

Session 4: Personal Resistance to Change

Objectives

1. To identify and reframe personal barriers to adopting safer risk behaviors
2. To increase personal negotiation skills in reducing sexual and injection risk.
3. To practice Active Listening skills

Materials

- Tape recorder, microphone, and tapes with labels
- Group Rules poster (from Session 1)
- “Peer Mentors” Poster (from Session 1)
- “SPEAKK” poster (from Session 2)
- Problem Solving Posters (3)
- Newsprint (One labeled “Behaviors You Want to Change” and 12 blank)
- Markers, pens, masking tape
- Homework activity card

Overview

- I. Welcome Back and Peer Mentor Homework (15 minutes)
- II. Reflection on Personal Resistance to Change (10 minutes)
- III. Dyad Active Listening (15 minutes)
- IV. Participant report on Active Listening (15 minutes)
- V. Summary of Dyad Active Listening Activity (5 minutes)
- VI. Break (10 minutes)
- VII. Problem Solving Impediments (35 minutes)
- VIII. Peer Mentoring Homework and Wrap-up (15 minutes)

I. Welcome Back - Debrief from Peer Mentor Training Activity (15 minutes)

Procedure

Group leaders welcome participants back to the group and ask them to share their peer mentor training activity. They briefly touch upon the topics that will be covered in today's session.

Hello everyone, and welcome back. At the end of last session, we asked you to talk to a network member about different ways to reduce HIV risk through sex using the Sex Risk Ladder or, if it is more comfortable, to bring up the topic of condom use.

Let's go around the room and share how it went. If you didn't do it we want to hear about the barriers that prevented you from talking with one of your network members.

Questions about the Interaction

1. *What actually happened?*
 - *How did you bring up the topic?*
 - *What was their first response when you brought up the topic?*
 - *Were you able to Stay Positive?*
2. *What went well?*
 - *What techniques did you use to engage them in conversation?*
 - *Did they try to avoid answering any of your questions or the information that you were presenting? What did you do to get them to talk?*
3. *What did not go so well?*
 - *Did they try to avoid answering any of your questions or information that you were presenting and what did you do to get them to talk?*
4. *Would you like some suggestions from your group about ways to improve your interaction?*

Transition

Okay, so it seems that talking to other people about sexual risk reduction was [summary of experiences].

II. Reflection on Personal Resistance to Change (10 minutes)

Now that we are halfway through the program, we want to take a moment to reflect on what we have accomplished so far.

Remember that the purpose of this program is to teach you useful skills, and for you to teach others, in order to help reduce the spread of HIV and other infections.

You have spent the past 3 sessions learning about HIV and practicing SPEAKK skills so that you can talk your network members and others about HIV.

We have been focusing on developing realistic harm reduction strategies for yourself, so that you can stay HIV negative and be a role model. We think that by setting a good example, Peer Mentors are leaders in the community, and you can have a powerful influence on people who are at risk for getting HIV.

We understand that making positive changes in our lives can be challenging. Many of you may have identified areas in your life where you could take steps to reduce the harms associated with using drugs and having sex. Some of you may have tried to make some of these changes. Often when we try to do new things in our lives, we come across barriers. Understanding barriers that exist within us is an important part of getting over the barrier so that we can make positive change.

*We want you all to take a moment and think about a time in your life when you tried to make a change and were **not** successful. Although it's sometimes easier to talk about our successes, remember, this is about a time when you did **not** succeed in changing a behavior. In a moment, we're going to ask you to discuss this, so be sure to pick something that you are comfortable sharing with all of us.*

[Facilitator Pause to let them think about it for a minute.]

As you think about this time in your life, think about the following points:

The Group Leader should check to make sure they understand what it is we're asking them to reflect on.

Read the questions below, slowly, allowing them time to consider each one.]

- *What behavior were you trying to change?*
- *What internal factors, or things within you, made this difficult? (These might include feelings like anger or frustration, or it could be a belief or lack of knowledge.)*
- *What external factors made the change difficult? (External factors might include other people, like your significant other, family members, roommates, neighborhood, or it might be that you lacked the resources you needed to change.)*
- *How were you, or how are you, able to move on after not being successful?*

Transition to Active Listening Dyads

In a moment, we are going to ask you to pair off and share with each other what your experience was like.

This activity has two main points - both equally important:

(1) ONE - to explore the barriers that kept you from changing a behavior you wanted to change, and

(2) TWO - to practice your "Active Listening" skills from the SPEAKK skills when your partner shares their experience.

First we're going to give you some background information to help you with this exercise, before you pair off.

Remember we agreed that good Peer Mentors are supportive and helpful listeners.

To actively listen, we should be attentive. One way to show that we are actively listening is by fully facing the person and by asking questions that keep the conversation going, like “Tell me more about that”. Another active listening skill is to repeat back what the person has said in your own words. This shows that you understand what the other person is saying and allows them to clear up any confusion.

What you are doing with active listening is showing people that you respect what they have to say and that you are trying to understand their point of view. It also shows them that you are not being judgmental. Respecting others can lead to them respect you. If people respect you, they are more likely to listen to you.

