

Checking in on our client relationships

The following activity can be used in group as a way to:

- Generate some thinking and discussion about the factors that are, or are not contributing to effective client relationships and engagement
- Analyse client interactions and identify areas for improvement

What's right in front of us?

It is easy to get bogged down when thinking about the various techniques and practice approaches we could use with clients to a) better engage with them, and b) improve our working relationships (therapeutic alliance).

Sometimes though the most effective thing we can do is to pay more attention to the things we are already doing in terms of what is working well and what isn't. While more advanced techniques and approaches can be highly effective in helping clients to make positive changes, it is the simple things e.g. how we engage, how we make people feel and how we are perceived by clients that provide us with a strong foundation.

Take for example the spirit of motivational interviewing also known as PACE which stands for Partnership, Acceptance, Compassion and Evocation. In the motivational interviewing world at least, PACE provides the foundation from which all meaningful work is undertaken.

So with PACE in mind consider the following questions:

- *When you look at each of these four words what do they mean to you?*
- *How might they be demonstrated during a client session?*
- *How are you demonstrating these qualities when you work?*
- *What would the client be doing that would tell you are using PACE?*

So before learning about some of the more advanced techniques and approaches, sometimes it pays to look at the basics first. After all you could have all of the technical skills in the world but if you come across as cold or disingenuous to your clients, chances are you will get nowhere fast!

Complete the following activity to really consider how you are addressing the foundational aspects of the work you do with clients.

Remember sometimes the most obvious things are right in front of us which can often make them difficult to see.

What am I doing? What are my clients doing?

<p><i>What I am doing that either positively or negatively affects the way I engage and relate to clients?</i></p>	<p><i>What are my clients doing that tells me I'm positively or negatively engaging and relating with them?</i></p>
<p><i>E.g. I smile, make eye contact and greet my clients when I start a session</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. My clients smile back and feel at ease at the beginning of a session</i></p>
<p>Considering the above...</p> <p><i>What changes could I make that would benefit how I engage and/or my client relationships?</i></p>	

Ask yourself the following questions upon completing the above activity:

- *What was it like going through this process?*
- *What insights into your own behaviour and the behaviour of others came about from doing this activity?*
- *What possible solutions or changes are you now thinking about as a result?*

Make the most of your interactions with offenders. Would you like to effectively engage with offenders in group, work to best practice and ultimately help offenders to make positive changes?

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