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when people gather with good intent

The Therapeutic Community as an Evidence Based Practice

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advocacy & public policy
holistic curriculum
research & evaluation
resource & community development
restorative justice
reconciliation^{renewal}
remembrance
resilience
resolution^{mindfulness}
teaching communities



References

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- International Journal of Therapeutic Communities
31, 2 Summer 2010
 - This entire issue is devoted to the issue of the Therapeutic Community (TC) as an Evidence Based Practice (EBP).
- National Institute on Drug Abuse Research Report on Therapeutic Communities
 - <http://www.nida.nih.gov/researchreports/therapeutic/default.html>





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- How when did the Therapeutic Community Begin?
- ❖ In Europe, after WWII, in England.
- ❖ Maxwell Jones “democratized” hospitals dealing with “shell shock” victims.
- ❖ The aim of therapeutic communities was a more democratic, user-led form of therapeutic environment, avoiding the authoritarian and demeaning practices of many psychiatric establishments of the time. The central philosophy is that clients are active participants in their own and each other's mental health treatment and that responsibility for the daily running of the community is shared among the clients and the staff. 'TC's have sometimes eschewed or limited medication in favor of group-based therapies



Some History

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- In the United States in 1958, an avid Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) member, Charles Dederich began an organization called Synanon.
- While it evolved out of AA, it began to attract heroin addicts. And, since heroin addiction was considered incurable, the success achieved by Synanon quickly drew national, then international attention.
- By 1968, the Ford Foundation traced 2,600 programs in the US which evolved from Synanon



Synanon

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**The Tunnel Back:
Synanon**
by Lewis Yablonsky



More History

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- In 1976, Therapeutic Communities of America (now known as Treatment Communities of America) was organized—and continues today as the national organization of TCs
- In the same year, WFTC (the World Federation of Therapeutic Communities) held the first of 24 successive conferences. National and regional associations of therapeutic communities from around the world (every continent except Antarctica) belong to WFTC.



History



QuickTime™ and a
DV/DVCPRO - NTSC decompressor
are needed to see this picture.



What is a TC?

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- The therapeutic community (TC) for the treatment of drug abuse and addiction has existed for over 50 years in the US.
- In general, TCs are drug-free residential settings that use a hierarchical model with treatment stages that reflect increased levels of personal and social responsibility.
- Peer influence, mediated through a variety of group processes, is used to help individuals learn and assimilate social norms and develop more effective social skills.



What's Different about TCs?

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- TCs differ from other treatment approaches principally in their use of the community, comprising treatment staff and those in recovery, as key agents of change.
- This approach is often referred to as "community as method." TC members interact in structured and unstructured ways to influence attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors associated with drug use.



Self Help & Mutual Self-Help

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- In addition to the importance of the community as a primary agent of change, a second fundamental TC principle is "self-help."
- Self-help implies that the individuals in treatment are the main contributors to the change process.
- "Mutual self-help" means that individuals also assume partial responsibility for the recovery of their peers -- an important aspect of an individual's own treatment.
- "You can do it, but you can't do it ALONE!"



Habilitation vs. Rehabilitation

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Some people admitted to TCs have a history of social functioning, education/vocational skills, and positive community and family ties that have been eroded by their substance abuse. For them, recovery involves **rehabilitation** -- relearning or re-establishing healthy functioning, skills, and values as well as regaining physical and emotional health.

But of all the treatment modalities dealing with substance abusers, TCs take the most disturbed clients. Most TC residents have never acquired functional life-styles. For these people, the TC is usually their first exposure to orderly living. Recovery for them involves **habilitation** -- learning for the first time the behavioral skills, attitudes, and values associated with socialized living



