Healthy Marriages, Relationships and Families: Interventions, Research and Policies

Child Welfare Worker's

TOOL Kit

Resources for Facilitating Communication, Negotiating Differences, Establishing Relationships and Prompting Change.

Becoming a -

Learner

Teacher

Role Model

1

This lesson plan can be combined with the lessons on ***Change and Motivational Interviewing or Family Wellness Intervention***. The coaching and role play tools are from *Family Wellness: Survival Skills for Healthy Families* program. This is optional content.

Promoting Child Welfare: Training Professionals to Support Healthy Marriages, Relationships and Families Project.

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Project Mission: To develop curricula and provide training for students and professionals that enhance their ability to facilitate healthy marriages, relationships and families in the child welfare population, with the end goal of promoting and improving the well-being of children.

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Learning Objectives

- **L**earn and apply assessment tools, skills, and practices appropriate to the target population for couples, children and families as a whole in order to discern challenges and supports to family health, well-being and formation.
- **D**evelop and demonstrate an ability to practice within the ethical standards of their chosen profession.

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Professional Values and Ethics

- **Value:** *Dignity and Worth of the Person*

  Ethical Principle**:** *Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.*
- **Value:** *Importance of Human Relationships*

  Ethical Principle**:** *Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.*
- **Value:** *Competence*

  Ethical Principle: *Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.*

(NASW Code of Ethics, 1996) 4

Professional Ethics and Values

- **Principle I**
  Responsibility to Clients

  Marriage and family therapists advance the welfare of families and individuals. They respect the rights of those persons seeking their assistance, and make reasonable efforts to ensure that their services are used appropriately.
- **Principle III**
  Professional Competence and Integrity

  Marriage and family therapists maintain high standards of professional competence and integrity.

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(AAMFT Code of Ethics, 2001)

Professional as a Learner

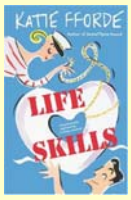
- Learning and Practicing basic helping skills.

….then using the basic skills in your professional and personal life.

If you cannot comfortably and naturally use these skills common to the helping professions….

you cannot expect that your clients will.

Common Skills



Many marriage and relationship programs focus on developing effective conflict resolution and communication skills.

While the processes and methods may be different, the essential skills remain the same.

These skills include:

- **Assertive Communication**
- **Being a Receiver/Sender/**
- **Decision Making**
- **Arguing Effectively**
- **Conflict Resolution**

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What is Assertive Communication

- Assertiveness is the ability to honestly express opinions, feelings, attitudes, and rights, *without undue anxiety*, in a way that doesn't infringe on the rights of others.
- It's *not aggressiveness*, it's a middle ground between being a bully and a doormat.
- It's dependent on a feeling of *self-efficacy*, a sense that if you behave in a certain way, something predictable will occur.

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(University of Iowa Counseling Services, 2008)

Definition of Self-Efficacy:

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes.

A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of failure. They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. They attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills that are acquirable. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. Such an efficacious outlook produces personal accomplishments, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression.

In contrast, people who doubt their capabilities shy away from difficult tasks that they view as personal threats. They have low aspirations and weak commitment to the goals they choose to pursue. When faced with difficult tasks, they dwell on their personal deficiencies, on the obstacles they will encounter, and all kinds of adverse outcomes rather than concentrate on how to perform successfully. They slacken their efforts and give up quickly in the face of difficulties. They are slow to recover their sense of efficacy following failure or setbacks. Because they view insufficient performance as deficient aptitude it does not require much failure for them to lose faith in their capabilities. They fall easy victim to stress and depression.

I. Sources of Self-Efficacy

People's beliefs about their efficacy can be developed by four main sources of influence.

1. The most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences.
2. Through the vicarious experiences provided by social models. Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities.
3. Social persuasion: People who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies. I
4. To reduce people's stress reactions and alter their negative emotional proclivities and is interpretations of their physical states.

ASSERTIVENESS CONTAINS:

1. **A description of the situation as you see it.** Be specific about time and actions. Don't make general accusations. Focus on behaviors not motives.

2. **A description of your feelings.** Use "I" messages. "I feel _____ because _____". To remain focused and less emotional, try thinking of positive feelings related to your goals and not resentment of the other person.

3. **A description of the changes you'd like made.** Be specific about what should stop and what should start. Make sure your request is reasonable and do-able. Be willing to make changes in return.

