

CA Symposium 2016

Session #2

What to do when clients don't want to talk, talk too much, and other forms of resistance

Julie Elmenhurst, LCSW

FFT therapist, consultant, and trainer

What is Motivation?

- ▶ Definition: the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way, the general desire or willingness of someone to do something
- ▶ Synonyms: incentive, stimulus, inspiration, inducement, incitement, spur, reason
- ▶ Why is it important? We have to motivate families to not only participate in therapy, but to view the problems facing them in a way that leads to solutions and then to learn new skills and practice those skills to address the problems



- ▶ Change is hard
- ▶ Why we do what we do:
Because it is safe
and it is beneficial

Matching

- ▶ This is an important technique throughout FFT
- ▶ Matching does not mean agreeing with everything someone is saying
- ▶ Matching is not small talk, however you will need to do small talk or relationship building to know how to match to each family member
- ▶ Matching is doing, saying and being so that all family member's feel heard and understood. You may match tone, interests, hierarchy, relational functions, learning style, language, etc.

Techniques of the Motivation Phase

Change Focus

- Interrupt and divert
- Point process / Sequence
- Strength Based Relational Statements

Change Meaning

- Theme hints / Relabels
- Reframes
- Themes

Everything you do should be strength based and relational – you Talk about the problem, but change the focus or the meaning around the Problem – Most Importantly – DO SOMETHING!!!

Acknowledgement

- Process vs Content
 - Do not be afraid of negativity and conflict
- Convey understanding, acceptance and respect
 - Not through agreement
 - Via strength-based and relational statements
- Be Patient/Try not to Force a New Perspective
 - When family members feel heard and respected, they are more ready to hear alternatives (e.g. Yes Set)

Feeling vs Logic

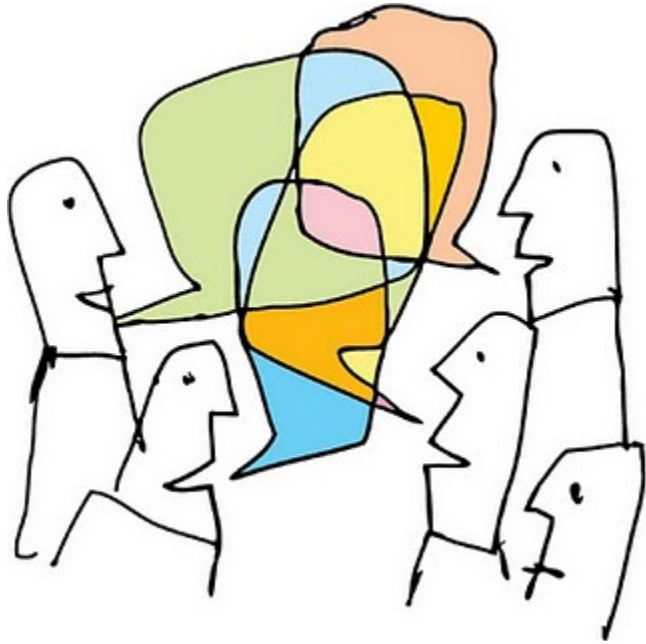
- ▶ Listen to what family member's are expressing – are they expressing feeling or thoughts
- ▶ We often try to respond to someone who is highly emotional with reason or logic – this does not acknowledge that we heard them and instead can increase their negativity as they try to be heard
- ▶ Conversely, if someone is talking thoughts or logic and you do not acknowledge and only respond with feeling they do not feel heard and may “down”

Help – They won't talk

- ▶ Remember, nowhere does it say in our goals that all family member's have to talk equally – some people are just quiet.
- ▶ The worst thing you can do with someone who is quiet or reluctant to talk is bombard them with questions – this just shuts them down even more
- ▶ Talk for them – make statements vs. questions
- ▶ Find out if they are quiet with everyone –referral sources, other family member's, etc
- ▶ Multiple forms of communication
- ▶ Non verbal communication



