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Miles

Did you know one of my favorite things to do is go to the beach? I just love the sun and warm weather. A few weeks ago I took a trip to the beautiful oasis of Tampa, FL. Ironically, I didn't get to venture to the beach, but had a lovely view of the ocean. While in Tampa I attended the 29th Annual Research & Policy Conference on Child, Adolescent, and Young Adult Behavioral Health. I really enjoyed talking to all my NWIC friends and meeting new ones. I met turtles from Oregon, Wisconsin, Washington, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Texas, Kansas that all love to learn and talk about Wraparound as much as I do.

The conference taught me so much about the importance of research and collecting data to inform how and why Wraparound works. This important discovery led me to understand that we need data for Mississippi. Data can help us improve practice in our state by giving us information to ensure that we are providing high quality Wraparound to families and ensure the best possible outcomes for families. I am hoping that all of you join us in our efforts at the MWI as we move forward with collecting data and evaluating Wraparound in Mississippi.

If you have something you would like to share or ask Miles, please submit questions to
Determined by Families

The final key element is that of family determination which means the family's perspective, preferences and opinions are first, understood; second, considered in decision making; and finally, influential in how the team makes decisions. It is not as simple as choosing activities because the "family says so" but within High Fidelity Wraparound all team members are expected to have enough depth of understanding so they not only know what the family wants but why they want it and how those choices relate to unique family strengths, culture and needs.

Bob Has to Smile
Submitted by
Brentwood Behavioral Healthcare of Mississippi
MYPAC

When Bob came to Brentwood’s MYPAC program, he was no stranger to services or
programs. Although he was only eleven years of age, he and his family had for years maneuvered their way through various programs and services on a quest to find the answers as to how to help Bob with his problems so he and his family could enjoy a healthy and happy life together. Bob and his family came to MYPAC, and wraparound, having been in and out of program after program. Bob was at risk of being placed in residential, and this would not be the first residential placement. Wraparound was not a completely new concept for Bob and his family, they had some past experience with the process, yet they had not been able to accomplish the lasting change that would help them on their journey to the healthy and happy life they had long sought.

In Bob’s early years, he was abused and neglected. He experienced being homeless and living outdoors as well as living with parents who were drug addicted and ill equipped to care for children. Thus, Bob and his younger sibling were sent to live with their grandmother, and this is when their journey to find healing began.

While Bob lived with his grandmother, he was allowed to visit with his parents; he began having problems with enuresis and encopresis. Other behavioral issues complicated his life as well. For a child like Bob, who had been exposed to sexual, emotional, and physical abuse, it was understandable, and almost expected, that he would exhibit acting out behaviors. His acting out behaviors led to multiple acute care admissions. These stays would do an excellent job of stabilizing his behaviors, but upon return home, the disruptive, aggressive behaviors and the sad mood would resurface. After his last acute care admission, Bob was referred to MYPAC.

Bob was admitted to MYPAC and his family admitted him to acute care two days later. Bob had gotten angry and ruined his sibling’s room with his own body fluids. A consistent concern expressed by prior caregivers, was that “it’s all because of the grandmother.” Consensus was that if the grandmother was nicer, the child would be nicer, because he was a sweet kid. Indeed, Bob was a sweet kid. Thankfully, for those of us who are afforded the privilege of working with kids like Bob and their families, the wraparound process requires us to ‘walk in the shoes’ of our participants and their families. Because, when a committed group of people put their heads together, and make up their minds that this long-traveled journey to a healthy and happy life is going to be successful, things start changing.

But, change does not always come fast and not without challenges. The relationship between Bob and his grandmother was, at best, strained. Bob’s sibling could do no wrong. Bob could do nothing right. Attempts to build a team were met with resistance; negative statements about Bob were rampant. Despite being engaged and expressing understanding of the strengths-approach of wraparound, even team members felt at ease pointing out Bob’s past and present behavioral issues, yelling at him, and calling Bob a liar.

