



Integrating Innovative Employment & Economic Stability Strategies (IIEESS) Webinar Transcript

Peer-To-Peer Learning Opportunity: Coaching Relationships, Changing Mindsets

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SAM WULFSOHN: Hi, attendees, this is Sam. I just wanted to let you know that we're just waiting for Public Strategies; I think we're having a little bit of a snafu with the sound. Give us two seconds, and what we might do is just launch into the webinar. Can you guys hear us? Can somebody type in "yes" if you can hear us? Okay, sounds like you can hear us. Yeah, that's good. Okay, so we're going to... maybe I'll take my hand at the logistics, even though I know Public Strategies usually does it, but since we're not hearing Miss Tina... so, maybe we can go back to the logistics slide, and I can just review those with everybody as we get started. Oh, I have the ball. Oh, even better.

Okay, so, I guess I'll introduce myself, and I'll let Stephanie introduce herself. Hi, I have met many of you, and I've been involved in these webinars for some while, so hopefully many of you already know me. I'm Sam Wulfsohn, and I'm a Senior Associate at MDRC, and I have done coaching in a number of different venues, including early childhood settings and in fatherhood programs, and now I'm getting to do that in the TANF setting as well. And I'm a clinical psychologist by training, but I won't be using that hat in this arena. So, hi, and welcome, we're thrilled to have you guys. Stephanie, you want to introduce yourself?

STEPHANIE BRUECK-CASSOLI: Sure. Hi, I'm Stephanie Brueck-Cassoli, and I'm with EMPATH, and I'm the Director for Curriculum and Instruction. And I'm a clinical social worker and I'll be using a little bit of that hat today. But I've been doing a few of these series of coaching webinars, and it's always wonderful to be able to talk about coaching and how you can do more of that in your work. So I'm excited to be here with Sam.

SAM: Thank you. So, I just... sorry, I'm going to... oh, the logistics slide is off, so I'm going to just count on the fact that you guys know the logistics, and that if you need to wave your hand, you can, and we will do some Q&A stuff, so I'm going to ask for some responses in the Q&A box, and I think that's probably... that's the summary of the logistics, from my perspective. So, before we get started into the meat and potatoes of the conversation, we want to welcome everybody, again, and remind you that we are a part of a learning community, and so the first thing we want to do is that we would like to have everybody introduce themselves. I am going to give you... because at least in New York, we're very excited about the prospect of spring, and for anyone from Oklahoma, we've done something similar to this already, so apologies for a little repetition. But I'm excited about spring, so what I would like all of you in attendance to do is, in the Q&A box, just type what state you're from, type your name, and I want you to make a choice. With spring comes two things—many, many different things—but the two things I'm thinking of are number one, flowers, which is one of my favorite things, but then also you think of cold desserts, so potentially having ice cream.

So if you're going to have to choose between one or the other, and my teammates are looking at me with smiles, so I'm hoping that that's because this is a good ice-breaker, is that I want you, again... so, what state are you from, share your name, and if you had to choose one reason you're excited about spring, would it be ice cream or flowers? So why don't we start with Alabama? Why don't you guys type in your name, share your names, and tell us what your choice is? Oh, and Enya, thank you for... I just saw your name appear on my screen, so thank you for letting us know that you can hear us.

Oh, a lot of you said yeah. Okay, so Alabama. So Oklahoma is choosing flowers. Elizabeth Walker: always ice cream. Kathleen is here. Vicki from Alabama is choosing flowers. Emma from Missouri is choosing flowers. Lori Jackson, Allie, I'm sorry I don't know how to say your last name, Brittney Redmond from West Virginia, Chastity Smith from Alabama is choosing ice cream. There's a lot of ice cream. Beverly from Alabama is choosing ice cream. Oklahoma, Julie from Oklahoma is choosing flowers. Lots of... there's a great mix, Carenda from Oklahoma City, flowers. Cresha from Oklahoma is choosing flowers, Ruthie from Massachusetts, flowers. Fewer calories, Ruthie is saying. Janet Douglas from Missouri is choosing... oh, is here for Missouri, but Janet chose flowers. Fannie, ice cream. Whoa, so we have a nice mix here. I wasn't sure what we would get. Darlene Jewell from Missouri is choosing ice cream. Mary Abbey from Missouri, flowers. Diana Ball from Missouri, flowers. Stacy Kaylor, welcome, flowers, from Missouri. Michelle Graham from Missouri is flowers. Enya Moore from Missouri, flowers. We got lots of representation from Missouri; fabulous. Jennifer is flowers. Keith from South Dakota—I guess you guys didn't get snowed out.

STEPHANIE: Oh good!

