

## Managing Challenging Clients

Presented by  
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## Agenda

- Understanding “Challenging” Clients
- 10 Tips for Managing Challenging Clients
  - 10 Tips for an Effective Needs Assessment
  - 10 Tips for De-Escalating Conflict



## Why Do We Find Some Clients More Challenging Than Others?

- Personal style
- History and triggers
- Lack of experience
- Inappropriate referrals
- Shifting goal posts



# Your Experience

## 4 Stages of Learning Model

	<b>Incompetent</b>	<b>Competent</b>
<b>Conscious</b>	Conscious Incompetence <i>you know you don't know</i>	Conscious Competence <i>you're learning ...but it's a struggle</i>
<b>Unconscious</b>	Unconscious Incompetence <i>you don't know what you don't know</i>	Unconscious Competence <i>you can do it without thinking about it</i>



## Who do *you* find challenging? Why?

- Use the chat feature to identify
  - the types of clients you personally find challenging
  - a brief explanation of why









## Coping with Client Reluctance

*Understand the source...*

- Fear of the unfamiliar
- Mandated participation
- Grief reactions
  - The Roller Coaster effect
- Client vs. "The System"
- Secondary gains
  - Insurance / welfare / spousal support
- Refusal to acknowledge a problem
- Unwillingness to take responsibility for the problem



~Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey, & Niles (2009, p. 48 – 50)



## Defuse Power Struggles

- Don't take the bait
- Understand client's reality
- Provide factual information
- Give reasonable choices
- Facilitate client's success



*A power struggle can only continue  
if both antagonists "play the game."*

~Dr. Michael Tobin



## Ground Rules

- Rights and responsibilities
  - Clients' and organizations'
- Expectations and mandates
- Limits to confidentiality
- Reporting requirements
- Implications of ending relationship



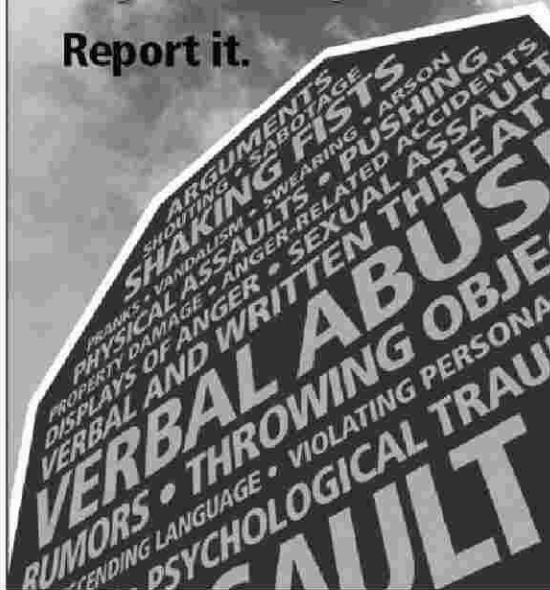
*The secret is to build mutual RESPECT!*



## 5. STAY SAFE

See signs of violence  
at your workplace?

Report it.



## Strategies for Staying Safe

- Take reasonable safety precautions
- Be alert to potential for violence
- Have plans in place to get help
  - Signal other staff
  - Consult
  - Call 911







## 6. NAVIGATE CONFLICT

### Conflict Markers

- Monitor facial expressions, body language, words
  - Furrowed brow, frown; "but," "however"
- Follow-up on conflict markers
  - I notice you seemed concerned when . . .
- Offer relevant info to reduce the conflict
- Reestablish rapport and credibility

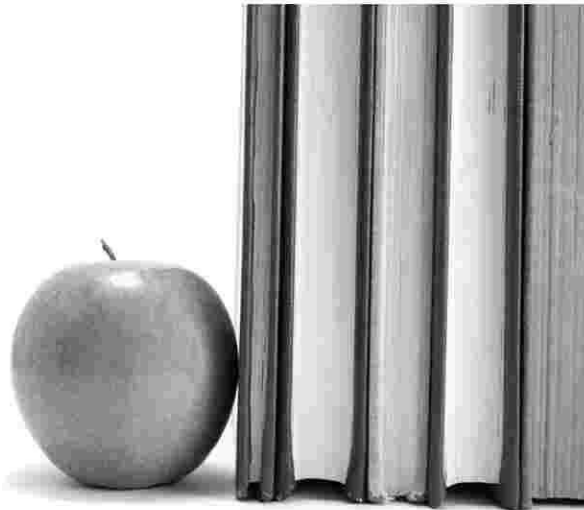


## 10 Tips for De-Escalating Conflict

1. Don't take the bait
2. Manage yourself
3. Speak softly and slowly
4. Be respectful
5. De-personalize
6. Listen carefully
7. Be tentative
8. Be strategic
9. Focus on the future
10. Take a break



## 7. LEARN MORE ABOUT CLIENT ISSUES . . .



## Relevant Resources

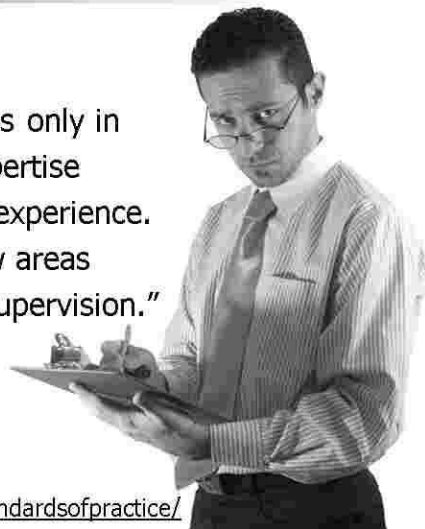
- Educate yourself
  - Formal or informal learning
- Find out what services are available
- Build connections with community partners
- Collaborate with other professionals
- Bookmark relevant websites / resources
- Create “tip sheets” of your own



## Supervision

“[Counsellors] provide services only in areas where they have expertise gained through education and experience. Counsellors practice in new areas only after specific training and supervision.”

