a few activities listed below.
3. Ask one participant to perform the same activity without any help.

Examples - collecting various articles and putting them in a basket, folding a saree, lifting and carrying a table, writing names and addresses of ten people in different envelops, separating beads according to their colors.

4. Discuss the advantages of working in a group.

### **Facilitator's Notes**

- Activities can be done with ease if done as a group.
- Sharing of responsibilities brings a feeling of togetherness.
- Sharing reduces a person's stress.

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### **What are family support groups?**

Al-anon / family support group is a worldwide organization that offers self-help recovery programme for the families and friends of chemical dependents whether or not the addict seeks help or even recognizes the existence of a problem. Members give and receive comfort and understanding, strength and hope through a mutual exchange of experiences. Sharing of similar problems binds individuals and groups together in a bond that is protected by a policy on anonymity

#### **Ground rules for membership (Transparencies for Presentation)**

- No qualification is needed to belong to this fellowship.
- Nothing is collected as fees.
- The member need not disclose her name, address or any other information.
- Support groups do not offer financial help or jobs.

#### **Objectives of family support groups**

- To share their experiences with, and offer strength and hope to others who have similar problems.
- To help solve problems arising as a result of addiction at home.
- To improve the family's emotional health and spiritual growth.

#### **Prayer of family support groups**

*"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage, to change the things I can and wisdom, to know the difference."*

## **What can a new member expect in a meeting ? (Transparencies for Presentation)**

There are no hard and fast rules as to how the meeting should be held. Each group can have its own way of holding the meeting. What is commonly seen is explained below.

- The members sit in a circle or in rows.
- The meeting begins with a prayer being said by everyone. The twelve steps and twelve traditions are read out.
- The person conducting the meeting asks one of the members to share. In a meeting, anyone is free to speak. In some of these meetings, only two or three speakers who have been decided upon before hand would share.
- The member will speak only about her experiences. She is discouraged to talk about the addict. She may merely talk about some problem that is troubling her at the moment.
- No one interrupts while the session is on and **what is shared is kept totally confidential**. No one talks about it outside.
- When a person is sharing, no one gives advice. If one member wants sometime in the past and how she coped with it. These automatically serve as guidelines.
- The new comer is encouraged to share, but there is no compulsion. The new comer can ask any number of questions.
- Towards the end of the meeting, a cover or bag or box is passed around. Each member puts in whatever she would like to contribute. This money is used to pay for tea expenses and rent for the meeting place.
- The meeting closes with the serenity prayer.

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## Activity 2 - Sharing by members of family support group

### **Purpose**

To get a first hand feedback from members of family support group and understand the benefits of attending group meetings.

### **Materials needed**

Nil

**Time needed**                      30 minutes

**Methodology**                      'Sharing'

### **What does the family learn by attending family support group meetings? (Transparencies for Presentation)**

- To accept that addiction is an illness.
- To stop protecting him by covering up the consequences of his drug/ alcohol use.
- Not to feel or give the impression that the addict is doing them a favor by not 'using' chemicals.
- To start communicating openly to the other family members about their concerns.
- To understand the importance of looking after their own needs and those of other family members.
- To accept that they are not alone and that help is available.
- To understand the need to get involved in healthy leisure activities.

### **What do the family learn to avoid ? (Transparencies for Presentation)**

- Hiding / throwing away alcohol / drugs.
- Arguing when the addict is under the influence of chemicals.
- Asking reasons for alcohol / drug use.
- Punishing, threatening, bribing, lecturing or making emotional appeals.
- In the long run, none of these methods work.

## Important slogans of family support groups (Transparencies for Presentation)

- ***One day at a time***
- ***First things first***
- ***Easy does it***
- ***Live and let live***
- ***Let go, let God***

## Additional Information

### ***One day at a time***

The members of family support groups learn to live just one day at a time. They are taught not to worry about tomorrow or regret about yesterday. They plan to live the present fruitfully. "If we have a kilometer to walk, we must take one step at a time". Similarly, by living one day at a time, the burden of carrying the whole life at once is avoided.

Today alone

- I will not worry about the chemically dependent person.
- I will not hurt others.
- I will not be anxious about the future.
- I will appreciate good in others.

### ***First things first***

The members learn to deal with tasks and problems in the order of their importance. They no longer act impulsively or haphazardly. Issues are prioritized and plans are executed with a sense of purpose.

### ***Easy does it***

This slogan helps in acquiring patience, acceptance and tolerance. Addiction has not happened overnight, hence recovery also will take time.

*If you can't go through an obstacle, then go around it.*

*If you can't solve a problem, accept it.*

*If you can't finish today, there will be a tomorrow.*

*Hurry never produced a masterpiece.*

*Easy does it, but do it!*



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### ***Live and let live***

They believe in the following principles:

- Every one has a right to make his own choice.
- Every one has a right to have his opinions, at the same time, has an obligation to tolerate the viewpoint of others.
- Need not expect others to behave according to one's own desires.
- It is not possible to change others, but possible to change oneself.

This slogan helps one to get along with others and guides the individual to concentrate on her own life instead of getting obsessed with the chemical dependents.

### ***Let go, let God***

Every day, there are decisions to be made and problems to be solved. While managing problems, old fears and anxieties may surface. This slogan enables them to surrender to God after realizing that one is powerless over many situations. They understand that when the situation goes beyond their control, God will grant them the necessary strength to manage those problems.

#### **Benefits that families of HIV affected patients may derive from support groups (Transparencies for Presentation)**

- Learning to live with a HIV patient.
- Handling the pressures of daily life.
- Dealing with feelings of loneliness, depression and powerlessness.
- Preventing transmission of HIV.

## **Additional Information**

### ***Learning to live with a HIV patient***

Support groups are often in a good position to address this because many people may have already gone through the process. They can describe the psychological problems they have experienced and the interventions they have found most useful.

### ***Handling the pressures of living with sick or distressed people***

Taking on these pressures on a daily basis, especially where this involves managing bleeding, vomiting,

incontinence, disposal of dressings, etc., is made possible through repeated sharing and listening to peers.

### ***Dealing with feelings of loneliness, depression and powerlessness***

Family support groups can provide help and mutual support. Advice from people who have themselves gone through such feelings may be more meaningful than advice provided on a second hand or theoretical basis.

### ***Preventing transmission of HIV***

The challenge in not contracting HIV-AIDS and maintaining safer-sex behaviour becomes feasible through practical guidelines offered by the members of the support group.

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### ***Preventing transmission of HIV***

The challenge is not contracting HIV/AIDS and maintaining safer-sex behaviour becomes feasible through practical guidelines offered by the members of the support group.