Getting to know the perspectives

- Who are you and why are you here?
- Who am I and why am I here?

My perspective for our next 85 minutes
- Comes from the “communication specialist” perspective
- Is born of learning from the masters of counseling in many genres, but most specifically in communication disorders/fluency disorders
- Provides a potential for review, validation, listening to varied perspectives, and definitely- new and updated information
Time today

- 10 minutes – Intro
- 15 minutes – Your Experiences
  - Roadblocks and Triumphs
- 35 minutes - Breaking it Down
- 45 minutes - Building it Back Up
- 30 minutes - Summary & Questions

START WITH THE FRAMEWORK

It helps all of us understand the depth of our assessments
WHO-ICF for Stakeholders

Retrieved: https://www.who.int/classifications/icf/icfbeginnersguide.pdf

The following diagram is one representation of the model of disability that is the basis for ICF

WHO’s ICF/Fluency Disorders

Breaking it down:

- Referral: We observe...
- Assessment: We suspect...
- Diagnosis & (Meeting): We found...

- **WHY are we talking about counseling during assessment?**

When we interact with stakeholders during these initial aspects of the special education process, we are setting the tone for the entire experience to follow.

If we have a grasp on counseling skills and language, we can
- glean more pertinent information,
- make more appropriate diagnoses, and
- set up more effective intervention plans

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**WIN! WIN! WIN!**

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**SO, WHAT ABOUT YOU?**

What are some of your triumphs and challenges in counseling stakeholders during this process?
THE GOOD NEWS...
SMALL CHANGES
MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE!

One or two extra interactions can change
the course of the assessment process!

Our Roles—Going Deeper

1. Helping stakeholders understand the suspected issue and the process of referral/assessment/diagnosis.
   ◦ This can be a challenging—but imperative part of the our role.
2. Listening to their story (supporting while gleaning information)
3. Validating concerns
4. Reflecting back through a new (wider) lens

5. Empowering: We are not here to RESCUE, we are here to EMPOWER by helping stakeholders get in touch with their feelings and helping them find their own path to understanding and acceptance of the issues their students are facing
Stakeholders are dealing with…

- A journey they don’t want to be on…
  - Stages of Grief
  - Stages of Change (Prochaska & DiClemente)
    - Guilt of the past
    - Fear of the future
    - Expectations of others
      - Spouse
      - Society
      - Extended family
      - And yes…educators (us)

How do we want parents to feel about our services-from the beginning?

- I got some pamphlets!
- They wrote goals for my child and I signed papers

OR

- I felt supported
- I was heard and felt part of the process
Remember

◦ We are working with stakeholders to find THEIR OWN STYLE of coping strategies while they support students and navigate through this process

◦ Simple questions are never simple...
  ◦ Exs: “What caused this to happen?”
  ◦ : “What can be done to help?”

◦ Cheerleading is a mistake! Let them feel the feeling and sit in the space with them.

◦ We are responsible TO the stakeholders, not responsible FOR them!

When stakeholders are involved in the process...

◦ They can feel more hope and optimism
◦ They can tap into “agency” (We can do something!)
◦ They develop knowledge and a deeper understanding of what is going on with their child/student
◦ They feel supported
◦ They learn strategies of how to best respond to challenges, and how to support their child

  - Michael Palin Center for Stammering
Counseling

Not something we “do”…

Integrated into all aspects of the assessment and treatment processes

Truly, counseling IS:
- 1/3 skills
- 1/3 how you say what you say
- 1/3 what you DON’T say

What counseling is NOT
- Information/Education
  - This is IMPERATIVE, but only a surface-level aspect of what we do…

Concepts to remember during our interactions
- The question is not always “the question”
- Projection is normal and insidious
- What you see (surface) is not usually what is real:
  - Shame, guilt, anger, sadness….these are ALL manifestations of FEAR
- Fear creates many other issues, including resistance and the inability to process information
Concepts for Counseling

1. **Actively Listen**
2. Stop TALKING
3. **Reflect**
4. Stop TALKING
5. **Summarize**
6. Stop TALKING

Luterman...
- “Counseling is not a place to go to ‘feel better’
- Most of counseling takes place when we are feeling rotten.
- We aren’t doing our jobs if everyone is comfortable

**Why counseling can feel uncomfortable**

*Because Change is Messy!*

**MORE HEALING**
Counseling Strategies (not an exhaustive list)

◦ 1. Create conditions for growth and change to happen
◦ 2. Be willing to let SILENCE happen
◦ 3. Wonder
◦ 4. Reflect
◦ 5. Respond to the FEELING of a statement rather than the content
   IOW...
   ◦ Is the question or comment valid on FACE VALUE?
   -OR-
   ◦ Is this more under the surface?

It could be as simple as...