It may not seem that big in the grand scheme of things, but Bob’s wraparound facilitator and his therapist noted that they never saw Bob smile. Everyone agreed; this had to change.
Bob had to smile! So, our job was to dig deep in order to walk in, not only Bob’s shoes but those of his grandmother. We had to unearth their hurts, fears, regrets, and even failures to reveal their strengths and passions. Then, we had to bring these strengths and passions to the surface and begin our work. Maybe his grandmother knew that almost everyone blamed her and maybe this is what kept down, because once the grandmother and the other team members discovered that the only finger-pointing in the wraparound process would be the pointing out of positives and successes, change began to take place.

The team worked together to build a plan that provided opportunities for Bob and his family to enjoy one another. They chose strategies that allowed them to use and maximize their strengths while having fun together. Admittedly, this family was not the best at finishing strategies as they planned and all their team members did not always come to the meetings. But, they knew that they had support from people who came together to be there to achieve their vision. And, this family had a clear vision.

A Strengths-Based Process, this is just one thing that makes wraparound unique and successful. It seems simple; you spend all the time it takes to get to know the family. You take an “as-if walk in their shoes.” As you take this walk, you consider what they may be thinking and what they are likely to be feeling. Then, you seek to unearth the family’s core needs and help them put these needs into words. You help them to articulate how their Vision, for their family, will look once these needs are met. You pull together and engage a group of identified supports, who will commit to working with and caring about this family, and develop a team. You identify strengths, you hear what the family wants to happen (and to do) and you all get to work.

In actuality, this may be a more complicated than it appears. This process is often quite different from what families like Bob’s have experienced through years of searching for someone to offer up an effective “cure.” Sometimes, it is hard for families to grasp the notion that in wraparound, they will have access to those involved in any decisions related to their family, they will have a voice in making those decisions, and that they will guide the development and progress of their unique plan. But, this is what MYPAC is all about. For once you have a commitment from all involved, and a clear vision determined, simple or complicated, this process can have lasting effects.

So, Bob’s family had a clear vision of how they dreamed their life to be. They wanted to “feel like we are walking on cloud nine.” In the beginning, we saw a grandmother who no
matter how hard she tried, she could not say something positive about her child. In the end, she became a grandmother who could voice enough positives to fill a book. In the beginning, we saw a preteen who wet his pants and his bed and got picked on mercilessly at school because of it. In the end, we saw a young man gain control over his body and have a sense of pride in his accomplishments. We saw a child who could not be trusted to visit friends or have visitors become trustworthy and we saw a grandmother learn to trust. The list goes on and on, and at the end of it all, we all saw Bob’s family, and Bob, smile. Now, that’s feeling like walking on cloud nine! Vision realized!

"Let's Take Care of Our Babies... Let's Just Love the Heck Out of Them"

Below is a link to a great talk about Wraparound by a pioneer in the field, Dr. John VanDenBerg. He managed the first statewide demonstration of the Wraparound process (Alaska), wrote the first professional article on the process, and did the first systematic training on Wraparound, in 1986. John managed the first demonstration of cross-agency statewide Wraparound process, the Alaska Youth Initiative. He has been a tireless champion in the development and improvement of the Wraparound process, which now reaches over a half million families worldwide.

What he says here really reinforces why it is so important that we never give up on the families we are partnering with, be willing to try truly new things, and that we deeply listen to what they want for themselves. Families deserve our best efforts, and often that means that we have to change the way we do things!

To watch clip, click Children Must Live with Families or on the picture below.
Wraparound Training

Introduction to Wraparound is the first training offered to front-line Wraparound practitioners, supervisors, and directors as well as community partners who may participate in a child and family team process. In order to...

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For more information or to sign up for Wraparound trainings,

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Technical Assistance
Available technical assistance includes but is not limited to: consultation with leadership/directors of organizations, discussion of strategies for implementation, on-site coaching of supervisors and facilitators, support in preparing for Child & Family Team Meetings, observation of Child & Family Team Meetings with customized feedback, and individualized planning for identified learning needs. Please contact us if you have questions or other specialized requests. We look forward to partnering with you!

Submit Request

Newsletter Submission
We invite you to share your Wraparound highlights. If you would like to submit a story, picture, or information of interest for inclusion in the July newsletter, please let us know what you are up to. We would like to hear from you!

Send Information

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