

# The Eye Witness Program at a Brief Counseling Center

In my psychotherapy practice, I've found that some clients return home and say to a loved one, "Dr. Smith says \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)."

The loved one might be defensive or not believe the client. The real issue is not what I said, how it was communicated, nor the response of the loved one, but that the client wanted to express an idea to a loved one. To avoid confusion or resentment which might distract from the idea the client wants to convey, I developed a process called "The Eye Witness Program."

The Eye Witness Program allows:

- concerned loved ones of clients to ask me questions
- everyone to gain insights to help therapy
- support networks to augment Treatment

The Eye Witness Program works by the client inviting a loved one to a session, then the client observes silently, takes notes and is prepared the next session to talk with me about the loved one's perceptions. The Eye Witness is treated as a guest, not as a client.

During the Eye Witness session, the loved one teaches me more about my client. Clients can bring tape recorders. As a counselor, the loved one can help me understand how the client is viewed, the nature of their relationship and how they envision their future. The atmosphere is informal, social, informative and enjoyable.

My clients can use the following invitation to fill out and give to a loved one to become a partner in providing care for the client:



Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dear \_\_\_\_\_

You have this invitation because

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of client) would like you to come to one of our sessions. I would like to hear from you any insights and first-hand observations you may have.

I will be consulting with you as an eye witness on my client since you have seen things I have not.

Your collection of photos, writings, report cards, scrapbook or memorabilia might help us.

Stores about events that shaped my client would also help. What you share with me will be kept confidential, but my client will be in the session. I will answer your questions providing they do not require me breaking the rights of confidentiality of my client.

I look forward to your visit!

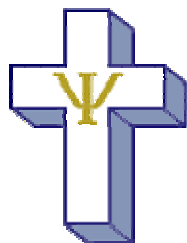
Sincerely,

Ray Wm. Smith, Ed.D., D.Min.

## After an Eye Witness Session

The client and the eye witness can discuss feelings and issues that came up. Plans can be made for changes. All communication between the eye witness and the therapist is done in the presence of the client to avoid any misunderstandings.

Feel free to copy the invitation, share it with your loved ones and let them share it with their therapists.



## Benefits of the Eye Witness Program

- loved ones learn more in an environment of structured support
- loved ones meet the client's therapist and discuss issues that may have been unclear or anxious
- eye witnesses can give the therapist information the client may not have known
- the counselor gets to meet the client's important ally in growth
- eye witnesses give similarities and differences in perspectives with clients
- eye witnesses learn of treatment goals and progress, about a client's medication or homework

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