

BUILDING AFFIRMATIONS

PEOPLE HAVE TROUBLE OFFERING AFFIRMATIONS, ESPECIALLY TO THEIR MORE “DIFFICULT” CLIENTS. THIS IS AN INTERESTING WAY TO SHIFT PERSPECTIVE AND PRACTICE.

Affirmations are the A in OARS skills and are sometimes overlooked by trainees.

PART 1: PARTICIPANTS WILL THINK OF A SPECIFIC CLIENT THAT THEY PARTICULARLY LIKE, TWO OR THREE VOLUNTEERS WILL NAME ONE CHARACTERISTIC OF THAT PERSON. PUT IT ON A FLIP CHART. ONCE WE HAVE THREE OR SO, ASK WHAT THE STRENGTHS UNDERLYING THAT CHARACTERISTIC ARE.

SOMETIMES THE CHARACTERISTIC IS THE STRENGTH, SOMETIMES IT ISNT. THEN, FROM THAT STRENGTH (AND PERHAPS A LITTLE CREATIVITY IN ADDING SOME CONTEXT), MAKE AN AFFIRMATION THAT PASSES THE AUTHENTICITY TEST FOR THE PARTICIPANT (ONE THAT S/HE COULD SAY WITHOUT GAGGING)

characteristic
↓
strength
↓
affirmation

PART 2: REPEAT THE EXERCISE, BUT WITH THE PARTICIPANTS CHOOSING ONE OF THEIR MOST DIFFICULT CLIENTS. AGAIN, WILL ASK WHAT THE STRENGTHS UNDERLYING THE BEHAVIOR MIGHT BE (THIS IS A CHANCE TO TALK ABOUT COMPETENT WORLD VIEW*). ASK THEM TO FORM AFFIRMATIONS BASED ON THE STRENGTHS.

characteristic
↓
strength
↓
affirmation

DEBRIEF: IN THE DEBRIEF OF THE SECOND PART, I ASK WHICH CLIENT THEY WOULD RATHER WORK WITH, THE ONE WITH THE CHARACTERISTIC THAT GETS ON THEIR NERVES, OR THE ONE WITH THE UNDERLYING STRENGTH. I ASK THEM TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT WHAT HAVING THAT DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ABOUT THE CLIENT MIGHT BRING TO THE INTERVENTION(S), AND HOW IT MIGHT CHANGE HOW THE CLIENT SEES HIM/HERSELF IF THE WORKER SEES HIM/HER DIFFERENTLY (AND MORE POSITIVELY). I ALSO OFFER THE SUGGESTION THAT THE PROFESSIONAL USES THIS EXERCISE BEFORE S /HE SEES THE CLIENT WHO IS DIFFICULT AS A PREPARATION FOR WELCOMING HIM/HER WITH COMPASSION AND EMPATHY.