SAM: I'm so excited to have you. Ice cream. Sammye Doyle just got on, so we can wait for her to let us know whether she would like flowers or ice cream. Barbara Williams, flowers. Kathy from Missouri, flowers. Flowers from Lori Jackson, Allie and Brittney, Kathleen... I think flowers are winning out. Oh, and Tiffani from Oklahoma City says she likes winter. Awesome, I love the variety in our team. Amber Davis, flowers. Christy, flowers, and Sammye, ice cream. Alright, welcome, everybody. It's fabulous to have all you flower- and ice cream-loving people join us today.

STEPHANIE: Sam, what would you choose?

SAM: I like flowers... ice cream made in the shape of flowers. How about that, so that I don't have to... and Keith is listening from home because they're in a blizzard, so Keith, welcome. We're grateful that you are so committed. How about you, Stephanie, what do you choose?

STEPHANIE: I had a real big conundrum with that, but I think I'm going to go with spring, knowing that I can have ice cream in the summer. So flowers in the spring. Ice cream in the summer, yeah.

SAM: Alright, so this is what we're hoping to share with you guys today, and make this useful, so we're going to talk a little bit about the stages of the coaching relationship. We're going to talk about what a strengths-based approach is and how that enhances the coaching relationship. We're going to think through with you that the relationship is more than just what you do, but how your thoughts, your feelings, and your actions all affect the relationship. We're going to talk about this idea of a coaching stance, or kind of way of being, in your relationship, and then we've got some examples from the field of things that we want to share, and kind of brainstorm some ideas of what you can do to apply this. So, I'm going to pass it on to Stephanie so she can start off with the conversation.

STEPHANIE: Okay, thanks, Sam. So, we are going to come back to this road map to coaching that we have seen in most of the webinars. And as you see in front of you, there are five different road signs, and the "building trusting relationships" is in blue, so we will spend our time today in that space. And then when we look at the other ones, I just want to remind us which ones those are, so accountability and follow up, goals orientation, problem solving, and self-assessment and goal setting. And they're all interrelated, and it's hard to talk about one without the rest, but if we focus on building trusting relationships, what Sam was talking about is we're talking about building the coaching stance and the types of strategies we can use to remain really present in the coaching stance.

So, building trusting relationships: What we're going to talk about today is strengths-based language, and so the reason that we want to start on this sign is because if we build a trusting relationship, then everything else thereafter is able to build organically, and also return to that base, right? So if we make a mistake, which we do because we're human, we're able to return to that base of building trusting relationships in the way that we have, based on that initial agreement with the participants that we work with. So... and then encompassed within that concept of focusing on strengths and their capabilities and figuring out what it is they want to achieve, we have these two other words: capacity to aspire and motivation. And so we want to look beyond just whether this is a mutually trusting relationship, but also whether it is a relationship in which the participants feel like they can develop and hone in on their capacity to aspire, keeping in mind that this might be the first relationship, especially in a systems-involved place, where they have felt like they are able to say what they want to aspire to, what they think they're capable of, what their dreams are. And then, if they felt comfortable in that trusting relationship to share that with us, we can then help keep them motivated and use different skills to keep them working towards that place of aspiration that they have. So that's where we're going to start with the road map to coaching.

So, what we have now is... I'm going to need a little help from Tina, so while she is setting it up, we're going to start with a video. So, you have heard strengths-based versus problem-based language, and Tina, if we can just pause until I say go, that would be super helpful. So, we've talked about strengths-based language before, so I know you're all familiar with it. So here's a short video from one person's social work perspective on what strengths-based perspective means to them, and specifically the use of empowerment, and as you're watching this video, which is just two and a half minutes, I want you to write down one piece that you hear, so a phrase, a concept, a word, something that sticks out to you. So keep that in mind as you watch this video. Okay, Tina, take it away.

VIDEO RECORDING: Whilst I've always yearned to help more vulnerable members of society, until embarking on this masters, my understanding of the best way to help was naïve. I now have a refined understanding of psychosocial vulnerabilities and my role in empowering the vulnerable I used to want to help by fixing things. And perhaps the greatest thing that social work has taught me so far is the dangers of operating from this paternalistic viewpoint. Rather, I must empower and encourage, and facilitate self-determination. During the beginning of my MSW, I thought empowerment was a bit of a buzz word, thrown around in all the literature. However, it was in the process of reflecting and undertaking supervision on the prac that I realized the importance of empowering clients rather than fixing problems for them, creating an unsustainable relationship of dependence and entrenching power imbalances. I consider that empowerment is also inextricably linked with a strengths-based perspective. In order to effectively empower a client, I will need to facilitate a process whereby a client identifies strengths, and considers how they can draw on those strengths to help themselves.