DeLeon's Essential Elements

12

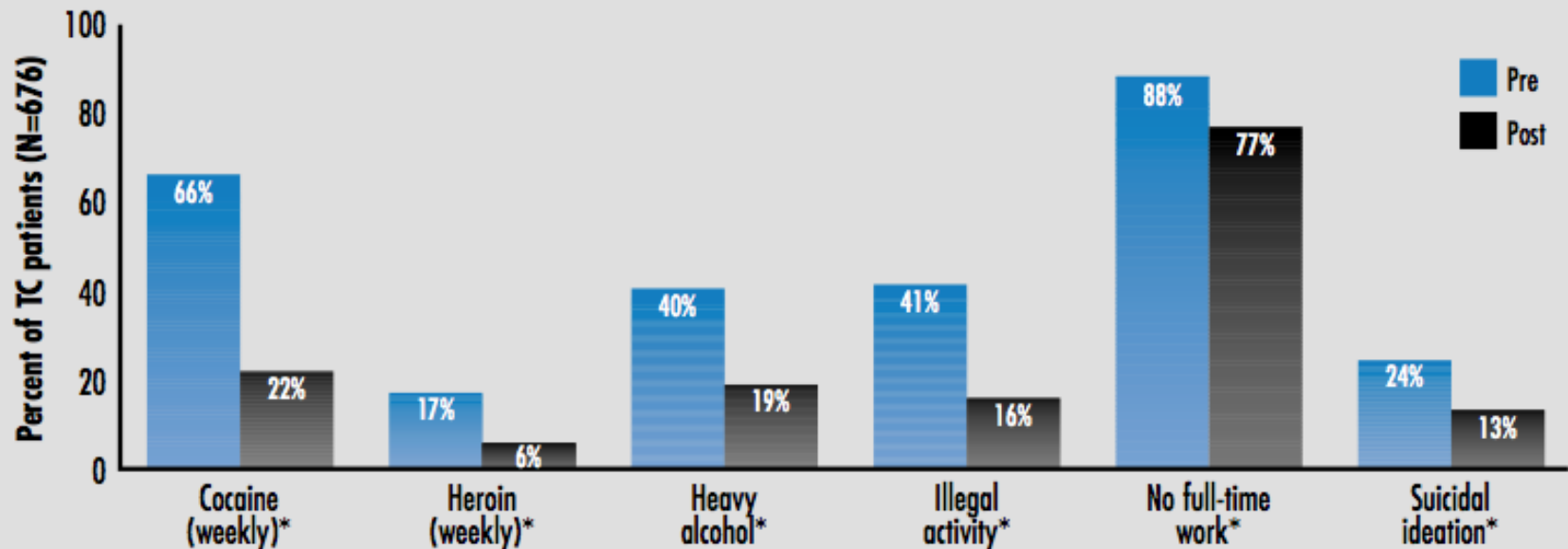
- Participant Roles
- Membership Feedback
- Collective formats to catalyze individual change
- Shared Norms & Values
- Structure & Systems
- Open Communication
- Relationships



Outcome Data

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Pre- and posttreatment self-reported changes among those in long-term residential TCs



* $p < .01$ for changes pre- and posttreatment.

Pretreatment measures are for the 12 months before admission. Posttreatment measures are for the 12 months after treatment.

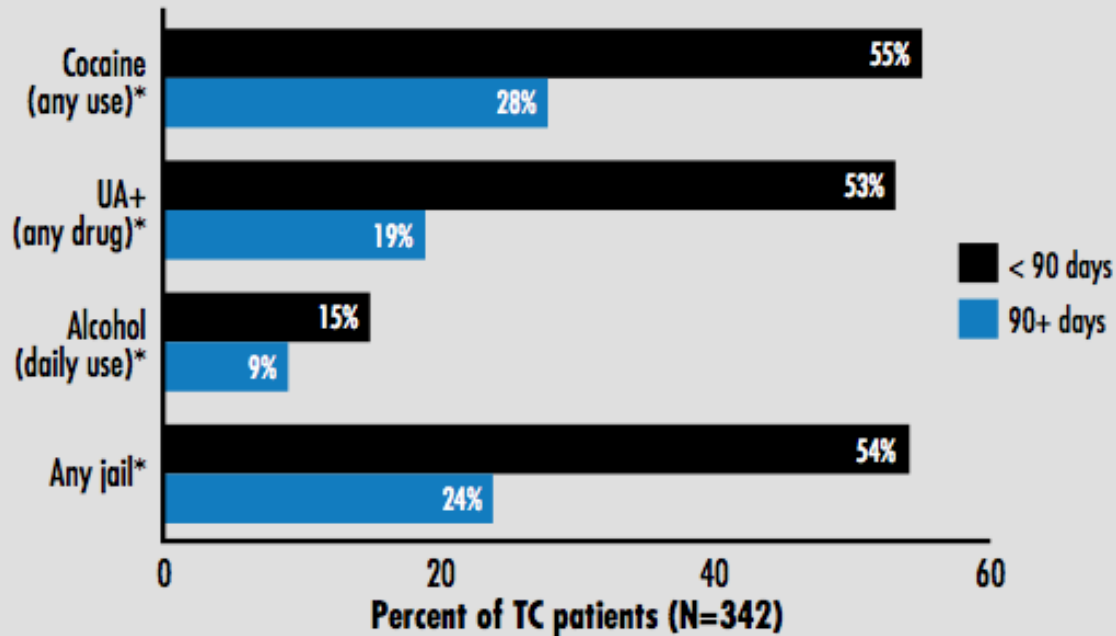
Source: Hubbard et al., *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 11:261-278, 1997.



