Social Work Practice with Individuals

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INTRODUCTION

A. Overview of this Course within the Social Work Curriculum

Social work practice with individuals is a required core component of social work practice courses. Foundation year social work practice courses frequently include teaching social work skills through the organizing principle of the change process. This is often most easily taught using the example of establishing work relationships with individuals. For example, Shulman (2009) explains that "[T]he helping process is complex; it must be presented clearly and broken down into manageable segments...This process and its associated set of core skills can be observed whenever one person attempts to help another" (xxiii). In this way, using the relationship established in individual work provides a vehicle to acquiring interviewing skills and to applying these skills across system levels. Whether the task is to learn active listening skills, reframing, paraphrasing, or advocacy, students are frequently initially helped to consider them in reference to work with an individual and then to practice these skills in field education placements. As a basic understanding of the helping process and the nature of change is achieved, these foundational skills are further honed and specifically applied to the stages within the helping process and to other client target systems or special populations.

First year social work practice content introduces these foundational concepts and skills while second year social work micro practice content focuses more precisely on specific populations and special considerations. Additionally, elective choices may select a particular population or issue from which to consider the special practice considerations of work with individuals. In this vein, many social work programs offer elective courses that focus explicitly on individual work within child welfare and the particular concerns of parenting, child abuse and neglect, on work with substance abusing individuals, or victims of domestic violence, etc. These focused courses are usually in the advanced year of the curriculum.

This guide is written understanding that there are multiple places where teaching individual work may appear in the curriculum. The themes identified for focus in this guide are important to any individual work undertaken; the lens may be adjusted to the level and specific focus of the course under consideration.

B. Relevance of the Case Studies to this Course and Integrating Themes

This guide is written from a family-centered perspective. As explicated in the Real Cases Guide titled "Family-Oriented Social Work Treatment" (Gonzalez), a family centered/oriented perspective sees "individual clients as part of their family system." This perspective provides a lens through which to consider any of the individuals featured in the case scenarios who are chosen as the target system for change.

Although a family-centered perspective underlies the work undertaken, this guide considers work with individuals—not their family system. A family-centered perspective is seen as essential and directly connected to our professional values and to the tenets of child welfare practice.

One of the prime values of our profession is the importance of human relationships. This value assumes that each of us is connected to others. These connections are "important vehicles for change" (NASW, Code of Ethics). Further, we "seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations and communities" (NASW, Code of Ethics). This assumes that although we may be engaging in individual work, we do not lose sight of those not in the room with us, but whom our clients "bring" with them.

Additionally, child welfare practice aims to ensure the safety of children while also ensuring that families will be actively involved in identifying their strengths (*The National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections*

Practice in Child Welfare [NRCPFC]. Accessed 6/20/11 at:
http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/downloads/pdf/quality_practice_model.pdf).

A family-centered perspective is posited as helping "to keep children safe, promoting relationships with caring parents and guardians, and supporting the developmental needs of children at all ages…" (*The National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections Practice in Child Welfare [NRCPFC]. Accessed 6/20/11 at:*
http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/family-centered-practice.html

Each of the Real Cases provides ample opportunity to consider the import of these issues. They provide vibrant examples through which these values and principles may be examined. Working with any of the adults highlighted in the scenarios, entails considering this individual's relationships with the other members in the client system if purposeful change is to occur. Understanding this provides a *family-centered lens* through which the work proceeds.

Each of the cases also provides examples of how confusing and complex the issues within child welfare practice can be. For example, in the case of Mary S we read the details of the case workers' attempts to gather information and to form an assessment--as if more details will provide the answers. As we read the details, our thoughts flow from one adult to the next as being a better caretaker for Jason. As more details evolve, so do our opinions about the actors described.