Assertive Communication Behaviors

- State feelings, needs and wants.
- Good eye contact & straight posture.
- Active listening.
- Positions and decisions are made clear.
- Confrontation is assertive, not passive and not aggressive.

Being Assertive

- Use of factual descriptions instead of judgments.
- Avoiding exaggerations.
- Using "I" and not "You".
- Expressing thoughts, feelings and ownership (taking responsibility for your part).

Assertive Communication is a foundational skills for discipline

I – Messages

Telling Others What You Feel in a Direct, Non-Blaming Way

Promotes acceptance of responsibility and expression of feelings so that others will hear.

The *benefits* of using I-messages include:

- A softer start-up to a conversation. Less offensive.
- Defiance is reduced and cooperation increased.
- Promotes awareness of feelings by thinking about how to say the I-message.
- Helps in avoiding negative communication styles such as putdowns, demanding, whining, blaming, judging, criticism, defensiveness, contempt, etc.

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I-Message Parts

1. **"I feel …." (state the feeling)**
2. **"when you….." (describe the other person's behavior)**
3. **"because ……." (explain the results of or consequences of the person's behavior)**
4. **"and I want……" (state what would make the situation better for you)**

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Communication Map

(Relationship Coaching Institute, 2007
www.TheCommunicationMap.com)

- Effective attitudes, skills and behaviors for good communication:
  - Consider issues to be unmet needs
  - All issues are valid.
  - Whoever has the unmet need owns the issue.
  - Discuss one issue at a time.
  - Take turns being the sender – 1 person speaks at a time.
  - Speak with moderation
  - Listen with curiosity
  - Assume a win/win stance.
  - Nurture each other.

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Receiver of Communication

(Relationship Coaching Institute, 2007)

- Key Points:
  - Assume the following attitudes:
    - It's not about me personally.
    - I'm curious.
    - I want to listen, support and empathize.
  - These attitudes lead you to say such things as
    - Help me to understand your issue.
    - Do you have a request or What do you need from me?
      - Never say no, counter-propose instead to get to a win-win position.

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Sender

(Relationship Coaching Institute, 2007)

- The sender is the one that experiences the issue being discussed. They need to own the issue.
- They can "hit a wall" by being judgmental, misinterpreting, defensive and reactive. Or,
  - Identify the issue clearly and factually.
  - Communicate the issue getting and giving validation and confirmation.
  - Make a request, letting go of the how it will get done or how it will look after it gets done. Turn complaints into requests.
  - Recognize when a wall is being hit and getting back on track.
  - Negotiate
  - Find common ground, things that can be agreed on.
  - Follow through.

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There is a CD available to use during lessons. To learn more or get a copy of the CD contact David Steele, MA, LMFT at the Relationship Coaching Institute found at www.TheCommunicationMap.com. Owning the Issue – Your thoughts, feelings, needs, issues and judgments are your reality, are valid for you, have little to do with your partner. Many people, including your partner, are unlikely to see things your way. If you take full ownership for your experience you will be able to create the conditions for connection and harmony in just about any situation with your partner. A fulfilling relationship is about accepting and negotiating differences, not about being right, seeking sameness or consensus.

Effective Decision Making Skills

1. **Describe and understand the problem**.
2. **Describe the desired outcome?**
   Be as specific as possible about the goal.
   Think long term and short term.
3. **What are the personal and other forces blocking achievement or progress toward goal?**
4. **List as many solutions or courses of action as possible.**
   Choose the three most likely to succeed.
5. **Carefully consider each of the three chosen solutions.**
   What are the pros and cons? How do they fit with your goal? Which appeals to you most and why?
6. **Select the best solution.**
   Take time to relax and let it "sink in". Let go of the other options.

Wholehearted commitment to carrying out the decision.

Planning and scheduling time to make it happen.

