

THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE

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Teaching Assistant Presentation for MSK-1

UNC Division of Physical Therapy

Learning Objectives

Learner will...

- Define therapeutic alliance and recognize implications resulting from effective alliance.
- Verbalize qualities that detract from a positive therapeutic relationship.
- Obtain tangible strategies to create a positive therapeutic alliance.
- Apply strategies to enhance therapeutic alliance to a case.
- Recognize the importance of an identifying an individual's willingness to change via Prochaska's Theory of change.
- Identify common verbiage that might evoke fearful responses in patients and replace it with non-fearful words.

What is Therapeutic Alliance?

Therapeutic Alliance

- Broad term first identified by Freud in the early 1900's, which outlines the concept of unconscious perceptions that one might have towards their therapist

An effective therapeutic alliance has the ability to:

- Promote patient retention¹
- Reframe health beliefs²
- Promote self efficacy³
- Improve clinical outcomes⁴⁻⁷
- Redirect anger/hostility⁸



Your turn: Negative Patient Experiences

PollEverywhere

1. www.pollev.com/sarahm655

OR

2. Text sarahm655 to 37607

OR

3. Scan QR code!



“Nobody cares how much you know,
until they know how much you care.”

- THEODORE ROOSEVELT



CASE

John's Low Back Pain

John is a 63 year old Veteran who presents to PT at the VA with recurrent low back pain.

He has had one bout of success with PT (about 4 years ago), which was relieved for about a year, but returned. In the past couple of years, he has found temporary relief with acupuncture, massage, and steroid injections.

He presents to you today, frustrated because it has taken him so long to get in to see you, and states that "I cannot get another referral for acupuncture, until I see PT".

HOW TO FORM AN ALLIANCE

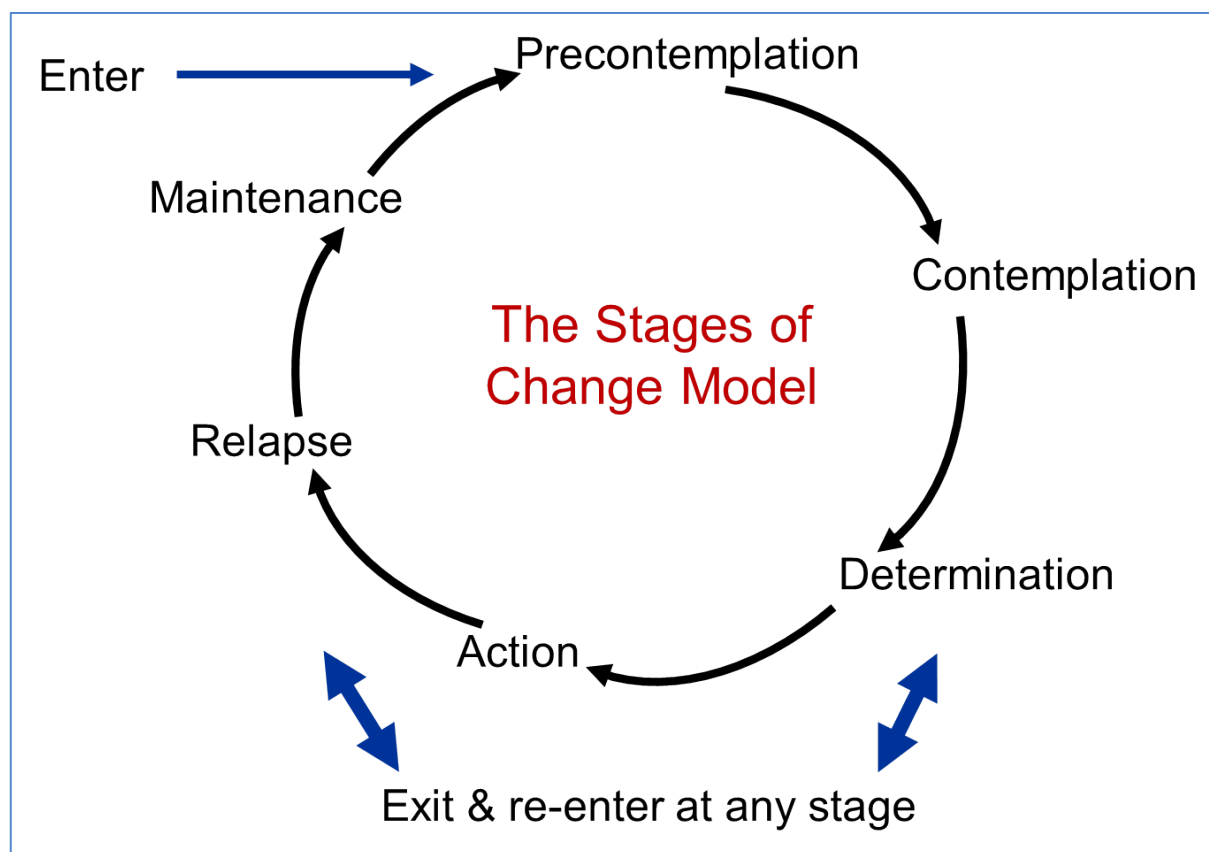
(WITH JOHN)

