

Suggesting Angles on Life

This is a condensed version of how I speak with the participants in the New London, CT's FUSE program.¹ In particular, I make a point of saying to the FUSE participants, that the FUSE program is about moving from street life to community life.

Len Raymond, 16th World Conference, IIRP, 2013

Problem Life

- “Dealing with it” means accepting the problems and barriers of life.
- Connected to the problems and barriers that naturally come up in life.
- Take the passive approach to dealing with the problems and barriers in life.

Street Life

- “Dealing with it” means doing something in an attempt to solve a problem.
- Aware of the problems and barriers that naturally come up in life and protecting oneself from those as best as possible.
- Have an active -- not passive – approach to dealing with the problems and barriers in life.
- **Of note:** One is mostly smart enough to survive in the street life without help from others.

Community Life

- “Dealing with it” means doing everything sensible to solve a problem.
- Engaged with the problems and barriers that naturally come up in life, and finding satisfaction in it.
- Use an aggressive but healthy attitude for getting around/through barriers.
- **Of note:** One usually *cannot* succeed in community life without smarts/mentoring from others.

1. The FUSE “program currently targets men and women who cycle through the homeless service and corrections systems...” Additional information can be found by searching for “CSH FUSE CT” on the Internet.

Intake Conference

Homeless Hospitality Center – FUSE program

Purpose

This conference is being held to engage community smarts in supporting how the person of focus participates in the FUSE program. This recognizes that a community is typically smarter than the expert when it comes to what is important.

Who is in the conference

A micro-community of six or seven people are in the conference – the person of focus with two supporters and the caseworker with two supporters. In some instances a facilitator – a seventh person – will be present to direct the flow.

Privacy - making it a safe place

Please respect confidentiality -- things shared here *stay* here. This makes it a safe place for sharing important thoughts and feelings. However, feel free to share your *personal experience* with those outside this meeting. Sharing without divulging information about others is not an issue – *no names!*

Questions

[Focus person's name] is in FUSE...

Going around the circle, each participant answers -

1. How did you learn of this?
2. What were you thinking when you learned of it?
3. What possibilities are there for [focus person's name]?
4. What do you think are the main issues?
5. What would you like from today's conference?

Creating a written document

Come up with a written statement that everyone supports. This will be a statement of support for the person of focus. It is best that this be simple and straightforward. It can be a goal, a plan of action or something that gives a concrete direction to the person's participation in the FUSE program.

Social

While the facilitator prints up the document, enjoy the snacks and refreshments. You will be asked to review the document for completeness. When ready, you will all be asked to sign the document. The signed document belongs to the person of focus. Copies of it will be distributed according to this person's wishes.

In-Place Conference

Wednesday, Sep. 19, 2012 -3:30 PM

Purpose

This conference is being held to engage community smarts in supporting how [*participants name*] moves forward in the HHC Shelter system. This recognizes that a community is typically smarter than the expert when it comes to what is important.

Who is in the conference

A micro-community of six or seven people are in the conference – [*person's name*] with two supporters and a staff persons with two community supporters. In some instances a facilitator – a seventh person – will be present to direct the flow.

Privacy - making it a safe place

Please respect confidentiality -- things shared here *stay* here. This makes it a safe place for sharing important thoughts and feelings. However, feel free to share your *personal experience* with those outside this meeting. Sharing without divulging information about others is not an issue – *no names!*

Questions

[name here] is a regular at the Shelter...

1. [he/she] has a safe place to sleep at night. How did you learn of this?
2. What were you thinking when you learned of it?
3. What possibilities are there?
4. What are the main issues?
5. What shall come from today's conference?

Brainstorming for a written document

Come up with a written statement that everyone supports. This will be a statement of support for [*name here*]. It is best that this be simple and straightforward. It can be a goal, a plan of action or something that gives a concrete direction to [*name here*] participation in the HHC Shelter system.

Social

While the facilitator prints up the document, enjoy the snacks and refreshments. You will be asked to review the document for completeness. When ready, all be asked to sign the document. The signed document belongs to [*name here*]. Copies of it will be distributed according to [*name here*] wishes.

Emergency Powwow Meeting

18 Apr 2013

(Some revisions to this made after the meeting)

This is a restorative conference for supporting a person-of-focus who has a particularly difficult -- or even painful -- situation to deal with. Being this person-of-focus is voluntary.

Of note: The “Strength panel” section below is a structure also used when managers and executives meet together -- called a professional learning community.

Check-in with two go-arounds

1. What's old?
2. What's new?

Emergency focus

Intro

- John [*fictitious name*] is at serious risk of going back to prison for violation of probation. He and I talked about this before the meeting and I suggested we do an emergency session on this in the meeting. He agreed.
- [*Ask John if he is still onboard with doing this.*]
- We will do this Strength Panel for John at the end of the meeting.

Go-around

We all have our moments of going in the wrong direction to make things “right.”
Regarding this going-wrong to make things right...

3. When is a time you experienced that?
4. What are you thinking at that time?

Strength Panel

Explain how the Strength Panel works.

- John presents his details, 10-12 minutes.
- John sits to the side.
- We talk to each other, brainstorming ideas, possibilities, etc for 12 minutes while John takes notes if so inspired.
- After 12 minutes, John is back in the circle and tells us two things he is going to do from what he heard, without giving any reasons for his choices. At the next meeting he will share how things went.

Closing

Go-around on last comments or impressions.

FUSE¹ Strength Council

The Strength Council seeks to strengthen the speaker's ability to deal with and complete struggles.

Seating - *seating has 3 sections*

1. Speaker - *the "honored person"*
2. FUSE¹ panel - *2-5 people*
3. Community supporters - *up to 3 people (facilitator sits with community supporters)*

The facilitator arranges the seating. It is roughly like a four-cornered diamond. The speaker and community supporters are at opposite corners. For the other two corners, the panel group divides in two, so panel members are facing each other from opposite corners of this rough diamond.

Privacy - *making it a safe place*

Please respect confidentiality -- things shared here *stay* here. Sharing without divulging information about others is not an issue — *no names*.

The Council

12 minutes - *Speaker*

Speaker: Tell about a struggle you had in your life.

Panel: Silent moments by the speaker are OK and not unusual. The panel listens with an ear to getting what is felt by what the speaker says.

12 minutes - *FUSE panel*

Panel:

- Relay to all of us what was expressed — avoid one's own story or issues.

- And creatively help everyone in the room *connect* to what the speaker is saying -- be a "compassionate witness."

Supporters: The community supporters make note of any questions that come up within the minds of the panel members. For example, if a panel member says something such as, "I didn't quite get..." then the supporters note it as a question to be asked in the next 12 minutes.

12 minutes - *Community supporters*

The community supporters ask questions of the speaker, limiting themselves to questions they heard the panel raise. The speaker answers them, taking as long as needed, until 12 minutes are up or all questions are answered -- whichever happens first. The supporters may organize this in any manner they choose, as long as only one question is asked at a time.

Closing - *Regrouping to sit in a circle -- doing a go-around of last comments and impressions.*

1. The FUSE "program currently targets men and women who cycle through the homeless service and corrections systems..." Search on the Internet for "CSH FUSE CT" for more details.