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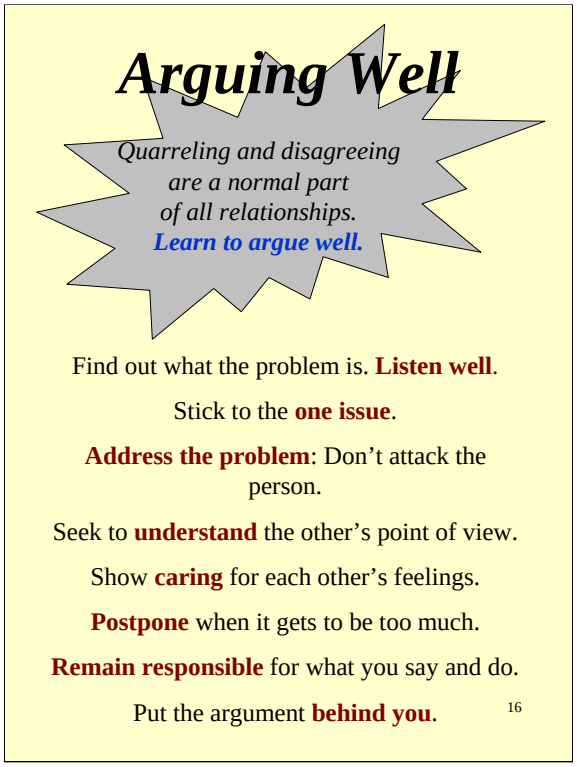
Refer to the Miracle Question as a way to get clients to begin to understand and describe their desired goal.

Compare it to the difficulty in establishing effective goals and objectives for individual client plans.



Gottman – It is not that people/couples argue but how they argue.

When Arguing Hurts
~ Behaviors to Avoid

Not Listening

Dismissing

Criticizing

Teasing and Name Calling

Put Downs

Sneering - Contempt

Bossing

Blaming

Threats

Getting Even

Bringing Up the Past

Making Excuses

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AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION:

Violating a person's personal, emotional and physical safety is destructive.

Any one of these behaviors - if used excessively, to control, to demean or to purposefully damage another - could be considered harassment or abuse.

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Conflict Resolution: An Important Skill

Start with the right frame of mind. Respect. Right Time. Arguing Well.

Define the problem or issue of disagreement.

Listen. Empathize. Understand both sides.

- Each person offers how they contributed to the problem.
- Take responsibility. Create ownership in solving the problem.

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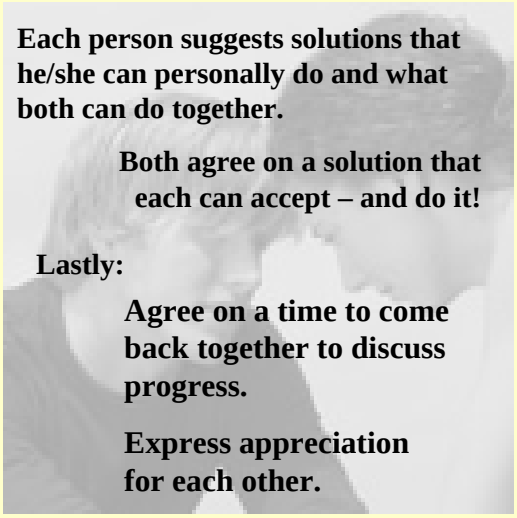
Conflict Resolution cont.



Each person suggests solutions that he/she can personally do and what both can do together.

Both agree on a solution that each can accept – and do it!

Lastly:

Agree on a time to come back together to discuss progress.

Express appreciation for each other.

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Child Welfare Worker Technique

Miracle Questions

Main Purpose: To orient the consumer away from the past and the problem towards the future and a solution.

Neatly turns the consumer's attention away from that old, unsuccessful, past behavior towards a future where the problem no longer exists.

Introduce the miracle question by asking clients if they will grant you permission to ask a peculiar question.

(Berg and Kelly, 2000)

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The Question Itself

Suppose that one night, while you are asleep, there is a miracle and the problem that brought you here is solved. However, because you are asleep you don't know that the miracle has already happened. When you wake up in the morning, what will be different that will tell you that the miracle has taken place?

(Berg and Kelly, 2000)

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See text of a miracle question as handout.

(Berg and Kelly, 2000)

Miracle Question Benefits

- The word “miracle” gives the client permission to think about the widest spectrum of possibilities.
  - After all, miracles do not have boundaries or rules. Therefore it encourages thinking broadly.
- The question circumvents resistance: Because the answer need not be part of the rational world.
- Answers are connected to the future, where no problems exist.
- It helps the client paint a detailed picture of his/her desirable state of life.
  - It is an elegant way to elicit clear objectives from consumers. Finding solutions becomes much easier once objectives have been set.

