

Therapeutic Communication

David S. Prescott, LICSW

Focus

- ▶ Review History
- ▶ Discuss Motivation
- ▶ Introduce the importance of feedback

Take-home message

- ▶ Motivation = internal/contextual, never forced, client makes the case for change
- ▶ Goals = approachable
- ▶ Alliance = routinely seen from the client's perspective.
 - Ongoing, structured feedback
- ▶ These elements are vital

Thank you, Mike Miner!



Conclusions

- ▶ There is more than one Mike Miner
- ▶ I am grateful to them all
- ▶ More research is needed

How did we get here?

- ▶ Quick look backwards
- ▶ Great respect for all involved
- ▶ Intent: Tough on issues, tender on people
 - *People are not now as smart as they think; people used to be smarter than we now think they were* (Quinsey, Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 2006)

My concern

- ▶ During the past 30 years, the majority of our progress has been technical in nature



In the beginning...



*Speech is a mirror
of the soul: as a
person speaks, so is
s/he*

– Publilius Syrus, 100 BC

17th century: Pascal's Pensees

"People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they have themselves discovered, than by those which have come into the mind of others."

Martinson, 1974

...t the size and probable duration of this effect; as of now
ly do not know.

Does nothing work?

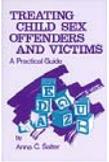
*Do all of these studies lead us irrevocably to the conclu
nothing works, that we haven't the faintest clue about ho
bilitate offenders and reduce recidivism? And if so, what*

1979: Edward S. Bordin



- ▶ Therapeutic alliance:
 - Agreement on relationship
 - Agreement on goals
 - Agreement on tasks
 - (Norcross, 2002, would add client preferences)
- Over 1,000 studies have emphasized the importance of the alliance in psychotherapy since (Orlinsky, 1994)

Salter, 1988 (p. 93)



- ▶ (T)he process of treating child sex offenders is heavily weighted in the direction of confrontation. Treatment requires continual confrontation.
- ▶ *No I don't trust you and you would be pretty foolish to trust yourself.*
- ▶ *Give me a break. What do you mean one drink can't do any harm?*
- ▶ However, later says that treatment should not be hostile. How do we reconcile this?

Sexual offender treatment programs

- ▶ Furby, Weinrott, & Bradshaw (1989):
 - No significant treatment effect due to methodology variability.
- ▶ Hanson, R. K., Gordon, A., Harris, A. J. R., Marques, J. K., Murphy, W., Quinsey, V. L., & Seto, M. C. (2002).
 - 17% untreated
 - 10% treated
 - Equivalent to a 40% reduction
 - Youth do best with community treatment
- ▶ Lösel, F., & Schmucker, M. (2005).
 - Re-offense reduced by nearly 40%

1998

Psychology, Public Policy, and Law
1998, Vol. 4, No. 1/2, 218-235

Copyright 1998 by the American Psychological Association.
1076-8971/98/\$

THE CONTAINMENT APPROACH: An Aggressive Strategy for the Community Management of Adult Sex Offenders

Kim English
Colorado Division of Criminal Justice

Most convicted adult sex offenders remain or return to the community. This article

English, Pullen, & Jones, 1999

- ▶ Five-part model containment process
- ▶ *In this approach to sex offender management, the client is the community. Under this philosophy, treatment and supervision modalities give priority to community protection and victim safety.*

Hope Theory, 1999



- C.R. "Rick" Snyder:
- Agency Thinking
 - Awareness that a goal is attainable
- Pathways Thinking
 - Awareness of how to do it
- *"Therapists who are burned out or otherwise fail to convey hopefulness model low agency and pathways thinking."* (in Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999)

2005: The SOTEP RCT

- ▶ No overall differences between treated and untreated groups, but:
- ▶ Sex offenders who successfully completed the SOTEP treatment program reoffended at lower rates than those who did not demonstrate that they “got it” (Marques, Wiederanders, Day, Nelson, & van Ommeren, 2005).

Marshall, 2005

- ▶ Warm
- ▶ Empathic
- ▶ Rewarding
- ▶ Directive



Problem: Many people think they have these qualities, but don't

Parhar, Wormith, et al., 2008

- ▶ Meta-analysis of 129 studies
- ▶ *In general, mandated treatment was found to be ineffective ... particularly when the treatment was located in custodial settings, whereas voluntary treatment produced significant treatment effect sizes regardless of setting.*



2011

- ▶ Attorney Larni Levi (SOMC-list)
- ▶ *In Massachusetts, offenders are required to sign what's called a Lamb Warning informing the individual that anything he says during treatment can be used against him.*

2012



- ▶ http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/csot/csot_difference.shtm
- ▶ The most prominent difference is that the primary client in sex offender treatment is the community and the goal of treatment is **NO MORE VICTIMS**. With sex offender treatment, community safety takes precedence over any conflicting consideration...

