

# THERAPEUTIC ENGAGEMENT: IMPROVING TREATMENT ONE PERSON AT A TIME

2016  
David S. Prescott, LICSW  
Welcome!

## CONTACT

David S. Prescott, LICSW  
Clinical Director and  
Director of Professional Development and Quality  
Improvement  
Becket Family of Services

VTPrescott@Earthlink.net  
www.davidprescott.net  
www.becket.org

- *Healthy lives,*
- *Safe communities*



## DON'T WORRY!

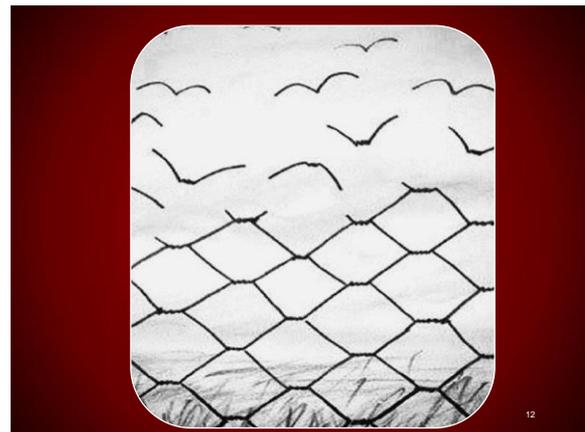
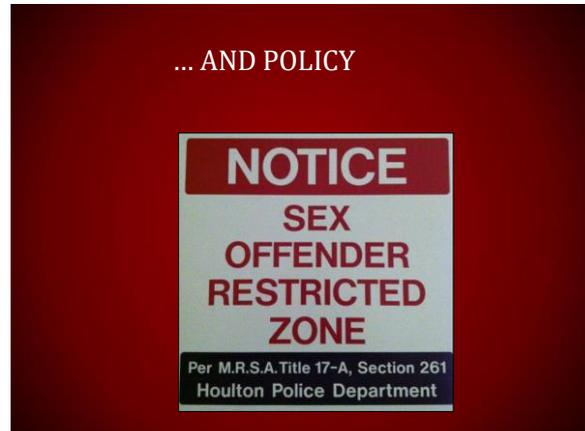
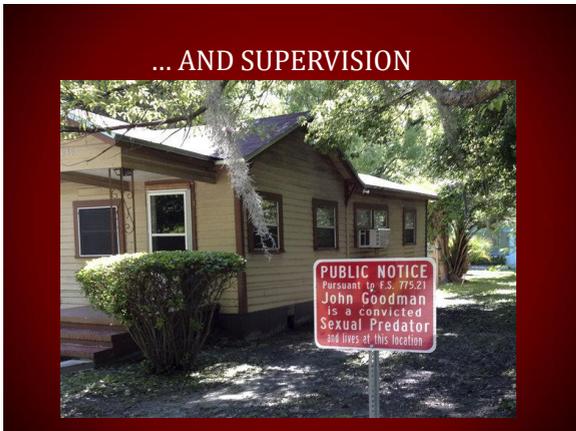
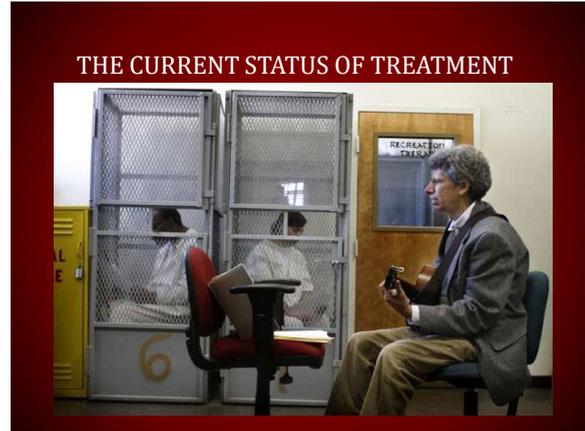
- I won't call on you for answers
- I won't ask you to role play
- I won't put too much research into each slide
- Maybe some lighthearted profanity, though...