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Follow Up Question

- How will your spouse (partner, best friend, etc.) discover this miracle happened to you?
- Or, Who else will notice when the miracle happens? How will they tell?

(Berg and Kelly, 2000) 24

Application

- **Group Discussion** – Think about your field placement experiences or past work experiences, are there openings where some of the tool box information is or can be used to teach clients either communication or conflict resolution skills, etc.
- How do you feel about teaching these skills?

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Establishing Rapport

Rapport fosters open communication, establishes trust and builds confidence in the educator's or practitioner's ability to help.

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The Helping Relationship

The Strength's Perspective believes that establishing a caring partnership where power differences are eliminated, and communication is mutually comfortable, sincere and honest, will lead to identification of strengths and resources that will help support positive change.

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(Glicken, 2004)

Twelve Elements of the Helping Relationship in the Strength's Perspective

- No power differentials.
- Know what the client wants of us.
- Early rapport is essential.
- Active and attentive listening.
- Evidence-based practice.
- Encouraging independent client solutions.
- The worker may share opinions.
- Focusing on the positives.
- Humility is the key to helping.
- Clients need to understand our work.
- Working with transference.
- Writing summaries of the work after each session.

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(Glicken, 2004)

Definition of Evidence-Based Practice:
Being client-centered first, evidence-based practitioners adopt a process of lifelong learning about practices, interventions and skills that are effective, searching objectively and efficiently for the current best evidence, and taking appropriate action guided by evidence and knowledge of the client.

Transference

The client transfers to the worker/practitioner wishes, fears, concerns, and other feelings that are rooted in past experiences with others. (e.g., parents, sibling, other relatives, and friends). Transference reactions may not only impede progress in the helping process but also create difficulties in other interpersonal relationships.

Classic Study

Key Worker –Client Relationship Competencies as Identified by Child Welfare Clients

- **Workers must show clients basic human respect**
  - Must not be pushy or rude.
  - Must ask permission of clients to look in rooms or examine contents of cupboards.
  - Must be willing to spend time with clients.
  - Must be consistently honest with clients.
  - Must be aware of the dehumanizing context of child welfare work.
- **Workers must be able to effectively communicate with clients.**
  - Must speak at the client's level.
  - Must use direct language.
  - Must be able to really listen to what the client says.
  - Should be able to use small talk as an aid to establishing effective communication.
- **Workers must be able to develop a comfortable relationship with clients.**
  - Should have the ability to develop relationships that are warm, not simply nonhostile.
  - Must be able to cast themselves as a friend and an asset to the client.
  - Must use an empathic presentation.
- **Workers must not prejudge families on the basis of reports from other workers or the nature of the initial report.**
- **Workers must have the ability to remain calm and to defuse client anger, especially in initial meetings.**

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(Drake, 1994)

Classic Study

Key Worker –Client Relationship Competencies as Identified by Child Welfare Workers

- **Workers must be able to express an appropriate attitude**.
  - Must avoid presenting a judgmental or blaming demeanor.
  - Must not impose their own values on clients.
  - Must be able to see the situation from the client's point of view.
  - Must project an attitude that is assertive but not aggressive.
- **Workers must be able to effectively communicate with clients.**
  - Must use clear, unambiguous language.
  - Must relate to clients at the clients' level.
  - Must use body language and eye contact appropriately.
  - Must avoid the use of threatening terms.
  - Must use good listening skills.
- **Worker must not prejudge situations.**
  - Must understand situations as they see them and should be open to input from clients.
  - Must not base their assessment on prior occurrences as documented in the case files.
- **Workers must clearly acknowledge the client's right to participate in the process.**
  - The client's role must be explicitly delineated.
  - Must allow the client to define the situation as he or she sees it.
- **Workers must have an awareness of the impact of child protective services (CPS) intervention.**
  - Must understand the intrusive nature of CPS intervention.
  - Workers must have skill in dealing with and diffusing anxiety.

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(Drake, 1994)

Worker Behaviors that Facilitate

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT

- Ask permission to do what we are going to do anyway
- It is HOW we do WHAT we do that counts.
- Spell out goals clearly in every phase of the contact.
- Repeat client's exact words often.
- Announcing the change of topic - context marker
- Taking what client wants (goals) seriously.
- Engaging clients in specific goals
- Let the client know that you heard him/her
- Inform client about every step of what is happening
- Engagement is necessary for a sustained conversation, which in turn leads to change
- Good engagement results in client thinking differently
- At times, it may take many repetitions to engage.

