Circle of Strength
A Responsive Family Treatment Model

Yvonne Fortier, LPC LISAC
The percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native adults who needed treatment for an alcohol or illicit drug use problem in the past year was higher than the national average for adults (18.0 vs. 9.6 percent)

NSDUH 6/2010
Trauma, Discrimination/Stigma, Loss and Separation are co-occurrences of Substance abuse

Life domains are impacted: family roles, relationships, economic, housing, legal involvement, health and spiritual wellness
Alcohol and Mental Health

• Distress among AIANs is 1.5x higher than general population
• Most significant MH concerns: depression, substance use disorders, suicide, anxiety
• PTSD is experienced 2x as often as general population
• Stigma is identified as a barrier to treatment and progress for SUDs and MH care

APA, Office of Minority and National Affairs (OMNA) 2010
Discrimination and Health Outcomes

• Discrimination has been related to depressive symptoms; global measures of distress; anxiety symptoms; and poor general health

• Everyday discrimination is much more stressful than time-limited discrimination, and, as a result, daily hassles have a greater impact on health outcomes (Unnatural Causes…)

• Among Natives, one study found that perceived discrimination was related to AOD use and depression (Whitbeck & Morris, 2001)

• Evidence suggests that oppressed statuses associated with multiple forms of discrimination may lead to more cumulative physical and mental health symptoms (Diaz & Ayala, 2001)
Multigenerational/Historic Trauma

• **Cultural trauma:**
  – is an attack on the fabric of a society, affecting the essence of the community and its members

• **Historical trauma:**
  – cumulative exposure of traumatic events that affect an individual and continues to affect subsequent generations. “The collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of *genocide*.”

• **Multigenerational trauma:**
  – occurs when trauma is not resolved, subsequently internalized, and passed from one generation to the next.

Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart
“What’s happened in your own personal history, as well as what’s happened in the generational line of your parents, grandparents, and in your community—great grandparent, great great grandparent—is all meaningful. The historical unresolved grief goes along with that trauma.”

Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart
Worldview Differences that Impact Healthcare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Indian/Alaska Native</th>
<th>Majority culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Relational, circular</td>
<td>• Linear, pt A to pt B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mind, body, spirit/One</td>
<td>• Psyche is the focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mystical/acceptance</td>
<td>• Scientific, verification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ceremonials/rituals</td>
<td>• Psychotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tribal connectedness</td>
<td>• Individualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spirituality &amp; balance</td>
<td>• Organized religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cooperation/sharing</td>
<td>• Competition/winning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Patience/respectful</td>
<td>• Assertive/forceful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Present oriented</td>
<td>• Future oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Herbs, plants, nature</td>
<td>• Psychopharmacology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Grandbois 2005
Protective factors, enduring spirit

**Strengths:**
- Strong identification with culture
- Family
- Connection with past
- Traditional health practices (e.g. ceremony)
- Adaptability
- Wisdom of elders

**Challenges to well-being:**
- Alcohol misuse
- Enduring spirit (stubborn, hard to accept change)
- Clashes between Indian and non-Indian views of mental health
- Long memories
- Trauma is communal

APA, OMNA, 2010
The Family Systems Perspective

- Individuals ~ are best understood through assessing the interactions within an entire family
- Symptoms ~ are viewed as an expression of a dysfunction within a family
- Problematic behaviors ~
  - Serve a purpose for the family
  - Are a function of the family’s inability to operate productively
  - Are symptomatic patterns handed down across generations
- A family ~ is an interactional unit and a change in one member effects all members
Systemic Perspective

- Individual may carry a symptom for the entire family
- Individual’s functioning is a manifestation of way family functions
- Individual can have symptom existing independent of family structure
- Symptoms always have ramifications for family members
- Change the systems and individuals will change
- Change dysfunctional patterns of relating & create functional ways of interacting & relating
Family Constellation (Adler)

- Consists of parents, children, extended family members
- Birth order
- How member find place in family system & how relate to one another to be unique
- Alignment of family members
- Develop genogram of family-starting point for client communication meaning of life
Multigenerational Family Therapy Goals (Bowen)

• With the proper knowledge the individual can change
  – Change occurs only with other family members
• To change the individuals within the context of the system
• To end generation-to-generation transmission of problems by resolving emotional attachments
• To lessen anxiety and relieve symptoms
• To increase the individual member’s level of differentiation
Conjoint Family Therapy
Key Concepts (Satir)