The varying philosophies regarding child discipline add to the complexity. Perhaps the answer of who should have custody of Jason lies within the concrete facts provided. Perhaps the final tally of these concrete measurable factors such as building code compliance, having carbon dioxide meters and window guards, or perhaps the financial ability of the grandmother or Jason's more secure school attendance under her care are what might make Jason's future more secure. Yet, each of these factors provides another question and like a mystery story without a final chapter, the reader is left to tackle what follows using the tools of our profession to move alongside the facts to more subtle factors and to find a way to a possible next step. In order to proceed, having the skills to conduct a *differential diagnosis* upon which to craft a mutual treatment plan provides an essential tool. Within this task, the worker must be cognizant of the paths to *establishing a working alliance* and the potential *resources, strengths, pitfalls and obstacles* facing the client system which impact the work. Each of the cases also provides the opportunity to explore the intricacies of individual work within the timeframe of a child's life. The needs of the individual parent/ caretaker are often in potential conflict with the needs of the child and the time parameters required within child welfare practice. Understanding *resistance* and its place in the process of change emerges as another important component within the case scenarios.

Finally, understanding the special place that *professional authority* and the power of the child welfare system, and their implications for our work with these individuals and their families, is critical. These areas are interconnected and will be usefully explored through any of the cases--albeit with different issues related to the special circumstances and facets of the cases presented.

C. Overview of What is Included in This Guide

Three specific learning objectives are identified which guide the use of each case study. Strategies for exploring these objectives are then offered. The references provide avenues for further exploration of the themes and issues presented. Although discussed as separate and distinct, students will experience these strategies –and the issues they tackle--as intertwined and interconnected. For example, while conducting a differential assessment consideration of how professional authority, power and powerlessness impact each of the scenarios is essential in achieving a useful assessment which provides clues as to how to establish a working alliance and what resources and barriers to anticipate.

D. Specific Learning Objectives

This section outlines three objectives for work with each of the cases, followed by discussion of each of the objectives.

Students will:

1. identify the issues of professional authority, power and powerlessness operative for themselves and for the adults in the scenario/s.
2. conduct a differential assessment which identifies the strengths and potential barriers to establishing a working alliance.
3. based upon the differential assessment and consideration of the issues of professional authority, identify potential resistances to a plan for work.

1. <u>Identifying issues of professional authority and their impact</u>

   Working with authority while sharing the power of change, and recognizing this component as a factor to be managed in sustaining the working alliance, are essential aspects for the work with individuals. Students need practice in acknowledging the power and expertise they do, and don't, have. Further, they need practice in considering how this impacts engaging clients in mutual planning and goal setting.

Enriching the understanding of the concepts of explicit and implicit power in the context of our professional role, power and authority is basic to advanced social work practice. Issues of power and powerlessness are explicit in each of the case scenarios simply by the fact that child welfare investigations have taken place in each of the families. In spite the worker's earnest intent, the client may approach the worker with unease and fear related to the worker's association to the public child welfare agency. Equally, the parameters of the worker's role in ensuring the safety of children requires being explicit and direct. For example, the worker's role may be exercised by allowing access to the child, granting custody, mandating treatment, or simply by choosing to share or withhold information. These realities cannot be side stepped. Finn and Jacobson (2003, 238) remind us that "[B]y virtue of our positions, we may have the power to attach labels to others, access resources, impose sanctions, and make recommendations with significant legal and social consequences."

Work within child welfare makes these often avoided considerations more easily visible. In this way, the scenarios provide a vehicle for students to examine this often inherent, but less tangible aspect of our work with clients.

2. Conducting a differential assessment

Being able to identify the strengths and obstacles to the work and potential for change is a critical foundation to social work practice. The Real Cases Guide to Generalist Practice (Cohen) provides a useful framework for helping students to tune into the issues inherent in the cases. This outline builds upon these essential skills to help students consider the steps needed to construct more focused helping skills within the working alliance.