(Berg and Kelly, 2000) 31

GIVING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK TO CLIENTS

- Goals of Your Message
  - The other person understands exactly what you want changed.
  - The Other's desire to cooperate is maximized.
  - The other's desire to cooperate is maximized.
  - The other's self-esteem is maintained.
  - A positive relationship is maintained.
  - Respect is conveyed.

What is Apt to Help

- Describing the behavior, not the person (missing appointments, not irresponsible).
- Using descriptions based on direct observations, not inferences (hitting brother, not being a cruel brother).
- Using behavioral descriptions, not judgments (yelling, not being an unfit parent).
- Using graduations, not “all” or “none” (“You sometimes interrupt me,” and not “You never listen”).
- Speaking in the here and now, not there and then (“I want to talk,” not “You just withdraw all the time”).
- Sharing ideas, not giving advice (“I would like it if things could be different,” not “You should shape up”).
- Sending want is of value to the receiver, not sender (what will help them to behave the way I want, not getting everything off my chest).
- Providing only the amount of information that can be used, not what can be sent (overload).

(Behavioral Sciences Institute, HOMEBUILDERS Division)

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Bridges Out of Poverty

The most successful relationships between workers and clients are formed when the worker uses strategies and relationship skills that are valued by the clients from their culture including the culture of poverty.

(Payne, DeVol, & Smith, 2006)

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Deposits and Withdrawals When In a Respectful Relationship with People in Poverty

Deposits	Withdrawals
Appreciation for humor and entertainment provided by the individual.	Put-downs or sarcasm about the humor or the individual.
Acceptance of what the individual cannot say about a person or situation.	Insistence and demands for full explanations about a person or situation.
Respect for the demands and priorities of relationships.	Insistence on the middle-class view of relationships.
Using the adult voice.	Using the parent voice.
Assisting with goal-setting.	Telling the individual his/her goals.
Identifying options related to available resources.	Making judgments on the value and availability of resources.
Understanding the importance of personal freedom, speech, and individual personality.	Assigning pejorative character traits to the individual.

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(Payne, DeVol, & Smith, 2006)

Pejorative – uncomplimentary, negative

Ten Guidelines for Establishing Rapport (Strength's Perspective)

- Self-Disclosure takes time – not easy to do, warm-up periods and false starts are likely.
- May require an indirect approach – be mindful of the client's need to save face in the process of self-disclosure and intimacy.
- Denial of pain – frequent response as a result of past insensitivities by others when feelings have been revealed.
- Clients feel weak, vulnerable in treatment or programs..
- Don't be distracted by manipulation, untruthfulness and selective telling of their story. These are often courses that the client needs to take until they gain trust in the relationship.
- Let clients talk about anything, even the insignificant. When they are ready, clients will often bring up important issues indirectly.
- Use genuine praise to keep the focus on client's strengths and positive behaviors.
- Don't label, most people do not like to be categorized. A formal diagnosis may be seen as demeaning and devaluing.

(Glicken, 2004)

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- **Two-Client Construct**

  A view of the social worker as always having two clients at any moment in time (for example, the individual and his family; the member and the group; the client and the system.)

- **Two-Client Concept and the Worker's Role**
  - A common problem when working with families is the tendency to identify with a subunit of the family system.
  - When working with families it is important for workers to be able to conceptualize and identify with two clients simultaneously; the individual and the family system for example.
  - Be present for or perceptive to the feelings of all members of the family unit involved in the counseling session. And secondly, be able to respond with empathy to each member in order to support change and growth for all.
  - Functional diffusion –loss of functional clarity that causes workers to diffuse their activity and implement a role or roles inappropriate for the moment. The worker may take on several different roles such as teacher, cop or preacher.

(Shulman, 2006)

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Process of Re-engaging Resistant Client

- Workers need to face their own feelings about engagement and rejection.
- Important to recognize and confront own feelings of ambivalence toward a client or toward working with the client. This ambivalence can often be perceived by the client thus triggering their resistance.
- Tune in to prepare for indirect cues and to get in touch with own feelings as well as those of the client.
- Engage or re-engage in clarifying purpose and roles, as well as reaching for feedback.
- Use skills that start developing a positive working relationship: elaboration, reaching inside for silence, empathizing with expressed feelings, and articulating unexpressed feelings slightly ahead of the client.
- Interdependence between Worker and Client. A negotiating process is taking place but this time it must include a discussion of the potential or perceived obstacles. Often when an obstacle has been identified and explored, it looses its power.