2012 continued



- ▶ Sex offender treatment is different than traditional psychotherapy in that treatment is mandated structured, victim centered, and the treatment provider imposes values and limits. Providers cannot remain neutral because of the risk of colluding with, adding to, and/or contributing to the offender's denial. In sex offender treatment, confidentiality is not maintained due to the enormous public safety issues.

These days

- ▶ We know better
- ▶ We do worse

2007-12




- ▶ Wilson, Cortoni, et al.
- ▶ Collaborative risk management, RNR principles, & holistic community aftercare can contribute to reduced re-offense
- ▶ Motivation varied across subgroups
- ▶ Illustrates need for post-institution community follow-up
 - Goal of "balanced, self-determined lifestyle"
 - (Similar to NewStart program in Saskatchewan)

Motivational Interviewing

2002: Best-known Definition

Motivational interviewing is a person-centered, directive method of communication for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence.




Steve Rollnick, 2/28/10



- ▶ *Motivational interviewing involves helping patients to say why and how they might change, and is based on the use of a guiding style*
- ▶ Mission critical: The client makes the case for change.
 - This is easily forgotten in sexual offender treatment

Motivational Interviewing

- ▶ In widespread use around the world
- ▶ But.....
- ▶ Hettema, Steele, & Miller, 2005:
 - ▶ *Observed effect sizes of MI were larger... when the practice of MI was not manual-guided.*

Discussion

- ▶ Offer
- ▶ Explore

Beyond offer/explore

- ▶ The importance of feedback:
- ▶ Therapists are only as effective as their clients believe them to be
- ▶ We are effective as a group of professionals
- ▶ We are not as effective individually as we believe we are

Walfish et al 2012

- No differences in how clinicians rated their overall skill level and effectiveness levels between disciplines.
- On average, clinicians rated themselves at the 80th percentile
- Less than 4% considered themselves average
- No one rated themselves below average
- Only 8% rated themselves lower than the 75th percentile
- 25% rated their performance at the 90th or higher compared to their peers

Dirty little secrets

- ▶ ... from outcome studies
 - More difference between the best and the worst therapists **within** any treatment method, than there is **between** treatment methods
 - Some therapists are better than others
 - Hiatt & Hargrave (1995) asked therapists to estimate their effectiveness in a treatment study
 - The LEAST effective therapists rated themselves as being among the most helpful

Wampold & Brown, 2005

- ▶ 581 therapists
- ▶ 6,146 real world clients
- ▶ Average sessions = 10
- ▶ 46% depression, 30% adjustment disorder, 11% anxiety, plus other diagnoses
- ▶ Who got the best outcomes?
 - Training makes no difference
 - Profession makes no difference
 - EXPERIENCE makes no difference
 - Diagnosis makes no difference



How can we get better?

Routine, structured feedback

Example

- ▶ Anker, Duncan, & Sparks (2009) in JCCP
- ▶ Couples therapy (n = 410)
- ▶ Feedback condition
 - nearly 4 times the rate of clinically significant change
 - maintained a significant advantage at 6-month follow-up while attaining a significantly lower rate of separation or divorce.



Miller, Duncan, et al. 2006

- ▶ 75 therapists and 6,424 clients over two years
- ▶ Formal, ongoing feedback about the alliance and progress in treatment resulted in significant improvements
 - client retention and outcome
- ▶ Clients of therapists who did not seek feedback regarding the alliance were three times less likely to return for a second session and had significantly poorer outcomes

Core Message

- ▶ We can make our communities safer by building healthier lives for all

The key

- ▶ Treatment means building willing partners in change.

The safest sex offender

- ▶ Someone who has a place to live
- ▶ connected to support people to which he or she is accountable,
- ▶ has work
- ▶ has everything to lose by repeating a sexual assault.
- ▶ Gwenda Willis, personal communication, August 2012

Thank you!

- ▶ David S. Prescott, LICSW
- ▶ Director of Professional Development and Quality Improvement, Becket Family of Services
- ▶ www.davidprescott.net