



## Additional Key Thoughts to Always Keep in Mind:

Keep **INSIGHT** and **MOTIVATION** on your radar at all times: Referring back to the concept of a [Change Initiative](#), it is important to *continuously assess Insight and Motivation levels*. This is true whether you are in conducting an intake or doing an individual or family session or running a group. Keep the most fundamental rule of the Escalator in mind at all times:

### Insight and Motivation Drive Change



Remember, the idea behind a Change Initiative is that it is a simple, real-time measure for clinicians to adjust their strategies appropriately, based on our clients' frequently varying insight and motivation levels. Even when running a group in which insight and motivation may differ greatly among members, any given group may have a prevailing "collective" insight and motivation level that can be assessed or at least estimated. For example, if the group as a whole seems to be listening and catching on with the topic you are covering and group members are appropriately making personal application of the information in their comments, then the group, as a whole is demonstrating a degree of insight and motivation. To the contrary if the group is argumentative, defensive, or persistently contradicting the information being provided by saying how it does not apply, then the group overall is demonstrating lower insight and is probably less motivated. If the group tends to be demonstrating some action toward positive change goals then that would indicate a degree of internal motivation. If the group as a whole seems to be concerned with external factors such as legal issues or family pressure, or if there seems to be an overall connection with positive supports, then the group in a general sense is demonstrating external motivation. From day to day and week to week the collective group change initiative can vary. For example, just one well-respected, well-liked group member who tends to be more motivated and insightful can have a huge positive influence on the rest of the group. Conversely, a negative but influential group member can steer the overall "vibe" of the group toward a more negative direction.





Also, in addition to the collective sense of a group change initiative that the group as a whole seems to exhibit, each individual group member has their own unique and variable personal change initiative. In the spirit of the counselor “knowing their audience” it is important to have a working awareness and estimation of each individual group member’s change initiative. By remaining attuned to each group member’s insight and motivation levels, the counselor can adjust his or her individualized approach to each member accordingly. For instance, when the counselor is aware of the more insightful and more motivated clients in the group setting, he or she can skillfully utilize and encourage these clients to help less insightful, less motivated clients either directly or indirectly through their positive example. In turn, these more motivated/insightful clients can sustain and increase their own motivation and progress through helping others and through the encouragement that comes along being recognized for doing the right thing. This exchange in a large way is what can make group therapy so effective and inspirational for all involved.

### **Know yourself...and know your audience**

*-Tennessee Ernie Ford*



Obviously when a group is truly mixed from a motivational and insight-based perspective then three guidelines should be followed by the group facilitator. First, if the group has an extreme variance with regard to group members’ insight and motivation levels then the counselor should be prepared to quickly vary his or her tools and strategies appropriately as needed. As one would expect, clients with different insight and motivation levels respond to group activities in different ways. Therefore the counselor may elect to judiciously mix and match various group activities to help the largest possible amount of clients. The counselor needs to be flexible with regard to adapting his or approach accordingly which is a theme throughout this book and throughout the entire Escalator method. The second strategy in groups with mixed motivational and insight-based client perspectives is to strategically utilize the more insightful and motivated group members to set the example and help those in the group with lower levels of insight and motivation as we discussed in the previous paragraph. Finally, when working with a group that has a high degree of variation with regard to motivation and insight, the counselor should also focus on varying his or her delivery from client to client, addressing each client in a way that corresponds to that client’s specific insight and motivation level. For example, once again from the perspective of “knowing your audience”, the counselor may elect to be more forward and directive with a motivated/insightful client with whom there is a stronger rapport while using more caution and carefully-chosen words when addressing a newer, less-insightful/less-motivated client. Obviously it is important to treat all group members with fairness and with respect at all times. But to put this last idea into perspective, consider the way an adult would address a group of children from varying ages. While maintaining a level of respect and courtesy toward all in the group, the adult running this varied age group would likely speak slightly differently when addressing a 5 year old child in the group as compared to the way the adult would directly address an advanced teenager in the group setting. This is clearly based on the obvious difference in



comprehension levels, knowledge, skill level, experience and understanding when comparing a 5 year old to a much older teenager. This same principle is true when it comes to any group of individuals with various insight and motivation levels, as the counselor should also be prepared to adjust and adapt his or her approach and delivery for each client based on that client's needs at any given time.



Almost every problem faced in therapy can be viewed and defined in terms of insight and motivation. At times our clients may not be getting better because they lack awareness or are resistant to accepting a difficult to face reality. If that is the case, our efforts as counselors, based on the Escalator method would need to be insight-based. Quite often our clients really do know what they need to do to get better and they may even say that they want change but often transferring that into action can be a quite a challenge. Obviously then, counselors in this second situation would want to focus on helping these clients increase internal motivation. Finally, when our clients struggle due to a lack of support or a lack of a needed “push” from the outside to help them start or sustain the change process, then we need to focus in therapy on external motivation. Insight, internal motivation, and external motivation drive change and therefore are enduring indispensable factors with regard to how we work with our clients.