- Enhancement and validation of self-esteem-Human Validation Process Model
- Family rules
- Congruence and openness in communications
- Sculpting
- Nurturing triads
- Family mapping and chronologies
Conjoint Family Therapy Goals

• Open communications
  – Individuals are allowed to honestly report their perceptions

• Enhancement of self-esteem
  – Family decisions are based on individual needs

• Encouragement of growth
  – Differences are acknowledged and seen as opportunities for growth

• Transform extreme rules into useful and functional rules
  – Families have many spoken and unspoken rules
Functional vs. Dysfunctional Communications

- Functional: each family member give chance to be individual, separate life – lots of freedom and flexibility in family with open communications
- Dysfunctional: closed communications, poor self-esteem of parents, rigid patterns-resists awareness, strained relationships, little individuality, incapable of autonomy or genuine intimacy: Family members: think, feel and act the same way: family controlled by fear, punishment, guilt or dominance
Conjoint Family Therapy Goals

- Communicating Clearly
- Expanding awareness
- Enhancing potentials for growth in self-esteem
- Coping with demands & process of change
- Identify new possibilities to the status quo
- Encouraging growth in each member
- Generating hope, courage to formulate new options
- Assess, strengthen, enhance coping skills
- Encourage members to exercise healthy options
Boundaries
(Structural Family Therapy, Minuchin)

- Emotional barriers that protect & enhance the integrity of individuals, subsystems & families
- Extremes of boundaries
  - Disengagement-overly detached-rigid
  - Enmeshment-very involved as one-diffuse-fosters dependency on parents
- Clear healthy boundaries-attain sense of personal identity yet allow sense of belongingness within family system
Structural Family Therapy Goals

• Reduce symptoms of dysfunction
• Bring about structural change by:
  – Modifying the family’s transactional rules
  – Developing more appropriate boundaries
  – Creation of an effective hierarchical structure
  – It is assumed that faulty family structures have:
    – Boundaries that are rigid or diffuse
    – Subsystems that have inappropriate tasks and functions
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Social Constructionism Tx Goals

• Generate new meaning in the lives of family members
• Co-develop, with families, solutions that are unique to the situation
• Enhance awareness of the impact of various aspects of the dominant culture on the family
• Help families develop alternative ways of being, acting, knowing, and living
Of 1146 Admissions to NAC BH...

- 237 Guiding Star
- 138 Indian Rehab
- 685 IOP/GMH

SA Treatment Admissions:

- 439 Alcohol Dep
- 113 Meth Dep
- 77 Alcohol Abuse
- 73 Cannabis Dep
- 52 Cannabis Abuse
- 39 Meth Abuse

Treatment Outcomes: 68% Residential

64% Outpatient

Demographics: Race

746 American Indian
283 White
228 Hispanic
(Past 10 years:
65% American Indians
35% Other)
NAC Snapshot: Data reported at intake  
(n=61 women)

- 81% physically assaulted
- 56% assaulted w/weapon and/or sexual assault
- 74% committed crimes
- 58% family member substance abusers
- 67% live w/relative/friend
- 36% severe depression symptoms
- 73% public assistance
- 35% 18-24 years old

ETOH 22, Meth 15, Marijuana 14, Cocaine 10
Key points of our evaluations

Half of the women are between the 25-34 years of age, with a range of ages between 19 and 37 years.

- Drug and alcohol use and patterns of use
- Family and living conditions
- Impact from Alcohol or Drug use
- Education, employment and income
- Crime and criminal justice involvement
- Mental health problems and treatment recovery
- Social connectedness

Early findings: significant increase in self-esteem and significant decreases in depression and risk-taking behaviors. (Eval of treatment and self at intake, discharge and follow up)
Behavioral Health

- Indian Rehabilitation
- Guiding Star
- Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)
- General Mental Health (GMH)
- New Path
  (Transition Age Youth-TAY)
- Standing Strong
  (Adolescent IOP)
- Children’s Outpatient
  (Child & Family Teams & General Mental Health Care)
- BH Supported Housing
  (Pendleton Court)
Circle of Strength participants are recruited from:

Guiding Star
Indian Rehabilitation
Outpatient Programs
Pendleton Court
Guiding Star

- An Adult Level II residential behavioral health facility providing structured, balanced treatment
- Specialized treatment for high risk behaviors, pregnant women, parenting adults and their dependent children and IV drug users
- Specialties in co-occurring disorders, positive parenting and cultural interventions
- 32 beds for women,
- 24 beds for children
- Since 1978
Indian Rehabilitation