Too often we examine cases from a deficit perspective. Blundo (2001) articulates the special challenges involved in shifting our perception of these factors. How we gather information is also critical. "Questions that identify unutilized talents, forgotten skills, qualities that could be enhanced, social networks from the past as well as in the present are useful to build avenues to empower clients" (Guiterrez and Lewis 1999, 38-51). De Jong and Miller (1995) and Saleebey (2006) offer useful frameworks from which to begin.

3. <u>Understanding resistances to change</u>

Even those desirous of change face uncertainty in the face of having to do things differently or to consider things from a different perspective. Each of the cases detail interchanges in which the individual could be assumed to bring resistance to the notion of change. Through an examination of these interchanges, it is possible to scrutinize the nature of change and the role that resistance inherently plays for any of us in the process of change. The resistance is merely the client's mechanism to provide a stable state. We often provide another glimpse into the reality –sometimes a world view change --that destabilizes the client's usual way of seeing circumstances and those around them.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

A. Strategy One: Working with Authority While Sharing Power

1. Areas/issues of the case studies to be highlighted: This exercise aims to engage students in an examination of their understanding of the professional authority they carry into any interaction and their own sense of their power within their work. The exercise takes students through reflection on their personal experiences of power and powerlessness to sharing this with their colleagues and a class discussion of what emerges. They are then helped to apply this to the work with any of the adult individuals in the case scenarios.

Similar to tuning in exercises (see Real Cases Guide to Generalist Practice, Cohen), this exercise normalizes our myriad responses to power and authority and helps students to reflect on how these may impact the work ahead. The subsequent class discussion moves the students to a more informed consideration of these issues based upon assigned readings and formal application to the case scenarios.

2. Timing within the semester: This strategy should follow initial consideration of engagement issues. However, understanding professional authority and the power attached to our roles, requires that students have some experience of their role within field education. Also, as the discussion of power and powerlessness requires some level of personal exposure, the class should have some experience of discussing such topics pertinent to their work. This will enhance their ability to examine these issues. Returning to this issue later in the academic year, or again in the advanced curriculum reinforces the importance of this issue.

3. Teaching methods: First, introduce the notion of professional authority (See for example, Shulman, 2009: 56). Ask students to individually write a reflection on the points identified below. This can be done in class or as an assignment in preparation for class. In either case, the aim is for each student to center thoughts on the issue and to write a reflection on the following points adapted from Bogo (2006: 47).

- Recall and examine an experience where you realized you had power over another;
- Recall and examine an experience where you realized another person had power over you;
- How might your perception and experience of power and powerlessness demonstrate itself in work with your clients?

By requiring each student to consider these issues before bringing the topic to general class discussion, each student is given the opportunity to consider his/her own position regarding this issue prior to being confronted with other positions. It also encourages less vocal students to give thought to their individual responses. This ensures that they are engaged in the work and promotes their preparedness to voice their thoughts (Shor, 1992).

The next step is to ask students to share their individual responses in pairs. They are asked to read their reflections to their pair, or to summarize this for each other. In these pairs the students are then asked to examine what experiences they share and what might be different.

Once students do their work in pairs, the professor may choose to increase student small group discussion by increasing the pairs to fours before coming back into the whole group for general discussion. This will depend upon the professor's sense of the class and its history of working together on sensitive issues. If this step is chosen, the students are asked to share what conclusions each pair came to in their previous discussion and to again examine what conclusions they identified that are similar and those that are different. This provides preparation for students to share and incrementally prepare for their discussions with the entire class.

Following these more intimate student discussions, the class comes together to examine the issues which have been highlighted in the smaller student discussions. They are simply asked "What struck you from these interchanges?" or, "What did you learn from these interchanges?" The aim is to focus on issues derived, not to go necessarily into each student's personal reflections. The professor is demonstrating the skill of synthesizing individual experiences to more general applications.