As we remain open minded, focused and aware of our clients' insight-based and motivational needs on a session by session basis it is important to have the tools at hand needed to readily help them. The Escalator method provides a multitude of counseling tools in all three areas: insight, internal motivation, and external motivation. Use these free tools to your advantage for your practice. They are available for download at by clicking the link below:



<http://www.takingtheescalator.com/therapy-tools>

**FAMILY INVOLVMENT** – The importance of family involvement is well known however at times it is underutilized. Getting families involved can be a real challenge especially when there is a high level of dysfunction and family discord. However, the extra work put in by a counselor on the front end by making an effort to get the family involved often pays off later. When working with adults, family involvement is a choice, however it should be encouraged as a general rule. In fact, a comfortable way to encourage family involvement is to let your client know that he or she has an “open invitation” to bring others to your individual sessions without needing to ask for permission. This can ease the



tension for the client who otherwise may feel he or she needs some special arrangements in order to bring someone to their session. It forces you, the counselor, to be on your toes as there may be anyone in the waiting room when you go to get your client. But once again, it is worth it because this open approach to family involvement can increase the likelihood of family attendance. In addition, family involvement should not just be limited to family. It can be helpful at times, for your client to bring their significant other or close friends as well. Often some counselors allow unnecessary worries about confidentiality forms to get in the way. In most states, legally if the client brings someone to participate in a session, even if there is not a signed consent form, the law of “implied consent” would apply. The implied consent rule indicates that when a client voluntarily and knowingly brings someone with them to a session this implies that they are giving consent to that person participating in the session as evidenced by their actions. Obviously, in group settings, family cannot show up unexpectedly due to the confidentiality of the other group members. However, it is highly likely that any group program will increase its positive outcomes when scheduled “family nights” are in place or when specific family groups are integrated into the overall program schedule. It is important to try to create a culture in group programs in which having family attend the family night group is valued by group participants. Family nights thus should be entertaining and engaging



There are many advantages to encouraging family involvement in treatment. Here are a just a few benefits:

- *Increased Engagement* - Engaging the family often increases client retention rates in treatment. Also when managed skillfully, the relationship with the client is often closer when one knows his or her family members even in situations where there is family conflict.
- *Information and Perspective Sharing* – Families can provide so much valuable information about our clients both directly and indirectly as we observe family dynamics and communication patterns.
- *External Motivation and Support* – Families are so often key supports for our clients in their change process. Families can be provide strong incentives for positive change. Both of these factors can significantly bolster a client’s internal and external motivation
- *Safety and Risk Management* – When a client has a history of risk behaviors, the client’s family can be such a valuable asset with regard to helping monitor and stabilize these safety issues. In fact, when working with high risk cases, it can be lifesaving for a counselor to really push for some form of family involvement in treatment.



**FOLLOW UP** – Similar to family involvement, follow up is more work for the counselor on the front end but it leads to less work later and it significantly impacts client retention rates in a positive manner. Following up with clients with that extra phone call or text can be a huge aspect of engagement. Following up with documentation is also an essential aspect of risk management. When working with more challenging types of clients, it is often unreasonable to expect these individuals to behave in a responsible and accountable manner. Reminder calls and texts and other follow up check-ins (particularly during periods of higher risk, like when our clients are actively using or having increased mental health struggles) can be critical in both with regard to engagement and risk management. Follow up calls to family, collateral sources and referral sources is also a critical part of helping to enhance external motivation and support. Obviously if a client or family calls too often it is reasonable to set boundaries and limits. But if you, as a counselor, want to enhance your ability to engage challenging clients it is much better to be accessible and concerned as opposed to hard to reach or aloof. Efforts to be mindful of the need to follow up can help bridge the gap with resistant clients because it shows we care. Even using our colleagues to follow up on our day off with a client who is going through a hard time can be extremely helpful and can make a positive impact on our clients and families we work with.



**USING YOUR OWN STRENGTHS and ASSETS**- Remember as we discussed earlier: Consider how you can emphasize your own strengths and talents as well as the strengths and talents of those who you may be working with. Are you skilled or talented in art? Music? Do you have a hobby or an area of knowledge that you can incorporate into therapy? Use what you have as well as what others in your work setting may have available. If you or your coworkers have special talents, skills or connections by all means consider incorporating these in an engaging way with your clients. This is important to keep in minds as our hobbies, talents and skills grow and change with time.





**REMAIN A SOURCE OF HOPE** – This was stated earlier however it is worth repeating because of its importance. Hopelessness can be contagious and it can reach epidemic-like proportions. Really, just about everyone can use a little more hope. It is essential to recharge our proverbial battery each day as counselors so we can be a source of hope for our clients. Our clients will keep coming back for that small ray of hopeful light shining through dark times if we can maintain our hope and optimism for our clients and share that light with them regularly. Our own self-care, spirituality and sense of purpose are all important if we want to remain a source of hope that does not grow dim with time. Also, the positive, mutually- supportive relationships we maintain with our coworkers and supervisors is essential to this process. Keeping a sense of humor around the workplace indirectly also helps keep the counseling staff from descending into a negative pit of burnout that can erode the positive and hopeful atmosphere we want to continuously maintain for our clients.



**“GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE”**– This simple phrase is such an effective little tool that can be used over and over again repeatedly. One of the best ways to increase our understanding of a situation is to simply say, “*Give me an example.*” Some examples using this effective probing phrase are listed below. In each one, the therapist can learn a great deal more simply by uttering “give me an example” That simple phrase is one of the best yet most smooth and straightforward ways to get our clients opening up, elaborating and explaining things which in turn greatly increases our understanding of a situation. In each example below, consider how this short phrase would pave the way to the client providing much more helpful detail:

- Client: “My husband treats me like garbage, I really don’t think he loves me” – Therapist – “Give me an example”
- Client: “I think I may be depressed but not the same way everyone else feels depressed. My depression comes on in weird ways and at strange times” – Therapist – “Give me an example”
- Client: “When it comes to relationships, I feel lost, it’s difficult to explain” Therapist: Give me an example

When you read each one above, it is easy to imagine the rich and meaningful information then provided by the client. “Give me an example” is such a simple yet effective probe which often ends up being an excellent doorway to empathy and understanding.