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PRACTICING THE STRENGTHS PERSPECTIVE

KEY PRINCIPLES AND ACTIONS OF STRENGTHS BASED SERVICE PROVIDERS

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PRINCIPLE 1

EVERY INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, GROUP, AND COMMUNITY HAS STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

Strengths might include what people have learned about themselves from coping with difficult situations; their personal qualities or traits, like a sense of humor or an artistic ability; their knowledge about the world around them that comes from both life education and life experience; talents people have; and cultural or personal stories that provide strength and guidance (Saleebey, 1997).

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IDEALS - PRINCIPLE 1

- YOU ARE GENUINELY INTERESTED IN YOUR CONSUMERS AND ARE RESPECTFUL OF THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES
- IT IS EVIDENT THAT YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR CONSUMERS- HOW THEY FARE MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO YOU.
- NO MATTER WHAT THEIR HISTORY/CIRCUMSTANCE YOU BELIEVE THEY CAN BUILD SOMETHING OF VALUE WITH THE RESOURCES WITHIN AND AROUND THEM
- IT'S OBVIOUS THAT YOU BELIEVE THEY WILL ACHIEVE
- YOU SEE POSSIBILITIES NOT PROBLEMS

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DETOURS - PRINCIPLE 1

- I DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCE THEY NEED OR WANT
- THEY NEED MORE THAN IS AVAILABLE
- I FEEL VERY SORRY FOR THEIR SITUATION
- I WANT TO HELP THEM MORE
- I KNOW WHAT CAUSED THIS
- I ASSESSED THE SITUATION AND ITS VERY COMPLICATED – THEIR NEEDS ARE GREAT
- I KNOW THAT THIS DOESN'T WORK, IT/THEY FAILED BEFORE

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PRINCIPLE 2

TRAUMA, ABUSE, ILLNESS, AND STRUGGLE MAY BE INJURIOUS, BUT THEY MAY ALSO BE SOURCES OF CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY.

DWELLING ON CONSUMERS' PASTS AND HARDSHIPS PROMOTES "AN IMAGE OF THEMSELVES AS HELPLESS IN THE PAST, WHICH BECOMES THE BASIS FOR FAULT-FINDING AND CONTINUED HELPLESSNESS IN THE PRESENT." (WOLIN AND WOLIN 1993)

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IDEALS - PRINCIPLE 2

- YOU SEE YOUR CONSUMERS AS SURVIVORS WHO ARE WORKING WITH YOU BECAUSE THEY DESIRE A CHANGE IN THEIR LIFE/SITUATION
- WHEN CONSUMERS ARE STRUGGLING TO MEET LIFE'S CHALLENGES YOU ARE ABLE TO POINT OUT COMPETENCIES, RESILIENCE AND RESOURCEFULNESS
- YOU UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA AND STRESS ON FUNCTIONING AND ARE TRAINED TO DEESCALATE CRISIS SITUATIONS AND PROMOTE SAFETY

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DETOURS - PRINCIPLE 2

- I SPEND THE MAJORITY OF MY TIME LEARNING ABOUT THE PROBLEM AND LISTENING TO HARDSHIP STORIES
- I RESPOND THE SAME WAY TO EVERYONE
- I SEE INEFFECTIVE AND UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS AND USE THESE TO DETERMINE NEEDS
- I GET DISCOURAGED AND DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY CONSUMERS BEHAVE THE WAY THEY DO
- I DON'T KNOW IF OUR TIME SPENT TOGETHER WAS USEFUL TO MY CONSUMER

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PRINCIPLE 3

ASSUME THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW THE UPPER LIMITS OF THE CAPACITY TO GROW AND CHANGE AND TAKE ASPIRATIONS SERIOUSLY.

*“Believe it can be done. When you believe something can be done, really believe, your mind will find the ways to do it. **Believing** a solution paves the way to solution.” David Joseph Schwartz*

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IDEALS - PRINCIPLE 3

- SET HIGH EXPECTATIONS
- EXPAND HOPES, ASPIRATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES
- BELIEVE IN YOUR CONSUMERS ABILITIES AND MOTIVATION
- CREATE HOPE WHERE THERE IS LITTLE
- STRENGTHEN BELIEF WHERE THERE IS LITTLE TO BELIEVE IN
- HELP CREATE ASPIRATIONS WHERE THERE ARE NONE

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DETOURS - PRINCIPLE 3

- THREATS VS NATUAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES
- SKEPTICISM
- NEGATIVE ASSUMPTIONS
- NO OR LOW EXPECTATIONS
- LACK OF EXCITEMENT
- FEAR
- PESSIMISM

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PRINCIPLE 4

WE BEST SERVE CONSUMERS BY COLLABORATING WITH THEM.

A HELPER MAY BE DEFINED AS A COLLABORATOR OR CONSULTANT: AN INDIVIDUAL CLEARLY PRESUMED TO HAVE SOME TOOLS AT THE READY BECAUSE OF SPECIALIZED TRAINING OR EXPERIENCE, BUT DEFINITELY NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH SPECIALIZED INFORMATION. YOUR CONSUMER IS THE EXPERT AND KNOWS THE MOST ABOUT COPING WITH HIS OR HER SITUATION. (Saleebey, 1997)

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IDEALS - PRINCIPLE 4

- Each interaction has a clearly defined partnership
- There is continual acknowledgement and learning about each others wisdom, insights and strengths
- Ensure each member in the partnership is aware of the others resources and responsibilities
- Promoting democracy and equilization is evident in all activities
- Reciprocity and mutual respect characterize each interaction.
- Take a nonjudgemental stance

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DETOURS - PRINCIPLE 4

- I only have time to get all of my paperwork completed
- I need to tell them.....
- I talk more than I listen
- I do things for my consumers
- I'm driven to do this work because I value charity
- I know what works best, I can see failure coming
- I have the answer, I can do it faster for them
- I feel good when I am helping and fixing
- I engage in blaming attitudes and behaviors
- I feel sorry for them, they deserve help
- I have decision making authority

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Principle 5

EVERY ENVIRONMENT IS FULL OF RESOURCES.

“In every environment there are individuals, associations, groups and institutions who have something to give, something that others may desperately need: knowledge, resources, talents, or simply time and place” (Saleebey,1997)

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IDEALS - PRINCIPLE 5

- Think outside of the box and find creative solutions regularly
- Work for social and economic justice
- Regularly assist consumers to identify and arrange for needed resources from within their own environment
- Learn about my consumer's norms and practice cultural competency

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DETOURS - PRINCIPLE 5

- I have to provide something specific and concrete for my clients, I get things done for them.
- I do for my clients and unknowingly hi-light that they are unable to do it for themselves
- They wouldn't come to me If they didn't need my resources
- They only want or need financial assistance
- I don't brainstorm with my consumers
- I only know or value mainstream resources

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS


