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Transforming Impossible into Possible (TIP): A group work model in workforce development

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The International Association of Social Work with Groups
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC
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Summary

This presentation introduces newly developed a social work group intervention model in workforce development. Transforming Impossible into Possible (TIP) program empowers participants to develop self-awareness, confidence, hope, goal-orientation, leadership, accountability, conscientiousness, and grit, it is anticipated that it improves both employment and retention outcomes.

Abstract

The purpose of this presentation is to introduce a newly developed social work group intervention model in workforce development. Based on reviewing best practice models and research findings in this area, a research team at Loyola University Chicago has worked with group work practitioners to develop an evidence-informed intervention model. By empowering the participants to develop self-awareness, confidence, hope, goal-orientation, leadership, accountability, conscientiousness, and grit, it is anticipated that it improves both employment and retention outcomes. This presentation addresses: 1) how this program can be best implemented for positive employment process and outcomes; 2) how it can be evaluated with sound measures; and 3) how it can be replicated in other settings for greater impact.

Transforming Impossible into Possible (TIP) program is made up of transformative 15-session employment readiness modules designed to assist low-income job seekers transition from long-term unemployment—due to welfare receipt, homelessness, substance abuse, mental health issues, prison sentencing, etc.—to employment. Research suggests that it is the personal success skills embodied in TIP brings together the measured effectiveness on both individual process—i.e., employment readiness pathways—and outcome—i.e., job placement and retention. At the core of these skills is the social and emotional well-being which is crucial to an individual's success finding a job and personal advancement in the workplace.

TIP comprises reflection and action commitment on topics—such as identity and purpose, forgiveness, goal setting, pathways, barrier inventory, strength assessment, self-worth, self-perceived capability, future possibilities, self-motivation, skills/resource awareness, managing stress/anger, social support, compassion, and gratitude—that lay the foundation for core personal success. The program's main goal is to improve participants' psychological self-sufficiency—the transformative energy generated by capitalizing on the interplay between employment hope and perceived employment barriers as participants look toward advancing into the workforce. As a result of TIP, empowered participants will be more deeply connected to maintaining internal power and be more proactive consumers of the workforce systems.

Enclosed are: (1) TIP Program outline and curriculum; and (2) Psychological self-sufficiency survey instrument that can be used for evaluation.



Transforming Impossible into Possible (TIP) Program Outline

Sessions	Themes	Topics	Leaders	Date
1.	Identity & Purpose	Survey (1) Who Am I/Purpose In Life		
2.		Forgiveness		
3.	Renewed Commitment	Goal Setting		
4.		Improvement & Pathways (1)		
5.	Barriers	Barrier Inventory		
6.	Strength Assessment	I am the best at		
7.	Employment Hope	Love/Self-Worth		
8.		Self-Perceived Capability		
9.		Future and the Possibilities		
10.		Self-Motivation		
11.		Skills and Resources Inventory		
12.		Improvement & Pathways (2)		
13.	Unresolved Triggers of Stress	Managing Stress & Anger		
14.	Gratitude	Finding meaning in life Count blessings Combining gratitude to meaning in life		
15.	Social Support and Compassion	Seeking Help & Helping Others Survey (2) Graduation Ceremony		

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Transforming Impossible into Possible (TIP) Program Curriculum

Group discussions and exercises to enhance applied learning of TIP's core principles will require synergistic, supportive, respectful, and safe transformative environment. Encouraging organic developments of subgroups, with some facilitator guidance, for transformative group exercises, will create empowering group dynamics that reduce participatory reluctance and increase commitment to transformation and peer support and learning.

Sessions	Themes	Topics	Activities Outline
1.	Identity & Purpose	Survey (1) Who Am I/ Purpose In Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do I come from? How did I get to be where I am now? • Do I have a purpose in life? • What gets me going every day? What keeps me from going every day? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Survey (40 minutes) (2) Introduction: Name and the answer to the first question (10 minutes) (3) Program introduction and pledge as brothers and sisters committed to each member's transformation (10 minutes) (4) Quiet reflection: Answer the second question (5 minutes) (5) Sharing and discussion (15 minutes) (6) Quiet reflection: Answer the third question (5 minutes) (7) Sharing and discussion (15 minutes) (8) Commitment to thinking "what gets me going every day" and sharing strategies to remind oneself of this motivator (20 minutes)
2.		Forgiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the inner obstacles that keep me from even trying? • What lasting pains do I have inside? • What is forgiveness? How do you forgive? Is it possible to forgive? • How can I best forgive the people and things that have left me these scars? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Quiet reflection: How do I get rid of "what keeps me from going every day"? (10 minutes) (2) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (3) Quiet reflection: Answer the first question (5 minutes) (4) Sharing and discussion (15 minutes) (5) Quiet reflection: Answer the second question (5 minutes) (6) Sharing and discussion (15 minutes)



