Community as method: principles and practice of therapeutic community treatment

Tim Flora - Odyssey House
David Scott - Windana

Chair: Anne-Maree Kaser
Community as Method: principles and practice of therapeutic community treatment

Tim Flora, Therapeutic Community Manager, Odyssey House Victoria

David Scott, Manager Rehabilitation Services, Windana Drug & Alcohol Recovery
Contents

Part One
- What is a Therapeutic Community?
- Fundamental Components of a TC
- What is Community as Method?
- TC Rules
- Who comes to a TC?
- A Day in the Life of a TC Resident
- Evidence Based Treatment
- ATCA Accreditation
- ATCA TC Members

Part Two
- Scenarios
- Group Discussion
- Question & Answer
What is a Therapeutic Community?

- a living learning experience
- residents and staff participate in the management and operation of the community
- the community itself, through self-help and mutual support, is the principal means for promoting personal change
- staffs role is to provide a physically and psychologically safe learning environment
- the community is the primary therapeutic instrument (De Leon, 2000)
- focus on social, psychological and behavioural dimensions of substance use
- TC environment unlike an institution, clinic, hospital, or even a treatment program
- the social environment of a TC resembles an energetic village than an institution or service setting (De Leon, 2000: 119)
- TC members are residents, not patients or clients
Fundamental Components of a TC

- **Self-Help**: the resident is the protagonist of their own treatment, others act as facilitators.
- **Hierarchy**: daily activities take place in a structured setting where residents act as role models.
- **Community**: living together in a group and fostering belonging is the main agent for therapeutic change and social learning.
- **Confrontation** (or challenge): residents provide feedback to each other such as observations of, and reactions to, behaviours and attitudes that interfere with community rules, value and philosophy and require change.
What is Community as Method?

- the profound distinction between a TC and other treatments is the use of **community as a method** for changing the whole person (De Leon, 2000)
- **residents** have input into **decision making** and participate in maintaining the facility
- the **community** is the **agent** for change
- the community is made up of staff and resident members, with resident members having clear “**ownership**” of the environment during their program, the **TC is their home**
- staff behave as **rational authorities** (consistent, trustworthy, compassionate & transparent) this counteracts negative experiences with authority
- the community help heal individuals **emotionally**, and support the development of **behaviours, attitudes** and values of **healthy living**
Who comes to a TC?

- 68% are male
- 35 yrs average age
- 18% of no income source
- 31% have dependent children
- 24% homeless month prior to admission
- 20% arrested in month prior to admission
- 81% unemployed month prior to TC entry
- 26% victim of violence month prior to admission
- 37% have current legal issues month prior to admission
- 24% ambulance / hospital admission month prior to admission

TC Rules

Odyssey House Victoria TC

Cardinal / Principle Rules
- no violence or threat of violence
- no theft
- no drugs or alcohol
- no sex
- no knowledge of breaking these rules

Windana TC

Cardinal / Principle Rules:
- no possession or use of any non-prescribed drugs or alcohol
- no violence or threats of violence to residents, staff or livestock
- no unauthorised leave from the property boundaries
- no unauthorized fires to be lit on the property
- knowledge of any of the above

General Rules:
- no sexual relationships or dependent relationships
- no stealing from a member of the community or from the community
- no continual or repetitive non-participation in any part of the program
- no smoking other than at the times and places specified

- any breach of a Cardinal Rule will most likely result in Discharge from the TC
- serious breaches of General Rules may result in immediate discharge however, more often; the situation presents an opportunity for positive consequential learning
A Day in the Life of a TC Resident

- 16 hour day
- highly structured, consistent & predictable
- day begins and ends at set times
- residents and staff share meals
- includes meetings, tasks, therapy groups, work phases, seminars, recreation
- weekends less structured

Daily Structure teaches:

- **productivity** - set goals, establish positive regimes, manage work & responsibilities
- **perform consistently** – routine teaches goal attainment occurs one step at a time and rewards consistent performance
- **manage free time** – routine provides certainty and reduces anxiety linked with free time that may trigger drug related behaviour
- **minimise self defeating thoughts** – structure lessens preoccupation
Evidence Based Treatment


Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association (ATCA) Accreditation

ATCA is the peak body for TC’s in Australasia

Windana & Odyssey House Victoria TC’s received ATCA’s Standard for Therapeutic Communities in Mid 2017 to achieve ATCA accreditation as a TC Windana & Odyssey House met the following:

• 80% of all criteria labelled as ‘essential’ must be achieved (criteria 1–13)

• Criterions are based on the 79 Essential Elements

• Performance Expectation 7.1 “Community as Method” must be within the 80% of achieved criteria
  
  a the Therapeutic Community programme applies the Community as Method approach
  
  b the Therapeutic Community has distinct stages which cover assessment, orientation, treatment, transition and re-entry
  
  c the Therapeutic Community approach is multidimensional. It involves therapy, education, teaching values, and skills development

• Management, staff and residents are aware of the TC model within the criterions
ATCA TC Member’s across Australia & New Zealand

ATCA members provide more than 70 Therapeutic Communities and associated services across Australia and New Zealand.
Part Two

Scenarios & Group Discussion
Scenario One

Spring is in the air and two residents Peter and Michelle have been down the back of the property kissing.

They asked Sarah to provide a watch for them and let them know if anyone was coming or looking for them.

Later Peter told his friend Mark about what had happened and Mark decided to let the Senior Residents know.

Apart from the Senior Residents all residents involved are early in their program.

What do you do as a staff member?
Scenario Two

A resident, Jane, in the middle stages of her program was asked by one of the parents to provide childcare while the parent attended a meeting in the evening.

Whilst providing childcare, Jane absconded from the program / property.

A few weeks later Jane applied for readmission and was accepted.

Are you going to allow the resident to provide childcare?
References


Thank You & Questions?

Tim Flora
Therapeutic Community Manager
Odyssey House Victoria
TFlora@odyssey.org.au

David Scott
Manager Rehabilitation Services
Windana Drug & Alcohol Recovery
dscott@windana.org.au
Lunch 12:30 – 1:30pm

Breakout 5 – 7: dining room area
Breakout 8: Simmonds Room