

HANDOUTS

STAGES OF READINESS FOR CHANGE

Precontemplation

- Client does not know that problem exists—sees no connection between problem and their behavior
- Others recognize the problem
- Not interested in participating in or establishing alliance with helping professional
- Usually mandated to treatment
- Attribute problem to bad luck

Recommendations:

- Do not side with referral source—will alienate client
- “Light touch”—be courteous and listen to client’s point of view
- Goal is not to force change
- Goal is to create climate where clients can consider, explore and appreciate pros and cons of change

Contemplation

- Recognize that change is needed BUT unsure whether change is worth the cost in time, effort and energy
- May even understand go and necessary actions to accomplish
- Characterized by “Yes, BUT”

Recommendations:

- Do not attempt to jump-start change by using rational arguments, guilt or blame
- Offer supportive environment where client can consider change without feeling pressure
- Encourage thinking, observation
- Encourage clients to “go slow”

Preparation

- Focus is identifying criteria and strategies for success
- Clients experiment with change
- Encourage/praise significance of early problem-solving efforts
- Easier to form an alliance with these clients (they are definite customers)

Recommendations:

- Help client solidify goals and choose treatment options/change strategies
- Client choice in strategy for change is essential

Action

- Client has firm commitment and plan for the future

- **Key to success in this stage is addressing earlier stages of readiness for change (helping clients who present in precontemplation and contemplation stages)**

Maintenance

- **Stress what clients need to do to solidify or consolidate gains**

Recommendations:

- **Help clients anticipate challenges that might provoke regression or relapse**
- **Develop prevention plans to address these risks or challenges**
- **Design retention plans for inevitable lapses so do not return to full problem behavior (“rock bottom”)**
- **Draw from client’s unique and personal approaches (previous successes)**

Termination

- **No temptation to engage in problem behavior and full confidence will never engage in behavior regardless of situation**
- **May be ideal (not realistic) stage of change—most clients stay in maintenance stage**
- **Continue to be mindful of possible threats to desired change, monitor to keep change in place**

MOTIVATORS FOR CHANGE

Present Discomfort is the person's sense of discomfort with the present situation, i.e., what the person describes as "the problem" or senses may be the problem

- ➔ Present discomfort can reflect an internal state, i.e., something the person perceives as a concern, or it can be a response to an external stimulus, as when the problem is defined by others.
 - Internal client discomfort: "I feel anxious and upset about the twins' crying, and I yell at them all the time."
 - External client discomfort: "The caseworker keeps talking about the need to identify an alternative place for Spence to live if I don't make some changes soon."

- **Questions to Assess Present Discomfort:**
 - ➔ How do you feel about the current situation? Do you think the present situation is "okay" for you and for those who rely on you?
 - ➔ What might happen if things remain unchanged? Would this be okay?

- **Ways to build present discomfort:**
 - In a nonjudgmental but persistent manner, explore their clients' understanding of the situation by asking them to describe how their standards are the same or different from those of the larger society, their family-of-origin, their culture, etc.
 - Use reflections and other interpersonal helping skills to deepen clients' awareness of their personal and family goals.
 - Use the skills of concreteness and summarization to highlight the dissonance between clients' behavior and what they see as the needs of their children.
 - Connect clients to information about the possible consequences of their actions or inactions when clients discount the seriousness of their behavior or situation.
 - Enlist the support of other resources to reinforce clients' understanding of problems (particularly if the worker is not perceived as a credible source of information). Example: few clergy would endorse beating a toddler despite people's interpretation of the Bible's admonition not to "spare the rod."

- Where needed, employ their protective authority to raise their clients' awareness of the choices they have and the consequences of those choices to the level at which it promotes change readiness.

***Emotional Security** is a state in which an individual believes that personal physical safety, attachments, identity, trust in others, and autonomy are not threatened while the individual is engaged in the change process.*

- Example: A parent trusts her child's foster mother enough to confide her concerns about her difficulty controlling her temper, and implements the foster mother's suggestions.
- **Questions to Assess Emotional Security:**
 - What makes you uncomfortable, sad, or scared when you think about changing things?
 - What needs would you have to meet in a different way if you changed how you currently act?
- **Ways to build emotional security:**
 - discover and attend to their clients' sense of safety, particularly in domestic risk and sexual abuse situations.
 - use facilitative genuineness and empathy to convey to clients that workers are human, caring, concerned individuals.
 - attend to the stages of the relationship, especially building trust and engagement.
 - use reflection to demonstrate understanding of clients' feelings and needs.
 - reach for mutuality in decision making.
 - let clients know that they appreciate clients' unique strengths and resources.
 - elicit feedback that communicates their willingness to respond to clients' fears or other concerns.
 - be honest with clients and protect their confidentiality.
 - acknowledge to clients ways in which insecurity in their situation is normal.

