Greater Omaha Community Action, Inc.

The Community Building Project at GOCA

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Mental Health Treatment in the United States

Much of Mental Health Treatment/Services are based on the Medical Model

- A biological CAUSE (disease or disorder) results in an EFFECT (symptoms).
- Relies on research to understand causes of pathology.
- Primary medical approach (allopathic) is to treat the CAUSE to eliminate the EFFECT (symptoms). This works very well for physical illnesses.
- Very specialized approach.
- Many social science studies have shown that this is **NOT** always the most effective approach to treat behavioral/emotional/cognitive problems and illnesses.
Positive Recovery Rates for Schizophrenia

Cross-Cultural Studies in Psychological Anthropology

- Western Industrial Society (15%)
- Third World (35%)
- Nigeria (57%)
What’s Going On?

- Collapse of Communal Systems increases the occurrence of emotional suffering and negative/adverse behavior as means to cope.
  - Down side of Industrialism (mental illness resulting from impact of industrialism)
  - Acculturation (cultures in conflict)
  - Forced Assimilation
Mental Health Treatment in the United States

- Barriers to helping people with mental health issues in our industrialized society.
  - Emergency rooms, jails/prisons, and psychiatric or forensic wards are used extensively to address long and short-term mental health problems within a community.
  - “Turf Wars” between different human service specialties/disciplines/professions (e.g., psychiatry, psychology, counseling, social work, drug and alcohol, etc.).
  - Non-profits fighting to stay afloat financially.
  - Discrepancies between the recommendation of a mental health practitioner and a court order.
  - Money, insurance, and ineligibility for social service benefits.
  - Socio-economic and political conditions.
  - Dominance of a mainstream value such as independent individualism
  - The stigma and resulting alienation when labeled with a mental illness.
  - Reactance (resistant behavior)
Community Mental Health (CMH)

- Components
  - Incorporates the Public Health Model in which treatment occurs within the environment where people live. (Stages of Prevention.)
  - Community is an attitude in which all systems/groups function to reduce marginalizing of people in distress.
  - Defining community as something much more than networks and support systems.
  - Health and disease begin and end in the community.
  - Medical treatment (a formal support) is just one component for effective treatment and can not stand alone.
Community Mental Health (CMH)

- Components (continued)
  - More emphasis is placed on the community’s welfare by integrating the strengths of its individual components.
  - Integration of Communal Systems (personal, family, and supports of the community) are the basis to giving effective help for those suffering from mental health and substance abuse problems.
  - Correlates nicely with principles of Restorative Justice, Community Corrections, and the “wrap around” approach.
  - Volunteers: must be trained to provide therapeutic friendship based on motivational approaches.
  - Importance of developing cultural/ethnic identity.
  - Nurturing of concepts such as Social Intimacy as the highest form of Competence within a community.
Community Mental Health (CMH)

- Integration of Communal Systems of Help
  - Personal Level: In our society, entering counseling (formal support) or accessing self-help strategies, resources, and other personal supports.
  - Family Level: an informal support and includes extended family and close friends.
  - Community Level: both formal and informal supports and can be any person(s) or group(s) in the community. They can not be family members and must have contact with the client on a regular basis.
Community Mental Health (CMH)

- Community Member
- Family
- Community
  (Integration of Formal and Informal Supports)
Community Mental Health (CMH)