

Resolving Ambivalence and Tipping the Balance Toward Change



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Review of Workshop #1 – Switching from a Problem-focused to a Strength-based Approach

➤ Problem-focused approach

- Helping is focused on problems and their causes.
- The person being helped needs “fixing.”
- The helper is an expert with skills to identify what needs to change and find solutions.
- Individuals are viewed through the “filter” of the agency – its language and requirements.

➤ Strength-based approach

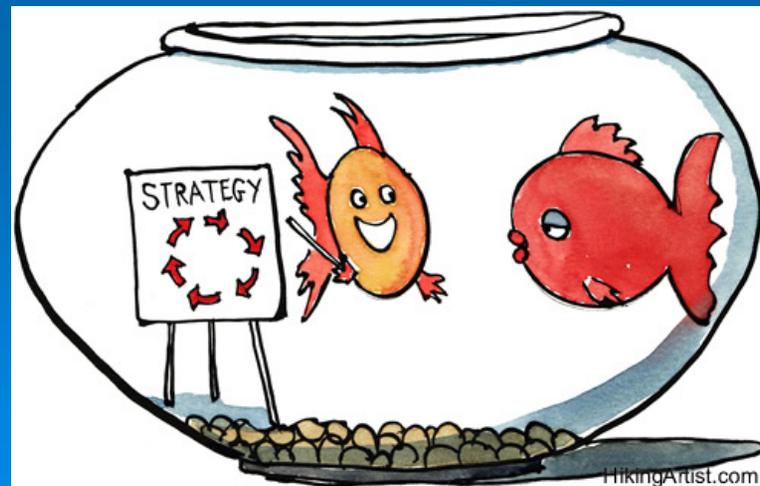
- People have the capacity to learn, grow, and change.
- The attention is on strengths rather than deficits.
- The participant is seen as the director of his or her life.
- The partnership between the case manager and the participant is a catalyst for discovering strengths and mobilizing resources.
- All environments, even the most bleak, contain supports and resources.

Review of Workshop #2 – Coaching to Motivate and Build Solutions

- A coach's role is to support and assist
 - Express empathy
 - Develop discrepancy
 - Roll with resistance
 - Support self-efficacy
 - Solution-oriented strategies to respond to resistance
 - Core value of respect
 - Listening for values
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Where Are We Headed?

- Strategies for Change Talk
- Techniques to Resolve Ambivalence and Build Motivation
 - Partner exercise
- Giving Information and Advice



Resolving Ambivalence

Signals of change:

- When you see a participant weighing the pluses and minuses of a possible change

Your goal:

- Prompt a commitment to change
- Use what you know about their values or find out more



Ambivalence Defined

Having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone.



- Jim doesn't want his kids to take the bus so he drives them to school everyday, which makes him late to work and causes him to lose his job.

From Discrepancy to Ambivalence

- When a gap is perceived between what they have now with what they want (desired future)
- Results in mixed feelings
- Loss may be experienced even when change is for the better



Tipping the Balance Toward Change

The odds of resolving ambivalence are improved when ***the participant*** presents the reasons for change.



You can lead from behind by asking strategic questions to tip the balance in the direction of change.

Your need to pressures or coerce indicates they're not interested.



Strategies for “Change Talk”

Address attitudes toward change and coach them to:

- ✓ Recognize disadvantages of current situation
- ✓ Recognize advantages of making a change
- ✓ Express optimism about making a change
- ✓ Express intention to make a change



Jess

I am stuck in
a rut



Recognize Disadvantages of Current Situation

- “Tell me more about how having regular work hours and paychecks would calm things down at home with Joe and the kids”
 - “What’s not working for you now?”
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Recognizing Advantages of Change

Jess is more likely to develop realistic plans if the goal or change aligns with what is important to her.