The general class discussion aims to facilitate deeper understanding of concepts of "use of self" and how the personal self intertwines with the professional self. Shulman (2009) is a powerful voice for unveiling the false dichotomy in these "two selves". He purports that we must understand how the personal self interacts with our professional role so that the two work together. This is different from positions that posit we place our personal self "on the shelf" when working—as if this is the best way of proceeding, or even possible. In this way, Shulman is supporting the facilitation of student self reflection so as to make them aware of personal pitfalls to harness and to identify resources to draw upon. (See also, Mandell, 2008.)

The next step is to turn to any of the case scenarios. This transition requires elucidation of the implicit power and authority that exists in the role and function of child welfare (Bundy-Fazioli, Briar-Lawson and Hardiman, 2009; Hackett and Marsland, 1997; Radley, 2008). Students are helped to understand that any of our professional roles and functions contains aspects of power and authority and that the case scenarios provide a glimpse into those associated with child welfare.

Students should have read the case scenario/s in advance. In the general class discussion, students are encouraged to identify explicit considerations of the case scenario/s in which power and authority are displayed. Each scenario provides issues of power/powerlessness that the individuals face.

Either in groups of four, or together as a class, students are asked to build upon their understanding of power to a case scenario and to work with a specific individual in the scenario. The groups are asked to consider:

1. How might the issues of power/powerlessness affect the work with the identified individual; and

2. Given these issues, students are asked to consider how the worker might anticipate management of the engagement phase of the work. Are these issues different when considering the contracting phase of the helping process?

The professor has choices as to how to manage this work. This can be done as a whole class or in smaller groups of students. The choice may also be made regarding considering the same individual or by considering two different individuals within the same scenario to highlight how differently these issues play out in the realities documented. Further, the professor may choose to do the work in stages. That is, have the groups work together on question one and then obtain class discussion, then return to the groups for consideration of question two. By considering more than one individual or more than one scenario, it is possible to examine how complexly these issues play out in practice and how

flexible the worker needs to be in meeting the different needs of the individual in question.

4.   Materials needed: Besides the chosen case scenario/s, no other materials are needed.

5. Supporting readings/ handouts: The questions for consideration can be either written on the blackboard or handed out to students so that the work remains focused. Besides the references cited in the body of this strategy, supportive readings can be selected from the reference listing. All references are provided at the end of this guide.

6. Evaluation plan: This strategy may be evaluated through general class discussion asking for student feedback, by asking for another short reflection from students, or by including a question on the final course evaluation that addresses this exercise explicitly.

Students can be asked to take this discussion to their supervisory sessions in field education placements to consider how new insights may be applied to the work within their placements. This can be brought forward to future class discussions in order to bring the issues alive, this time applied to the real work in field education placements.

B. Strategy Two: Conducting a Differential Assessment

1. Areas/issues of the case studies to be highlighted: Using a framework for assessment which includes identifying the factors within the individual's "problem" situation involves understanding that the problem is "the mismatch or disequilibrium between the help seeker's needs and environmental demands and resources" (Cowger, Anderson, Snively, 2006: 106). This requires the identification of those strengths and barriers both within and external to the help seeker's own personal psychological, physical and emotional factors. The plan for change can then be built upon the competencies and capabilities of the client and her/his environment. Resources and supplemental services can be explored to help fill the gap between the individual's capacities and the demands of the environment. This process enhances the likelihood of success of the change effort. For example, Andrea R's capabilities need to be assessed in light of Vincent's needs and the resources of their environment.

2. Timing within the semester: Issues related to assessment are often tackled in the beginning of the semester, but there is also wisdom in returning to this phase of work later in the term to reinforce the learning and to increase students' sense of efficacy in tackling familiar issues in more complex case scenarios.

3. Teaching Method: Using Cowger et al.'s (2006) framework provided below (Section 5: Suggested Handout), students are asked to brainstorm on the identified strengths from each of the quadrants. This is a useful exercise to do as a class. Students often need assistance to shift from a problem/deficit perspective (Blundo, 2001; Graybeal, 2001). They frequently point to the many weaknesses/obstacles so easily identified in any of the case scenarios and they experience challenges of finding strengths or areas of potential. Equally, some identified weaknesses are also indicative of potential resources and this also requires explication. This can be a powerful exercise that helps students experience the influence of a deficit perspective and how difficult it is to reframe "weaknesses" or to be helped to see strengths not immediately obvious. What is required from the professor is to facilitate the students' curiosity about hidden client/ environmental talents and potentials.

