

Empowering Nurses with Motivational Interviewing

Using Best Practices to Strengthen TPAPN Participant Commitment and Support Recovery



The basis of motivational interviewing is using a collaborative style of communication with language focused on change.

FOR HUNDREDS OF NURSES, the Texas Peer Assistance Program for Nurses (TPAPN) facilitates positive life change. However, reaching a stable point in recovery is an ongoing process. Case managers work with nurse participants on this journey, supporting them for up to five years. Now TPAPN staff have a new addition to their toolbox that will make the process even more person-centered and goal-oriented: motivational interviewing.

A PARADIGM SHIFT

In June, TPAPN staff received extensive, multi-day training in motivational interviewing from Jacklyn Hecht, MSN, RN, an expert in motivational interviewing and faculty at the University of Texas. The focus of the training was to learn to communicate in a way that better facilitates recovery.

"Through motivational interviewing, participants explore their own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion," said Dawn Webb, MSN, RN, TPAPN program director.

The basis of motivational interviewing is using a collaborative style of communication with language focused on

change. Often, participants are ambivalent or reluctant to engage in the process. By working with participants—rather than telling them what to do—and listening empathetically, case managers can help strengthen personal motivations and commitment to a specific goal.

The structure of motivational interviewing is summed up in the acronym OARS:

- **Open questions:** Ask for more information than a "yes" or "no"
- **Affirmations:** Highlight client's strengths, determination, or values
- **Reflective listening:** Explore out loud what the person's statements mean
- **Summarizing:** Connect and reinforce the points discussed

"By attaching the participant's goals to the larger goal of completing the TPAPN program," Webb explains, "the participant's journey through TPAPN will be more beneficial to the participant's long-term recovery and nursing success." For instance, while the end goal of the program may be returning to safe practice and ensuring public safety, the participant may have additional goals of personal sobriety or improved health and wellness.

THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

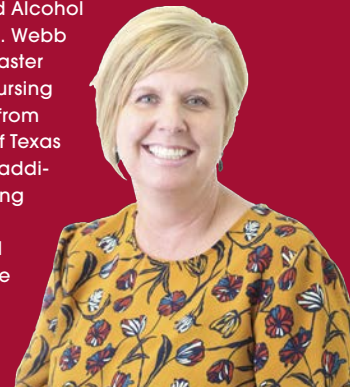
The value of motivational interviewing lies in building a stronger therapeutic relationship between the case manager and participant. If a participant does not trust their case manager and feel safe in expressing their personal goals and motivations, progress can be hindered. A strong therapeutic relationship is the best predictor of lasting change. However, participants must often first overcome barriers or fears—perceived and real—especially of being judged or feeling threatened in their interactions with case managers.

"As we were wrapping up training, Hecht wanted to know our major takeaways," Webb recalled. "One of our case managers stated that 'before this training I did not realize I was in a position of power.' It can be hard to recognize the dynamic you have with participants, but until we understand that relationship, we can't build trust."

At the simplest level, the goal of the case manager is to enable behavioral change. However, without a truthful and complete picture of where the

MEET DAWN WEBB

Dawn Webb, MSN, RN joined TPAPN as program director in April. She most recently worked at Austin Travis County Integral Care as nursing supervisor where she provided oversight to multiple teams in outpatient clinics, community outreach, and homeless shelters. She also previously worked at Seton Shoal Creek Hospital and as a licensed chemical dependency counselor at Austin Drug and Alcohol Abuse Program. Webb received her Master of Science in Nursing Administration from The University of Texas at Arlington. In addition to her nursing education, she also graduated from the Institute of Chemical Dependency Studies.



participant is when they start the program, case managers won't be able to appropriately meet the participant's needs or accurately track progress. With a healthy therapeutic relationship, case managers can better assess how ready, willing, and able the participant is to change their behavior and then support them in that change.

LISTENING AND THE POWER OF WORDS

Hecht framed the motivational interviewing process through the Four Stepping Stones: engaging, focusing, evoking, planning. This starts with agreeing on a target behavior or change goal. The case manager then acknowledges

the participant's inner strengths and prompts the participant to provide ideas for change. Finally, they help participants identify *why* they want to make a change and then *how* they want to make the change.

Throughout the process, the case manager works on listening to the participant. They listen for words that indicate a desire to change (I want, I would like to), the ability to change (I can, I could), and a need to change (I have to, I need to). They also listen for words that indicate commitment (I decided to, I promise to) and examples of steps taken towards the identified goal.

"The power of our words came up a lot in the training," Webb said. "One of my favorite books is The Four Agreements and my favorite agreement is 'Be Impeccable with Your Word.' I am teaching this and modeling it the best I can."

Webb said she and the TPAPN case managers have already seen positive shifts in conversations with participants. When one case manager asked a new participant how they felt about being referred to the program, the participant responded, "Wow, no one has asked me how I feel about this except my therapist. Thank you so much for asking." ✕

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TNA members Lisa Boss, PhD, RN, ACNS-BC, CNE, and Lisa Campbell, DNP, RN, PHNA-BC, are avid tweeters and great examples of TNA ambassadorship online.

Campbell says nurses can serve as subject-matter experts on Twitter and offer an important perspective. To be most effective, she says "consider including a link to a recently released study, an

infographic or post—one great way to engage with others." Designing your Twitter "handle" with a professional image is key for Boss. "Take time to observe the 'culture' of Twitter," she says. "Once you are comfortable, chime in and let your voice be heard!"

Read more about how Campbell and Boss (and other #nurseswhotweet) approach Twitter at texasnurses.org/news.



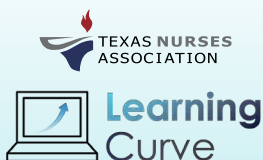
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