

Strategies for Managing Resistance

Oppositional Client Behavior:

The Oppositional client has a reactive personality style. Rather than defining his or her own realistic goals, the oppositional person waits for others to take a stand, and then reacts against it.

- Offer choices about how to achieve outcomes
- Explore with client the consequences of choices and of not choosing
- Present the positive aspects of choosing.
- Explain that the choices that the client makes determine what you and others do.
- Try to maintain a positive or at least neutral relationship with the client.
- Stay fact-based and objective in your decision-making; and, avoid punishing the client.
- Give clients feedback about the positive impact of reasonable choices and cooperative behavior.

Passive-Aggressive Client Behavior:

Passive-aggressive behavior often has foundation in experiences where the client had no opportunity to exert positive control or from someone punishing the client for having been assertive. Since the client feels he or she has no positive control, the objective is to frustrate those who do attempt to exercise control.

- Attempt to clarify what the client wants.
- Attempt to identify client strengths and past successes to bolster self-esteem.
- Break goal achievement into very small steps.
- Celebrate achievement of small steps.
- Try to avoid becoming frustrated.

Denial:

- Don't get stuck on trying to get the client to admit faults or wrongdoing.
- Confront with facts and tell the client that you are proceeding with a plan to address the problems regardless of client failure to acknowledge what others objectively know.
- Focus on the ASFA-related case goals and outcomes, versus secondary issues.

Excuses:

- When presented with client excuses, especially when they appear to be a pattern of behavior, don't ask "Why." Asking "Why" breeds more excuses.
- Ask "When" the client plans to complete a task.
- Ask "How" the client plans to achieve the task.
- Ask "What" the client needs from you to ensure task completion.