Actively listening is a skill that takes a lot of practice. We encourage you all to try to Actively Listen more often. We can practice by listening to our kids, partners, or friends. Your peer mentor homework will give you a chance to practice Actively Listening to your network members.

Now we’re going to ask you to pair off with someone in the group, and once you’re in your pairs, we’ll give you further instructions.



Note to Facilitator

When debriefing Active Listening, ask the participants some questions to get them to think about the concept:

e.g., When you’re talking, how do you know that someone is hearing what you said? What’s the value of showing people that you are listening to them? How do you really know if you understand what some else is saying?

III. Dyad Active Listening (15 minutes)

Procedure

Have participants pair up with a partner. If there is an odd number of participants, one person should work with one of the facilitators.

Make sure you have their full attention.

Give directions for the activity, as written below.

As the pairs of participants are sharing with each other, pay attention to their Active Listening skills. For example, make a note of those who maintain good eye contact, who have open body posture, are listening more than talking. Then you can use these as examples of good Active Listening.

You each will have 4 minutes to share with each other. The person sharing should talk about that time they tried to make a change but were not successful.

We will let you know when the first 4 minutes is up, and you should switch roles, so that the person listening will now be talking.

After you are done sharing, we are going to ask everybody to report to the group what their partner talked about. Therefore, we want to remind you to pick a situation that you will be comfortable having your partner discuss with the whole group.

Remember to describe a risk behavior you tried to change, but you were not successful at changing. We want you to focus on both the internal factors and the external factors that made it hard to change, as well as on how you were able to move on, and your feelings about how things turned out.

Okay, just to make sure we're all on the same page, can somebody tell me what it is that you are going to do?

IV. Participant Reports: Active Listening (15 minutes)

Procedure

Have pairs of participants volunteer to share each other's experience. Use the guided questions below to keep the report focused.

Okay everyone, we would like you to share what your partner told you with the group. Remember, to tell us what your partner told you about. Focus on what they tried to change in their life, and what made it hard to change.

Suggested Pair Debriefing Questions:

- To the Active Listener:

What change was your partner trying to make?

What made it difficult for them?

How did it feel to Actively Listen? What made it difficult? What was natural or easy about Actively Listening?

- To the participant who shared:

How did it feel to have [name of Active Listener] totally focusing on your story?

How could you tell they were listening?

V. Summary of Dyad Active Listening Activity (5 minutes)

There were two reasons for the activity this morning. The first was to give you a chance to practice one of the most important SPEAKK skills: Actively Listening.

We may have lots of good information for our peers, but if we are not listening to them, can we expect them to listen to us? Plus, we need to know what is going on with our peers so we can give them information that they can use. The Harm Reduction philosophy is about meeting people where they are; actively listening is a good way to find out where a person is.

The other purpose of the activity was to allow you to reflect on barriers that you may have experienced in trying to make changes in your own life.

These barriers can be beliefs or attitudes that you may have, like "I don't think I can get HIV, I don't care if I get Hepatitis," or "I am afraid that if I try to change my behaviors, people will think that I have HIV."

Other barriers can be lack of information or resources like, "I don't know if using a dirty needle to split drugs is risky," or "I don't know where I can get free condoms."

Finally, some people in our lives can be the source of resistance to change. Trying to stop smoking when your partner smokes or trying to use condoms when your partner does not want to use them is very challenging.

It is easy to become frustrated when we try to change and are unable to do it completely. Often people say to themselves, "Well, I tried but it didn't work, so I am not going to try anymore."

Remember the Harm Reduction approach is about building on our strengths and moving forward, even if we fall short of our goals. It is about saying things like, "Well I tried to be as safe as possible, and next time I will try even harder."

Good Peer Mentors Stay Positive when talking with others about reducing their risk. This does not mean that we ignore or minimize the challenges they face. Staying Positive means that we try to help people build on their strengths and avoid making them feel guilty when they fall short of their goals to be safer.

Now we're going to take a 10 minute break. After the break we are going to do an activity that will help you keep moving and Staying Positive even if you fall short of your goal.

VI. Break (10 minutes)

VII. Problem Solving Impediments (35 minutes)

Procedure

(1) Prepare Materials - First, put up a piece of Newsprint labeled (1) "Risk Behavior You Want to Change." Second, put up the 3 Problem Solving Posters in a row, labeled: (2) Barriers, (3) Reasons You Want to Make Changes, and (4) Practical Steps. The three posters should be arranged as if each heading is a column in a table. Third, on each of the 3 posters, put 4 pieces of blank newsprint under the heading (arranged in layers so that you can peel them off, one at a time).

(2) Get **the whole group** to brainstorm a list of specific RISK behaviors that they are trying to change. Make a list of all of the problems the group generates on the first piece of newsprint that is labeled "Risk Behavior You Want to Change."

(3) After you have a good list or have heard from everybody who is willing to share, begin to work on one behavior at a time. Ask **only the person who has mentioned the problem behavior** for any important details about the behavior and what changes they have tried to make.

