

# **Keeping the Focus on the Substance Abusing Students**

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# Student-Focused Teaching

What is the benefit of students talking about...

- Their problems?
- Their struggles?
- Their stories, viewpoints, and ideas?
- Their choices and decisions?
- Their reactions to lessons?

# Benefits of Student-Focused Teaching

- Develop and increase students' responsibility for change
- Reduce teacher burnout

# Students' Attempts to Divert Focus

- Criminal justice system
- Correctional staff
- Teacher
- Peers
- Family

# Teacher Pitfalls

- “Righting Reflex” (make things right)
  - Persuasion or Argumentation
  - Giving Premature or Unwanted Advice
- Talking Excessively about Yourself
  - Your values and views
  - Your experiences and solutions
- Question / Answer Trap
- Expert Role of Teacher – Passive Role of Student
- Blaming, Labeling, or Preaching

# Strategies to Return Focus to Students

- Reflections
  - Start with the word “you”
  - Make a guess about what student means
- Ask questions about student
  - Directly to student
  - To other class members
- Reaffirming guidelines/rules for class

# Participant Exercise

- Write down 3 student statements
  - Diverted focus away from them
  - Something heard in your class
- Practice / Rehearse
  - Possible pitfall
  - Strategy to bring focus back to student

# Recognizing Resistance

Resistance – Student actively defends not changing- often emotional or interpersonal in nature

## Types of Student Resistance Behaviors

<b>Rebellion</b>	<b>Rationalizing</b>	<b>Withdrawal / Passivity</b>
<b>Sarcasm</b> <b>Complaining</b> <b>Anger</b>	<b>Arguing</b> <b>Blaming</b>	<b>Noncompliance</b> <b>Drop Out</b> <b>Silence</b>

Student: Oh, this is just awesome! [Throws hands in air.] I make one mistake and I get screwed over. Nobody really cares how this affects my life. There's no way I'm going to the meeting today.

# Understanding Resistance

## MI Conceptualization of Resistance:

- Interaction between student and teacher
- Predictable response to change process

### Student

- Student perceives pressure to change
- Student not ready, willing, or able to change

### Teacher

- Teacher temporarily out of sync with client
- Signal to teacher to shift approach temporarily

# Participant Exercise

## Understanding Resistance

# Responding to Resistance

Inhibit antagonistic responses and defenses

## Less Helpful Responses

- Criticizing the student
- Pitfalls (Arguing, Persuading, Giving advice)
- Defending self, others, institution
- Saying nothing / Avoiding student's resistance

# Responding to Resistance

## Examples of Less Helpful Responses

Student: “Oh, this is just awesome! [Throws hands in air.] I make one mistake and I get screwed over. Nobody really cares how this affects my life. There’s no way I’m going to the meeting today.”

Teacher: “Hey, calm down. YOU made the mistake, not the staff.”  
(Criticizing Student, Defending Others)

Teacher: “You should just go to the meeting today and you’ll be glad you went tomorrow.”  
(Persuading, Giving Advice)

Teacher: Says and does nothing in response.  
(Avoiding)

Teacher: “Fine. Don’t go. It won’t bother me at all.”  
(Lacks Empathy, Defending Self)

# Responding to Resistance

What is likely to be more helpful for a resistant student?

## More Helpful Responses

- Acknowledge Resistance
- Express Empathy
- Do Not Take Personally
- Continue to be Professional

# Responding to Resistance

Specific Strategies for Responding to Resistance

REFLECTIONS: Statement about what student means

Simple Reflection – Reflect student's response.

Double Sided Reflection – Reflect elements of student's ambivalence for and against change.

Amplified Reflection – Exaggerate argument against change in hopes of student taking up argument towards middle (more towards change).

# Responding to Resistance

## Examples of Responding to Resistance with Reflections

Student: “Oh, this is just awesome! [Throws hands in air.] I make one mistake and I get screwed over. Nobody really cares how this affects my life. There’s no way I’m going to the meeting today.”

Teacher: “You feel like the program expects you to be perfect.”  
(Simple Reflection )

Teacher : “On the one hand, it is really hard to deal with the program’s consequences , and on the other hand, your lawyer said you need to stay in this program.”  
(Double Sided Reflection)

Teacher : “You’re so upset right now that you’re ready to give up on the program.”  
(Amplified Reflection)

# Responding to Resistance

## Other Strategies for Responding to Resistance

- Shifting Focus
- Agreement with a Twist
- Emphasize Personal Choice and Control
- Reframing
- Coming Alongside

# Responding to Resistance

SHIFTING FOCUS: Diffuse emotion and move to less threatening topic temporarily.

Student: “Oh, this is just awesome! [Throws hands in air.] I make one mistake and I get screwed over. Nobody really cares how this affects my life. There’s no way I’m going to the meeting today.”

Teacher: “I can see you’re really upset. Let’s not talk about the meeting right now. First, I’d like to hear about what’s going on in your life.

# Responding to Resistance

**AGREEMENT WITH A TWIST:** Agree with part of what student says, but refocus towards change.

Student: “Oh, this is just awesome! [Throws hands in air.] I make one mistake and I get screwed over. Nobody really cares how this affects my life. There’s no way I’m going to the meeting today.”

Teacher: “I agree that this program is very strict. I’m wondering how you could deal with the program so that you will still want to participate. What works for you?”

# Responding to Resistance

## EMPHASIZING PERSONAL CHOICE AND CONTROL

Student: “Oh, this is just awesome! [Throws hands in air.] I make one mistake and I get screwed over. Nobody really cares how this affects my life. There’s no way I’m going to the meeting today.”

Teacher: “No one can force you to go to the meeting. Only you can make the decision of whether or not it’s worth going. What are the pros and cons for you?”

# Responding to Resistance

**REFRAMING:** Reframing resistant behavior as a value, strength, or goal that leads to change.

Student: “Oh, this is just awesome! [Throws hands in air.] I make one mistake and I get screwed over. Nobody really cares how this affects my life. There’s no way I’m going to the meeting today.”

Teacher: “How you do in this program is important to you and it’s really frustrating when you make a mistake. How do you think these high standards could help you in the long run?”

# Responding to Resistance

COMING ALONGSIDE: Temporarily joining with student argument against change - paradoxical argument for not changing.

Student: “Oh, this is just awesome! [Throws hands in air.] I make one mistake and I get screwed over. Nobody really cares how this affects my life. There’s no way I’m going to the meeting today.”

Teacher: “Even when you try, you still make mistakes. So it seems like it may make more sense not to try at all. What do you think?”

# Participant Exercises

Classroom activity

# Feedback

One thing I found interesting...

One thing I can use...

One thing I still wonder about...