

Workshop Manual

Effective Techniques for Dealing with Highly Resistant Clients

Clifton Mitchell, Ph.D.

Mind Management Seminars
3328 Berkshire Circle
Johnson City, TN 37604
cliftmitch@comcast.net
website: www.cliftonmitchell.com

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3 hours

Conventional Definitions of Resistance

- "Any client behavior that exhibits a reluctance, on the part of the client, to participate in the tasks of therapy as set forward by the therapist,"
- "...any behavior that indicates covert or overt opposition to the therapist, the counseling process, or the therapist's agenda," (Bischoff & Tracey, 1995, p. 488).

Alternative Perspectives: The Social Interaction Theorists

Resistance occurs as a result of a "...negative interpersonal dynamic between the therapist and the client" (Otani, 1989, p. 459).

"Resistance is defined as psychological forces aroused in the client that restrain acceptance of influence (acceptance of the counselor's suggestion) and are generated by the way the suggestion is stated and by the characteristics of the counselor stating it" (Strong and Matross, 1973, p. 26).

Resistance and Influence: Breaking the Negative Cycle

A general hierarchical list of the least forceful to most forceful methods to influence:

least forceful	completely non-directive
	indirectly suggest
	directly suggest
	provide advice/educate
	confront
most forceful	punitive force

Resistance is created when the method of delivering influence is _____ with the clients' current propensity to accept the manner in which the influence is delivered.

General Principles for Managing Resistance

Do the Unexpected _____

Slow the Pace _____

Focus on Details _____

Seek Emotionally Compelling Reasons for Change _____

Maintain an Attitude of Naïve Puzzlement _____

Treat Clients' Resistance with Respect _____

Establish Mutually Agree Upon Goals _____

Conclusion _____

All a client has to do to thwart your efforts is _____.

Adapted from King, 1992

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Email: cliftmitch@comcast.net website: www.cliftonmitchell.com

To Ask or Not to Ask, That is the Question

How to Convert Questions Into Curious Commands

Openers	Directives	Add-ons/Softeners	Object of the Inquiry
Can you (unnecessary, eliminate)	tell me describe explain summarize outline clarify share	a bit more about a little about a little more about something about the problems with something more about a little more about	your husband your childhood your medication what the move was like the move the larger picture regarding the move
Could you (unnecessary, eliminate)	talk give me give me an idea of help me to understand	something more about	what your dad said your illness your job your relationship with...

Managing "I Don't Know" Responses

Responding to "I Don't Know"

The key to responding to "I don't know" is to respond to the _____ behind the response. Examples of responses that interpret "I don't know" at face value include:

"At this moment, you are really stumped as you search for an answer."

"You really cannot think of a possible approach that you can take that appears better than what you are doing."

If client has stated "I don't know" in order to avoid revealing some threatening reality about him/herself, simply empathize about your suspicion:

"It is difficult and scary to actually say aloud the truth about..."

"You are really uncomfortable facing this aspect of your life."

If you suspect the "I don't know" is a peacekeeping deflection, then respond similarly with an understanding of this perspective.

"You are concerned that if you provide the answer it will cause a lot of controversy and conflict among your family."

"You are reluctant to tell me the answer because you worry about how I might take it."

How to Avoid "I Don't Know" Responses

1. Simply omit the question altogether. Instead, respond with the empathic statement.

Example: "I sense that you are stuck as to what to do, you have no idea how to begin doing something about your problems, and you are really searching for some new approach that might work."

Inquire of a Wise Friend

The Classic Pretend Technique

"Pretend you weren't confused, what would you be saying if you knew what you wanted."

"Make up an answer."

"Guess what you think you might say if you did know."

email: cliftmitch@comcast.net website: www.cliftonmitchell.com

NOTES

References

- Bischoff, M. M., & Tracey, T. J. G. (1995). Client resistance as predicted by therapist behavior: A study of sequential dependence. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 42*(4), 487-495.
- Otani, A. (1989). Resistance management techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D.: An application to nonhypnotic mental health counseling. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 11*(4), 325-334.
- Strong, S. R., & Matross, R. P. (1973). Change process in counseling & psychotherapy. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 20*(1), 25-37.

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Effective Techniques for Dealing with Highly Resistant Clients 2nd Ed.

Clifton W. Mitchell, Ph.D.

Hundreds of Innovative Approaches & Ideas To Prevent, Avoid, & Resolve Resistance

A to-the-point, practically written guide that brings together tangible, stress-reducing approaches and techniques for dealing with your most frustrating clients. An invaluable resource that both the working practitioner and student will turn to when seeking realistic, pragmatic ideas & strategies for overcoming stagnation & creating therapeutic movement.

"This book should have been entitled, '*Everything you didn't learn about doing therapy in graduate school and wished you had.*' It is filled with stress reducing, cutting-edge ideas for managing resistance. A highly practical, must-read for all therapists." **Bill O'Hanlon**, author of *Change 101*

"**Stop resisting and buy this book!** Simply put, it is the most practical book ever written on managing resistance. Your clients will be glad you read it!" **Scott Miller, Ph.D.**, Director, Center for Clinical Excellence

"Dr. Mitchell provides answers to the question asked by neophyte and experienced therapists in workshops and seminars, "What do I do when . . . ?" He courageously presents practical ideas and methods for helping counselors get beyond reasons for clients' resistance and avoidance. Therapists using the ideas contained in this book will meet the needs of clients efficiently and effectively. The book matches his training sessions: *unambiguously presented, eminently practical, and highly engaging.*" **Robert E. Wubbolding, Ed.D.**, Director, Center for Reality Therapy, author of *Reality Therapy for the 21st Century*, and Director of Training, The William Glasser Institute

"*...by far, the best presentation of the therapeutic relationship I've yet run across.*"

I received your book last week and am so impressed...last night during a session with my most challenging client, I experienced his resistance in a completely new way: instead of feeling like a source of frustration to me, it became a place of great therapeutic opportunity for the client. He was more vulnerable and engaged than ever and his work took on an organic "flow" which was remarkable to experience. ...your book is, by far, the best presentation of the therapeutic relationship I've yet run across. It makes me feel excited again about being a counselor and instills hope in me that I can actually help my clients change. Just wanted to say a huge THANK YOU! Best regards, **Tal Parsons**, Los Angeles, December, 2007

The next evolution in counseling

The methods I've used from this book have greatly improved my success in gaining cooperation and participation during counseling sessions. It's also relieved a lot of stress. In this book you will find a new way of viewing resistance...it is a special form of communication from the client, and when handled skillfully, it can actually be used to move therapy forward. Responding to the resistance to change is also viewed as the heart of all therapy because without it people wouldn't be in therapy in the first place. This book cuts to the chase by bypassing elaborate theory to get right to case examples that illustrate the methods and techniques described. The metaphors and excerpted quotes promote the quick understanding of the material even further. At first glance it may appear to be just a book of techniques, but it is actually a complete approach to therapy and is built on the foundation of Rogers' Person-Centered Therapy. This book also makes an excellent compliment to Miller and Rollnick's Motivational Interviewing. **D. Kirkham "Mind Explorer"**, July, 2007

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