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# Saying “NO” & Managing Difficult Calls

— ADRC & 211info —

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# AGENDA

Introductions

Group Agreements

Types of Difficult Calls

Tools of the Trade

Saying “No” & Scripting

Crisis Calls

Self-Care



# GROUP AGREEMENTS



Confidentiality

Step up, Step back

Take care (breaks, stand up, etc.)

Be OK with non-closure

Assume the best

People first, respectful language

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# ICEBREAKER

What ONE WORD comes to mind when we say “DIFFICULT CALL”?

# DIFFICULT CALLERS V. DIFFICULT CALLS



We tend to identify the Caller as being “Difficult”. Once we do that we become judgmental which violates the core concept of Unconditional Positive Regard. This places us at odds with not only the Caller but ourselves and our basic training. We come to view the situation as something being done to us. We come to a point where we are no longer “interacting” but are reacting. We forget or, more pragmatically, fail to admit that feelings of helplessness and frustration can and do result from certain types of calls. In addition, viewing the Caller as difficult introduces the danger that someone in actual need may not receive the full benefit of the services the agency is able to offer.

John Plonksi “Working With Difficult Interactions”

- Hopeless
- Unproductive
- Demanding
- Mental Health communication differences
- Intoxication
- Literacy/communications complications
- Donor / Stakeholders
- **Asking Demographics**

- **Crisis**
- **Limited Resources**
- Distracted
- Inappropriate/Harassment
- Abusive / Angry
  - Hate speech
  - Inappropriate language

# TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Know thyself

Remain non-judgemental

Know when to listen

Know when to interrupt

Limit "I" statements

Focus on the feelings

Hone your tone

Confidence!

**Be Honest - when to say "No" and end the call**

Boundaries - Don't take things personally

Meet the caller where they are at

Effective pauses

Be kind

**Active Listening**

**Express empathy**

# Empathy Video



# Active Listening Skills & Roadblocks to Listening

## Active Listening Skills

Minimal Encouragers

Reflection (Mirror or Paraphrase)

Focus on Feelings

Checking in for clarification

Empathy

## Roadblocks to Listening

Planning your Response

Praising or Agreeing

Arguing, using logic

Judging

Diagnosing or Labeling

Reassure

Problem Solving or advising

# Saying “No”

- Reality check
  - Creative problem solving
  - Don't provide false hope
  - Empathy
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Activity

# HELPFUL SCRIPTING

“I hear you...” (this is better than saying “I understand...”)

“Thank you for sharing that information...” (a great neutral way to verbalize empathy!)

“I understand you want X. What I can do for you is Y. For X, you can try calling...” (knowing your role and boundaries but still offering to help!) Or “Unfortunately, I don’t have any resources for X at this time. Let’s think about what other things that might help you eventually get to X.”

“What have you done in other difficult situations when you’ve felt really upset?”

“It sounds like you have a lot going on right now. Is there anyone in your life you feel comfortable talking to about this? Would you like to speak with someone at a crisis line or talk line?”

“I’m not able to find resources for X (rent, electric bill, etc.) in our database at this time. Can I look for resources for other bills you may have so that you could possibly rearrange how you’ll budget your money this month?”

# Helpful Scripting

“Do you have any friends or family who have helped you in the past or might have some ideas for you or are you a part of a faith based or other community group?”

Silence

“We’ve talked about multiple resources today (reiterate resources given). Does that sound like a good place to start?”

“I appreciate you wanting to share your story, I think I have enough information to provide you with some referrals”

“I hear that you are upset, but I am having difficulty hearing/understanding you. Can I ask you some basic questions we ask all of our callers?” or “would it be helpful to call us back?”

It’s OK to end a call without finding resources or coming to a solution!

# Scripting for Asking Demographic Questions

“Do you mind if I ask you some questions we ask all of our callers?”

“I’m happy to look for resources for you, while I’m doing that, can I go over some demographic questions that will help me find the right resources for you?”

(If a caller asks why they have to answer) “These are standard questions we ask all of our callers. They help me determine what resources will work for you, and help us learn more about the needs of our community”\*

# CRISIS AND SUICIDE CALLS

People who work in an I&R service may not be crisis professionals, but they will receive crisis calls. Many of the reasons/situations that cause people to contact I&R services are also potential triggers for the development of crises.

AIRS I&R Training Manual

# What are some warning signs?

Or “RED FLAGS”

# Ask the Question

SAFETY SCREENING

“Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

“Are you thinking about suicide?”

# Refer to Help

County crisis lines  
National suicide hotline  
Other crisis and helplines

# Debrief

This is vital.

# SELF CARE



Caregivers need to be empathetic, but empathy is not one thing. Both neuroscience and psychology have uncovered an important distinction between two aspects of empathy: Emotion contagion, which is vicariously sharing another person's feeling, and empathic concern, which entails forming a goal to alleviate that person's suffering. Whereas contagion involves blurring the boundary between self and other, concern requires retaining or even strengthening such boundaries. Learning to practice one but not the other could be the best example of how caregivers can simultaneously look out for patients and for themselves.

Jamil Zaki "How to Avoid Empathy Burnout"

# Vicarious Trauma

Definition: “The inner transformation that occurs in the inner experience of the therapist (or other professional) that comes about as a result of empathic engagement with client’s trauma material.”

Other terms for vicarious trauma are: provider fatigue, compassion fatigue, and/or secondary trauma. They all refer to the same experience of having exhausted hearts, minds, bodies, and souls from helping people in crisis through their painful experiences.

It develops over time.

It’s a normal response.

Protective Gear: Self-Care

**What do you do for you?**

**QUESTIONS?**

