

Feminist Counseling Workshop

26 - 29 April 2018

Workshop:- Feminist Counseling Workshop

Date:- 26th April 2018 - 29th April 2018

Venue:- Christian Retreat Center (Dehradun)

Total Number of participants:- 27

Resource Persons:- 5 (Madhu, Chaitali, Sunita Thakur, Shubhangi, Chitra)

Jagori has been conducting Feminist counseling workshop for a long time and continues to do the same successfully till date. Recently Jagori conducted its FCT 2018 successfully, where 27 participants from all over India came and participated. Each day was a new learning with the exchange of knowledge and experiences. All 4 days consisted of new tools of learning interlinking each other. The healing session was an add-on, as a case worker also needs to work on their own mental health for more efficient output. Activities during the mental healing sessions were very refreshing and energizing and more new tools emerged out of these interactions which could be recommended to the survivors suffering from mental ailment. These tools can make it easy for them to heal.

DAY 1

Chaitali started the session with an introduction about Feminist Counseling training, its history and its importance. Our work, as a case worker, demands us to be a part of this feminist counseling workshop. For an efficient output, a case worker has to constantly change and update their strategies as and when there is an amendment in the law. The main objective of this training was to exchange with each other our varied knowledge and sharpen our techniques of case work.

Rules were set that were to be followed for the next 4 day.

Activity 1

The participants were given chart papers and were asked to write their expectations, contributions, and doubts from this workshop. The same was discussed in the group.

Activity 2

Introduction Activity:-

The participants were asked to imagine that they were walking on a broken road and had to reach a destination. While walking they had to introduce themselves to each other which included their name, where they are from and what inspired them to be in this sector and also what is that one secret reason which inspired them to be a participant in this workshop. Then the participants were asked to share their thoughts that if they get a chance to change one thing within them what will it be? Lastly the participants were asked how they would want to spend their next few days in the workshop.

Feminist Movement

1. The session started with narration of a story. Participants were asked to imagine a character of a woman of any age, state, caste or community.

The story had 3 characters: 2 men and 1 woman. It was about a couple who married against their families will. The man supported his wife throughout in her decisions. Even after they had a child the woman wanted to go to a different state to pursue higher studies. The man took the responsibility of their child and waited for her to successfully complete her studies. Meanwhile she fell in love with some other man and came back and told her husband that she wants to leave him and the child and move on with the new man in her life. At the end, before taking any step ahead she found out that she was pregnant again.

On the basis of this story the participants were asked a few questions.

2. The next session was on Mahila Andolan and Nariwadi Soch (Women's movement and Feminist Ideology).

The difference between a Movement (Jan Andolan) and Women's movement and a feminist idea running the movement were discussed. An umbrella example was given about various bodies who consider themselves feminist, like Durgavahini, Congress Mahila Wing, and other groups and independent forums. But the question arose that do these organizations really have a feminist perspective?

Feminism means abolition of patriarchy and fighting against gender discrimination. Women do not want to gain sympathy. Accepting death penalty for a crime against women would be supporting human rights violation. This also proves that as a woman we are only bound by our body and shame. Feminist thought believes in the safety of the woman, and not hang someone to death as a solution. It's about giving equal right and respect to the women. Feminist ideology believes in equality and a fight against discrimination – a person of any gender can be raped, so the law should consider everyone equal.

Next, women political groups and their ideologies were discussed. It is a topic of deep analysis. Are the yojanas and schemes really helpful? Are they following the feminist ideology? Is it really empowering the woman?

History of Chipko Movement, widow remarriage, Shrikakulam, Mehengai Andolan, Nirbhaya case was also discussed. In conclusion it was seen that women have equally and actively participated in these movements but unfortunately none of them are remembered now. It is seen that from time to time women activists come to the lime light, play their roles and then disappear. None of them have stayed for very long to be considered important. Is this our feminist ideology? It is a matter of deep concern.

Jan Andolan(Movement) can be carried without a feminist ideology but Mahila Andolan (Feminist movement) has a definite feminist ideology.

Activity 3

Participants were divided into groups and each group was given a topic like Shahabano case, Gujarat riots, Mathura case, and Nirbhaya. Each group was given a task to do some basic findings, like what were the reasons behind the delay of justice in these cases, the facts of the case, and what are the impact of these case from a feminist perspective.

Activity 4

A number of chart papers were glued to the ground. It was a chain describing the journey from victim to a change-agent in 5 steps. The participants were asked to analyze and decide at what point do they stand at the end of the day, and how and why? Sharing about the personal experiences also took place.