The strengths-based perspective is also a perspective I try to apply to my personal life. I had not heard of the concept of the strengths-based perspective before starting the MSW, and I feel so fortunate to have learned about it. Employing this perspective to my personal life has altered my perception of myself and my psychosocial world. It's allowed me to become much more of an optimist and have greater self-confidence by drawing on my strengths. As a social worker, I consider that I will have a duty to remain abreast of social issues, and advocate in relation to these issues where appropriate. The great majority of my generation is consumed by social media, and while this can mean political news is more accessible, it also limits my generation's awareness and tolerance of alternative viewpoints as the views that pop up on everyone's social media streams are, by design, views that that person agrees with. So in a career tied up with a diverse range of social problems, I must remain aware of a wide range of opinions, not just those that I subscribe to. And I must seek to have constructive conversations about these opinions and let these conversations inform my advocacy activities.

STEPHANIE: Okay, thanks, Tina.

TINA SMITH: You're welcome.

STEPHANIE: So, while that comes back, I want to recognize that that was hard to hear for everyone, so I'm not sure you were able to catch all of that, especially the beginning part. So, I want to give just kind of high-level points that I heard from that video, and then we'll take us into the content.

So, what she really started with was this concept that when she came into social work, she was from the mindset of wanting to fix things for people, and that felt really useful to her, to be able to fix problems, and that sounds really useful in the moment. And she started to switch towards this concept of empowering, and she felt like social work used this term "empowering" in a way that didn't really resonate with her. She thought it was just, I don't know, an overused word, for lack of a better term. And so, what she then realized, though, is that fixing relationships led to unsustainable relationships, right? There's a time at which you can't be the one who fixes everything, and there's only so much of you that you can bring into it. And that by empowering clients that she's working with, she's helping them to figure out how they can fix those issues for themselves and how to be able to do that moving forward. So, what she had found in her journey of moving from fixing problems for people is how to facilitate conversations, and do so from an empowering lens. So if you didn't catch the video, those are the high-level points. And she goes into some personal advocacy and what that means for her personal life, and so you're welcome to watch it more if you're interested. So when we think about that, the only other last piece that she said was she needs to be mindful of being respectful and valuing opinions of others, not just the opinions that she subscribes to. So back to thinking for a moment. So noticing and respecting the opinions of others, and not only following opinions that she subscribes to.

So when we think about the work that we all do, and the fact at TANF we're working on benefits and providing basic needs for families, you know, what kinds of opinions do we have about the rights that people have or the limits of our services, and how can we remain open when we have all these background parameters in our head about, you know, how active does a participant need to be to be considered an active case? How many goals do we need to be working on at a certain time? How often do my assessments need to be put in? They've canceled again, which means my data backlog is beginning to get out of control. And I bring all of that in with me when I'm meeting with someone, so how do I shut out those opinions that I have about the work that I have to get done, and notice the opinions of the person sitting in front of me? So those are the things that stuck out to me.

Let's go on to this next slide and think about strengths-based and problem-focused. So what you see here are just clear definitions about strengths-based approach versus a problem-focused approach. So, we're going to start on the right side, which is reversed, but problem-focused approach, right? This is similar to what she was saying about fixing problems. So what I'm noticing in my interactions with someone is the problems that they are coming to me with and the problems they're identifying. And what my focus is on is fixing those problems. Now, a problem-focused approach does not mean that I'm fixing things for them necessarily. So in that way, you could consider it a step beyond that, where you could even say it's up to them to fix them, but all you're focusing on is the problem. And then strengths-based approach: So, everyone has problems, everyone has strengths, and what we're seeing here is we want to start with the clients' strengths, and we want to focus on what future positive outcomes they could have, and then the role for you as the case worker is to support the client in getting to the place that they want to get to.

I'm going to go back... oh, that's forward. I want to go back a few slides to bring us back to this. So, when we're saying that we're joining with them together, we're building that trusting relationship. And it is their journey, right? This road that we see in front of us is their journey, and we are just participants in that journey for that moment. And what they decide are these mountains— could be a beach, could be a lake, could be anything that they decide is their end point, and we are just helping them navigate the pieces to get to that place.

So what does that mean? So strengths-based, problem-focused—you've heard this, and I know that in our IIEESS work across your states, there's been shifts in the way that your assessments have been written to use more strengths-based language. You've been really focused on that. You've wanted to recognize the agency of the participant, so when we think about the coaching relationship, and what Sam's going to go into, which is thinking about less than ideal cases and how you still approach those cases from a coaching stance.

Let's go through that step by step. So setting the stage for building a partnership. So, the first question to ask is: what is it that the client, the participant, dreams for themselves or their family? You know, where is it that they want to go? What have they thought about wanting to go? And they might not be able to answer that question in the beginning because it might be the first time someone's asked them that. But in hearing that, you as the coach are recognizing their strengths and are demonstrating your belief in their capability of getting to that point. So even if it feels like a pie-in-the-sky type of idea for them, you say, "If that's somewhere you want to go, I believe you will be able to get there, and we will work together to figure out how you can get closer to that."