Ask them for a few of the main barriers that make it hard for them to change the behavior. List these on the top layer of newsprint on the poster labeled, "Barriers." (Use the whole sheet of newsprint; when you move onto the next problem you can just peel this off and use the next sheet.) Barriers might include how they feel about the behavior, negative beliefs related to changing the behavior, and the context (where, when, with whom) where the behavior occurs (triggers).

(4) On the newsprint on the third poster (labeled "Why you want to change"), list the reasons why **the person who named the risk behavior** says that they want to make the change. Fill in the appropriate column with this information.

(5) Once you have all this information from the person describing the behavior, ask the **group** to come up with practical steps that the person could try. The suggestions should address (match) the persons' specific barriers. We also want these solutions to include ways they could try talking about the changes and new ways of thinking about the problem and their attempted solutions.

(6) Once you are finished working on this problem, peel off the top layers of newsprint on the 3 posters, and pick another problem from the list, and repeat steps 3 through 5 above. Do this for 3-4 problems, as time allows.

Problem Solving Impediments - Instructions to Participants

[TO THE GROUP] *We have been talking about the barriers to changing that you have encountered in the past. Now we want to spend some time talking about barriers you may be experiencing right now as you try to practice safer behaviors.*

Most of us are probably not 100% safe, so try to think of something you are working on right now. For those who have been safe, think about what it was like when you were first trying to make those changes.

What we want to do is to come up with a list of specific RISK behaviors that you all are trying to change. Then we will work on one behavior at a time, and as a group come up with practical steps that you can try to take and different ways of thinking about these changes. Who can get us started?

[List responses on the first sheet of newsprint, "Risk Behaviors You Want to Change." Then pick a behavior to work on first.]

Thanks for that great list.

[TO PARTICIPANT ____ (who volunteered the behavior)] *Let's start with [pick a behavior that seems relatively easy to change]. [Participant who volunteered behavior], tell me more about [behavior.] What change would you like to make?*

Can you tell us how you feel about [behavior]? What makes it hard to [stop, start, change] this behavior? What types of feelings, or beliefs, or people, places, or things, make it hard for you to [name safer behavior]?

[Prompt for types of barriers, as necessary. List responses on second sheet of newsprint, "Barriers."]

[TO PARTICIPANT _____ again]: *Why do you want to change this behavior?*

[List response on third sheet of newsprint, "Reasons to Change." Emphasize the motivation to decrease risk and be safer.]

TO THE GROUP: *Can you think of some practical steps that [participant] can take to decrease [his/her] risk? Be creative - brainstorm, and then [participant] can decide what's realistic later.*

Do your suggestions address these barriers that [he/she] mentioned over here [point to 2nd newsprint]? See how actively listening can help us make our suggestions fit a person's specific situation?

After the group lists some "steps" - **SAY TO THE PARTICIPANT WHO VOLUNTEERED THE BEHAVIOR:** *Do any of these seem like ideas you might try?*

Repeat these steps for 2-3 other "behaviors" on the list, as time permits.

Debrief the Problem Solving Activity:

Sometimes we are not able to meet our goals for being safe. This may be because our goal is too ambitious, or it may be because we are not getting the help we need from our partners, our friends, from agencies and from the society as a whole. But we don't want to give up and quit trying. Remember we need to Stay Positive about ourselves and help our peers to Stay Positive too. We need to find ways to give ourselves credit for the effort we have made, and to continue trying to find ways to meet our goals.

Now that we better understand how our own barriers can make it hard for us to change, we can also see how the same thing is true for our network members.

How can we use this understanding to become better Peer Mentors?

[Wait for response, and then emphasize:]

Yes, it's important that Peer Mentors Actively Listen to what types of barriers people bring up when you talk to your network members about changing behavior.

Remember, barriers can be simple, like not knowing about a community resource, or more complex, like having negative feelings and attitudes about changing their behavior.

The ideas you share with your network members can be very effective when they directly address their personal barriers, or resistance, to reducing their risk behaviors.

For example, if we just tell someone where to get condoms, without first listening to the reasons that they don't want to use condoms (like maybe they don't know how, or they feel too dry, or they think their penis is too big), we could miss a chance to help them to really make a change and keep themselves safe.

VIII. Discuss Peer Mentoring Training Activity and Wrap-Up (15 minutes)

Procedure

Each participant names or gives the first initial of the network member that they will talk to. The group leader records each person's goal to use at the next session's debriefing. The participant writes his or her goal on an activity card to take with them to remind them of the activity.

For today's peer mentor training activity, we want to ask everyone to listen to one of your network members about barriers that they have in their lives that keep them from making changes in their risk behaviors. You can start the conversation out by asking them what makes it hard for them to be safe and then Actively Listen to what they have to say. Ask questions to keep the conversation going. Remember, to help them see their strengths and not feel too down about coming short of their goal. If you know of Resources in your community that can help them work towards their goal you can share that too.

When you come back next session, be ready to share what it was like for you to Actively Listen to your network members.

Homework:

Session 4 –Listening to Barriers to Changing Risk Behaviors

I'm going to talk with _____ about something I learned today.

If I don't see _____ I'll talk with _____.

I plan to talk about _____

The next session is _____ / _____ / _____ at _____ AM/PM

If you need to speak with someone before the next session you can call _____ at _____.

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