For example, the case of Andrea R provides a useful exercise in this regard. The deficits/obstacles are easily listed. The scenario is replete with the many obstacles facing Andrea. It is particularly challenging to identify avenues of personal strength or to feel confident about the resources available. Helping students to identify the potential (albeit limited) resources is an important exercise.

Andrea's concern for Vincent may be first noted as her over reliance on Vincent to help care for her. The cleanliness of the apartment may be questioned as an insufficient strength in the face of the deficits, or questioned as related to Vincent's helping and not pursued as one of Andrea's capabilities and expression of coping. Andrea's ability to secure good attendance at school for Vincent also may be lost among the concern expressed about her lack of provision of pampers. Andrea's initial ability to identify Elizabeth as a resource for her son may be questioned as creating tension for Vincent due to Andrea's own difficulties in her relationship with her sister and may be overshadowed by her later reneging on this suggestion. Her requiring that her sister and mother "only have contact with Vincent if first going through her" may be seen as negative controlling behavior rather than potentially indicative of her fear of losing Vincent, her desire to remain in Vincent's life, or indicative of a realistic assessment of her family's reluctance to maintain involvement with Andrea. The exercise does not provide the answers; the aim is to provoke student curiosity and to break through preconceived notions of Andrea that emerge from a deficit perspective, and to provide a fair accounting of both the deficits /obstacles and the strengths/resources (Blundo, 2001; Graybeal, 2001).

The depth of Andrea's psychiatric condition and depression is a major obstacle not to be ignored, of course. However, her ability to cooperate in seeking help during better periods of coping needs to be acknowledged. Her lack of compliance with her treatment, in this context, becomes a key in signaling that all is not well. The exercise offers students a chance to explore questions of what might aid maintaining Andrea's well being, and that of her son. This case

provides rich material from which to explore moving from a deficit perspective to a strengths perspective that produces a more detailed assessment of how to stabilize the situation and then to plan for next steps.

The aim of the exercise is not simply in the listing and brainstorming of strengths and obstacles. The value of the exercise is related to its potential in the critical examination of the case scenario to give students experience in tackling a differential assessment of this individual and her system. The professor prompts for those qualities/factors that raise further questions. For example, Andrea's mother is assessed as a possible resource but this is not pursued "because she lives in a rented single room." This may easily fit in the Assessment Axis as an environmental obstacle. But, it might be posed to the students to consider the influence of the previous material presented about Andrea's own child rearing. Has Andrea's mother been so easily written off for further consideration due to this? Why not evaluate her on her current maternal capabilities and if she is found to be a resource, help her obtain another more suitable apartment. Might a further evaluation of Vincent's grandmother turn this environmental obstacle into an environmental strength/resource? Further, how is Andrea's psychiatrist listed in the quadrant? Is he an environmental resource or obstacle—or both? He has long term knowledge of Andrea and her psychiatric disability. He assesses her as capable of caring for Vincent and he does not act when she misses her appointments. He recommends that Vincent be returned to prevent Andrea's further depressive reaction. How might the students assess these critical components within Andrea's system and what questions might be posed to help clarify this essential part of Andrea's resources and key to her stabilization? What questions emerge that point to students' ability to consider Andrea's needs as potentially in conflict –but complexly intertwined --with Vincent's?

4. Materials needed: Students should be assigned to read the chosen case scenario. The Andrea R case scenario is used above. No other materials are needed.

5. Supporting readings/ handouts: The following matrix can be provided to students as a working tool, or placed on the blackboard. (Note: More space in the quadrants should be provided if used as a handout.) Besides the references used in this strategy, supportive readings can be selected from the reference listing at the end of this teaching guide.

