



Shut Up and Communicate: Practical Ways for Reaching Youth

Developed by

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Discussion: Intentions and Preferred Outcomes

What is it that you hope to accomplish day-to-day, month-to-month, year-to-year with the youth and young adults you work with?

Discussion: Challenges

What are some of the most difficult aspects of connecting with and/or engaging youth and young adult clients?

Two Common Areas of Challenge:

1. Resistances and Oppositional Behavior

2. Getting Youth to Talk to Us

Resistances and Oppositional Behavior

- Avoiding appointments
- Not talking
- Lack of cooperation/participation in meetings
- Walking out of meetings
- Apathetic and passive behaviour
- Not following through on goals/commitments
- Answering, “I don’t know”, “I don’t care”, “Whatever”
- Saying “no” to almost anything
- Doing the opposite of what you ask/expect
- Running away
- Intimidation
- Destructive Behaviour
- Violence towards others

Understanding Resistances

Resistance and opposition are not “bad” things. They are information that something important is happening and needs to be checked out.

Resistance and Opposition are
INFORMATION

Resistance can be information that something may not be “right”. It does not simply mean that the youth is not interested, does not want to be involved, does not want to set goals, or learn. There may be very good reasons why youth may not want to move, participate, set goals, or participate actively in their own learning.

Resistance can inform us that we need to pay attention to something other than (or at least in consideration with) the youth or the youth's behaviour. It is important to consider other things when you experience resistance or opposition

When Experiencing Resistance or Opposition - Things to Consider:

- *What is my relationship like with this youth? (Trust, closeness, comfort, understanding, etc). Does he/she feel good about us?*
- *Is my program, home, safe, predictable, consistent?*
- *Is my behavior, safe, predictable, consistent?*

When Experiencing Resistance or Opposition - Things to Consider:

- *How am I standing? What is my body posture? Tone of voice?, etc.*
- *How am I being perceived by the youth? Friendly? Busy? Threatening? Apathetic? – ask them!*
- *What kind of questions am I asking? How am I asking the questions?*

When Experiencing Resistance or Opposition - Things to Consider:

- *Does the youth see the value in what I am asking him/her to do? Do they have a goal? Is this in line with their goal(s)*
- *Am I missing something here? Is there something that is interfering with the youth's ability to understand what I am saying or doing?*
- *What is my own comfort like with this youth?...the topic?...situation?*

When Experiencing Resistance or Opposition - Things to Consider:

- *What is he/she trying to tell me with his/her behaviour? What is the need or the goal that they might be trying to meet now?*
- *What am I representing or “giving” to the youth to oppose? (Attitude? Power? Negativity? Ingenuiness?)*

Why Many Youth Won't Talk or Tell Us What's Really Going On

- Early Negative Childhood Experiences
- System as Barriers to Youth and Youth's Story
- Often Not Involved (or related to youth's goals)
- Haven't Been A.L.T.A.C (Asked, Listened to, Taken seriously, Acted upon, Checked in with)
- Our Responses Create Barriers

Early Negative Childhood Experiences

Resulting Impacts...

Negative View of Self

Negative View of Adults

**FEAR, HURT, SADNESS, CONFUSION,
STRESS, ANXIETY, ANGER**

*** Difficult to Trust, To Feel Safe, To Talk, To feel “Good”***

System as Barriers to Youth and Youth's Story



OFTEN NOT INVOLVED (or related to youth's goals)

So many youth and young adults do not attend their planning meetings.

Interestingly, those meetings continue to happen without the youth...sometimes many occur.

Who is setting the goals? Where is the youth or the youth's voice?

Or, if they are in the room, the goal often is not something that is important to them, or at least see the value in.

...Often leading to a place of “what's the point” or “why bother?”

Haven't Been A.L.T.A.C

- **Asked**
- **Listened To**
- **Taken Seriously**
- **Acted Upon (Followed Up)**
- **Checked In**

So, We MUST..

1. Ask Them!

Stay Calm!

Shhhhhh....

Go To Your Happy Place if Necessary!

Paraphrase

Respond Empathically

YOU NEED TO HEAR THIS!!!!

Getting to know the youth and the youth's story.

Negative Social History

File Information



Labels

Experts

Our Story

Theories

Stereotypes &
Generalizations

Assumptions

DSM Diagnoses

OUR RESPONSES CREATE BARRIERS

Common Adult Responses to a Youth/Young Adult

- **Defensive**
- **Dismissive**
- **Expert (know it all)**
- **Preaching**
- **Advising/Giving Solutions**
- **Consoling**
- **Sarcasm/Inappropriate Humour**

So, We MUST..

- **Ask Them!**
- **Listen, Listen, Listen!**
- **Take What they Say Seriously!**
- **Act Upon It (Follow Up)!**
- **Check In!**

Helpful Questions

- Tell me about that?
- How was that for you?
- Tell me more about that?
- What was that like (for you)?
- What is that like when that happens?
- What does that mean?
- What do you mean when you say _____?
- AVOID “WHY” Questions
- ALLOW FOR SILENCES

Getting to know the youth and the youth's story.

Negative Social History

File Information

Labels

Knowledge

Opinions

Experts

Culture

Goals

Dreams

Resiliencies

Strengths

My Story

Sensitivities

Values

Experiences

Theories

Individual Uniqueness

Our Story

**Stereotypes &
Generalizations**

Assumptions

DSM Diagnoses

**Because We Can't Really Move From a
Place Until We Arrive...**

We Need Them...

We Need Their Story.

Questions or Comments?