The motive of this activity was to remind the participants that we all were victims someday and now we have started our journey from victim to change agent and we all are rotating within that circle only.

DAY 2

The day started with a healing session by Chitra. The session was focused on the ways to explore inner feelings. An activity was done with cards. Each card had a feeling written on it, each participant had to pick up one card and they had to relate it to oneself and describe the feelings. Another session was on how to express good and bad feelings with an example of dummies.

The day also saw a legal session. Shubhangi from Aali was the resource person for the day. She started with an introduction on law and went on to explain how it is interlinked with case work. The session started with what is a constitution and what are our fundamental rights. We discussed Reservation and its impact, and why is it necessary to discuss it. In our country, right to equality is difficult to practice as we are surrounded by the constant practice of discrimination on the basis of caste, class, community, etc.

Different kinds of laws were discussed and the difference between criminal law and civil law and their remedies and kind of punishments were discussed.

Domestic Violence: laws, proceedings, queries and questions

1. 498 A with its uses and misuses were discussed. How women are misguided with this law and its execution, pros and cons etc. were discussed.
2. The basic concept and the procedure to file NCR, DD and FIR was discussed. Difference between cognizable and non-cognizable, Bailable and non-bailable offence were also discussed.
3. Difference between detention and arrest; the rights of a detainee; and what are accessible while arresting and detaining a person.
4. Interim orders and reliefs a person can get under Dv Act were discussed; demands made by a survivor, remedies in Dv act and the right to house were also added. It was said that the party should ask the advocate to specifically mention the reliefs she would want from the opposition like the right to stay in the house even if it is a rented house, compensation amount and other reliefs which she has an access to.
5. Session on DIR discussed: Who can file a DIR and what is the procedure.
6. How can a Protection officer be appointed, his/her duties were discussed.
7. Courts power to inspect documents in the case Dv.
8. If the cases are sensitive, then the magistrate can be requested for an in camera trial.
9. The basics of Domestic violence laws and how they can be used by the participants as a case worker were discussed.

Session on Rape and Sexual Violence

1. POCSO laws were discussed.
2. Clarifications on the types of sexual violence, acts that are considered as sexual harassment etc. were discussed.
3. Brief discussion on consent of woman, what is privacy , as a case worker how and what are the keys one can make the survivor understand so that they can specifically understand the meaning of sexual violence and can prepare themselves to fight against it.
4. Concept of medico legal, and the do's and don'ts were shared so that the case workers along with the survivors can't get misguided by the authority.
5. Certain sections in POCSO and sexual offences along with their implications and remedies and punishments were shared.
6. Session on right to choice and how case workers can strategies and utilize the legal proceedings to deal such cases were also discussed.

DAY3

This session was taken by Sunita Thakur and Chaitali. The session was on Feminist Counseling and Case Work.

The session started with an introduction on what is feminist counseling and the basic concept of a case work. The counseling procedure was discussed. The session started with a brief concept about the political structure to help the participants/case workers to easily strategies and changes the thought process. Various kinds of feminist thoughts were discussed like Marxist, Gandhian , etc.

Activity 1

The participants were asked to write few words describing feminism (Nariwadi) and note some principles which should be followed during counseling. The description reflecting counseling given by the participants were identical to the ones describing feminism; the participants were asked to write a definition for the term "Feminist Counseling".

Violence is not only suffered by women; a feminist approach is all about equality. It was decided that instead of using the term 'women', the word 'people' will be used specifically (Women, Children and LGBT groups)

Myths and facts of feminism

- a. Feminist counseling gives option to the survivor to take the decision.
- b. The motive of a feminist counseling is to help the survivor to transform in to a change-agent.
- c. A true counselor is someone who is ready for all kind of situation, play its role anywhere and in any situation. Example, a real life situation handled by the resource person would make the situation more clear and precise.
- d. In a feminist counseling the women is the main focus. Keeping the woman in the center a case worker should try to assist her and lead her from a survivor to a change-agent. The idea of feminist counseling is to take the individual issue.

- e. The concept of confidentiality was discussed; what data should be kept confidential and what are the limitations of confidentiality. At times, when the case becomes intense case worker has to go beyond its own team and share the matter with the management. In this situation the limitations of confidentiality should be drawn and the ethical guidelines laid down.

Activity 2

The participants were divided into groups. Each group was given a chart paper and asked to write the points that a case worker has to follow, and those should be non-negotiable. The activity was basically to clarify the difference between principles and process in the feminist counseling.