Suggested handout: Assessment Axis (Cowger, et al., 2006, 109)

Environmental Factors	Client Factors
Environmental factors Strengths/Resource 1. 2. 3. etc.	Personal factors (psychological, physical, emotional etc.) Strengths 1. 2. 3. etc.
Environmental factors Obstacles 1. 2. 3. etc.	Personal factors (psychological, physical, emotional etc.,) Obstacles 1. 2. 3. etc.

6. Evaluation plan This strategy may be evaluated through general class discussion asking for student feedback, by asking for a short reflection from students, or by including a question on the final course evaluation that addresses this exercise explicitly.

Students can be asked to apply this exercise to their work within field education and to use the axis with their field instructor with work already being undertaken. This can be brought back to future class discussions in order to bring the issues alive, this time applied to the real work of field education.

C. Strategy Three: Understanding Resistance to Change

1. Areas/issues of the case studies to be highlighted: This third strategy aims to address the challenges encountered when client resistance to change is met. Resistance is a natural response to maintain homeostasis but is often experienced as frustrating by the worker. If misunderstood, the working alliance is threatened. Students benefit from careful consideration of this phenomenon and the case scenarios provide a useful platform from which to do this work. General Systems Theory explains that as you reach the boundary of any system, resistance toward change increases as the system attempts to balance for homeostasis. Therefore, resistance to change is normal and should be anticipated. It is an inherent part of the process of change (Shulman, 2009; Finn and Jacobson, 2003). It is therefore important to be on watch for signs of ambivalence as precursors to evolving resistance. It is also important to assess the nature of the resistance. We cannot assume it is coming from only one precipitant, and it may be associated with various factors. Neither can we assume that the resistance is negative to the work.

2. Timing within the semester: Resistance as a threat to the working alliance is usually connected to engagement and the work phases of the helping process. Providing content on the topic of resistance provides a useful reinforcement to mutual goal setting and the challenges encountered as the treatment plan is implemented. If the course content is focused on mandated/ involuntary populations, the topic of resistance can be placed early in the roster of topics and taken in association with engagement issues.

3. Teaching Method: The aim of the class discussion on resistance is to facilitate student understanding of this inherent component to change. From a strengths perspective and empowerment model, we look upon our relationships as collaborative and therefore resistance is a component within the working alliance (Ragg, 2001; Finn and Jacobson, 2003). Resistance is reframed as a signal that the work is "stuck" instead of labeling the client as non-compliant, unmotivated, in denial, etc.

Ragg (2001) explicates the nuances of supporting, developing and managing threats to the working alliance (Chapters 13 and 14). A delineation of client-related challenges, worker-related challenges and relationship-related challenges are outlined with clues on how to respond. He proposes an honest yet direct approach in addressing these challenges—both to acknowledge the issue/s and to validate the client's concern. Even an issue which seems client-based (e.g. failure to keep appointments, or stalemates reached in progress toward agreed goals) are viewed as relational. The worker is part of the equation and therefore, the conversation includes discussion of "our" work together and "our" need to resolve a path forward.

Class discussion questions and tips:

We all know what it is like being on the other side of resistance in the face of change.

> How do we understand resistance? What is it?

> How do we recognize it? How do we experience it? How do we respond to it?

> In recalling a time in which you were resistant to change, can you recall what you wanted to happen instead? Do you have thoughts about how the situation or the other person involved could have responded differently to gain your confidence and cooperation?

What do these considerations tell us about resistance?

What are some of the purposes of resistance?

1. self protection – (If the self feels threatened, might we consider whether there is such a thing as too little resistance?)

2. allows time for trust to build – (perhaps the push for change is going too fast?

3. expression of ambivalence – (is this the inability to choose, or to choose between two pulls?)