(Shulman 2006) 38

Opportunity to show video **"Why Am I here? Engaging Reluctant Clients"**

A CASE STUDY – Environmental Specialist

- **Bridges Out of Poverty, Chapter 12 (p. 158)**

"An environmental specialist working one of the more dangerous jobs in rural Ohio has the task of enforcing septic-systems standards with people who have consistently voted down zoning. Government officials are not usually welcome on their property. The environmental specialist developed the following strategies and skills.

He drives a beat-up pickup truck and wears casual clothes. When greeting clients at their home he takes time to talk about local fishing holes and gossip about friends and relatives. Before long he tells them that there's been a complaint about their septic system. He has learned to defuse the early moments by letting his clients know that he is willing to work with them. He doesn't throw around bureaucratic codes but simply asks what their septic system is like. If the clients get defensive he remains detached; he expects them to be angry. He doesn't take their anger personally. While they accuse neighbors for turning them in and of having worse septic systems than theirs, he waits them out. He returns to the issue and mediates by talking about the fish found in the creek nearby. He explains how turnoff from improper sewage management kills fish and how that will impact them directly. "There won't be any fishing left," he says. Next he discusses how the system can be corrected and, by giving them choices, shows his respect for them. "How much time do you need to get that done?" he may ask. His ability is rewarded by the trust that his clients put in him. Several men have gone fishing with him. He has acted as mentor to a few, teaching them time management and goal-setting strategies, as well as ways to reward themselves when they have met short-term goals."

- **What core competencies, based on the Bridges Out of Poverty material, is this person using to work with people from the poverty culture?**
- **What lessons has this person demonstrated that we can apply to our own work as social workers?**

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Answer to Case Study Questions:

This professional has many core competencies required to work with the people from the poverty culture. He can build relationships, understand the use of the casual-register language, and avoid power struggles and manipulations. He can mediate, teach middle-class rules, and even be a mentor to his clients.

Tool: Coaching

- Within a conversation you help a person learn or practice a skill by interrupting the ineffective communication and helping them to learn and try more effective ways to express themselves and get a specific result.
- Import Steps
  - Preparation – think ahead about what you want to coach so that you are ready when the opportunity presents itself.
  - Coaching
  - Closing – appreciation and summarization.

(Doub & Creighton 1999)

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Coaching Guidelines

- Choose a single skill to teach or reinforce.
- Start the coaching with one of these lines:
  - Show me how it usually goes
  - Tell him/her what you want
  - Say what you want and then get ready to listen.

(Doub & Creighton 1999)

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Video

You're the Coach: How to Teach Family Wellness Skills to Families

Produced and distributed by

Family Wellness Associates

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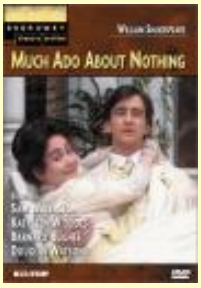
Tool: Role Playing

- Teaching and learning through drama
- Used to:
  - Demonstrate the application of a rule or technique
  - Teach a skill
  - Assess learning
  - Coach



(Doub & Creighton 1999)

Types of Role Plays

- Instructor Determines Content
  - Instructor to Instructor Role Play
  - Instructor to Participant
  - Participant to Participant

- Participant Determines Content
  - Instructor to Instructor Role Play
  - Instructor to Participant (Instructor Coaches)
  - Participant to Participant (Instructor Coaches both)
  - Family to Family (Instructor Coaches both)

(Doub & Creighton 1999)

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Steps in Role Playing

- In advance **choose topic** to be taught and type of role play you will use. Can be instructor driven or participant driven.
- **Establish storyline** –Plan your script in advance when possible or have simple summaries for participants to base their actions.
- **Decide who will participate**. Choose carefully. Make invitation to participate. Give directions and reassure.
- **Enact the role play.**

(Doub & Creighton 1999)

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General Guidelines for Role Play

- Be brief, two to five minutes.
- Focus on a specific story to teach a particular skill.
- Use asides to anyone observing.
- Focus on competence. Coach.
- Involve only one family member in a role play when in groups.

(Doub & Creighton 1999)

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Recommended Reading

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