



Module Eight
DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CLIENTS
ACCREDITEDHEALTHCOACHING.COM.AU



Causes of discord in Coaching
Module 8 - Topic 1



Coaching:
When do things go wrong and how do we know?

Take note of client's responses

- Energy changes
- Disengage
- Defensive
- Body language is closed/defensive, eyes averted
- Verbal communication is argumentative, interrupting, aggressive, or client creates diversions, maybe even agrees (but you feel the disconnect)

Discord

“Signs of disharmony in your collaborative relationship”
Miller & Rollnick, 2013

Discord is a normal human response from our clients when they feel we are pressuring them to take action when they are not ready. It often comes in the form of a "yes, but" statement.

Question & answers



- Too many questions!
- Feel interrogated
- HP becomes expert, driving the agenda and priorities
- Client feels passive, judged and uncomfortable
- Feel defensive- more sustain talk

Have you.. could you..why don't you..



- Offering unsolicited advice
- Telling the client what has worked for us
- Gives the impression you are the expert of the clients problem and 'perfect'
- Client feels you can't relate to them
- Pushes client into passive role
- Could result from differing opinions on priorities or methods of change

Scare tactics

- Warn clients about negative consequences
- Dangers of current health choices
- Frightens or shames the client
- Client's focus is on dealing with fear- defensive
- Client may have a belief that the solution being offered is ineffective- not productive



Moving towards change too quickly



- We could accidentally push someone too quickly towards change
- Talk about the how-to's
- Eager to share our ideas!
- Not ready to change they will respond with sustain talk
- Some clients seem to want the how to's. 'I know I need to eat better, give me a meal plan, tell me what to do.' BUT this reinforces a passive role

Information overload



- They might not come back so you tell them everything at once
- More is better, right?
- Long lists of behaviours = unlikely to succeed
- Need motivation not information!
- As they feel overwhelmed they come up with more sustain talk

Cheerleading



- Sends a message about what defines success - client feels there is pass/fail- less likely to share where they are struggling
- Client begins to make changes to please their HP
- Cheerleading the change talk means client starts to express more sustain talk


Past experiences

- Come in angry/resigned/defensive!
- Could be a result of previous experiences – HPs, previous efforts in trying to change, family/friend's opinions
- Expectations and role of the coach are unclear - what you do, what you expect them to do



Managing discord and resistance

Module 8 - Topic 2




How do we fix it when it does go wrong?

WWW.ACCREDITEDHEALTHCOACHING.COM.AU

Decreasing Discord

How do you decrease discord if it happens throughout your consultations?

- Emphasise autonomy
- Shift focus
- Apologise
- Reframe
- Affirm
- Re-engage
- Partnership/Collaboration



Key skills

- Reflections and Summaries
Present their statements back to them to help them clarify, see both sides,
- Open ended questions:
Curiosity to understand their perspective, what they already know, what's important to them, what their priorities are
- Affirming
Affirm strengths, efforts

Decreasing Discord

- Autonomy:
'I'm here to support you'
- Re-engage:
'Help me understand where you are coming from'
'Yes I haven't been in your shoes, tell me what it's like?'

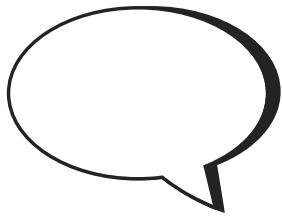
Decreasing Discord

- Shift focus:
'Would you like to park this for now?'
'What's important for you? What would you like to talk about/focus on?'
- Apologise:
'I'm sorry, I think I we may have gotten off on the wrong foot'
'I feel that maybe I have taken over/started giving advice..'

Decreasing Discord

- Affirm:
'How could you possibly understand?'
'You've had a lot of experiences, there's a lot you've had to overcome'
- Reframe:
'I hate being told I can't eat whatever I want'
'It's tough having to make food choices all the time'

Offer information and advice



Enquire

- What has your client already considered?
- What do they already know or do?
- What are they currently thinking might work?

Based on your client's answers you can then decide if your advice is still required.

2. Offer.

Ask for permission to offer some advice.

- For example you might say "Could I offer a suggestion here?". "I have some ideas, would you like me to share them with you?". "Would you like me to explain what I know in this area"

If they agree, remember to ensure the information you offer is in bite size pieces, pitched at their level of understanding.

3. Enquire.

Check in after offering your advice to see if your client found it useful. You can ask what they took away as important, what they might use, how it may help them to change their behaviour.

Key elements for dealing with discord

We can prevent or remedy discord by expressing empathy, supporting client autonomy, partnership and collaboration.

When you hear discord, reflective listening helps to diffuse hostility.

When you hear discord here's what you can do instead....




Moving towards change too quickly



- Find out what the client already knows and what they have been thinking of doing
- Understand their stage of change- explore importance and confidence
- Provide client with what they need, when they need it.

ACCREDITEDHEALTHCOACHING.COM.AU

Question- answers



- Consider what information you really need
- Open ended questions and reflections engage the client, letting them talk about what is important and their priorities
- Invite client to talk about what is going well and areas for improvement
- Tell me about your..... (diabetes/eating habits..)
- What do you think is going well/positive aspects of the current situation?
- What isn't going so well/negative aspects of the current situation?

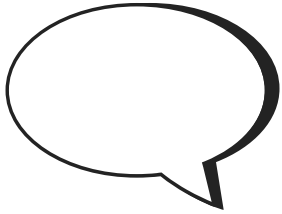
Scare tactics

- Find out what the client knows and what concerns they have (about negative consequences)
- Emphasise autonomy- they don't have to change
- Know that you are not responsible for the clients choices



ACCREDITEDHEALTHCOACHING.COM.AU

Have you.. could you..why don't you..



When you are tempted to offer unsolicited advice:

- Remember client is the expert in their own life
- Encourage clients to come up with their own solutions
- Explore change talk, affirm strengths
- Ask permission to share

ACCREDITEDHEALTHCOACHING.COM.AU

Information overload

- Find out what the client already knows and what they would like to know- offer before giving advice
- Check in , express empathy, allow client to choose topic (autonomy)
- Able to provide client with what they need, when they need it.



ACCREDITEDHEALTHCOACHING.COM.AU

Cheerleading

Instead: affirm client to build self efficacy and intrinsic motivation

- 'You've taken steps to .., that's something to be proud of'
- 'You feel good about the changes you've been able to make.'
- 'You've noticed you feel better when you... and that's making you feel like you can do this!'



ACCREDITEDHEALTHCOACHING.COM.AU

Past experiences

Establish the ground rules upfront- clarify expectations, how your approach is different

How do you:

- Introduce yourself
- Explain your role and why is your approach different to others
- Clarify patient expectations

Not everyone is ready to change

Pre-contemplative clients can be challenging- angry/ disinterested/denial/unaware/unwilling/resentful BUT Time spent with pre-contemplative clients is never wasted!

We can guide them closer to thinking about change- significant change to move them from denial or no possibility.

All of your OARS are key skills to help you evoke change talk and minimise sustain talk