So then we move to establishing the relationship. So, we want to make sure that we have consistency in this, that we are continuously aware that we are building a relationship and sometimes that that can take time. And something that we need to build is trust. And one of the ways in which we build trust is by being accountable and following up. So if I say, "After this meeting, I'm going to send you an email that has X, Y, Z resources we discussed," I better follow up with that email that I say I'm going to follow up with, because that is one way that participants say, "Oh, she said she was going to do something and she actually did it." And you might start to change the way that someone might associate you or view you with kind of a guard up, based on their past experiences. So that's one really quick way to establish the relationship. Follow up on what you say you're going to follow up on. Harder to do than it's said, right? So calendar notifications, all of those things to make yourself accountable to that.

So then planning together: This is where your switch in language is. I would say it's strengths-based plus because what you're doing is you are also changing the ownership of the planning process onto the participant. So, "What are your ideas for where you want to go? Have you heard from anyone in your community about similar job opportunities that you're discussing? What is it about this specific goal that you're so interested in, and where would you like to start?" So rather than rushing in with our advice, I feel like under this planning together, I would want to write an asterisk that says: Stay curious. So, when you jump in with that one piece of advice, how can you hold back and ask one more question about how they might want to plan that process and problem-solve those steps?

And then tracking progress: So this goes a little bit to the managing accountability that I discussed in establishing the relationship. But beyond that, we also want to just recognize when certain steps are being taken, so that that momentum and that motivation stays present, right? So if someone is working on getting a job, let's say, it's going to take some time before they get to that place, but there's steps they're taking in between. They're writing their resume, their cover letter, they're applying to jobs, so how do we acknowledge those steps along the way and demonstrate the excitement? And that goes to the next point: sharing in the excitement of each step. So that each step is acknowledged and recognized, and that that momentum continues forward. And so, if I am saying, you know, "You've worked really hard on getting your resume updated, and you are going to work just as hard, I'm sure, to make sure you apply to those jobs, and I'm with you every step of the way." That could be a really reaffirming way of recognizing that they are doing the work, and that you also are sharing in the excitement with what they're doing.

And then on to the future. So this accelerates to assume, let's say, you are ending your relationship with them. And one nice way to do that is to recognize all of the goals that they've accomplished when you've worked with them, and then to notice any change that you've seen. So, one participant that I worked with for a couple years, she had a tendency to get angry pretty quickly. And over time, I noticed that that anger subsided pretty significantly, and I watched her specifically take a deep breath before she responded to me about something. And she wasn't yelling at me, and I knew that, and she knew I knew that, but it took some time, in a safe space, to be able to figure out how did she advocate for what she and her daughter needed without flipping that lid, if you remember that expression, without really using the yelling tone that had gotten her to the place that she had, which was getting housing for her and her daughter, which was a significant step. And so when our relationship ended, we both discussed how different our meetings are now from when we first started, and how much she has really worked on the way she communicates, both with me but really beyond our

relationship, which was with her daughter's school, or with her benefits case worker, and how much better she feels after those conversations.

So noticing progress that they've made, being really concrete about that, and the way that I am able to do that is I keep notes that tracks goals that they've achieved in a separate spreadsheet or a Word document, and I just take note that if I notice that someone's behavior starts to shift in our meeting, I take notes so that when that relationship ends, I'm able to recall that really well. And without those notes, I wouldn't be able to remember. So I want to normalize that process. Okay. On to you, Sam.

SAM: Hey... I think I might need you to help me move—oh, no, I've got power.

STEPHANIE: You've got the power.

SAM: Got the power. Okay, so the one thing I also want to point out about that status of relationship is that we don't often get to do all those stages, and so the things that Stephanie is sharing related to the strengths-based approach, and some of the things that I'm going to talk about, also, really allow us to set the stage for going through all the stages of a relationship. To building it, getting some work done, and seeing and working with a client to support them in having success, and then eventually having a good goodbye, a positive goodbye, which is what a lot of us don't often have.

So one of the things we'll often hear people talking about when they're talking about building relationships is what you should do, what you should do. Do this, do that, act this way. And that's important, but I think I want to also point out there's two other pieces that we need to remember to bring, that we bring to the table, in our relationships. First is we go into the relationship and we have thoughts about what's going on. So it's very important to be mindful, thinking about your thoughts, and aware of: What are you thinking in the moment related to what's going on in this relationship? And then we have feelings, and the psychologist in me can't let go of the feelings; those come into play as well. And how are we feeling about ourselves and the person that we're facing, as well as how things are going between us. And then we have behavior. And so all three of those are really important to pay attention to as you build relationships with clients, and are thinking about your relationships with them.

