

THE ROLE OF FRIENDS AND PEERS IN RELAPSE

AND ITS PREVENTION

The theories of social conformity states that pressure or influence from friends can influence a person's behavior or attitude either positively or negatively.

Also, Farrell and White 1998, observe that friends not only provide immediate access to substances, but also provide model drugs using behavior and help shape believes and positive attitudes toward the use of drugs.

Our experience in wellspring rehabilitation center agrees with Farrel and White in their findings.

After treatment and recovery, an ex-drug patient is expected to maintain a state of sobriety and permanent state of abstinence and have a better and purposeful life in the society. But in some cases, some of them relapse due to their re-association with their drug using friends and peers. This has been a major challenge to these patients and their families.

In WRC, we see this as a serious challenge that our patients must overcome to remain in sobriety/abstinence after their treatment and recovery.

And I want to say that we have recorded successes in our module of treatment and recovery in this critical challenge.

OVERCOMING THE TENDENCY TO RE-ASSOCIATE WITH DRUG USING FRIENDS AFTER TREATMENT/ RECOVERY

WRC is a faith based rehabilitation center. Our treatment module is purely based on the bible which is this word of God. Hence in WRC, we use the scriptures to help our patients (residents) to overcome this challenge and to know the right friends or associates to keep, after discharge.

SCRIPTURAL TEXTS TO HELP THEM IDENTIFY WHOM TO ASSOCIATE WITH

1. 1st Corinthians 15:33

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

2. Psalm 1: 1-3

¹ Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

² But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

³ And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

3. Proverbs 13:20

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

4. **2nd Corinthians 6: 17-18**

¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

These scriptures are divine instructions/guidelines by God to help them associate with friends who will inspire them, motivate them, strengthen them and steer them in the right direction.

Their potentials, gifts and qualities will always find expressions with the right group of friends not their drug using friends. Our focus in WRC is to take our patients (residents) through an intensive scriptural education/counseling sessions to make them break ties with their drug using friends.

As I said earlier we are recording successes with our faith based treatment & recovery programme.

Family support: The family also has a role to play in monitoring their sons/daughters who have completed their treatment & recovery programme. Families need to know whom they are associating with.

ROLES OF FRIENDS IN RELAPSE PREVENTION

1. The recovering patients must associate with new friends who will always remind them of the dangers of relapse and how a relapse can negatively affect them especially their career and children.
2. Friends/peers must be exemplary in their behaviors.
3. Friends/peers could take responsibility by helping him avoid media messages, social media, TV programmes, movies, songs, that can glamorize drug use.
4. Friends/peers must have good knowledge of what the symptoms of addiction to look out for and its risk factors.
5. When discussing with them avoid emotional appeals that will trigger feelings of guilt and the compulsion to go back to drugs.