**M5-A. Module 5: Relationships Summary**

Members typically have a history of poor relationships with family, peers, members of the opposite sex, romantic partners, and people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Members typically have not had positive role models to teach and guide them toward pro-social behaviour. The TC provides a supportive family-like atmosphere in which members can learn to develop healthy relationships and be guided by positive peer and staff role models.

Staff members are expected to help members learn and experience healthy relationships by:

* Encouraging mutual self-help
* Encouraging conversations between and among members that focus on the changes they are  experiencing
* Encouraging members to seek advice from and give advice to one another
* Encouraging members to share knowledge about topics they know more about than their  peers and to assist others (possibly through seminars)
* Organizing structured tutoring and asking members to help others on a one-on-one basis or in  small groups in language, mathematics, reading, and writing
* Assigning senior members the task of “pulling in” and orienting new members
* Promoting family-like relationships and healthy peer friendships
* Teaching and encouraging responsible concern and caring as well as compassionate and  mutually supportive relationships
* Observing members as they re-create the roles they played in their families and providing  opportunities for members to increase their self-awareness of the behaviours and attitudes  associated with those roles
* Encouraging members to be role models and leaders.

**Diversity**

Living in a TC with people of all backgrounds promotes recovery and right living. Living in a TC requires that all members eat, work, and learn together, which makes perceived differences seem insignificant and leads to focusing on common issues.

Living together in a TC provides opportunities for conflict in a safe setting. The TC promotes conflict resolution as an opportunity for self-learning. Through public disclosures of personal pains and challenges, members recognize common problems and feelings. This recognition fosters acceptance of individuals despite their differences.

TC staff members are expected to:

* Focus on similarities among members, such as common perceptions, feelings, and issues related to substance use disorders and efforts at recovery, shifting the focus from differences such as age, gender, and race
* Provide opportunities for equal mobility for members of all backgrounds (which may contrast with their experience in mainstream society)
* Discourage negative peer groups
* Serve as role models and examples of people who are working on self- awareness of prejudice  and stereotypes.

**Gender Issues**

Whilst prison TCs are almost never mixed gender, prison TCs for women, have been shown to be highly successful. Society often judges women with substance use disorders more harshly than it judges men. Issues that are common to women living in a TC include:

* women in a TC may have more complicated issues related to their self-image
* stronger feelings of shame and guilt about using drugs and alcohol
* women who were abused by men verbally, physically, or sexually, either as children or adults, may not feel physically or psychologically safe around men
* when compared with men who use drugs or alcohol, women with substance use disorders typically have lower self-esteem, more anxiety and depression and fewer marketable job skills

Issues that are common to men living in a TC include:

* Lack of positive male role models to prepare them for fatherhood or healthy relationships with peers and women
* A tendency to conceal insecurities, ignorance, and fears about sexuality
* More reluctance than among women to admit or talk about sexual abuse
* Rigid machismo and aggressive behaviour
* Difficulty with emotional expression and exposing personal vulnerabilities.

**Role Models**

Role models are at the heart of the TC change process; what members see in their peers they perceive as possible within themselves. Having members as role models guarantees that 24-hour social learning takes place. Through consistent role modelling senior members teach new members to show respect for authority and to accept constructive criticism, feedback, and guidance. As role models, members experience personal growth and increased status in the peer community. All members of the community, both staff members and TC members, serve as role models to maintain the integrity of the TC programme and to encourage social learning.

A role model behaves according to TC expectations of recovery and right living and sets a positive example for members to follow. Positive peer role models are expected to:

* Show others how to change by example
* Talk about benefits gained from right living and the positive influences of the TC
* Provide feedback to others
* Demonstrate the concepts of “act as if,” “responsible concern”

TC staff members are expected to:

* Be sensitive to gender-related issues
* Not discriminate or show favouritism
* Offer special group sessions where needed
* Serve as role models and examples of people who are working on self-awareness and  sensitivity to gender-related issues
* Participate in in-service training