Length of Stay & Outcomes

14

1-year outcomes for shorter and longer stays in TC treatment



* $p < .01$ for all four measures.

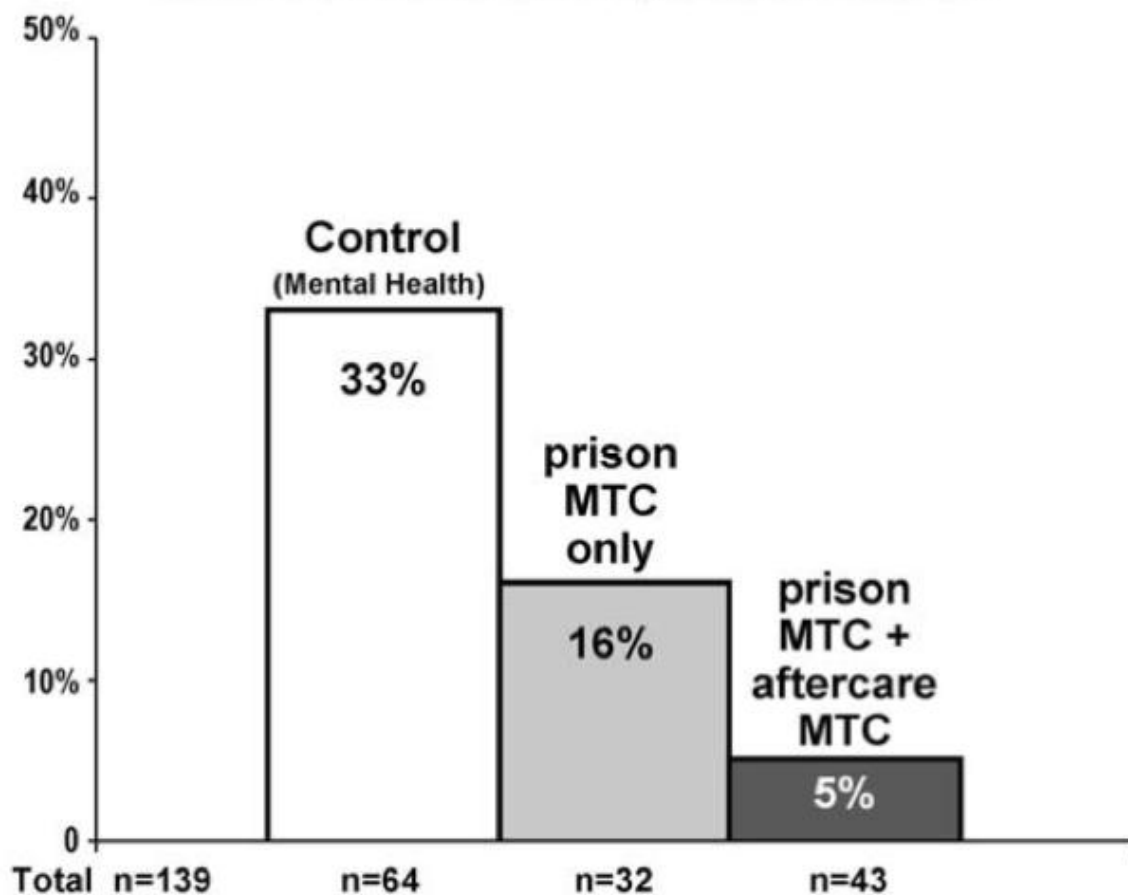
Cocaine use, alcohol use, and being jailed are self-report measures for the 12 months after treatment. UA+ indicates a positive urinalysis test at the followup interview.

Source: Simpson et al., *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 11:264-307, 1997.



TCs & Dual Diagnosis

Figure 2: Offenders with co-occurring disorders
Reincarceration outcomes 12 months post release