Interrupt/Divert



- ▶ Intervening to do something to interrupt escalation
 - Blocking or intercepting an interaction
 - Diverting flow of communication

Always keep a respectful and strength-based focus

Pointing Process

- ▶ Describing specific steps in an interaction that you observe in the session
- ▶ Then offering a positive, less negative or relational spin to it



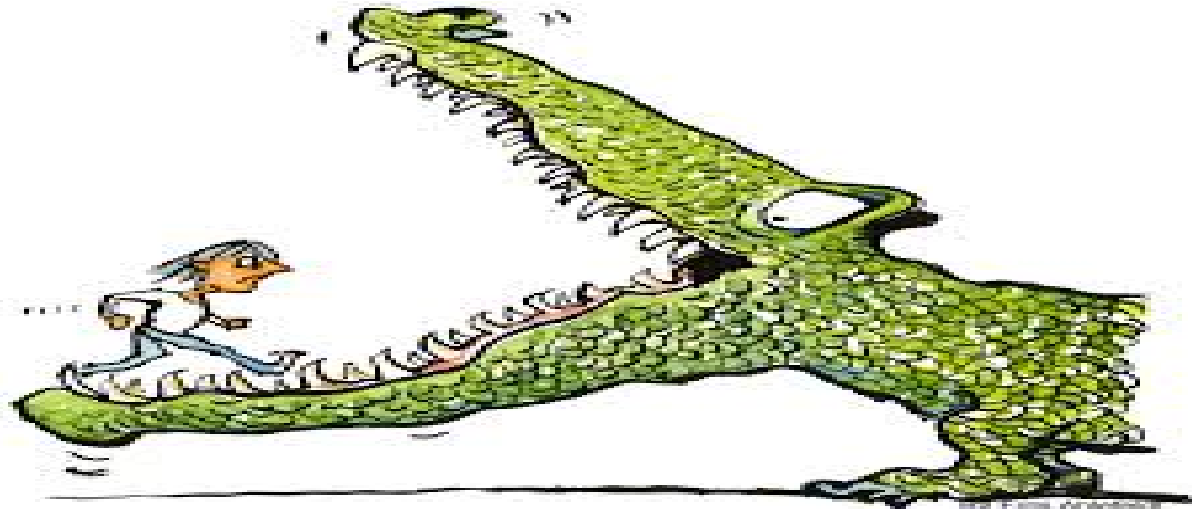
Examples of Point Process

- ▶ I notice that when you start talking about dad that Junior puts his head down and looks away, that tells me it is hard for both of you to talk about dad
- ▶ Sally, I notice when mom is talking you roll your eyes, but you still listen, so you do hear what she is saying
- ▶ I have noticed that all of you try to talk at the same time – this tells me that working this out is important to all of you

- ▶ Remember Point Process may lead to themes and reframes

Strength-Based Relational Statements

- Statements that highlight or note a strength about a person in the context of a relationship



Examples of Strength Based Relational Statements

- ▶ You all want to protect each other
- ▶ Everyone is very worried about this situation with the family
- ▶ You all are willing to fight to save this family
- ▶ All of you agree that there is a problem
- ▶ All of you are willing to do this therapy in order to try and make things better
- ▶ You are all very honest people



Examples of Theme Hints / Relabels

- ▶ Hurt behind the anger
- ▶ Protection
- ▶ Guilt
- ▶ Control=feeling overwhelmed and needing to make sure things don't fall apart
- ▶ Secret Love Test
- ▶ Fighting=still caring enough to not give up
- ▶ Nagging reflects importance

What if it doesn't work?

- ▶ First evaluate – why don't you think it isn't working – they are still negative? It is to reduce negativity, not do away with it. Are family members expressing more hopeful statements, are they listening to each other more?
- ▶ What do the FSR's tell you?
- ▶ Be relentless – you are facing possibly years of negativity and blaming – you must be more relentless with your attempts to change focus and meaning than they are with the negativity
- ▶ Things may shift slowly but if they are shifting you are on the right track
- ▶ Get feedback from supervisor and team members