- You might use a miracle question.....
- And then a follow up response
- Or use an exception question



Miracle Question

- *“So, let’s imagine that the most perfect, most regular job falls out of the sky and lands on you. You wake up tomorrow knowing your work schedule for the next six years and you know when you are getting paid, and how much, and when you will pay which bills. Tells me how that could change things for you, day-to-day”*

Exception Question

- *“Was there a time before in your life that you had a job which gave you regular hours and paychecks, and that was safer? How were things better for you then?”*

Jess

I'm beginning to
see my way out
of my rut!



Optimism about Change

Specific to a particular change you discuss with Jess you might ask:

What makes you think that if you do decide to get a different kind of job, you could do it?

...Or you might use a scaling question

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 mean the change is “absolutely doable and easy” and 0 represents “impossible”, where do you fall? What would it take to get to a higher number?

Reflect on Strengths

- Now is a good time to reflect on strengths you have previously observed and/or acknowledged
 - *Jess, I remember you describing that day you saw your ex in court and how hard you worked at just staying calm and focused. I can see that strength coming in play here – what do you think?*

Intention to Change

You could ask:

- *What do you think you might do?*
- *What would you be willing to try?*
- *How important is this to you?*
- *How much do you want to do this?*



Summary: Strategies for Tipping the Balance Toward Change

- Recognize disadvantages of the current situation
- Recognize advantages of making a change
- Express optimism
- Express the intention to make a change

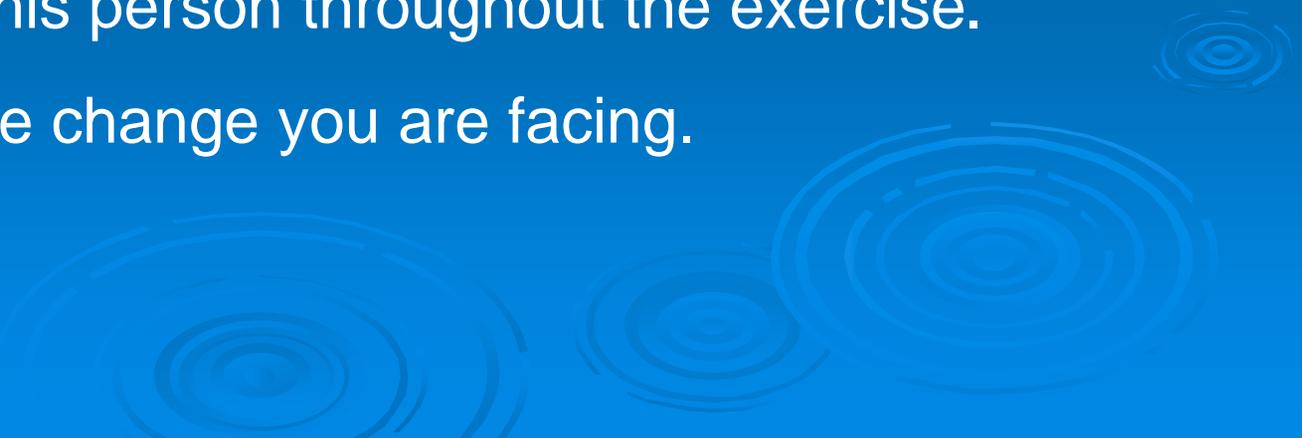
Techniques to Resolve Ambivalence and Build Motivation

- Scaling questions
- Best/worst questions
- Exception questions
- Possibilities questions
- Exploring goals and values



Exercise A

This exercise will be carried throughout this topic so that you are able to practice the techniques being trained.

1. Think about a change that you are currently considering and feel some tension around making.
 2. Pick a partner, choosing someone you know well or would be comfortable discussing your change with. Work with this person throughout the exercise.
 3. Describe the change you are facing.
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Scaling Questions

Scaling questions are really helpful to understand a participant's ambivalent attitude toward change. The purpose of asking scaling questions is to:

- Learn how important a specific issue is to a participant
- Help a participant express his or her confidence level to make a change



Example of Using a Scale

Participant: *I hate depending on people for rides, but driving makes me so anxious. I get too worried to go and practice when I can...*

Case Manager: *On a Scale of 1 to 10, how important is it to you that you drive yourself places, eventually? What would it take to get to a ____ ?*



🔧 Exercise B (scaling)

Use a simple scaling question to gauge how ready, willing and able your partner is to make the change being contemplated. Later, you might want to try using a more specific scaling question.

