

DEFUSING DISCORD

Rethinking and Reducing Resistance

Allan Zuckoff, PhD

Lecturer in Psychology and Psychiatry
University of Pittsburgh
Past Chair, Board of Directors
Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers
zuckoffa@pitt.edu



Ambivalence

- ◆ Stuck in ambivalence
 - Don't know what you want/need to do
(conflicting options have advantages/disadvantages)
and/or
 - Don't believe you can do what you want/need to do
(succeed at accomplishing a desired choice)

Change Talk

◆ DARN (Preparatory)

- Desire *I want to...*
- Ability *I can...*
- Reasons *I should because...*
- Need *I must...*

◆ CATs (Mobilizing)

- Commitment *I might... → I'll try... → I will...*
- Activation *I'm ready to...*
- Taking steps *I've done...*

Rethinking Resistance

- ◆ Sustain Talk
 - ◆ The other side of the decisional balance
 - ◆ Motivation to stay the same
 - ◆ Normal and expectable when someone is ambivalent
 - ◆ More frequent and insistent when the clinician is ahead of the client's readiness to change

Sustain Talk

The Other Side of Ambivalence

- ◆ I like getting high.
- ◆ I don't see how I could stop losing my temper.
- ◆ Smoking relaxes me.
- ◆ I need to drink when I'm around people.
- ◆ I will go on isolating.
- ◆ I'm not ready to go to self-help meetings.
- ◆ I told my doctor that I'm not taking medication.

Rethinking Resistance

- ◆ Discord
 - ◆ Tension or defensiveness in response to practitioner's negative judgment and/or control
 - ◆ Interpersonal
 - ◆ Can be triggered by the practitioner or anticipatory
 - ◆ Protection of self-esteem and/or autonomy

Recognizing Discord

- ◆ Arguing
 - ◆ Challenging
 - ◆ Hostility
- ◆ Ignoring
 - ◆ Inattention
 - ◆ Nonanswer
 - ◆ No Response
 - ◆ Sidetracking
- ◆ Interrupting
 - ◆ Talking Over
 - ◆ Cutting Off
- ◆ Negating
 - ◆ Blaming
 - ◆ Excusing
 - ◆ Claiming Impunity
 - ◆ Minimizing
 - ◆ Denying
- ◆ Pseudocomplying
 - ◆ Blanket agreement
 - ◆ Passivity

Pseudocomplying

◆ Deceptive

- “Smooth” conversational tone
- Blanket agreement
- Passivity

◆ Effective

- Avoids punitive reaction and preserves autonomy when there is a power differential
- Avoids conflict, tension, disappointment when there is a desire to preserve the relationship

Defusing Discord

◆ Tasks

- ◆ Avoid provoking discord
- ◆ When discord emerges, focus on reducing it

◆ Key Points

- ◆ Discord is a signal to respond differently
- ◆ Unless discord is low, nothing constructive can be accomplished in conversations about change

Defusing Discord

- ◆ Reflective Responses
 - Simple or Complex Reflection
 - Amplified Reflection
 - ◆ Over-shooting and under-shooting
 - Double-sided Reflection

Double-Sided Reflection

- ◆ When clients express both sides of their ambivalence
 - Often expressed as “Yes, but...”
- ◆ Reflect both sides of the ambivalence
- ◆ Replace the word “but” (an “eraser”) with “and,” “at the same time,” or “on the other hand”
- ◆ Reflect the sustain talk first and the change talk second

Defusing Discord

◆ Strategic Responses

- Shifting Focus
- Emphasizing Personal Choice and Control
- Reframing
- Agreement with a Twist
- Coming Alongside
- Running Head Start
 - ◆ Decisional Balance Discussion

Running Head Start

- ◆ **Explore Pros of Current Behavior / Cons of Change**
 - *“What are the good things about ____?” “What might make you want to continue ____?”*
 - ◆ Reflect, Ask “What else?” until the answer is, “That’s all”
 - ◆ Summarize
- ◆ **Explore Cons of Current Behavior / Pros of Change**
 - *“What’s the other side?” “What are the not-so-good things about ____?”
“What advantages would there be to working towards a change?”*
 - ◆ Reflect, Ask for Elaboration, “What else?” until the answer is, “That’s all”
- ◆ **Double-sided Summary**
 - *“On the one hand, there are some good things about ____:*
 - *At the same time, you’ve also found that...”*
- ◆ **Key Question**
 - *“What are your thoughts about this right now?” “Where do we go from here?”
“What would you like to do about this?” “What’s next?”*

Defusing Discord

◆ Reflective Responses

- ◆ Simple or Complex Reflection
- ◆ Amplified Reflection
- ◆ Double-sided Reflection

◆ Strategic Responses

- ◆ Shifting Focus
- ◆ Emphasizing Personal Choice and Control
- ◆ Reframing
- ◆ Agreement with a Twist
- ◆ Coming Alongside
- ◆ Running Head Start