Methods to Forming Alliance

1. Identifying willingness to change¹⁴
2. Motivational Interviewing¹⁵⁻¹⁶

Stages of Change¹⁴

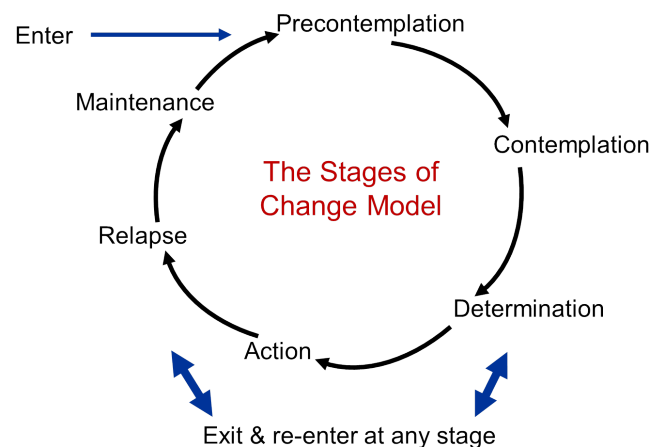
- DiClemente and Prochaska's model



Stages of Change¹⁴

Stage-matched interventions can be utilized to enhance successful intervention

Stages can be both stable and open to change



Remember – behavior and psychology cannot be solved with one model.

Motivational Interviewing¹⁵

*Evidence-Based approach to behavior change and enhances therapeutic alliance

Helps us as providers to better understand the patient, listen, and empower –

Using the patient's own motivations

Utilizes:

Open-Ended Questions | Affirmations | Reflections | Summary

<https://youtu.be/MUckCzvIkJY?t=31>

Methods to Forming Alliance

1. Identifying willingness to change
2. Motivational Interviewing
3. Subjective Exam Components and Open-ended questions

Initial Exam Components

(Modified from *Dylan Sheedy, DPT Capstone 2021*)

SUBJECTIVE EXAM

Acknowledge frustration	"I understand you're feeling..."
Re-direct negativity	"I hear you say 'x', but I want to point out 'y'..."
Open ended questions	"How does 'x' influence your daily life?"
Affirmations (comment on positive behavior)	"I understand 'x' is challenging for you. You demonstrate good self-awareness."
Reflections	"You struggle with 'x', and you worry about 'y'"
Summary statements	"Your 'x' limits your ability to do 'y', which makes you feel 'z'. Is that correct?"
Explore patient beliefs	"Why do you think your 'x' gives you pain?"
Collaborative goals	"What would you most like to be able to do in __ weeks?"

