Helping Individuals Tell Their Story

Asking About and Hearing Sensitive Topics

NY Connects Fall 2016 Regional Trainings
NWD Screen – Behavioral Health Questions

• The individual self-reports, or others report, the use of alcohol, illegal drugs or misuses prescription medication.

• If “Yes” proceed to ask the following questions.
CAGE Screening Questions

• Have you ever felt that you should Cut down on your drinking/drug use (or was told by others)?
• Have people Annoyed you by criticizing your drinking/drug use?
• Have you ever felt bad or Guilty about your drinking/drug use?
• Have you ever had a drink or used drugs first thing in the morning as an Eye-opener?
Telling Their Story

• Sometimes individuals have a hard time sharing sensitive information with other people. This can result in those individuals changing answers or withholding information that affects what services we can connect them to.

• As a NY Connects Specialist, it important to help individuals feel more comfortable in order to provide the best level of service possible.
Three Factors that Affect Reliability of Individual Self-Report

- Your own anxiety to talk about certain topics
- The individual’s anxiety to talk about certain topics
- The “how” of asking questions
Individual Discomfort and Anxiety

• Common Fears, Worries, and Concerns:
  – Embarrassment
  – Being judged
  – Topics one rarely discusses
  – Confidentiality
  – Relevance to care
Communication Techniques

• How you ask the question can influence self-report –
  – Preparing the individual or setting the context
  – Careful, mindful wording of question
Techniques to Use in Preparing or Setting the Context

• *Using Transparency* – Explain why you are asking the question

• *Asking Permission* – “Would it be alright with you if I asked you questions about your alcohol use?”

• *Option of Not Answering Question* – Inform that they have the option of not answering the question if it makes them uncomfortable

• *Addressing Confidentiality Concerns*
Following Through

• Acknowledgement: affirm with the individual that it was difficult information to share and thank them for sharing the information with you.

• Summarize: provide the individual with a summary of resources available and any linkages that you will be making for them.

• Conduct follow-up with individual as appropriate.
Be aware of what is going on in your head and with your feelings, your own anxiety may impact the story that is told.
Thank you!
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