

Background

As trainers we recognise budgets are tight and that we make demands on the time of the professionals who attend these courses, so it is important for us to understand whether the skills in the course are relevant (and are some more so than others) to the everyday work you do.

This "research" has shifted the emphasis on elements of the course and the results from the latest analysis of your responses have added to our understanding of what works best for you.

Over the last 3 years 52 people have attended one or other of these two courses. They contain essentially the same skills whether we "MEDIATE" formally between people in conflict or "facilitate" informally to help people change their behaviour towards themselves or neighbours. The underlying skills and approach are the same the only difference is that in training a mediator, time is spent on the mediation process and how to manage it.

Questionnaire

The skills in the course we asked you to rank were as follows.

The Approach	It's their problem, not yours: being a facilitator not a problem solver, helping clients to solve their own problems.
Conflict	How we respond to a perceived threat, automatically, without thinking. Allow 5 mins for adrenalin & cortisone to flush out of the system – time for the brain to engage.
Transactional Analysis	Parent / Adult / Child language, not talking down to clients but engaging them like adults to consider their problem not react to the other person.
Motivational Interviewing	Helping Clients to decide for themselves to change their behaviour "What's good about What's not so good about", "Would it be OK to talk about ..." "What would help you to make a change to"
Active Listening	Summarising "I think you were saying that have I got that right?", Normalising " many people find that difficult", Empathising "I can tell this is difficult for you", Encouraging "You mentioned Could you tell me more about that?"
Ask, Suggest, Tell	Ask open ended questions first to get the client to think; if they don't see an answer, make a Suggestion as a question "If you were to what would you think about that?" If possible never Tell anyone anything – they will reject it as a threat.
Open Ended Questions	What, When, How. "What would you say is the problem then? Communication or respect, what do you think?" (Not Why - it can sound judgemental)
Reality Checking	Question sequence if Clients make impossible demands. "What would you like to happen?And how likely do you think that is?So what else do you think might be possible?"

So far 27 of a possible 47 people have responded - 5 people have left their jobs and one team are doing a combined report, so we will update this in the future. The respondent's roles covered Housing Options, Housing Support, Youth Homeless Prevention, Anti-Social Behaviour & Ex-Prisoner Support.

Some of you gave a differential ranking, that is allocating each element a different usefulness and some didn't, allocating the same usefulness score to more than one element.

Analysis Overall

The Approach – whereby you switch from “problem solver” mode to “solution facilitator” seems to have had the most positive effect - releasing you from the stress of having to take on to your shoulders what are other people’s problems, largely created by themselves. By helping them to solve the problem, using the questioning techniques covered in the course, you are also able to pass on a skill so the client is more able to complete the task themselves next time.

That is also reflected in the ranking for Motivational Interviewing, the NHS technique whereby addicts learn how to decide whether their behaviour is positive and if not, when and how to change what they do.

<u>All</u>		<u>Preference</u>		<u>No Preference</u>	
1.2	Approach	1.3	Approach	1.0	Approach
2.4	Motivational Interviewing	3.8	Motivational Interviewing	1.0	Motivational Interviewing
2.8	Active Listening	3.8	Active Listening	1.0	Reality Checking
3.0	Reality Checking	4.7	Ask, Suggest, Tell	1.3	Transactional Analysis
3.1	Open Ended Questions	4.8	Open Ended Questions	1.3	Open Ended Questions
3.2	Ask, Suggest, Tell	5.0	Reality Checking	1.7	Ask, Suggest, Tell
3.8	Transactional Analysis	6.2	Transactional Analysis	1.8	Active Listening
4.2	Conflict	6.3	Conflict	2.0	Conflict

“Options” vs “Support”

Thereafter the differences are relatively small, but seem to reflect that in the main those of you who have extended contact with a client tend to rank the 8 elements as almost equally useful.

Where your contact with a client is shorter, the ranking seems to follow a logic around your interaction –

- 🌟 The Facilitators Approach stops you taking their problem on your shoulders as problem solver.
- 🌟 Motivational Interviewing allows the Client to identify the positives and negatives about their existing behaviours and future options quickly and so retain self-determination and self-interest.
- 🌟 Active Listening allows you to get the maximum information in the shortest time and helps to create some level of relationship, based on being “heard” and understood.
- 🌟 Reality Checking – the ability to confront a client, respectfully but firmly, when their demands are unreasonable, so they determine a more realistic outcome with which they see as reasonable.

Other elements then seem to be helpful to have in your back pockets, being useful from time to time with different Clients.

Those of you in longer relationships with clients, offering extended support will almost certainly have more occasion to use all of the skills on a more regular basis.

This would be true whether you are working with a family through a series of youth homelessness prevention discussions, or helping an ex-prisoner manage their habits and their return to a life outside or working with someone whose mental state makes their life chaotic and difficult to predict.

Verbatim Comments

These were interesting and we have included some of them here as they highlight different aspects of what seems to work well.

“Due to the service users I work with they require the worker to be in parent mode. It is difficult to change their mind set due to their being institutionalised.”

This reference to the Parental Transactional Analysis state would be really interesting to follow up after several months with one or more Clients, to see whether they were able to develop the self-confidence (?) to adopt a more adult state of mind – or whether that may be asking too much.

"I found The Approach most useful. I was the problem solver and the amount of work and stress this caused me could be overwhelming at times. Acting as the facilitator has taken away a lot of the pressures I felt to get things done. At the same time it gives the service user responsibility and can help them to think about what it is they want and how it might be achieved. "

This reflects many of your comments and is pleasing because in the early days of these courses we didn't emphasize this.

In retrospect it is blindingly obvious that we should have done.

"I found every aspect of the training very useful. It is one training course that won't leave me and I feel that it has had a very positive impact on our team and our tenants."

This reflects an underlying objective of the course, which is to facilitate communication within your own team. Some of you work closely together, others don't have the opportunity, so having a common understanding is important in making your internal communications more productive and satisfying.

"I found the Approach particularly useful with parents and adolescents. As facilitator I wasn't on anyone's side and the young people found the idea of someone who wouldn't judge them helpful and unusual. I have also used that hand signal of giving people back the responsibility for their decisions and that seems to reinforce my independent role. "

Working with different generations can be a nightmare of misunderstandings and negative attributions and both age groups will try to get you on their side. Emphasising your independence / non-judgemental role will help to remind them it is their lives and they should be the ones taking the responsibility for making decisions about them.

Summary



We will update this as further comments come in, but my guess is the balance won't change all that much.

So thanks to everyone for taking the time to help us.