The second piece is what we're describing as the coaching stance. And the coaching, when we refer to the coaching stance, we're talking about your way of being, how you are in the relationship. So it's kind of hard to grasp, because it's not just your behavior, but it's your whole approach and how you are, and it encompasses what you're thinking, what you're feeling, and how you're acting. So here are some ideas of coaching stance components that really help to build a relationship and build a positive coaching experience. The first is sharing in the effort. So you want to share—it's not just their goals and their effort, it's not what you're imposing, it's something that you're sharing together. That's the first of our coaching stance components. The second is you don't have to be the expert. Your client is the expert in their lives, and so you're approaching it as: I'm here to work with you. I'm not going to be doing to you anything. We're going to work together to help you move through the system and get to a better life. A third is exploring, so this is where some of you might have just started doing some motivational interviewing and using more open-ended questions. So, instead of saying, "Well, you need to do this, this, and this," you're exploring options in collaboration with your client.

The parallel process: This is something we've talked about in the past as well, and you've heard this language. So, if you're able to show empathy to your client, they're going to show empathy to others. If you are doing respectful things and responding to emails, you know, that the parallel process will happen where they will be doing the same. So, each experience happens in parallel. Similarly, if your supervisors are giving you empathy, it's going to help you to be more available to do the same for your clients. Trying to genuinely understand what your client's experience is, putting yourself in their shoes, and if you have... if you think perhaps more from their perspective, it helps. And I know some of the states have been doing customer journey mapping, and that's a really nice way of really putting yourself in their shoes and thinking about what that experience was like. Slowing down, taking it one step at a time: It takes time. You don't have to hurry. You're going to get there.

And then, this is one of my favorites, is holding hope. Because people, at least the conversations I've had with... I work with Oklahoma and some of the things I've heard have been really challenging situations that people come in with. It's that we start off with we're holding the hope for them, and eventually we're going to pass that on, but it's our job, initially, to say: "There's hope, and we're going to help you to move forward. And I'm here to hold that for you." So these are examples of what we mean about the coach's way of being. These are different... it's going to be how I feel, what I'm thinking in my head, and also how I behave.

So let's try to make that a little more concrete. What does this look like? So here's an example of something I thought of in terms of sharing the effort. So what might happen is that you might think, when you walk in, "Okay, so how can I align her goals with what I think is important?" as you're working with a client, so that might be the thought. The feeling might be: "Alright, I'm getting nervous about getting on the same page, and that's okay, it's alright, we're going to get there." And then what you're going to do is you're going to tell the client, "We're in this together. We're going to figure out these goals, to make them work." So that's just an example of what it might look like in terms of thinking, feeling, and doing.

So why don't we think about these examples, and what I would like to do is give a little assignment to each state right now. If you're sitting together, you can talk with each other. If not, you can kind of think for yourself. And I just want to make sure that I remember what states are here. So I'm going to give you a coaching stance to your state, and then I'm going to ask you, for that state, to think for a moment about what the feeling might be, what the thought might be, and what the action might be for that stance. So let's have anyone from Alabama, you can take avoiding the position... the expert position. Anyone from Missouri, you can take exploring instead of knowing. For Oklahoma, you guys can do using the parallel process. West Virginia, genuinely understanding the client's experience. I think we only have one from North Dakota, so we'll give you slowing down and taking it one step at a time. Do we have anyone from New Hampshire on the call? I think... I don't think I saw New Hampshire, but if New Hampshire or New Jersey are here, you guys can do holding the hope.

So, give yourself about five minutes or less—we don't want to have too much silence—to think about it, so think about your assigned stancing example, and think about how it might play out in terms of how you think, how you feel, and how you might act. And then once you have your thoughts, you can type it into the Q&A box. And if somebody is really excited about thinking about the holding hope one, you can feel free to do that. Maybe I'll give that to any coaches who are listening in, in case New Hampshire and New Jersey are not here, because I'm not sure I saw any of them. So coaches who are here, you guys can do the holding hope component.

Yeah, I see the word "holding hope" from one of our coaches. So, perhaps she's getting ready to add some thoughts about feeling and thinking and action. And just so you guys know, we actually will have a handout with some examples as well. So we'll hold onto the examples that you all share, and also give you the examples that we thought up ahead of time.

Okay, so we have Leah is sharing something here. And she is saying: "I know that things will work out. It just may take some time." So there's an example of what she might be thinking to herself. And Molly is sharing: "Thinking positively and operating self-care." So that's a great example of both the thinking and the action component of it. Take care of yourselves. We often don't talk about that, and Stephanie and I, in talking about relationships, mentioned that the self-care piece is something that often gets left behind. So, you want to make sure you guys are taking care of yourselves.

