

## Group Support From a Counselor's View

A couple weeks ago I had the honor of being a guest at a new Gambler's Anonymous open meeting and pinning at the Unity Center. It was a wonderful experience in so many ways. It was an opportunity to reconnect with former clients and to cheer their accomplishments. It was also an opportunity to experience a local twelve step program. I was amazed at how dedicated everyone was to one another's recovery. Love was there.

Healing was visible as people shared their stories. These stories held nuggets of inspiration for others gathered around the table. The personal testimonies were powerful. This meeting was "open." Addiction was not a criteria for attending so everyone was invited.

Wheeling is blessed to have opportunities for those in recovery. Ohio Valley Recovery, Inc. is located at the Unity Center, 2314 Chapline Street. This organization is dedicated to those in recovery. Check them out at [www. OVRI.org](http://www.OVRI.org)

Support groups are a valuable tool for those needing to make a life change. They offer an opportunity to be surrounded by others that really understand the nature of the particular addiction, hurt or hang up. Those in the group don't necessarily have advanced degrees in counseling, but their insight into problems is powerful. Sometimes it is just plain easier to draw wisdom from someone who has walked that path previously. It is helpful to see that others have overcome. Support groups require accountability. They give hope and teach members that they are not alone in their challenge to overcome a problem.

I also refer my clients to an international Christ-centered program called Celebrate Recovery. The Wheeling chapter locally meets every Friday at 7:00 p.m. at the Vineyard church, Waddles Run Road. It offers an array of groups for problems such as addictions, sexual abuse, men's issues, and co-dependency. Grief Share and Divorce Care meet on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. Grief Share is a support group for someone losing a loved one to death, while Divorce Care deals with the losses involved in divorce and separation.

Most support programs use the Serenity Prayer and a 12 step program. I especially like the 12 step program used by Celebrate Recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked him to remove all our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of those we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

I am constantly encouraging clients to attend support groups and church. These modalities of support are an important component for healing. Individual counseling is beneficial, but it is often more effective when coupled with support from a group. Counseling is often a brief encounter with a therapist, but a group offers support over many years. Sometimes a group can be a source of help to someone otherwise unable to afford counseling.