4. concerns about differences and feeling misunderstood. (Here i issues of difference related to race, gender, class, or age between the worker and client may be involved.)

Questions to ask in the face of resistance:

What is the precise nature of the barrier? That is, how else might the barrier be explained?

Whose problem is it? That is, whose need for change is it? Who is more invested in this particular solution, or route to change?

What positive and negatives about the possibility of change exist?

Is the solution based on the wrong hypothesis/tasks/focus etc? That is, perhaps there is agreement on the problem, but not about the goals or about the manner chosen to go about achieving those goals. Might the pacing or timing need reconsideration?

What are some of the factors that affect a system's response to change?

1. Is the change inspired from within, or caused by, an external cause?

2. Is it a matter of survival? If not, how important is it? If yes, whose survival? (Note: Remember even if it is an important issue, this does not necessarily lessen the possibility of resistance. Just being a good idea or that it seems the right thing to do, often is not enough.)

3. Fears a loss of job, status, etc. or the need for change is not seen (Perhaps the stakes seem too high to proceed with a plan for change, or there is a belief that more harm than good will result.)

4. Doesn't respect the person's judgment proposing the change

5. Doesn't like the way it was introduced or doesn't feel consulted

6. Sees the change as a personal criticism

7. Feels change will take too much effort, and that it is not worth the effort

8. Others are pressuring for resistance to change

What are some responses to mitigate the fear of change/resistance/ambivalence?

Acknowledge that change is difficult

Defuse the negative flow by proposing you may have been moving too fast. This also models that it is o.k. to acknowledge that you may have been going too fast and reaches for mutuality in the process.

Reach for the client's own curiosity about the impasse. This also communicates interest in the process of change.

Reframe - help them out of a corner, address the positive behavior. "You are reluctant, but you are here." "Perhaps it is better for us to slow down and take time to review." "Perhaps we need more time to consolidate the changes you have already achieved before moving ahead."

Make this current effort distinct from other previous failed attempts. "You may feel as if you are at stage one again, but let's review this together."

Remind the client that being stuck is part of the work. "Change is difficult and we should not be surprised that it is difficult and that it takes time."

<u>Examination of case scenario</u>

Next the class, either as a whole class or in smaller groups, is asked to examine a case scenario. The case scenario, Anne M, is used here as an example. The aim is to identify instances that indicate "cooperation" and those that may indicate "resistance" to the presenting problem of seeking safety for Anne M and the children.

Current Investigation: illustrates the different responses from Mr. M and Anne related to the initial CPS call. What do students see from the details here? What beginning negotiations are made between the worker and each individual? Are there any questions arising from these initial contacts?

Subject's Account of Allegation: makes note that Anne M left Jamaica immediately after assessing she was not safe there. She proceeds without hesitation to seek an Order of Protection on 7/16, the day after this is recommended—two days after the incident in Jamaica.

Initial Home Visit: Anne M makes the documents available and allows the worker to talk to the children. She volunteers her fear of her husband and describes her safety ritual when returning home each night.

Safety Plan: Anne M cooperates with establishing a more detailed safety plan, but is not willing to consider a move from her current apartment.

How can this viewed in relation to providing clues to Anne's feelings about the changes ahead for her and her children? What response from the worker might address Anne's fears which may also further the work of change ahead? The aim here is to allow the students to craft responses that acknowledge Anne's reluctance to move and ambivalence about this as an option, and to respect that this particular safety measure may involve too much change at this point but to leave room for change if this becomes an issue of safety.

Active Listening to communicate understanding
> "Your reluctance to leave your home is understandable. You are frightened each night and it seems the familiarity of the apartment gives you both reassurance that some things can stay the same, while also realizing that the memories here are difficult for you and the children and moving shifts everything that is familiar."

Acknowledge that change is difficult while leaving room for change
> "A move would involve a lot of changes for you and the children. I understand your reluctance to consider this *at this particular time*.