So, perhaps I will push you guys a little bit. I know I want to give you some time to think through this, but let's start with the avoiding the expert position. Alabama, were you able to come up with an example of what you might be thinking, feeling, or doing in relationship to avoiding the position of expert? How about Missouri? You guys ready to share your ideas related to exploring instead of knowing? Before I start giving you examples, I want to make sure everybody has a chance. Oklahoma, any thoughts about parallel process, anyone?

So I'm going to give a... I'll give an example for avoiding the position of expert. So you might think in your head: "I know I have a lot of information that I can share, but first I want to hear what my client is going to say."

And you might be feeling: “Oh, I really want them to know that I'm awesome, and I've got lots to contribute. I really got to make sure they believe that I can make a difference,” and that might be the feeling that you're having. And your behavior might be one of: “I'm just going to listen. Tell me what you know, and tell me what you're thinking.” So those... that's an example of avoiding the position of expert. We'll do one more, and then if anybody else has an idea, since you guys are not taking your assignment seriously, I'm giving you all the answers. I will give you the example of genuinely understanding the client's experience. So your thought might be, as you walk in, your thought might be: “I really need to try to think about what's going on with this client's experience.” She came in, and I think to myself: “Look at her, she's got three kids and two car seats.” My feeling might be: “I can't imagine how hard this must be. Like her, I feel really bad, but I'm also really frustrated because I'm not going to be able to get through this stuff.” But you overcome that, and your behavior might be one of helping the client and carry one of the car seats, giving them a look of empathy. And so that's an example of how you might think, feel, and do, in terms of the coaching stance.

So, anybody else have ideas? Oh, okay, we got something from Alabama here. Great. Now things are showing up. Feelings, so, we have... sorry, I'm trying to get to the screen; it's hard to move. So Charles from West Virginia says: “Show empathy towards the situation, summarizing up what they have expressed to you, and to just not jump to conclusions, and not impose your own opinion.” Thank you, Charlie, that's fabulous. Elizabeth also is talking about avoiding the position of expert. For think: “I don't want to come across as talking down to her, as if I have all the answers.” Thanks, Elizabeth. From Diana: “I believe that it's asking the client about the direction they want to go in and thinking.” And from Emma Jane, thinking: “Brainstorming is a building block toward good planning.” Right. And Emma says: “So true.” Lori Jackson: “There was a family whose grandfather passed away and left \$2,000 to his family, and his family took a trip to the beach with this money. Some questioned why they did not use the money for the child's education. But maybe we have used unexpected dollars for...” Like, you have a lot... from Kathy, for the feeling: “You have a lot of perspective and experiences they can benefit from. Thinking and brainstorming and doing, and let them offer suggestions first, and let them do most of the talking. It's important to guide without actually making decisions.” You guys are amazing. You've got so many thoughts here.

So, from Alabama: “Think about how the client is feeling in that moment, assess where they are, and gain an understanding of the situation. We would feel a little anxious or uneasy, as it is not a natural response for us to be...” Sorry, I lost my... “It is not a natural response for us to not be an expert and figure out what to do.” And then from Fanny from Alabama: “Ask questions as opposed to instructing them in what to do.” And from Michelle Graham: “Explore instead of knowing.” And for her thinking: “I'm going to make sure I let her know... let her tell me about the situation.” For the feeling: “I feel like the client is going to want me to give her the answers.” And the behavior is: “To listen.” From Kathleen Bender: “Get a case aid assistant if you're overwhelmed, and don't judge.” So. There we go. Thank you very much for that one. Okay, I think that's from everybody that we got, so fabulous responses. Good. I think maybe you had done your assignments and I wasn't seeing it on the screen. So I gave you some examples, and you guys all gave some fabulous examples as well. So that was wonderful.

Okay, so let's move on. So now what we want to do is we've talked to you guys about using a strengths-based approach. We've talked to you about the stages of the coaching relationship. We've talked about this coaching stance and the components that make up the coaching stance, which is the thinking, feeling, and acting, and now we want to think about this from the real world, and give some real case examples. So applying, we're called this “applying a strengths-based approach.” So we sent some notes out to teams and asked for some examples of challenging coaching relationships, and what happened, and why this was a challenge. And I have some examples that I would like to share that people have given to me, which I think are really helpful to hear about. And then the goal will be for us to, as a team, to share some ideas of how we can use some of the concepts that we've been talking about today to address that challenge. Let me pull up my first challenge that I can share with you, and you can hear about it.