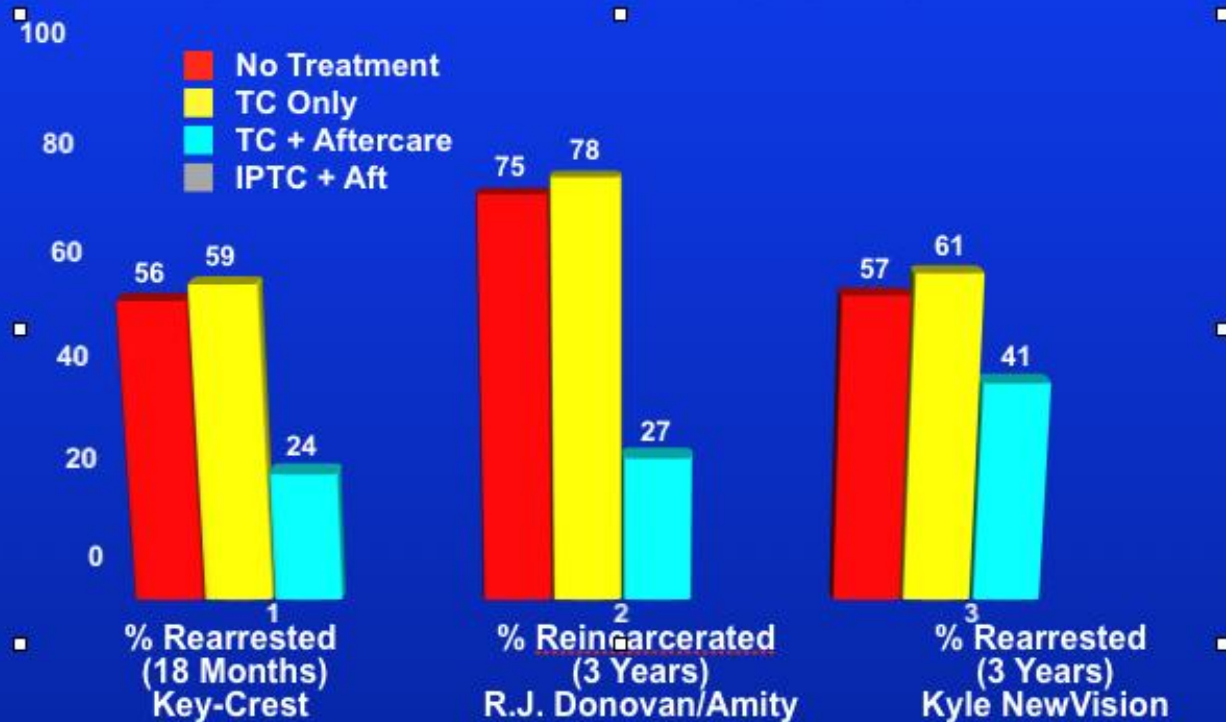
adapted from Sacks, S., Sacks, J., et al. (2004)



Prison TCs

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Recent Evaluations of In-Prison Therapeutic Community (TC) Treatment





Conclusion

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- The overwhelming conclusion looking at research and outcome studies over many years in many countries is that TCs are very effective--particularly with the most challenging populations.



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Related Resources

Encounter Groups for Addictions -- 3 DVD Set
by Rod Mullen



TCs in Prisons: A Research Perspective
by Harry Wexler



3 DVD Set | 02:57:00

The Therapeutic Community -- 3 DVD Set

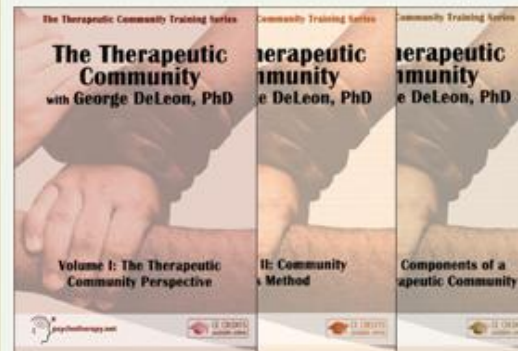
by George De Leon

George De Leon, the leading authority today on Therapeutic Communities, provides an in-depth look at the history and core principles on TCs.

Video

Print

Earn CE Credit



Since the 1950s therapeutic communities (TCs) have effectively treated people with the most severe cases of substance abuse. The focus on an all encompassing community and peer support model is still thriving in TCs today. George DeLeon, author of the classic text, *The Therapeutic Community*, blends his expert lectures with historical and contemporary footage from active TCs in this comprehensive series on the framework, methods and components of an ideal TC.

Volume I: The Therapeutic Community Perspective

De Leon lays out the framework and theory underlying a therapeutic community, including the TC approach to substance abuse treatment and recovery. He explains that the TC is different from other treatment models in that it views substance abuse as a disorder of the whole person, and aims to treat that whole person, not just the drug addiction. Thus, TCs create social living situations where all aspects of a person's personality is displayed in work, formal groups and social activities, and then addressed directly by the community.

Volume II: Community as Method

De Leon explains how a therapeutic community uses its social environment

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