~ CCPA





Source: <http://www.ccpa-accp.ca/en/standardspractice/>




## 10 Tips for An Effective Needs Assessment


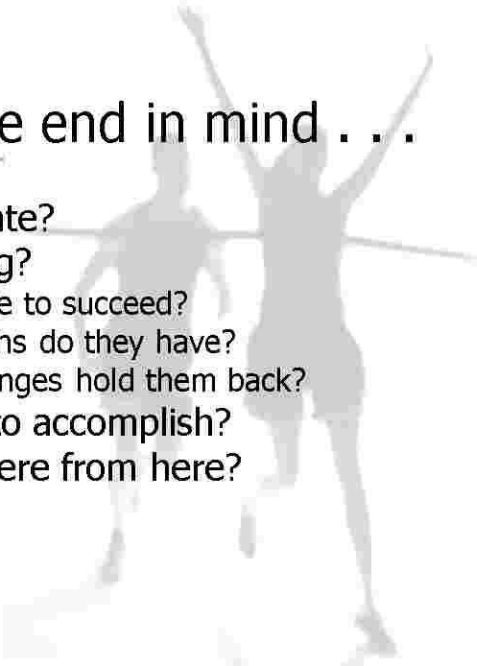
1. Begin with the end in mind
2. Build rapport
3. Understand eligibility
4. Get informed consent
5. Be observant
6. Be holistic
7. Use discernment
8. "Thin slice"
9. Make effective notes
10. Be efficient



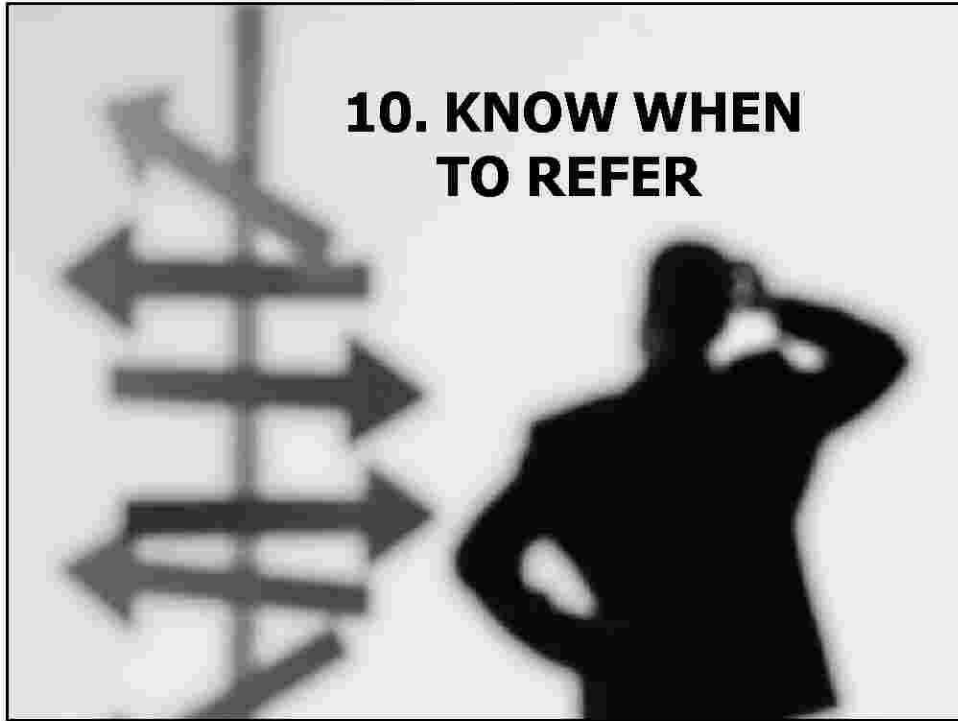


 Begin with the end in mind . . .

- What is your mandate?
- Who are you serving?
  - What do they require to succeed?
  - What assets/strengths do they have?
  - What barriers/challenges hold them back?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- How can you get there from here?



## 10. KNOW WHEN TO REFER



### Service Providers



- Private organizations
- Schools and educational institutions
- Community service agencies
- Employment centres
- Mental health organizations
- Rehabilitation service providers
- Other counsellors





## To Refer or Not . . .



- Lack of fit with your program / service
  - i.e., beyond your scope of practice
- Lack of interest
  - e.g., mandated clients
- Multiple barriers
  - Complex layers of problems
  - New issues arising after service has begun
- Specialized supports needed
  - i.e., beyond your boundary of competence



## 10 Tips for Managing Challenging Clients

1. Strengthen your therapeutic alliance
2. Overcome resistance
3. Avoid power struggles
4. Set some ground rules
5. Stay safe
6. Navigate conflict
7. Learn more about client issues
8. Assess effectively
9. Customize a strategy
10. Know when to refer

