

# Positive Psychology Peer Led Programs

Waterbury Hospital Infectious Disease  
Clinic

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Ryan White All Grantee Meeting  
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# Introduction

- PLWHA usually do not have the opportunity to identify skills and resources to live productive lives.
- May result in substance abuse and mental illness disorders
- Now that HIV has become a chronic illness, people are striving to learn how to develop a positive life.
- Positive Psychology is an evidenced based program based at the University of Pennsylvania authored by Martin Seligman PhD.

# Introduction (cont'd)

- Provides direction for meaningful, productive lives by learning appropriate skills focusing on positive emotions, building environmental mastery, personal growth, life purpose autonomy, self acceptance, and positive relationships with others.
- Positive programs are an antidote to substance abuse and depression, anxiety and other mental illness issues.
- Our clinic has developed an innovate program utilizing peers using this positive psychology program.

## Programs include:

- Self Awareness Course
- Photography
- Movies for Life's Lessons.

# Purpose

- To teach successful life skills through clinic's positive programs
- To enjoy a pleasant life including satisfaction, contentment, fulfillment, pride, gratitude, hope, and optimism.
- To enjoy a life that pursues engagement, involvement, and absorption in activities and relationships.
- To create a sense of flow; a person becomes so absorbed in the task that one loses all sense of time.

# Purpose (cont'd)

- Enhance engagement to help person find their highest talents and strengths and the opportunities to use these strengths.
- Meaningful life by serving something that is bigger than one's self.
- Giving instead of taking.
- Volunteering
- Transform unfortunate circumstances into fortunate.

# Programs

- Empowerment Through Self Awareness Course,
- Hospital Photography Group, and
- Movies for Life's Lessons.

# Project Rationale

- Now that HIV /AIDS has become a chronic illness, PLWHAs have hope for a long life
- Previously there was little concern for the future.
- Many felt hopeless and helpless with no long term goals and plans
- Life skills were needed for people to maximize involvement with life
- Life is more than just about focusing on suffering
- A focus needs to be on what is enjoyable, pleasurable and healthy.
- Early influences on Positive Psychology include Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers.



# Project Rationale

- Belief that human beings strive toward a level of functioning that transcends mere satisfaction of physical needs.
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Once basic needs are met, a person can focus on higher level ones (Self Actualization). Focus on one's talents and aspirations.
- Rogers focused on allowing a person to grow fully when blocks are removed from suppressing this growth.
- One needs to develop positive thoughts and attitudes. Being optimistic creates a positive outlook on life.
- Positive thinking produces positive feelings which results in satisfying behaviors.

# Empowerment Through Self Awareness Course

- The Course is 10 weeks long, each week having a different psycho social topic.
- Through a design of combining educational material, experiential exercise and discussion, participants learn about their own personality
- Exercises and discussion relate the material to their own issues.
- Once self awareness is developed, the opportunity to make changes— setting new goals and plans becomes an option.

# Project Description

## 1. *Empowerment Through Self Awareness Course*

- Through a design of combining educational material, experiential exercise and discussion, participants learn about their own personality
- Exercises and discussion relate the material to their own issues.
- Once self awareness is developed, the opportunity to make changes—setting new goals and plans becomes an option.
- The Course is 10 weeks long, each week having a different psychosocial topic.

# *Empowerment Through Self Awareness Course*

## Topics

1. Needs, Wants and Drives
2. Stress Management
3. Thought & Feelings - How They Affect Behavior
4. Communication
5. Relationships
6. Loss & Change
7. Developing Empowerment: Self-Esteem, Judgment, Competence.
8. Life Coping Strategies
9. Wellness
10. Life Planning

## Program Description

- Homework to reinforce sessions
- Exercises and other experiential tasks.
- Lunch provided
- Graduation ceremony with framed certificate.

## Project Referral

- Open to all clinic patients
- No restrictions



# Program 2- *Hospital Photography Group*

## Project Description

- Interested people experience a 4-6 week trial to determine if they are serious.
- Expected to participate in activities.
- At end of the trial period, person commits to contract and receives a digital camera.
- Weekly meetings to plan, develop and implement programs.
- Peer-run program. Group elects officers who consult with staff involved. Joint decision making.
- Photo editing offered with Photoshop Elements.
- Selected pictures printed and framed

# Projects include:

- Field trips to State parks, Boston, local photo shoots.
- Hospital Fund Raiser and Golf tournament
- Clinic Christmas card
- Exhibits in the hospital, local library, Barnes & Noble
- National Disabilities Art Show



- Four members were in the top 40 winners out of 1500 entries in the National HIV /AIDS photo contest sponsored by Bristol Myers Squibb
- AIDS Walkathon New Haven
- AIDS Legislative Day Hartford
- Homeless Shelter Project
- AIDS Statewide Planning Group CHPS

# Project Outcomes

## Psychosocial Outcomes: Life Skills Learned

- Positive Attitude
- Desire / Ambition
- Persistence
- Specialized Knowledge
- Creativity
- Imagination
- Purpose / Goals
- Self-Discipline
- Achieving Excellence
- Team Work
- Volunteering



# Movies for Life's Lessons

## Program description

- Peer initiated, planned, developed and implemented
- Motivational, inspirational, and educational movies are selected to view and discuss.
- Peer leader develops a set of discussion questions
- Discussion involves relating movie issues to life situations
- Insight gained by observing how movie characters handle life issues.
- Modeling of characters behavior teaches coping skills.

# Combined program outcomes

- Retention in care
- Adherence to HAART
- SAMISS score
- Recidivism (staying out of jail)



## Retention in care

- Of 10 participants, all are in Primary HIV medical care.

## Adherence to HAART

- Of 10 participants 9 are compliant with HAART.
- One is not eligible for HAART  
(high T-cells)

## Substance Abuse / Mental Illness Screen (SAMISS) scores

- 8 are substance free
- 2 referred to a higher level of care

## Recidivism (staying out of jail)

- Six have been in jail or prison previously.
- None have returned since participating in the programs.

# Lessons Learned

- Assist patients to use time constructively.
- Increase feeling of self-esteem, confidence, self-acceptance and competence.
- Develop constructive relationships with others
- Discover creative talents
- Realize a joyful life

# Peer Involvement

- Integrates the staff with trained Peer Advocate
- Selected and trained as peer counselor to help consumers with support, links to staff and resources
- Advocates for consumers in community meetings
- Relates to consumers by understanding what they are experiencing
- Assists in leading the Photography group as one of the officers
- Presented initial idea for *Movies for Life's Lessons*
- Planned, developed and implemented the program



# Participant Feedback:

- Leonard



- For further information please contact:

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