The kinds of cases discussed were:-

1. One who comes for an advice and does not want intervention.
2. One who registers the case with the organization so that a letter could be sent for counseling at the organizational level.

Further the process of counseling which is followed by Jagori was discussed. After registering the case, a notice is send to the accused party. If the party does not appear another letter is posted. When both the party's are present the counseling process is briefed. Counseling can be done in two ways: firstly through individual counseling and secondly counseling with both the parties.

There are three basic fundamental rights which everyone should know and as a case worker one should spread the awareness among the people about them. They are: Right to Freedom, Right to Equality and Right to Life. These three fundamental rights are applicable for fighting against all kind of violence.

Activity 3

The participants were asked to role play to understand the difference between sympathy and empathy. Then a brief session on how to control emotions as a case worker was discussed. Along with emotions it is important for a case worker to maintain equality with the survivor.

Activity 4

A story was narrated by Chaitali to make the participants understand that a case worker should perceive or judge.

After these activities the procedure of counseling were discussed. This included active listening, paraphrasing, body language, reflecting, detailing. These are the basic rules to be followed by a case worker.

Activity 5

The participants were divided into groups and were given woolen balls and asked to untangle it, assuming that it was a case. Then there was a discussion on how the participants felt while doing this task. What were their emotions and what did they think while solving the hurdles in a group. This activity was also done to show that counseling can be done by 2 or more counselors at a time depending upon the need of the case.

Activity 6

The resource persons Chaitali and Sunita Thakur did a role play too to show the above discussed principles to be followed as a case worker. The Do's and the Don'ts of a case work were discussed.

Discussion on important values and behaviors to be followed by a case worker

- Maintaining distance
- Controlling emotions
- Empathy
- Certain keys were also discussed which are necessary for a case worker to follow. A balance between emotions and work was also briefed.

Activity 7

The participants were divided into group of three. One was the narrator and the other had to provoke and try to interrupt the speaker. The third one was the Observer. After the activity each observer had to explain the other two participant's emotions and reactions. This activity was an example of an active listening.

The day was also accompanied by Chitra's healing session. An activity was held in which the participants were divided into groups of 2. Each of them had to select a card which had certain emotions written. Both of them had to share their emotions relating to the word and the other had to reflect the same back.

This was followed by a self healing activity. The participants were asked to think about an incidence from the past where, if given an opportunity, they would change their decision. This activity was basically to heal the emotions like guilt, sadness, regret.

DAY 4

The day started with a healing session by Chitra. Participants were asked to meditate for 15 minutes. They were asked as what they would do to keep themselves mentally healthy in their day to day life. Activity regarding transferring positivity to each other was done. The participants were asked to stand in two rows facing each other. Each one of us was asked to pass through the space between the two rows. Each participant had to pass a positive feeling through their gestures on the one who was passing by. This activity strengthens and also gives mental peace and positivity. The basic idea of this activity was to feel the emotions of love.

Activity 1

The participants were divided into groups. Each group had 5 participants and were asked to narrate stories they have experienced during case work. Then they were asked to perform the same as a small skit. The skit reflected the laws and the strategies which could possibly be used in such circumstances.

1. Protocol of Jagori for case work was shared and discussed.
2. **The disclaimer that survivors are required to sign before registering the case:**
 - Principle of natural justice was discussed where a case worker cannot accompany the survivor during the court case unless there are orders from the magistrate himself.

- A case worker cannot file a F.I.R on behalf of a survivor. The case worker has to stay neutral and cannot himself/herself become a party in the case.
 - There can be some special situations where the case worker can represent the case on behalf of the survivor. For eg. if it's a special child or any special case of mental or physical health.
3. Consent letter (*Sehamati patra*) was also discussed.
 4. Ppt was presented for all of the above.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the Feminist Counseling Workshop was interesting, different, yet inter-connected. The participants liked the group discussion. The movements which have been discussed on the first day and its relevance with feminist movement fascinated the participants as it helped to change the entire ideology. The healing session by Chitra gave certain tools which can be used in our day to day life to keep the participants mentally healthy as a case worker, and also for self care. The role plays made it easy to understand and were also entertaining. It helped us to understand the techniques of counseling that included active listening, emotions, and team work. Movies were screened at the end of the session. The movies were on a specific topic like domestic violence, law, sex worker, etc. The participants were active throughout the workshop and participated with energy and enthusiasm.