Sessions	Themes	Topics	Activities Outline
			(7) Quiet reflection: Answer the third question (5 minutes) (8) Sharing and discussion (15 minutes) (9) Quiet reflection: Answer the fourth question (5 minutes) (10) Sharing and discussion (15 minutes) (11) Commitment to challenging themselves individually to leave their pains behind by forgiving one person (20 minutes)
3.		Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I can choose anything in the world, I would like to achieve _____ in life. I want people to remember me as someone who _____. If I can choose one thing to achieve this year, it would be _____. (1) Quiet Reflection: Answer question one (5 minutes) (2) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (3) Quiet reflection: Answer question two (5 minutes) (4) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (5) Quiet reflection: Answer question three (5 minutes) (6) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (7) Come up with a SMART goal using worksheet (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) (15 minutes)
4.	Renewed Commitment	Improvement & Pathways (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the past, I have tried _____ to work towards my goals and _____ happened. Imagine the current SMART goal In order to get the current goals, I can get started by doing _____. (1) Quiet reflection and backward mapping exercise: Answer question one and map out the past pathways to goals (10 minutes) (2) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (3) Quiet reflection: Illustrate in drawing or in any other artistic format what this image looks like and means to you (10 minutes) (4) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (5) Quiet reflection and forward mapping exercise: Answer question three and map out the future pathways to the current goal (10 minutes) (6) Sharing and discussion / commitment to thinking “what can I do now to work towards these goals?” (10 minutes)



Sessions	Themes	Topics	Activities Outline
5.	Barriers	Barrier Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are my barriers to achieve these goals? • Rank order the most severe ones to the least. • Which ones are possible and not possible to address. • What are some ways that I am using to block out, circumvent, or overcome these barriers?
			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Quiet reflection: Answer question one (10 minutes) (2) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (3) Provide the PEBS to see if any of them need to be added to their list (10 minutes). (4) Quiet reflection: Answer question two (10 minutes) (5) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (6) Quiet reflection: Answer question three (10 minutes) (7) Sharing and discussion: Why are some impossible? Will they remain impossible or could some of them be moved over to the area of possible (20 minutes) (8) Quiet reflection: Answer question four (10 minutes) (9) Sharing and discussion (15 minutes) (10) Commitment to moving “as many impossible items to the area of possibility” (15 minutes)
6.	Strength Assessment	I am the best at	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my opinion, I am really good at doing these things. • People tell me that I’m talented in _____. • I am most happy when I do _____.
			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Quiet reflection: Answer question one (10 minutes) (2) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (3) Quiet reflection: Answer question two (10 minutes) (4) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (5) Quiet reflection: Answer question three (10 minutes) (6) Sharing and discussion (10 minutes) (7) Strengthfinder.com testing and scoring (30 minutes) (8) Compare the test results with what individuals thought about themselves and the actual scoring (10 minutes). (9) Commitment to exploring career options including newly uncovered strengths (10 minutes)



Sessions	Themes	Topics	Activities Outline
7.	Employment Hope	Love/Self-Worth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I feel confident about myself? Am I proud to be me? Who are the people that love me? Do I feel that I am good enough for any jobs out there? Do I feel respectful toward myself? Do I appreciate myself? Do I feel that I am worthy of working in a good job?
			(1) Quiet reflection: Answer questions (2) Sharing and discussion (3) Commitment and action plan
8.		Self-Perceived Capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Am I capable of working in a good job? Do I have the strength to overcome any obstacles when it comes to working? Am I good at doing anything in the job if I set my mind to it.
			(1) Quiet reflection: Answer questions (2) Sharing and discussion (3) Commitment and action plan
9.		Future and the Possibilities Self-Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Am I going to be working in a career job? Am I able to tell myself to take steps toward reaching career goals? Am I committed to reaching my career goals? Do I feel energized when I think about future achievement with my job? Am I willing to give my best effort to reach my career goals?
10.			(1) Quiet reflection: Answer questions (2) Sharing and discussion (3) Commitment and action plan
11.	Skills and Resources Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Am I aware of what my skills are to be employed in a good job? Am I aware of what my resources are to be employed in a good job? Am I able to utilize my skills to move toward career goals? Am I able to utilize my resources to move toward career goals? 	
		(1) Quiet reflection: Answer questions (2) Sharing and discussion (3) Commitment and action plan	
12.		Improvement & Pathways (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Am I on the road toward my career goals? Am I in the process of moving forward toward reaching my goals?