Initial Exam Components

(Modified from *Dylan Sheedy, DPT Capstone 2021*)

Non-Verbal Communication^{7,17}

Enhancing

- Body oriented towards patient
- Leaning forward
- Eye contact
- Affirmative Head nods
- Smiling

Detracting

- Body orientation away from patient
- Stern appearance
- Appearance of distractedness

CASE

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Methods to Forming Alliance

1. Identifying willingness to change
2. Motivational Interviewing
3. Subjective Exam Components and Open-ended questions
4. Message Framing
5. Attention to Verbiage

Message Framing²⁰⁻²²

How information is delivered

- Benefit vs. cost-framed messages
- Both have a place in the healthcare setting
- Benefit-framed messages encourage more participation in less “severe” health circumstances

Benefit Framed

Participating in PT for your Rotator cuff tear will help to improve your functional abilities, reduce pain, and help you to self-manage – likely keeping you from needing surgery.

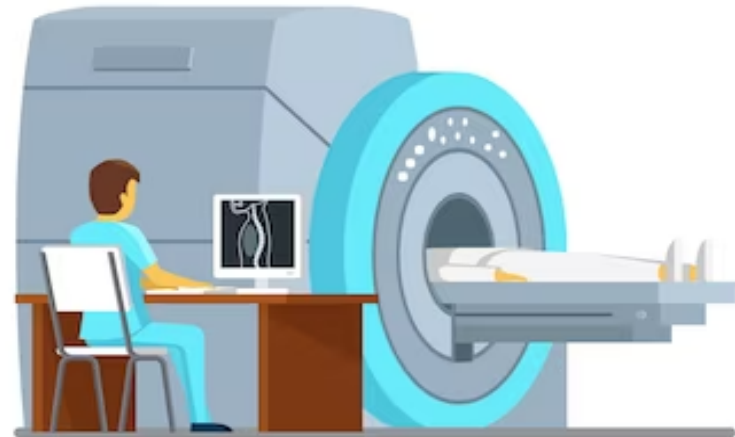
Cost/Loss Framed

If you choose not to participate in PT for your rotator cuff tear, your pain and dysfunction will likely persist, leading you to ongoing management and increased potential for needing surgery.

Verbiage¹⁹

“Harmful” language has a large potential to influence our patients, from...

- Ourselves¹⁹
- Other provider²³
- Imaging reports²⁵
- The internet²⁴



Plays a role in...

- Patient perception of impairment and abilities
- Outcomes
- Movement patterns
 - conscious and non-conscious protective movements²⁶

Verbiage

Degeneration



age-related changes

Compression



help things to move more easily

Stabilize



strengthen, improve activation, control

Anatomical terms

(eg kyphosis, parasthesias, herniation)



normal curvature, reduced sensation,
temporary change/irritation of the disc

How would
you address
his concerns?

John admits to reading the imaging report in his patient portal without follow-up with Dr. His imaging impression uses words:

“Multilevel moderate to severe degeneration, “chronic”, “foraminal stenosis”, and “reduced lordotic curvature”

John expresses his frustration that PT only worked temporarily in the past. He states that he has read about surgery that can help people with LBP and would “fix” his spine. He feels “fragile”, has been afraid to exercise, and is tired of cycling through different doctors.

Methods to Forming Alliance

1. Identifying willingness to change
2. Motivational Interviewing
3. Subjective Exam Components and Open-ended questions
4. Message Framing
5. Attention to Verbiage
6. Patient-Centered Care

Patient-Centered Care ^{5-6,13,18}

Self-Efficacy

- Self-perceptions that individuals hold about their capabilities
 - Provide foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment
 - Enhanced Expectancies⁵⁻⁶

Autonomy

- Allowing the patient to have a choice within treatment
 - Patient chooses color of square to jump to
 - Giving the patient a say in exercises
- Improved outcomes,³⁻⁵ improved therapeutic alliance ^{13,17}

CASE

John's Low Back Pain

How can we apply concepts of “Patient-Centered Care” into John’s evaluation and treatment plan?

- These skills develop with time
- Consider the entire patient
- Find the right time to redirect
- Listen and be open



Don't Forget!

An effective therapeutic alliance can...

- Redirect anger/hostility⁸
- Promote patient retention¹
- Reframe health beliefs²
- Increase participation^{3,13,18}
- Improve clinical outcomes⁴⁻⁷



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Questions?