Reframe - help her out of a corner, address the positive behavior.
> "Perhaps we can review this together from time to time. If you like, we can return to this once the new locks are installed and you have a chance to see if the fears lessen."

Are there other options?

Court Involvement: Mr. M's initial cooperation has turned to blocking the proceeding of the court hearing by refusing to attend and then failing to obtain a lawyer. The judge intervenes by stating that Mr. M. would be required to represent himself if he appeared again without a lawyer. Confrontation is an intervention to use when resistance threatens the safety of the client system. Would students like to return to the interchanges above and add a possible

confrontation intervention on the assumption that there is evidence that Anne and the children are no longer safe in their apartment?

Confrontation

> "Anne, you and the children are not safe here. I understand your reluctance to move and your need to think about the changes involved. We can work together to achieve safety for yourself and your family. Let's talk about this further."

Ongoing Contacts: Anne M. keeps her scheduled appointments with the worker. Work concerns and child care issues prevent a child evaluation specialist to conduct an Elevated Risk Conference. Anne M. reaches out to her worker with concrete concerns and advice about texting messages received from her husband. During a visit Thomas responds to the mention of his father and interrupts the conversation between the worker and his mother by turning up the TV. The worker notes that Anne M. "only" gave the Order of Protection to the Head Teacher and that she was asked to give a copy to each person. Anne M returns to the topic of finding a new apartment and she asks for a referral due to flashbacks. She is also worried about the children. In response to being asked what she does to deal with her anxiety, she answers that she prays.

Students are asked to consider this information. What do they note in relation to indications of possible ambivalence/resistance? They are asked to consider what they would want to say to promote the work ahead.

The concern noted about Thomas is highlighted in juxtaposition to the failure to have a consultation with a child evaluation specialist. Based upon the above examples, what interchange/s might the worker make at this point in the interview. What can be said to further the work while addressing the potential ambivalence and while recognizing the extent to which the children have been affected?

The need to have each person receive a copy of the Order of Protection is an important safety precaution. What interchange/s might the worker make to ensure that this measure is followed up on?

Anne M. acknowledges her need for counseling. She reports that she prays when she is anxious. This is important information and an area we often do not pursue. What interchange/s might the worker make that furthers the work? How can the worker intervene to support the personal resource of prayer while also

enquiring whether more is needed? How would understanding this aspect of Anne's inner life provide a more detailed assessment of Anne's resources? Does she have the support of her religious community? Is prayer an effective source of sustenance for her? What source of sustenance exists for the children?

Elevated Risk Conference: Details of the children's responses is discussed and Anne shares her confusion of wanting her children to have contact with their extended family and possibly with Mr. M. Counseling is recommended for Mr. M. Given the history, what interchange/s might the worker make regarding Anne's confusion over contact with the extended family for the children? Given the recommendation that Mr. M receive counseling, what interchange/s might the worker consider towards achieving this goal?

4. Materials needed: Students should be assigned to read the case scenario chosen for review. The Anne M. case scenario is used as an example above. No other materials are needed.

5. Supporting readings/ handouts: The class discussion notes provided above may be adapted as a handout for students. In particular, the section "Class discussion questions and tips" may be adapted as a handout. Besides the references used in this strategy, supportive readings can be selected from the reference listing at the end of this teaching guide.

6. Evaluation plan This strategy may be evaluated through general class discussion asking for student feedback, by asking for a short reflection from students, or by including a question on the final course evaluation that addresses this exercise explicitly.

Students can be asked to watch for expressions of client system ambivalence within field education and to practice responses to ambivalence/ resistance in these situations. These attempts can be brought back to future class discussions in order to bring the issues alive, this time applied to the real work of field education.

CONCLUSION

A. Recap

This guide offers suggestions to address social work practice issues which impact the working alliance: achieving a strengths perspective within the assessment of the client and client system, understanding power differentials, and acknowledging resistance to change. The case scenarios are replete with opportunities to deepen student understanding of these critical practice concerns.

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