- An Adult Level II residential behavioral health facility providing structured, balanced treatment
- Specialties in co-occurring treatment and cultural interventions
- 16 beds for men
- Since 1972
Outpatient

• Intake and assessment
• Intensive Outpatient programs for adults and adolescents
• General mental healthcare for children and adults
• Transition age youth programs
• Supportive peer and housing programs
• Specialties in relapse prevention, family and alumni involvement, and cultural education and interventions
Pendleton Court

- Transitional Living
- Relapse Management
- Moving on Skills
Circle of Strength

• An immersion experience within a Native American cultural environment
• Intensive 3 day (or 2 day adapted) weekend program
• Integrating identified family members and other social supports in treatment
The COS Experience

• ‘Circle’ format for sharing education and process by ‘natural order’
• Morning, evening and closing day blessings
• Modules: Educational presentations and experiential activities
• Talking Circle ceremony
• Planned family outings
• Evening support meetings
• Sharing mealtimes
Treatment Themes for Family

- Family Roles
- Co-dependency
- Brain Basics
- Communication
- Spirituality in Recovery and
- Healthy Return to Community
CIRCLE OF STRENGTH
AGENDA – DAY 1

8:30 A.M.  WELCOME! CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST
            MORNING BLESSING
9:00 A.M.  THE CIRCLE BEGINS WITH YOU
9:30 A.M.  HOW FAMILY STRENGTHS WORK
10:00 A.M. CIRCLE OF LEARNING: WHAT IS
            ADDICTION AND CHANGE
10:30 A.M. BREAK
10:45 A.M. CIRCLE OF LEARNING:
            THE DOMINO EFFECT (Video)
NOON      LUNCH PROVIDED
1:15 P.M.  TALKING CIRCLE
3:00 P.M.  HOW ARE WE DOING? CLOSING
            THOUGHTS/PRAYER
5:00 P.M.  DINNER ON GSL CAMPUS
7:00 P.M.  AA MEETING ON GSL CAMPUS
            EVENING FAMILY
            ‘DOWN TIME’/REFLECTION
CIRCLE OF STRENGTH
AGENDA – DAY 2
8:30 A.M. CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST – WELCOME BACK!
MORNING BLESSING
8:40 A.M. REFLECTIONS OF PREVIOUS DAY
9:00 A.M. CIRCLE OF MESSAGES: Communication
Healing Conflict
10:00 A.M. BREAK
10:15 A.M. CIRCLE OF MESSAGES (Continued)
11:00 A.M. CIRCLE OF DISCOVERY: HEALING THROUGH ART

NOON LUNCH PROVIDED
1:00 P.M. CIRCLE OF DISCOVERY: ART PRESENTATIONS
1:30 P.M. CIRCLE OF PEACE: ORGANIZING FAMILY MEETINGS
2:00 P.M. CIRCLE OF PEACE: PLANNING TIME TOGETHER
2:30 P.M. PRESENTATION OF FAMILY PLAN
2:45 P.M. PRACTICING THE PLAN
CIRCLE OF STRENGTH
AGENDA – DAY 3
8:30 A.M.  CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST – WELCOME BACK!
MORNING BLESSING
9:00 A.M.  CIRCLE OF BALANCED LIVING WHEEL
10:00 A.M. AFFIRMING, SHARING THE VISION,
HEALING THE HEART – CLOSING THOUGHTS/CERTIFICATES
CLOSING PRAYER FOR SAFE JOURNEY
VISITATION BRUNCH WITH FAMILY
THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE CIRCLE…
BE WELL! AND MAY YOU BE BLESSED WITH HARMONY IN YOUR CIRCLE OF STRENGTH!
Participants

- 11 Circle of Strength weekends
  July 2012 – June 2013

401 Total Attendees:
- Clients: 147
- Other: 62
- Parents/Grandparents: 60
- Spouse/Partner/Boyfriend: 50
- Brother/Sister/Uncle/Aunt: 50
- Children of client: 32
• 32% of ‘support’ participants reported being in recovery
• 82% reported increased knowledge of communication and interpersonal skills, and 80% reported increased awareness of the impact of substance abuse on families
What was the most useful thing you experienced today?

- How to communicate
- Expressing feelings
- Sharing/Hearing other people's stories
- Affirmations
- Setting boundaries
- Family collage
- Talking Circle ceremony
- Increased knowledge about addiction process and impact on family members
- Sharing experiences with loved ones
What family members are saying:

“…special tremendous spiritual healing and emotional healing; important communication.”

“… I have never experienced anything so uplifting and empowering as this program. Thank you all!!”