



Fletcher Group Lessons Learned

IT'S DIFFERENT!

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THE WORLD GETS SMART

Unlike programs based on subservience to a higher power, the worldwide success of the SMART Recovery Successful Life Skills Curriculum (SLS) is based on individual autonomy and self-empowerment. But that's not the biggest difference, says Jade Hampton, the Fletcher Group's Manager of Provider Relations. Though he came late to the party and with considerable skepticism ("I'd heard SMART was all about medication-assisted treatment and wanted no part of it"), Hampton agreed to support SLS in recovery homes by becoming a facilitator. That's when something special happened.



SOMETHING'S UP

"I had already spent twelve years as a peer-support specialist when I walked into my first SLS meeting," says Hampton. "The difference hit me during a ten-minute break when one of the eight participants asked what was I doing the rest of the day. When I said I had nothing planned, she asked if I could do another hour. The other seven participants chimed in, saying please stay because they were getting so much out of it. I was floored. In all the years I've done this kind of thing I've never seen anything like that."

BUILT DIFFERENT

"Other programs have a lot of structure, which is good," says Hampton. "But trying to live up to the program's or counselor's expectations can cause people to miss the mark. Because SLS is so free-flowing and inclusive, the only standard you're trying to live up to is your own. People set their own goals and work at their own pace. You're not looking to someone else for approval or skipping ahead to stay on a schedule. The common denominator is the empowerment that comes from learning to manage your urges, thoughts, and behaviors."

MY ONE MISTAKE

"The one mistake I made was following the book too closely which made the first couple sessions too robotic," says Hampton. "Everything improved when I realized the book was a framework, not a blueprint. As soon as I let go and got out of the way, the clients took over and began working the program on their own, getting deeper and deeper to the root of things, including powerful insights into their own roles getting where they are today. It's been beautiful to watch and a revelation to me personally."





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PERSONAL CONNECTION

In contrast to 12-Step Meetings, the Successful Life Skills Curriculum encourages cross-talk. The self-paced, non-linear approach also encourages participants to work on the issues they consider most urgent. "Because it's so open, it tends to be more personal," says Hampton. "These are people who've gone through a lot. Each one has his or her own unique set of challenges, but they all appreciate the freedom they're given them to be themselves, without being judged or held to someone else's standard. In my experience, that freedom allows them to get deeper and more honest with themselves than they might in another program."



Foundation

MY PART

"In other programs you may be accountable to the therapist or the coach or, as in a 12-Step Program, to God," says Hampton. "But in SLS you're accountable to yourself. The focus is always on the individual, warts and all. Therapists like to use the term 'self-efficacy' when talking about the confidence a person in recovery gains from getting a job or a degree," says Hampton, "but SLS encourages a different kind of self-efficacy—the confidence that comes from discovering, managing, and directing your own unique path to recovery."

CHAIN REACTION

According to Hampton, SLS meetings are different in another important way. "When a person finds the courage within to open up in a way they couldn't before, the others realize they're not alone with the hurts and hang-ups they've been living with. That can start a spontaneous chain reaction with one 'aha moment' following one after the other. That's when you get the best of both worlds—powerful insights on the micro or individual level spurring similarly powerful insights on the macro/group level."

DEEPLY SPIRITUAL

SLS works smoothly side-by-side with AA, 12-Step, and other faith-based programs. And while SLS applies a distinctly secular and science-based approach to recovery, Hampton has found it to be just as spiritual as faith-based programs, if not more so, "I say that because of the emotional depth of the conversations and insights that take place; the amazing, almost unimaginable changes I've seen, as though they've become a completely different person; and because those changes come from such a deep place within each person."

