

EMPOWERMENT CHECKLIST

Coming to Power

* For people with psychiatric labels/ addictions, or other people who've been oppressed.

*This list is to acknowledge and encourage the many ways we come into our power.
Accomplishing any item on the list is a cause for celebration.
(If you've got more than 10 going on, you've got the power!)*

1. See and celebrate yourself as an individual.
Let go of stereotypes, diagnoses, labels, and negative expectations.
2. Find your voice, your point of view. Define your situation.
3. Get information that you need.
4. Find and consider your options (including their different costs and benefits).
5. Make decisions, choices. Carry out actions.
6. Discover your rights. Claim ownership of your life, your body, and your mind.
7. Value your feelings and the expression of them. Accept your anger and sadness and joy, (consider using them creatively).
8. Know that you are not alone, that there are other people with similar experiences.
9. Recognize that the oppression you experience is because you belong to a class of people that some people treat with prejudice and discrimination. Know that you have the right to participate in society.
10. Have a meeting of only people who share this experience of oppression, in order to talk freely.
11. Get together with people to accomplish something.
12. Value your community's uniqueness, and diversity.
13. Recognize that abuse, oppression, prejudice and poverty are social failings. If you have been subject to them, it is not because you are personally flawed. Know they are determinants of health. Oppose them.
14. Be assertive about what you want, stand up for yourself.
15. Represent yourself, or your group in decision-making settings.
16. Notice your talents and skills. Choose to use them, (perhaps add to them).
17. Make changes in your surroundings.
18. Lobby to get a fair share of resources.
19. Put pressure on institutions or other collections of people, to bring them around.
20. Notice your abilities.
21. Redefine yourself, your potential, and your limitless capacity for growth.

The use of the word "empowerment" can obscure the real issue, which is power. And the truth is, for the powerless to have more power, the powerful must have less. To be empowered, people require respect, resources, and control. The definition of liberation must come from the group itself.

With thanks for some points to: Judi Chamberlin, "A Working Definition of Empowerment" *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, (1997) Vol. 20 No. 4 p.p. 43- 46; and Margot Breton, "On the Meaning of Empowerment and Empowerment-Oriented Social Work Practice", *Social Work with Groups*, (1994) 17:3, p.p. 23-37

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EMPOWERMENT CHECKLIST

BEING AN ALLY: GIVING UP POWER, AND ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO TAKE IT UP

For people who want to be allies to oppressed people,
particularly to those with psychiatric labels and/or addictions.

"Power does not exist in a vacuum, but in relations between individuals, or groups, institutions..." (Breton, p.24)

Professionals have to recognize and accept that they don't know best" (ibid, p. 28)

1. See and celebrate a person as an individual.
Let go of stereotypes, diagnoses, labels, and negative expectations.
2. Listen to her/his point of view, and definition of the situation.
3. Facilitate access to information.
4. Offer real options. Listen to the consideration of costs and benefits.
5. Support the person's making of decisions, and carrying out actions.
6. Uphold people's rights. Encourage her/him to reclaim their life, body, and mind.
7. Value feelings and the expression of them. Accept yours and others anger and sadness and joy, (consider using them creatively).
8. If need be, remind him/her that he/she is not alone, that there are other people with similar experiences.
9. Recognize that oppression happens because some people treat others with prejudice and discrimination. Uphold everyone's right to participate fully in society.
10. Support people who share this experience of oppression to meet on their own, to talk freely.
11. As an ally, support people getting together to accomplish something.
12. Value each community's uniqueness, and diversity.
13. Recognize that abuse, oppression, prejudice and poverty are social failings, not flaws in an individual. Know that these are determinants of health. Oppose them.
14. Encourage assertiveness, people standing up for themselves.
15. Facilitate participation of the oppressed in decision-making settings. Create opportunities for a person to represent her/himself, or the group.
16. Notice people's talents and skills, and say so. Ask if they would use them. (If asked, assist person in adding to them).
17. Make room for people to change their surroundings.
18. Offer a fair share of resources.
19. Join the oppressed in putting pressure on institutions or other collections of people, to bring them around.
20. Have faith in, and recognize, people's ability and competence.
21. Redefine everyone's potential, and limitless capacity for growth.

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