STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING FAMILIES

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STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES
ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL

- Working towards an open-ended partnership
- The family is the expert
- Seek to understand family’s reality
- Assume client families really do want to change
- Client families are resourceful
- Language and Behavior must indicate your respect for the family as expert of their condition, and your participation as a partner.

STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES
UNIVERSALITY OF 5 SKILLS

- Universal across phases of treatment
- Across service professionals
- Across family structures
- Across presenting problems
- Inclusive, collaborative, systemic, empowering, celebratory
STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES JOINING

- A way of developing rapport with the family system that helps the family to become more comfortable with helping professional, and helps professional to get to know the family.

- The goal is to create a therapeutic system

- Accommodation

- Tracking

STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES JOINING- ACCOMMODATION

- Focus on family’s style, pace, mood, and posture

- Modify your behavior to match the family’s behavior in specified ways

- Follow the content

- Identify the emotional impact of the family’s transaction.

STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES JOINING- ACCOMMODATION

- Acknowledgement of and respect for the family’s existing structure

- The professional must acknowledge and respect the intent of the current structure.

- Intervening prior to establishing a therapeutic system will result in rejection.
STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES
JOINING- TRACKING

Tracking a family’s communication entails:

- Asking open-ended questions
- Reflecting content and feelings
- Verbalizing thoughts and feelings that family members may not be able to respond to on their own
- Verbalizing thoughts and feelings using language that matches the family

STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES
CIRCULAR QUESTIONING

- “Means for conducting a systemic investigation of the changes and differences in family relationships which recursively support dysfunction” (Nelson, Fleuridas, Rosenthal, 1986).
- Goal is to understand family interactional patterns, that promote dysfunction, promote family system health, and constitute normative behavior.

STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES
CIRCULAR QUESTIONING

An interview technique that...

- Solicits each family member’s experience of and opinions about the problem
- Helps to identify changes and differences in the family relationships that support dysfunctional or healthy dynamics.
- Provides a time efficient way to expand one’s view of the problem
**Problem Definition**

- What is the main concern of the family now?
- How is that different than before?
- Who agrees that this is the problem?
- What is your explanation for that?

**Comparison/Classification**

- What is the thing that you are most proud of about your family right now?
- What is the most effective thing that the family does right now that helps to manage this problem?
- Who is the most involved in fixing the problem?
- How do you explain your success in dealing with this problem?

**Interventive**

- Deficit Detective
- Health Hunter
**CIRCULAR QUESTIONING**

**SEQUENCE OF INTERACTION QUESTIONS**
- When mom and brother are fighting, what does your dad do?
- Does sister get involved in the fight or does she stay out of it?
- Has brother always behaved in this manner?
- How do you explain Dad's tendency to leave home often?
- Who usually takes the first step to calm things down?
- When mom and dad make up, who else is involved?
- When things are going well, what is dad doing?
- How do you explain the family's tendency to have fun days despite having this problem?

**CIRCULAR QUESTIONING**

**COMPARISON/CLASSIFICATION QUESTIONS**
- Who is closest to whom?
- Who acts most upset when she seems uncooperative?
- Who feels most helpless when the problem occurs?
- Who generally sides with whom?
- Who is the most affectionate person in the family? Then who?
- Who spends the most time helping you with your homework?
- Do you or your husband communicate the best with the children?

**CIRCULAR QUESTIONING**

**INTERVENTIVE QUESTIONS**
- What do you think mother needs to do to prepare for the time that Karen leaves home?
- If mom were to try to teach daughter not to whine and complain, how would she do it?
- When mom goes to the hospital, how are each of you going to help in the home?
- What do you think would be the most effective way to solve the problem?
- What would happen if they consistently addressed his behavior each time it happens?
- Do you think she'd be more willing to share feelings if she saw you and your wife share feelings with each other?
Techniques are based on Prochaska and Diclemente's Six Stage Change Model (1982) and identifies where a client family is in the process of change. Allows professionals to ask crucial questions at each stage of change to help the family to explore options and move toward their treatment goals.

Precontemplation
- The family does not recognize that there is a problem.
- Often forced into services at this point
- Family needs information related to unhealthy dysfunctional dynamics to raise awareness of these behaviors.
**PROCESS OF CHANGE**

**CONTEMPLATION**
- Family is aware of the problem.
- Family is considering the information provided by others regarding unhealthy or dysfunctional dynamics.
- Family questions the presented information and contemplates the true need to change (ambivalence and denial).

**PROCESS OF CHANGE**

**DETERMINATION**
- Family is determined to do something about the problem.
- The family may wax and wane in this stage. At times determination is resolute, at other times it is diluted.

**PROCESS OF CHANGE**

**ACTION**
- When the family is resolute in their determination to do something about the problem.
- Some families enter/become active in services.
- Some families employ self-imposed steps toward change.
- Families may slip or falter in their attempts at change and move back to the determination or contemplation stage.
Families maintain the gains that they have created from the action stage and continue to operate in a healthy way.

Professionals can help families to be consistent with new behaviors.

Professionals can give supportive to the client as needed and provide psychoeducation.

Professionals can:

- Address change ambivalence by discussions regarding costs and benefits of changing or staying the same (Contemplation).
- Identify potential courses of action to effectively facilitate change (Determination)
- Motivate clients towards implementing change, and provide support as needed (Action)

A method of motivating families using their own words and wants without aggressive confrontation.

Helps professional to be family focused.

Allows the services to be tailored to the family’s unique needs.
TRAPS THAT IMPEDE PROGRESS

- Expert Role
- Asking too many questions (Interrogation)
- Confrontation
- Arguing for Adherence
- Unsolicited Advice
- Premature focus
- Labeling or Diagnosing (stigmatizing)

STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES ASSESSING FAMILY RESILIENCY

- Generate interest in what the family is doing right.
- Understand how family manages to experience success in various areas of their lives.
- Find out about what/who keeps them motivated and strong to weather the current storm.
- Create a list of protective factors that guard against the problem becoming worse.

ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY RESILIENCY

- Are there times that you don’t have this problem?
- What is different at those times?
- What will make it possible for more of that to happen?
- Why aren’t things worse?
- How did you manage that?
- (then build on the accomplishments)

Pursuing Exceptions/Unique Outcomes
Failing Questions
ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY RESILIENCY COPING QUESTIONS

- Helps clients to know that they are more resourceful than previously realized.
- Allows professional to focus on maintenance of endurance to further empower client.
- Allows professional to be family’s cheerleader and highlight their continued accomplishments throughout their time together.


ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY RESILIENCY COPING QUESTIONS

- What keeps you going under such difficult circumstances?
- What do you do to take care of yourself and your family under these circumstances?
- What have you done to keep things from getting worse?
- How do you find contentment or happiness right now?


STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES EXTENDING INVITATIONS

- Invites the family to hear your conceptualizations, goals, ideas for help.
- Indicates a more collaborative stance as a team, rather than professional as expert.
- Creates agency for the client family in each interaction between the family and helping professionals.
STRENGTH-BASED STRATEGIES
EXTENDING INVITATIONS—QUESTIONS

I have some ideas about additional opportunities for improvement that may help you reach your goals. Would you be interested in hearing those ideas?

Listening to you talk, I have some thoughts about what is happening with your family. Would you confirm whether I am on the right path?

REFERENCES