So this is an issue with communication and I think trust is a key issue. So this is a situation where the client would not disclose information that could help them. So they came in for the case management, and they... in

fact, one step further, they not only wouldn't share information that could help them, but there were some barriers that could get in the way of their ability to be able to benefit from the services. So they might not be comfortable sharing: "I have a criminal history" or "I don't have housing." Because they don't yet trust you. So, they go out to the field, they start doing some of their work, and it's not until the last day that suddenly you hear that they've got a light bill that they can't pay, or that they've gotten to the project site and they got a background check, and they can't take the job because they have some criminal history that comes up, as the charges come up and there's an issue with it. So, the first challenging relationship that we're describing is one of trust and not being able... or comfortable enough to disclose information to the coach. And what might happen here, as an example, is that we can't give them the best... match them to the best services or figure out what it is that they really need. So given this challenging situation, I'd like to hear from the group if they have some thoughts about how you might approach this challenging situation using a strengths-based approach, and which components of a coaching stance you might be able to bring to the table to help address this particular challenge.

STEPHANIE: Sam, could you just do like a short recap of what the main parts of that scenario were? Thank you.

SAM: Of the situation that I described? Yes, absolutely. So in this scenario, you have a client who comes in, they don't trust the case worker, they have a... let's say a criminal history that they don't feel comfortable sharing, and so the case worker matches them up to a job site, and then the job site sends a note back saying, "We can't take them because we just did a background check, and this person has a history of... a criminal history and we're not allowed to keep them at this site." So, they're having to start from square one.

STEPHANIE: Thank you.

SAM: Sure. So, thinking about that scenario, what components of a strengths-based approach might be helpful in order to address that concern, and what components of a coaching stance would you use? Any other thoughts or recommendations that you would have related to using the coaching relationship to facilitate this or help this client? I'll start by letting just people think for a moment and share out, and then I'll start calling out states to get you guys to share your great ideas.

TINA: Miss Sam, they would like to see the coaching stance slide again, just so they can kind of get a refresher as far as like what they need to think about.

SAM: Sure. There you go. Good point; that would help as a reminder. So, I was about to reread something that you guys shared earlier, so I won't read it again. Okay, so given the scenario, does anyone from Alabama have some ideas of how they might approach this, and some recommendations for the team that shared this scenario? How about anyone from Missouri? Race to the finish. Who's going to be the first one to speak out? West Virginia? I want to make sure I don't forget any states. Oklahoma? New Hampshire? Our one North Dakotan, who's sitting in a snowstorm? So how might you... for this scenario, in terms of the trust and not sharing, how might you use the coaching stance for genuinely understanding the client's experience to help facilitate this relationship?

TINA: Miss Sam, we have a response from West Virginia. And they stated: "Explore resources to overcome background history."

SAM: Thank you.

TINA: We have another one stating: "To empathize with the client and maybe share something that happened to you that is similar."

SAM: Fabulous, and that's from Michelle Graham—

TINA: We also had another individual respond: "Let the client know the background you just found out about is a stumbling block, but not impossible to get around. Then encourage client to give you anything that you may need to know, so you can help them."

SAM: And that's from Vicki. Thank you, Vicki. Oh, I see something from Enya: "Sharing in the effort, genuinely understanding the client's experience," as an example. Beverly is sharing that: "Seek out an employer who will hire the individual with such a background." I have another... something in the chat window: "A recommendation is to figure out how to share her criminal background history ahead, before they pull it. We've had tremendous success with participants sharing their story before it comes up on paper." I think this might fit under slowing down and taking it one step at a time. That's a great example. From Christy: "Encourage the client that this could happen due to their past, but we will keep trying." That's a nice example of holding hope. "And working together to try not to get discouraged." This is sharing, a lovely example of sharing in the effort. Thank you, Christy. So you can see how the ideas that you guys have come up with are really nice examples of these different coaching stance approaches.

Okay. I'm going to... I have actually a printout of an example of another challenging case, and I'm not going to read the whole thing because they actually resolved it later on, but I'll read the beginning part of it, and you guys can think about how you might respond to this one. So, it's: "During my time as a case worker, a challenging coaching relationship occurred with a client I was helping. She had accepted a job at Arby's with minimal hours due to some barriers she was facing with transportation and her children were having discipline problems at school, and this caused her to have to leave her job offer to go meet some school staff. She had a goal of wanting to work full-time. However, she was at a loss and she was frustrated with how to proceed in handling the barriers." I'm just... "I was able to assist her with transportation, but she was unsure how to talk with her employers about what was going on in her life, at that particular point." So this is the example of the challenging situation.

So, let's think about some examples of things, before I tell you what actually happened, some things that you might do in terms of handling this challenging coaching relationship. And it's helpful, Miss Tina, if somebody types something that doesn't appear right on my screen immediately, so if you'd give me the heads-up, I'll know that it's appearing and I won't try to call out states to share when they've already shared. So she was just wanting full-time employment. Her long-term goal was full-time employment. But at the... she was currently, from what I'm reading, she had minimal hours due to some of these challenges that she was having. Thanks for the question, Christy.