“This process can, at times, feel challenging and maybe a bit...overwhelming”

“How are you doing (feeling, etc.) with all of this?”

“START somewhere!

“What can we do, as a team, to support you and your family (classroom) as we make plans for your child (student)?”
Wrap Up

WHAT ARE YOUR “TAKE HOMES?”

WHAT IS YOUR “SMALL CHANGE” ACTION PLAN?

ADDENDUM

THESE ARE FYI BITS OF LANGUAGE!

Just a running list...Use what you think will be of help! 😊
Ideas that help the process
Clinical Nuggets...for SLPs

◦ Create conditions
◦ Let it GO
  ◦ Trust yourself
  ◦ Trust them
  ◦ Trust the process
◦ Be willing to let SILENCE happen
  ◦ Reflection of self is to recognize self
◦ Give them words...resilience, persistence, etc.
◦ Acknowledge, Educate, EMPOWER

Words from the Masters...for SLPs

◦ Take care of the parents and you take care of the child.
◦ Kids come with a gift
  ◦ “That can come in the form of pain, anxiety, hard work, sensitivity, hope”
  ◦ “How wonderful; you have found a teacher!”
◦ As professionals, we operate on the fringe of our incompetency; be sufficient/not perfect
◦ Respond to the FEELING of a statement rather than the content
◦ Making small changes can make the biggest change
◦ Keep things positive/Let them be smart
◦ People stay in denial when they don’t feel they can handle the reality
◦ Our basic goal is to EMPOWER
More Clinical Nuggets

- Stakeholders need more time to get to talking about themselves—not just their child/student.
- All of us (stakeholders and clinical professionals), need to develop confidence that we will come up with what is needed.
- Get off the “performing/expert track!” Let stakeholders come up with their own thoughts/ideas.
- Be willing to let SILENCE happen!
- When interacting, mention time constraints, as applicable.
  - “We have about 20 minutes left... How can I be most helpful to you today?”
- Rules for group maintenance (think: meetings):
  - Nobody imposes their solutions on the group (including us).
  - Our role is to “set the tone” and help create space for the processes of change and acceptance.

And More...

- Counseling is not “disorder-specific”
- Don’t give too much advice (it disempowers)
- Ultimately while we are in the assessment process, we are creating confident, competent, independent stakeholders who don’t need us (nor our colleagues) to solve all of the problems that arise.
- Make the ‘space’ and let it come back around (or not).
- Stakeholders aren’t as fragile as we think they are... Help them see they can accept and move forward even in the pain of.
- As professionals, we need to NOT have an agenda! Let go of the task list sometimes! Trust that each person’s individual process will unfold.
Language that helps the process...
Culling Themes:

- “How are you feeling about that?”
- “How is that for you?”
- “How did that impact you?”
- “Do you have some notions about that for yourself?”
- “It seems as though you have been thinking about it, can you tell me more?”
- “I’ve been hearing…”
- “My sense is…”
- Do you have an expectation about his/her progress?

Language that helps the process...
Guided questioning

- “There is a lot of responsibility here that you can’t just turn over to someone else,” “What’s that going to look like for you?” (your classroom/your family)
- “Because your child is an individual and situations are so varied, everyone experiences your child in a different way.” (and that’s OK)
- “What’s your measure of success?”
- “What is the criteria for ‘doing well?’”
- “What will happen if that doesn’t happen.”
- “Do you think your measures will change over time?”
Language that helps the process... Validation

- “That must be so hard...”
- “That must have been rough...”
- “That’s a thoughtful question. It sounds as though you’ve thought a lot about this.”
  - “There isn’t an easy answer. Let’s explore this together.”
- “You are the expert on your child.”
- “I may have some knowledge to share, but the wisdom is within you.”
- “This is a fully collaborative process.” [parents and teachers need to hear this]
- “You have a perspective on this child and I will also gain a perspective.”
- “We all want to be happy with this process, and see happiness in this child. We all want to do our best.”
- “The _____________ is as much an issue for us as it is for our kids.”
- “When we don’t know what to do, this child has the best feedback.”

Sample language that helps the process...

- “Can you be a successful parent even if your child [stutters]?”
- “What are your expectations of the process?”
  - Are they aligned with the diagnosis?
- “Is our view of average or "OK" skewed?"
- “Ask yourself, what are you investing in?”
- “The [fluency] issue can obscure all the other stuff you have to do as parents.”
- “Have we done all that we can do... WITHIN OUR CONTROL?”
- “Ultimately we are trying to create an independent adult who doesn’t need us.”
- “Raising kids is a series of ‘Letting Go’s’”
  - The only questions are the when’s? and the how much’es?
- “Can you take the credit or just the blame?”
- “We don’t always know if we are doing it right.”
  - “right is fleeting anyway”
- “What does practice look like at home?”
  - Show me in a session (or by other means)
Selected References


