

Responding to Resistance

Resistance:

- Resistance is normal.
- It is not fixed and there is something you can do about it.
- It is how you respond to client resistance that makes the difference.
- Resistance most frequently arises from interpersonal interaction between the worker and the client.
 - If there is little rapport, effective communication is very difficult.
 - Resistance is an opportunity. The client is probably expecting you to act in a certain way – they way others have. The opportunity lies in heading things off in a new direction.
- Resistance is specific to a particular kind of change.
 - A person might be willing to make a change, for example attend school, but not be ready to find a job.
- Your general task when resistance occurs is to understand the reason for resistance behavior.

How do you respond to resistance:

- **Reflective Listening** – to be accurate you must really listen to both what the client says and the feelings underneath the words.
 - Listen to the speaker's perspective, feelings and wants. To make sure you clearly understand what they are saying, ask for clarification or for more information.
 - I'd just like to check that I've understood you correctly...
 - Just let me run this past you, what you're saying is...
 - My understanding is...
 - You seem very worried about...
 - Client: I'm trying...
 - Worker: You're working hard on the changes you want to make.
 - Client: Who are you to be giving me advice?
 - Worker: It's hard to imagine how I could possibly understand.
 - Worker: Sounds like you're pretty angry at me.
 - Worker: If I see something that I think could stand in the way of you reaching your goals or that might help you meet your goals, is it okay with you that I share it?
 - Client: I ought to be able to handle this on my own...
 - Worker: You don't want to rely on someone else.
 - Worker: If I see something that I think could stand in the way of you reaching your goals, is it okay with you to tell me?
 - Client: I can't...
 - Worker: You can't see any way that would work for you.
 - Worker: You're rather discouraged about trying again.
 - Worker: That can be a difficult task. Let's take it one step at a time and figure out what we need to do.
- **Shifting Focus:**
 - In shifting focus you want to first defuse the initial concern and the direct attention to a more readily workable issue.
 - Perhaps...

- Maybe...
- Could it be that...
- Client: You want me to get a job right now?
 - Worker: Were just beginning, I'm certainly not ready to jump to conclusions, at this point. What is it that you want to do?
- Client: I guess you going to tell me it's all my fault.
 - Worker: That is not the issue. It is not going to help to place blame. I am worried about.... Tell me a little about what has been happening for you.
- **Reframing:**
 - Client: I've tried so many times to change, and failed.
 - Worker: You're very persistent, even if the face of discouragement. This change must really be important to you.
 - Worker: Every time you give it a good try, you're one step closer to getting there.
 - Worker: What would you like to have had happen?
 - Worker: Let's take it one step at a time and figure out what needs to happen to reach your goal.
 - Let's look at another way...
 - Have you considered...
- **Agreeing with a twist:**
 - It really is up to you....
 - You are in the best position to know what will work and what won't...
 - You are a full partner in this process
 - You've got a good point, and that's important...
 - Maybe I haven't been paying enough attention to the bigger picture...
 - If I were to tell you a whole lot of things that you have to do, it would it would make it even harder.
 - What is that you want to do?
 - It's ironic, isn't it? When you feel like you have to do something, it actually prevents you from doing what you want to do.
- **Emphasizing personal choice and control:**
 - (providing information) What you do with it is completely up to you. Naturally, no one can make you...
 - It really is your decision. All I can do is tell you the advantages and disadvantages for you, and give you my opinion. If you want it, help is available. It's up to you.
 - It's your choice. I couldn't make the decision for you, even if I wanted to.
 - If it doesn't work, I can work with you to develop a different plan, one you might like better.
 - Let's go over what we've decided to do at this point. Tell me what you understand the plan to be.