

Working With Resistance

Engagement

Talk about what has been working for you as you meet with families. What are your needs? If you are ready to improve your skills in working with resistance, this guide can support you as you assess and plan.

Explore:

When you think about working with resistance, what are your strengths?
 What improvements would you like to make in your ability to work with resistance?

Assessment

Scaling:

On a scale of 1 (need to learn) to 10 (can mentor), where would you place yourself?
 (Record on the Functional Assessment.)



Scaling Continuum:

<u>Learning</u> Learning the Skills	<u>Working</u> Using the Skills with Families	<u>Mentoring</u> Using the Skills to Mentor
1. Recognize the indicators and cues of resistance.	1. Support families in recognizing the indicators and cues of resistance.	1. Recognize indicators and cues of resistance in mentoring, casework, and with families.
2. Manage own emotions in working through areas of personal resistance.	2. Manage own emotions when working with a family who is working through resistance	2. Support and coach workers through working with families dealing with issues of resistance.
3. Get to the underlying needs behind personal resistance.	3. Get to the underlying needs behind families resistance.	3. Support and coach workers through helping families identify the underlying needs behind resistance.

<u>Learning</u> Learning the Skills	<u>Working</u> Using the Skills with Families	<u>Mentoring</u> Using the Skills to Mentor
4. Accept reflection around personal issues of resistance.	4. Reflect forms of resistance back to families and allow silence as a tool to listen and observe.	4. Support workers in learning to reflect forms of resistance back to families and use silence as a tool to listen and observe.
	5. Use active listening as a tool to clarify issues.	

Planning

1. What will it look like when you are able to work through resistance as you would wish?
2. What steps can you take that will lead to the desired result?

Practice Opportunities

Mentor with Caseworker	Caseworker with Family	Family with Family
Use the handout "Steps For Working With Resistance Worksheet" for working through resistance with caseworker.	Use the handout "Steps For Working With Resistance Worksheet" for working through resistance with families.	Support the family in using the handout "Steps For Working With Resistance Worksheet" for working through resistance with a child or other family member.
Combine this skill set with Working on Change skill set to show how resistance and change interact.	Work with families on resistance and change together to show how change often creates resistances.	Coach family through dealing with a child's resistance as they are being asked to make changes.

Knowledge Base

Concept:

Identifying and working through resistance and getting to the underlying needs behind resistance

Basic Elements:

Steps for working with resistance
Hostility/anger

Avoidance
Passivity
Recognizing the cues
Manage your emotions and reactions
Reflect the form of resistance
Active listening and empathic reflection

Definitions:

Steps for working with resistance

Working with the steps of resistance helps caseworkers understand the natural and expected responses from resistance. Resistance is a predictable and natural emotional reaction to feeling forced to change and to face difficult issues. Resistance occurs as a response to feeling vulnerable, out of control, and threatened by change. There are three major patterns of resistant behavior: hostility/anger, avoidance, and passivity.

Hostility/anger

Anger and hostility may present in such ways as, "We don't need you in our lives," "The sooner you are gone the better," refusing to let the caseworker in the house, yelling, refusing to do what the caseworker suggests, verbal threats, and aggressive posturing.

Avoidance

Avoidance resistance may include false compliance or pressing for solutions, flooding you with details or light to health ("I'm totally recovered and you can get out of my life").

Passivity

Examples of passive resistance may include silence, excuses, rationalizing, or denial.

Recognize the cues

Identify the form of resistance. Also identify the emotions you feel in reaction to the form of resistance. Be aware of the nonverbal messages and the messages heard in the person's voice. Trust your own feelings and accept them as a cue to the possibility that you are encountering resistance.

Manage your emotions and reactions

Examine your emotions and select ways you can manage them effectively. For example, remind yourself resistance is a normal response to the process of change. Do not take the expression of resistance personally. Identify the positive intent or the benefit to the person for experiencing the resistance.

Reflect the form of resistance

Use reflection to state in a neutral way the form of resistance you are seeing and hearing. Make your statement succinct and genuine. Use "I messages" such as,

“When I ask about the affect of your drinking on the children, I notice you change the subject.” Then fall silent and allow this reflection to “echo” for them.

Active listening and empathic reflection

Now is the time to be quiet and help the person more clearly discuss their feelings of vulnerability or their concerns about control. Use your empathy, active listening, attending, reframing, and clarification, which will enable the person to explore their vulnerability. For example, “If it were true that your drinking has had a negative affect on your child, what would that mean to you?” Explore the stages of change, especially Stage 2--Endings, to help them and you understand some of the feelings of vulnerability and losses being experienced.