

Engaging Clients Who Have Mental Health Disorders

Do not shy away from asking clients about mental health issues—let them teach you about their mental health issues. Example questions include:

- ◆ What does [anxiety] look like for you?
- ◆ How does your [anxiety] affect you?
- ◆ How does it affect others in the home?
- ◆ How do you cope or deal with your [anxiety]?

After clients teach you about their mental health issues, offer support.

- ◆ How can I help?



Traditional Approach

Focus on correcting client's perception.

Emphasis on disease aspects of behavior.

Focus on convincing client there is a problem.

Denial is met with argumentation.



Preferred Method

Focus on exploring client's perceptions.

Emphasis on how to increase personal choices about problem behaviors.

Focus on eliciting client's own concerns about the problem.

Denial is met with reflection.

Tip: Use person-first language

Instead of this: "My bipolar client."

Try this: "My client who has bipolar "disorder."

Assessing Importance and Confidence

- ⇒ On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being not important and 10 being very important, how important is it to you to _____? (take your medication, find healthy ways to cope with your depression, get your kids back home, etc.)
- ⇒ On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being not confident at all and 10 being very confident, how confident are you that you could _____ (go to therapy regularly, change/manage this behavior, etc.) if you decided to?

Did You Know?

About half of people who experience a mental illness will also experience a substance use disorder at some point in their lives and vice versa (National Institute on Drug Abuse).

Remember to use and refer to community partners!

- ◆ Local community mental health centers (CMHCs)
- ◆ Targeted Assessment Program (TAP)
- ◆ Resources from managed care organizations (MCOs)