



## PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING CLIENTS IN SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT

[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#) – Summary Below:

---

### Substance Use Treatment Evolution

#### Shift from Abstinence-Only to Harm Reduction

- The conversation highlights a major shift in addiction treatment:
  - **Early 2000s:** Treatment was **12-step-focused** and **abstinence-based**.
  - **Present Day:** Greater acceptance of **harm reduction** approaches.
- Harm reduction is about **meeting patients where they are** instead of enforcing a strict "all-or-nothing" model. Accepting incremental progress and change

#### Why Harm Reduction Became Necessary

- The **opioid crisis** and later the **fentanyl epidemic** changed the landscape.
  - Many overdose deaths, including among **affluent and powerful families**, forced a reevaluation of treatment methods.
  - **Old mindset:** If a patient wasn't fully committed to quitting, they were **kicked out of treatment**.
  - **New approach:** Engage people in **incremental progress** rather than demanding immediate, total sobriety.
- 

### Concrete Differences in Treatment Approaches

- Previously, **smoking marijuana** while in opiate recovery would disqualify someone from treatment.
  - Now, the focus is **reducing harm at the client's pace**, rather than forcing total abstinence immediately.
  - Encouraging **any progress** rather than an all-or-nothing approach.
- 

### The "Disease Model" Debate

- Discusses the **genetic component** of addiction and why it is classified as a disease.
- Some clients and family members struggle with the idea of addiction as a "**disease**" versus **personal responsibility**.
- The key takeaway: **It doesn't matter so much what you call it**, as long as **progress is happening**.



---

## Family Involvement in Addiction Treatment

- Many families struggle with **how to help their loved ones** with addiction.
- The **"tough love" approach** (cutting off the person) has mixed results:
  - It has helped some individuals.
  - But for many, **support and patience** were what truly helped them recover.
- The **"rock bottom" myth**: Change doesn't always come from hitting rock bottom. Many people just **decide one day** they are done.

### Advice for Families

- **First step: Listen** and avoid jumping to quick-fix solutions.
- **Be supportive**, set boundaries when needed, but **don't rush to cut ties**.
- Encourage professional help and **assess the situation before making drastic decisions**.

---

## Engaging Resistant Clients

- One of the primary objectives of in early substance use treatment is **getting people to return for sessions**.
- **Techniques for engagement:**
  - **Find and discuss client values and interests** (sports, music, hobbies).
  - **Use humor** and small talk to build rapport.
  - **Avoid judgment**, focus on **understanding the client's perspective**.
  - **Encouragement and positive reinforcement** to make therapy rewarding.

---

## Key Therapy Modalities Used in Addiction Treatment

- **Motivational Interviewing (MI)**: A **collaborative** approach to guide behavior change.
- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**: Helps identify and modify negative thought patterns and offers client skills
- **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)**: Focuses on emotional regulation and distress tolerance.
- **Trauma-Informed Care**: Recognizes how past trauma influences addiction.



## Takeaways for New Clinicians

- **Get comfortable with uncertainty** – therapy is not a one-size-fits-all process.
  - **Trust your instincts** but seek supervision and support.
  - **Engagement is key** – without it, treatment doesn't work.
  - **Lower your ego** – the client is the expert in their own life.
  - **Use multiple approaches** – no single method works for everyone.
- 

## Finding the Right Recovery Approach

- The conversation continues on the **importance of a personalized recovery plan**.
- There is **no single "right way"** to overcome addiction—each person needs a **unique mix** of strategies. Consider a combination of some of these options:
  - **Medication-assisted treatment** (e.g., Suboxone).
  - **Exercise, nature, spirituality**.
  - **Therapy, meetings, support groups**.
  - **Building structure and routine**.

## The Importance of Connection

- **A sense of belonging** is crucial in recovery.
- People who succeed often have a **support network**:
  - **Meetings (12-step, therapy groups, etc.)**.
  - **Faith-based communities**.
  - **New friendships and social circles**.
- Avoiding negative influences (**staying away from past using friends**) is one of the **hardest but most necessary steps**.

## Developing Purpose and Routine

- A **productive daily structure** is essential:
  - Avoid excessive downtime (**binge-watching Netflix all day isn't helpful**).
  - Focus on **personal growth, short term and long-term goals**.
  - Shift priorities from **seeking the next high** to **building a meaningful life**.

## Final Thoughts

- Recovery is an individualized process of **self-discovery and change**.
- Finding **what gives life meaning** is often key to long-term success.

[Practical Strategies for Engaging Clients in Substance Use Treatment](#)