

How the Prosumer Program Works

Often at meetings, I stand before the group and declare that we are not a support group, but an empowerment group. Support happens at the Prosumer meeting, but the purpose of the group is to help you realize your power as a person, focus on wellness and self-worth, as well as learning about resources in the community. That sounds really good, but what does that mean and how do we know it works. We know it works because our members say it works. For those scientific types that want to know the ins and outs, the theory and studies, I offer this article.

We have been working in collaboration with the School of Nursing, Health Science Center in San Antonio Research Scholar Program for about a year. They have helped identify the model we use which is called "Salutogenesis". This is a fancy term for focusing on wellness using three distinctive areas.



The first area is realizing that you have control over your life, which you get by realizing that you have choices in all things. Having choices takes us from a victim of life or illness to a survivor of life or illness. To have choices means we have to recognize that when we blame or get angry, we are giving the person or situation the power over us. Since "they made us..." or "it is their fault that..." leaves us at their mercy because we are relying on "it" or "them" to change so we can feel better.

Once we take back our power and realize that we are in control, it is only then that we can choose that which empowers us to have a full and happy life.

The second area is realizing that you have resources. I am not talking about a lot of money, but knowing who to contact or where to go for information for things that you need. Family is a great resource. If your car breaks down and your family is in town, you can call for help. Friends are a great resource for a lot of things, as well. Many times consumers of mental health services do not have family or friends which leaves them lacking in resources. At a Prosumer meeting, you make a family. You can find out anything from what dentist uses a sliding scale fee to where to buy used clothing in large sizes. If you are going into the doctor or hospital, we have one member who can tell you everything that is going to happen, how it is going happen and what to expect.

The third area is doing something meaningful in life. Doing something that makes a difference in someone else's life, gives you a sense of well-being. We encourage this in the Prosumer Program. By volunteering, you will find your recovering from what ails you. It is like when you get a paper cut. If you are busy, you don't notice it until maybe when you start for bed. You look down and see it and it starts hurting again. If you are not busy, it can hurt and worry you all day long. Mental illness works the same way. If you are continually focusing inward, your pain will feel worse, maybe even magnified. It is through focusing outward, that life becomes exciting, happy and rewarding, no matter what pain you may have.

Prosumers are a group of people who have been labeled in life. They meet at a monthly meeting to learn how to gain power over their life. They become a Prosumer by being proactive in their recovery and giving back to the community. It is by being in action that you are a Prosumer. A Prosumer is what you do, not who you are. Prosumers take responsibility for their lives. They don't sit and wait for something to happen. They are out to make the world better in some way. And after becoming a Prosumer, many times the next step is a job or school. These are the most common reasons people stop coming to the meetings. Many of our members know that Recovery is Possible, because they are out there living their dreams. Be in action around your dreams. Be a Prosumer because RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE!!!!

www.ProsumersInternational.org