Sessions	Themes	Topics	Activities Outline
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if I am not able to achieve my financial goals right away, will I find a way to get there? • Will my current path take me to where I need to be in my career? • In order to get there, I can get started by doing _____. • Revise the mapping of the plans to get there. • What will be the toughest obstacle that will keep you from taking this first step?
			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Quiet reflection: Answer questions (2) Sharing and discussion (3) Commitment and action plan
13.	Unresolved Triggers of Stress	Managing Stress & Anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I deal with problems in life? • How do I release stress? • What better ways are there for me to deal with things that are beyond my control?
			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Quiet reflection: Answer questions (2) Sharing and discussion (3) Commitment and action plan
14.	Gratitude	Finding meaning in life Count blessings Combining gratitude to meaning in life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What meaning do you give to the story of your life? • Count your blessings: What things are you grateful about in your life? • How does being grateful connect to the meaning you give to your life? • Transformation means new self, new beginning, with new hope. Discuss what new hopes do you have? If you don't, why not? • Movie Clip/Discuss: What happened? Are you grateful? If not, why not?
			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Quiet reflection: Answer questions (2) Sharing and discussion (3) Commitment and action plan
15.	Social Support and Compassion Graduation	Seeking Help & Helping Others Survey (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I get support from others to continue my path to success? • When I succeed, I could I help others to climb the ladder well like I did? • What can I bring back to the family and community that raised me to be who I am? • How can I help the younger people to look to the bright future instead of following instant gratification? • With power of transformation comes responsibility



Sessions	Themes	Topics	Activities Outline
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">Let's get to work, make hope work!
			<ol style="list-style-type: none">Quiet reflection: Answer questionsSharing and discussionCommitment and action plan



Employment Hope Scale (EHS-21)

	Strongly disagree			Neutral				Strongly agree			
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Self-worth	1. Thinking about working, I feel confident about myself.										
	3. When working or looking for a job, I am respectful towards who I am.										
	4. I am worthy of working in a good job										
Perceived capability	5. I am capable of working in a good job.										
	6. I have the strength to overcome any obstacles when it comes to working.										
	8. I am good at doing anything in the job if I set my mind to it.										
Futuristic self-motivation	9. I feel positive about how I will do in my future job situation.										
	11. I am going to be working in a career job.										
	12. I will be in a better position in my future job than where I am now.										
	13. I am able to tell myself to take steps toward reaching career goals.										
	14. I am committed to reaching my career goals.										
	15. I feel energized when I think about future achievement with my job.										
Utilization of skills and resources	16. I am willing to give my best effort to reach my career goals										
	17. I am aware of what my skills are to be employed in a good job.										
	18. I am aware of what my resources are to be employed in a good job.										
	19. I am able to utilize my skills to move toward career goals.										
Goal orientation	20. I am able to utilize my resources to move toward career goals.										
	21. I am on the road toward my career goals.										
	22. I am in the process of moving forward toward reaching my goals.										
	23. Even if I am not able to achieve my financial goals right away, I will find a way to get there.										
	24. My current path will take me to where I need to be in my career.										



Short Employment Hope Scale (EHS-14)

	Strongly disagree				Neutral				Strongly agree			
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Psychological empowerment	3. When working or looking for a job, I am respectful towards who I am.											
	4. I am worthy of working in a good job.											
	5. I am capable of working in a good job.											
	6. I have the strength to overcome any obstacles when it comes to working.											
Futuristic self-motivation	11. I am going to be working in a career job.											
	15. I feel energized when I think about future achievement with my job.											
Utilization of skills and resources	17. I am aware of what my skills are to be employed in a good job.											
	18. I am aware of what my resources are to be employed in a good job.											
	19. I am able to utilize my skills to move toward career goals.											
	20. I am able to utilize my resources to move toward career goals.											
Goal orientation	21. I am on the road toward my career goals.											
	22. I am in the process of moving forward toward reaching my goals.											
	23. Even if I am not able to achieve my financial goals right away, I will find a way to get there.											
	24. My current path will take me to where I need to be in my career.											

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Perceived Employment Barriers Scale (PEBS)

		Not a barrier		Neutral		Strong barrier
		1	2	3	4	5
Physical & mental health	10.	Drug / alcohol addiction				
	11.	Domestic violence				
	12.	Physical disabilities				
	13.	Mental illness				
Labor market exclusion	15.	Lack of work clothing				
	16.	No jobs in the community				
	17.	No jobs that match my skills / training				
Child care	6.	Child care				
	18.	Being a single parent				
	19.	Need to take care of young children				
Human capital	1.	Having less than high school education				
	2.	Work limiting health conditions (illness / injury)				
	3.	Lack of adequate job skills				
	4.	Lack of job experience				
	8.	Lack of information about jobs				
Soft skills	22.	Problems with getting to job on time				
	23.	Lack of confidence				
	24.	Lack of support system				
	25.	Lack of coping skills for daily struggles				
	26.	Anger management				

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