

Enhanced Communication Strategies

Supporting Clients with Mental Illness and Addictions



Successful Tenant Evaluations

- ❖ Instill hope
- ❖ Provide opportunities and options
- ❖ Support the client in evaluating outcomes
- ❖ Support self-efficacy building
- ❖ Support right to self-determination
- ❖ Measures of least intrusive to most intrusive
- ❖ Collaborate and communicate
- ❖ Relationship building and rapport
- ❖ Resourcing and networking
- ❖ Working with a client “where they are at”



Unconditional Positive Regard

- ❖ Unconditional positive regard is not about liking someone or approving of their behaviour.
- ❖ What it means is that you respect the person as a human being that is ultimately doing their best to survive.
- ❖ Means valuing the person as doing their best to move forward in their lives constructively and respecting the person's right to self-determination.
- ❖ It is not about approval or disapproval but genuine acceptance of an individual... as an individual.



Being “With” Your Client

❖ Identify the following:

- ❖ Speech patterns
- ❖ Language
- ❖ Level of Eye Contact
- ❖ Posture

❖ Fall into alignment with the client

- ❖ Speak ***WITH*** your client
- ❖ Listen to your client and try to understand what he/she is communicating.



Listening

- ❖ Most important skill but most challenging as well
- ❖ Being psychologically present
- ❖ Most therapeutic approach is when we say less and listen more
- ❖ Must be active listening
- ❖ Listening to the verbal and non-verbal communication
- ❖ Utilizing silence as a communication device



Roadblocks to Listening

- ❖ Ordering, directing, or commanding
- ❖ Warning, cautioning, or threatening
- ❖ Giving advice, making suggestions, or providing solutions
- ❖ Persuading with logic, arguing, or lecturing
- ❖ Telling people what they should do; moralizing
- ❖ Disagreeing, judging, criticizing, or blaming
- ❖ Agreeing, approving, or praising
- ❖ Shaming, ridiculing, or labeling
- ❖ Interpreting or analyzing
- ❖ Reassuring, sympathizing, or consoling
- ❖ Questioning or probing
- ❖ Withdrawing, distancing, humoring, or changing the subject





Helpful
Tips



Exploring the Decisional Balance

- ❖ It can be helpful to have people discuss both the positive and negative aspects of their present behavior.
- ❖ Advantage: getting people talking and feeling comfortable and also clarifying both sides of their ambivalence



Querying Extremes

- ❖ When there seems to be little desire for change at present, ask people to describe the extremes of their (or others') concerns, to imagine the extreme of consequences that might ensue.
 - ❖ “Suppose you continue on as you have been, without changing. What do you imagine of the worst things that might happen to you?”
- ❖ Can be useful to imagine the best consequences that might follow from pursuing a change:
 - ❖ “What might be the best results you could imagine if you make a change?”
 - ❖ “If you were completely successful in making the changes you want, how would things be different?”



Looking Back

- ❖ It can be useful to elicit change talk to have the client remember times before the problems emerged and compared these times with the present situation:
 - ❖ “Do you remember time when things were going well for you? What has changed?”
 - ❖ “What were things like before you _____? What were you like back then?”
 - ❖ “How has your pain changed you as a person, or stopped you from growing, from moving forward?”
 - ❖ “What are the differences between the you of 10 years ago and the you of today?”



Looking Forward

- ❖ Helping people envision a changed future is another approach for eliciting change talk:
 - ❖ “If you decide to make a change, would you hope might be different in the future?”
 - ❖ “How would you like things to turn out for you 10 years from now?”
 - ❖ “I can see you’re feeling really frustrated right now. How would you like things to be different?”
- ❖ Also, it can be helpful to have the client look ahead and anticipate if no changes are made:
 - ❖ “Given what happened so far, what you expect might be happening five years from now you don’t make any changes?”



Exploring Goals and Values

- ❖ Ask the client to tell you what things are most important in his or her life.
- ❖ Priorities may be quite different from the counselors – work with clients where they're at.
- ❖ Exploration provides reference points against which to compare the status quo.
- ❖ Discover ways in which current behavior is inconsistent with or undermines important values and goals.





Closed Questions

- ❖ These are questions that limit the other person's options and often only give the option of a 'yes' or 'no' response.
- ❖ Useful when gathering information, however they have limited value and do not encourage dialogue.
- ❖ Reduce the opportunity to engage with the client.
- ❖ Overuse of closed questions can also set up a pattern of 'questions and answers', which can be hard to break.



Leading Questions

- ❖ These questions involve imposing your own perspective or being suggestive.
- ❖ For example “You’re not happy with your husband?” rather than, “How do you feel towards your husband?”.
- ❖ Often start with, “Don’t you think...?”



Multiple Questions

- ❖ These involve asking two or more questions at once.
- ❖ Can be confusing and unhelpful for the client.
- ❖ When the client answers, we may not know which question the client has answered.



Either/or Questions

- ❖ These questions are both leading and restrictive because the options put forward are ones that have been chosen and...
- ❖ As with multiple questions, they involve two questions.
- ❖ For example ‘What do you want to do, go for a walk or attend the anxiety management group?’



The 'Why' Question

- ❖ Tends to invite an answer rather than a description or an exploration.
- ❖ May appear interrogative.
- ❖ May evoke a defensive answer from the person.
- ❖ Might evoke such a limited response.