Make sure to define both ends of the scale (0 and 10) in descriptive terms so that your partner understands what he or she is rating.



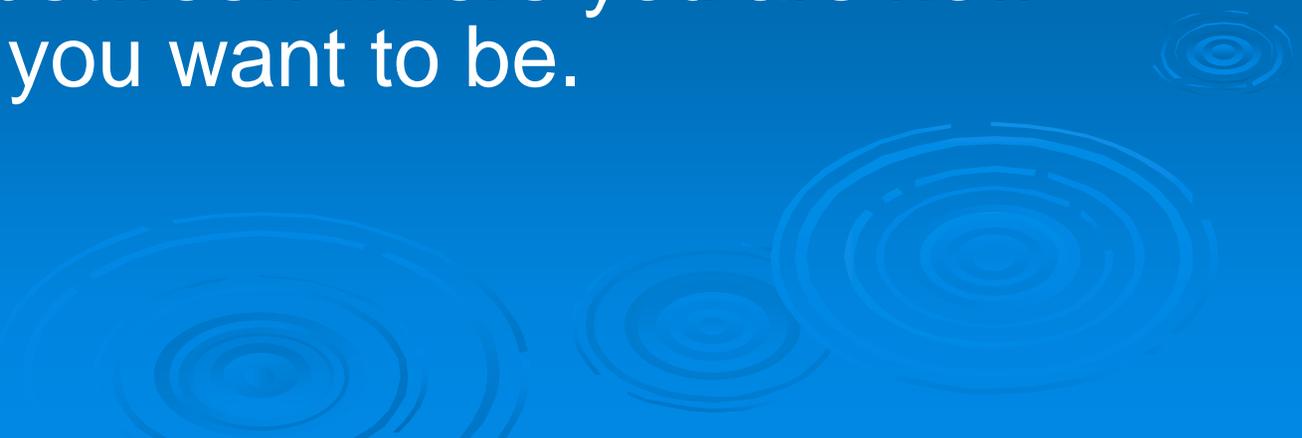
Best/Worst Questions

- Useful when you perceive participant is not interested in change
- Ask what the best thing is about making the change
 - *What would be the best thing about moving?*
- Ask what would be the worst thing about *NOT* making the change
 - *What would be the worst thing about not moving and staying where you are?*

🔧 Exercise C (Best-Worst)

Use best/worst questions and scaling questions to help amplify the discrepancy and resolve ambivalence.

Stop as soon as you think you see the difference between where you are now and where you want to be.



Exception Questions

- Ask the participant to look back at a time when things were better.

Do you remember a time when things were going well for you? What was different then? What has changed?

- Helps participant to see the difference between more positive and less positive experiences.
- Helps develop discrepancy

Possibility Questions

- Help participants envision a different future.
- Imagine life with and without change.

If you do decide to make the change, what do you hope might be different in the future? What will your life look like?

Suppose you don't change anything, and you continue just as you are. What does your future look like in this case?

Exploring Goals and Values

Everyone has some motivation to tap into. When you ask participants to tell you what is most important in their life, you gain perspective on their goals and values.

- *What are some of the things that are most important to you?*
- *Describe a great day (or job, or relationship, or anything).*
- *Let's make a list of things you like to do.*

Exercise D

Continue working with your partner, using exception and possibility questions AND exploring goals and values to help resolve the ambivalence around the change being contemplated.



How Change Talk Worked For Me

- Did one type of question work better than another?
 - Were you able to come to some resolution regarding to change or are you still contemplating it?
 - Were any questions difficult to use?
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Giving Information and Advice

- It is appropriate in the following circumstances:
 - When the participant requests it
 - With the participant's permission
 - At times when you are presenting the parameters of a program

Activity: Giving Information and Advice

Part One:

Place a checkmark beside each response you think is appropriate for the case manager to give.



People commit for
their reasons, not
yours.

Leadership Freak

