Challenging Clients

There are many types of challenging clients. Most of these clients are at least ambivalent about coming for professional help and so they may behave in provocative ways that make working with them more challenging and more interesting.

Defining and Exploring Resistance

Resistance as a function of the situation
Readiness to change
Recognizing and managing resistance
Opening questions and goal-setting strategies
Chapter 11 – Challenging Clients and Demanding Situations

Defining and Exploring Resistance (Cont.)
- Using reflection
- Using emotional validation, radical acceptance, reframing, and genuine feedback
- Coming alongside (using paradox)
- Dealing with resistant clients who may be lying or delusional

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Resistance as a function of the situation
- We should not blame clients for resisting therapy
- We should also not blame therapists
- We should work to modify the situation so that clients and therapists can work well together

Chapter 11 – Challenging Clients and Demanding Situations

Readiness to Change
- This theoretical concept developed by Prochaska and DiClemente consists of:
  - Precontemplation
  - Contemplation
  - Preparation
  - Action
  - Maintenance
  - Termination
Chapter 11 – Challenging Clients and Demanding Situations

- Recognizing and Managing Resistance
  - The motivational interviewing model is based on the reality of client ambivalence about change
  - Consequently, resistance is normal and natural and easily recognizable

- Opening Questions and Goal-Setting Strategies
  - What would make this a helpful visit?
  - If we have a great meeting today, what will happen?
  - Watch and listen for health-oriented goals underlying the client's distress

- Using Reflection
  - Reflective techniques help clients see their own ambivalence
  - Reflect your clients' efforts, frustration, hostility, discouragement, etc.
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- Using Emotional Validation, Radical Acceptance, Reframing, and Genuine Feedback
  - Validate your client's resistance and hostility
  - Concede your lack of power
  - Accept even the most outrageous client statements
  - Offer genuine feedback

- Coming Alongside (Using Paradox)
  - This technique consists of reflecting and emphasizing the client's resistance and motivations not to change
  - Paradoxical techniques should not be used as clever techniques designed to outwit the client

- Dealing with Resistant Clients Who May Be Lying or Delusional
  - Tell clients that you’re keeping an open mind
  - Do not play the role of judge
  - Remember resistance is often about pain or fear
Chapter 11 - Challenging Clients and Demanding Situations

- Interviewing Clients with Substance Issues or Problems
  - Gathering information
  - Use motivational interviewing strategies

- Assessment and Prediction of Violence and Dangerousness
  - Assessment of violence potential
  - Risk factors to consider
  - Narrowing in on particular violent behaviors
  - Predicting fire setting
  - Predicting homicide among young men

- Demanding Situations
  - Sometimes interviewers are faced with humanitarian crises, clients in the midst or immediate aftermath of trauma, and other demanding situations
Chapter 11 - Challenging Clients and Demanding Situations

- Interviewing guidelines in disaster or humanitarian crisis environments
  - Setting and creature comforts
  - Informed consent and record-keeping
  - Assessment decisions
  - Confidentiality
  - Techniques and resistance
  - Secondary or vicarious trauma
  - Cultural differences
  - Boundary concerns

- Interviewing Trauma Survivors
  - Defining trauma
  - Issues and challenges