***Internalization of Responsibility** is the extent to which an individual accepts personal responsibility for his or her actions and needs.*

- Example: A parent accepts that her substance-abuse problem is interfering with her ability to provide adequate supervision for her children.
- **Questions to Assess Internalization of Responsibility:**
 - Who do you believe has responsibility for this situation?
 - In what ways are you responsible for this situation?

- What (choose any of the following underlying conditions or contributing factors pertinent to the person) shapes your understanding of who has responsibility for changing things?
- **Ways to build internalization of responsibility:**
 - strive to empower their clients to feel that they have control of their lives, their choices, and their destiny.
 - create a sense of emotional security.
 - reinforce clients' perceptions of themselves as competent, worthwhile, and capable of taking charge of their lives.
 - take care not to blame clients or use "blaming" language.
 - separate the person from the problem behavior.
 - connect clients to information illustrating how they have made autonomous choices that affected their own lives.
 - use circular questioning about how they see others, in order to build their awareness that everyone is, ultimately, responsible for his or her own actions and behaviors.
 - strengthen clients' connections to significant others so they understand the importance of their choices in the lives of others.
 - use exception-finding questions to point out times when clients exercised control (internalized responsibility) and thus gained more positive outcomes for themselves.

Efficacy is the confidence or belief in one's power or ability to produce desired results.

- Example: A parent believes that he can establish a visitation routine with a child in foster care and that this will assist in the family's achieving timely reunification.
- **Questions to assess efficacy:**
 - What have you tried to do about this concern in the past?
 - How successful have you been in making changes in other areas of your life?
 - Do you feel that you can be helped by others or could use outside resources to resolve this problem?
- **Ways to build efficacy:**
 - develop a professional helping relationship with emphasis on joining and engaging.
 - absolutely follow through with meaningful help.

- articulate confidence in the service plan and in their clients' abilities to achieve the goals laid out in it.
- fully involve the client in developing the assessment and the service plan, projecting confidence in their ability to care for their family and plan for their future.
- build the plan on the family's strengths.
- use solution- and strengths-based questions to help clients discover their capabilities to solve problems and make changes.
- project a positive attitude about themselves and toward their client families.
- ensure that community-based resources follow through with effective, appropriate services.

***Preferred Alternative Future** is the vision of something different – a goal or changed state of relationships, conditions, and behavior patterns – for which the individual can strive.*

- ➔ Example: A parent can describe how she will care for her son when he is returned to her home from foster care.
- ➔ **Questions to assess preferred alternative future:**
 - ➔ What's your picture of an ideal solution to this situation?
 - ➔ What needs of yours' could be met if things were different?
 - ➔ How might (choose one or more of the contributing factors and/any of the underlying conditions pertinent to the person) have to be changed in order to have a better?
- ➔ **Ways to build preferred alternative future:**
 - ➔ use the "miracle" question to help clients describe how life would be if all their problems were solved.
 - ➔ use questions and reflections to raise clients' level of awareness of their hopes and dreams.
 - ➔ link clients to the information and skills they need in order to reach for lasting change (e.g., ensuring a teenage mom has at least the minimum knowledge about child development to provide for her child's safety and development).
 - ➔ reinforce clients' capacity for action by specifically affirming the things they have done or are doing that show responsibility and capability.
 - ➔ project hope and optimism.
 - ➔ discuss the possible positive consequences of new behavior or different choices.

- work with clients to help them set their own goals in the service plan, using the clients' own words as much as possible.

SUNY Research Foundation/CDHS (2000). ASC Supervisory Core Curriculum

Readiness for Change Worksheet

Please answer the following:

1. Is there a need for change? If so what needs to change?
2. What is the Smith family's sense of present discomfort? What is its source?
3. What questions would you advise the caseworker to ask the Smith family to learn more about her emotional security?
4. What questions would you advise the caseworker to ask the Smith family to learn more about her internalization of responsibility?
5. What questions would you advise the caseworker to ask the Smith family to learn more about her sense of efficacy?
6. What questions would you advise the caseworker to ask the Smith family to learn more about her preferred alternative future?
7. Which element(s) of change is (are) contributing to the dynamic experienced as resistance?