TINA: Miss Sam, I have one from Michelle Graham: "Create a mock situation with the client, where you are the client, explaining to the employer the issues."

SAM: Thank you. And that's from Michelle. And I'm thinking that sounds like an exploring instead of knowing, where you're kind of working together, rather than telling her how to do it. So that's a great example. And I see that Fannie Ashley has something. She says: "Try to help to decipher why she's uncomfortable talking with her employers," which is another example of slowing down... exploring instead of knowing. I was thinking "exploring" and had my eyes on "slowing down." Both of these are also examples of not necessarily being the expert, but trying to help her come up with her own answers. Actually, these are examples of all of these coaching stances, now that I think about it. So, before... anyone else, any other ideas before I tell you what the... I'll read the rest of the story, so you guys can hear the real-life scenario.

TINA: Miss Sam, from Missouri, a comment at the bottom by Miss Diana Ball.

SAM: Thank you. So, Fannie: "Try to help her..." Oh, we talked about that. So Diana of Missouri: "Discuss with the client to see if they have family that can help them with the child when she's at work, so that she can still work and feel less stress of having to leave the work site so often." I almost see that also as holding hope, that you're not alone; you have your family as well to turn to, if they have someone present. Make use of the hope holders.

So when... I'll tell you what happened, open up the box and hear the real story. So, what happened is that with the permission of the client, who agreed, the case worker called and spoke with the supervisor, explained the situation and what was going on, and how they were trying to assist and what the program was about. So in this case, the supervisor didn't understand the program. The supervisor was then more accepting of the situation and agreed to work with the client. So two months later, after continually working through the barriers,

the client came to visit the case worker with a check stub that showed 40 hours, and she just hugged her for the longest time, thanking me for everything we did to help her, and she felt so relieved that she could start on a path towards finally getting her family in a better situation. I also like this story because it's an example in terms of the coaching relationship of where we're looking at the later phases of it, where, actually, you don't always have the good goodbyes, but sometimes you have people coming back to say hello again and share some of the successes that they've had.

So, with that, I actually had one other final story of a success to share, that somebody from one of the teams shared recently, and I'm going to look at it up there, because I can't quite see it on my screen. So this is something they said: "I had a really cool experience today. I was talking to an applicant who only received TANF for a short period 20 years ago. And I was explaining how we want TANF to be a much different experience, that we want to build a relationship with her and we want her to succeed. Her face immediately lit up, while also relaxing, if that makes sense. I have such high expectations for this program." So I think just letting the client know that this is going to be different, and that we're starting with a relationship and that our goal is to make you succeed, changed the relationship and just the client's reaction alone says everything there is to say about that.

So that's all we have for the—oh, well, there's some more from... I was going to say that's all we have, but we have some more ideas from Missouri that we would like to hear, if you do. So we don't want to end this without getting any last further comments or questions from people who are wondering about some things related to this topic.

STEPHANIE: I think that example is really cool and brings us back to the beginning of the road map, to how you start the relationship. So it really brings it full circle.

SAM: Yes. And thank you to those of you who shared your ideas. Okay. Well, with that, thank you all for participating and being active members in this wonderful topic. We will look forward to talking to you all in a month more about communications and building relationships, and I give to you 26 extra minutes into your day that I have borrowed, and so now you can go and do something to think about how these things might be useful for you in your work. Unless there are any last questions before we say goodbye? Alright, well, thank you, everyone. Enjoy the rest of your day, and enjoy the flowers or ice cream, depending on what your favorite thing was.

TINA: And Sam, before we end the webinar session, just know that we'll have a survey after you close out your webinar presentation. If you could take the time out to provide any responses or answers, we would greatly appreciate those answers and feedback from you all. Also, did you still want me to maybe upload a file for them, you know, a resource tool?

SAM: Oh, yeah.

TINA: The coaching relationship handout for them to have?

SAM: Yes, that would be great. And somebody asked about emailing the slides, and absolutely, the team will share slides and the handout with you as well, when it's gone through all the procedures that it needs to so that it's 504 compliant. But right now, this tool summarizes some of the content that we've shared today in a little nifty handout, which might be easier to use than the slideshow. But certainly both are available. So you'll see it appear...

TINA: Just hover your mouse over the file that I have on the screen for you to save it to your desktop or flash drive. And again, thank you all for joining today's webinar. We appreciate your time and attention, and if you have any questions related to the presentation, please submit them to your coaches.

SAM: Thank you so much.

STEPHANIE: Thank you.

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