

There's No Therapist! I'm All They've Got!
Break Out Session, Saturday, Feb 19, 2011
Fifth Annual Midwest Conference On Missionary Care
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Introduction:

George needs a ride from his assisted living facility to Sunday School and Church each Sunday. Who's willing to help?

“And they all with one consent began to ...raise questions. (Luke 14:18).
Fear of litigation and unwanted consequences can paralyze you. How do we approach people in need and serve them effectively?

In this session we'll cover the following:

1. Some reminders
2. Three case studies
3. Debrief the case studies
4. Five suggestions
5. Some self questions
6. A problem-solving model
7. Questions and answers

Some Reminders:

1. Those in the following situations may be vulnerable:
First termers; double-jeopardy people; introverts; mothers with young children; those who are isolated; people who recently went through a traumatic event and are fearful; leaders; those whose churches abruptly cut off their support; those who were replaced by someone younger; those whose kids are leaving the field to go to college; handicapped people; minorities.

2. Some situations lend themselves to collegial help:
Discouragement; culture stress, grief, lack of interpersonal skills; need for coaching, mentoring, parenting; loneliness; debriefing; in times of great change; feeling like a failure; transitions; other?

3. Some situations call for professional help—
Bizarre behavior, suicidal ideation; violence; PTSD; moral failure.

4. Some situations will resist help—
Passive aggressive people; personality disorders; very angry people; authority problems; unrepentant people, people with addictions.

Three case studies: (7 minutes)

1. A young couple is experiencing severe culture stress in their entry to the field. You're an old timer....

2. A Korean couple has joined your field team; they're the only Koreans around and they appear to have isolated themselves, and seem very lonely. You and your wife are German and understand what it feels like to be a minority in this predominantly American group. What will you do?

3. An older single woman was replaced by someone younger, more energetic and more computer savvy. She's angry. You're single too. What could you do?

Debrief. What did you do? Why? What did you learn?

Five suggestions:

1. Be tentative.
2. Engage on the basis of observed behavior. Don't diagnose.
3. Some embedded weaknesses are worsened by the context – See Evan Parks' article in EMQ, April 2010, pp 174-178.
4. Some will get worse if it seems that no one cares. Show that you care.
5. Build your therapeutic community before you go—have electronic access to some resources and resource people.

Some self questions:

What am I seeing? Observe carefully.

What am I feeling? How does this impact me? Am I eager? Fearful?

Overly confident—"I can fix that!"

What can I do? What are my skills, my experience? Am I the right person?

How could I help?

How can I avoid doing damage?

When should I get involved?

How much risk is there if I do nothing?

Is this a developmental matter? What is likely to happen in a week, a month, a year, if I do nothing? Will it go away by itself?

Steps in Problem Solving:

Observe

Pray—for the person, for guidance, for opportunity

Engage, establish a connection, “I’ve noticed...want to talk?”

Listen (to the words, the tone, the body)

Ask – “what are you going to do about it?”

“what have you tried? What happened?”

“what have you thought of trying?”

“what options do you have?”

“what are the probably consequences of this? Of that?”

Only then, offer your suggestion: “have you considered.....?”

Help them choose an option

Suggest a time when they’ll get back to you but don’t own their problem or create a dependency relationship

Be respectful of their confidence, but don’t give promises of premature confidentiality.

Gestures of care, giving attention, good listening—these say the person matters, and you’ve noticed them. Almost always, it helps someone to realize this. To encourage means to ‘add heart.’ We can do that. Remember Mary? “She did what she could,” Jesus said of her when she washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. (Mark 14:8).

Don’t let professionalism or its lack stand in the way of doing what you believe God would have you do.

Suggested Resources:

Carter, Greg. 2010. *Skills, knowledge, character: A church-based approach to missionary candidate preparation*. Valparaiso, IN: Turtle River Press.

Dodds, Lois and Laura Mae Gardner. 2011. *Global Servants: caring for cross-cultural humanitarian heroes*. Volumes I, II, and III. Available at www.heartstreamresources.org.

Foyle, Marjory. 2000. *Honorably Wounded*.

Kane, J. Herbert. 1989. *The making of a missionary*. Baker.