## WELCOME NEWCOMERS!



## ARE WE GETTING IT RIGHT YET?





## THE PROBLEM: APPEARANCES



## THE LESS APPARENT BACKGROUND



## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- Quick look backwards
- Great respect for all involved
- Intent: Tough on issues, tender on people

– *People are not now as smart as they think; people used to be smarter than we now think they were* (Quinsey, Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 2006)

## MY CONCERN

- During the past 30 years, the majority of our progress has been technical in nature



## IN THE BEGINNING...



*Speech is a mirror of the soul: as a person speaks, so is s/he*

- Publilius Syrus, 100 BC

## 17TH CENTURY: PASCAL'S PENSEES

"People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they have themselves discovered, than by those which have come into the mind of others."

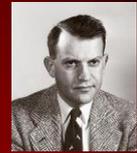
## MARTINSON, 1974

...t the size and probable duration of this effect; as of now ly do not know.

### Does nothing work?

*Do all of these studies lead us irrevocably to the conclusion that nothing works, that we haven't the faintest clue about how to rehabilitate offenders and reduce recidivism? And if so, what ...*

## 1979: EDWARD S. BORDIN



- Therapeutic alliance:
  - Agreement on relationship
  - Agreement on goals
  - Agreement on tasks
  - (Norcross, 2002, would add client preferences)
- Over 1,000 studies have emphasized the importance of the alliance in psychotherapy since (Orlinsky, 1994)

## SALTER, 1988 (p. 93)



- (T)he process of treating child sex offenders is heavily weighted in the direction of confrontation. Treatment requires continual confrontation.
- *No I don't trust you and you would be pretty foolish to trust yourself.*
- *Give me a break. What do you mean one drink can't do any harm?*
- However, later says that treatment should not be hostile. How do we reconcile this?

## 1998

Psychology, Public Policy, and Law  
1998, Vol. 4, No. 1/2, 218-235

Copyright 1998 by the American Psychological Association,  
1076-8971/98/\$

### THE CONTAINMENT APPROACH: An Aggressive Strategy for the Community Management of Adult Sex Offenders

Kim English  
Colorado Division of Criminal Justice

Most convicted adult sex offenders remain or return to the community. This article

## HOPE THEORY, 1999

- C.R. "Rick" Snyder:
  - Agency Thinking
    - Awareness that a goal is attainable
  - Pathways Thinking
    - Awareness of how to do it
- *"Therapists who are burned out or otherwise fail to convey hopefulness model low agency and pathways thinking."* (in Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999)



## 2005: THE SOTEP RCT

- No overall differences between treated and untreated groups, but:
- Sex offenders who successfully completed the SOTEP treatment program reoffended at lower rates than those who did not demonstrate that they "got it" (Marques, Wiederanders, Day, Nelson, & van Ommeren, 2005).

## MARSHALL, 2005

- Warm
- Empathic
- Rewarding
- Directive



Problem: Many people think they have these qualities, but don't

## PARHAR, WORMITH, ET AL., 2008

- Meta-analysis of 129 studies
- *In general, mandated treatment was found to be ineffective ... particularly when the treatment was located in custodial settings, whereas voluntary treatment produced significant treatment effect sizes regardless of setting.*



## 2007-12

- Wilson, Cortoni, et al.
- Collaborative risk management, RNR principles, & holistic community aftercare can contribute to reduced re-offense
- Motivation varied across subgroups
- Illustrates need for post-institution community follow-up
  - Goal of "balanced, self-determined lifestyle"
  - (Similar to NewStart program in Saskatchewan)



## 2011

- Attorney Larni Levi (SOMC-list)
- *In Massachusetts, offenders are required to sign what's called a Lamb Warning informing the individual that anything he says during treatment can be used against him.*



2012

- [http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/csot/csot\\_difference.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/csot/csot_difference.shtm)
- The most prominent difference is that the primary client in sex offender treatment is the community and the goal of treatment is **NO MORE VICTIMS**. With sex offender treatment, community safety takes precedence over any conflicting consideration...



2012 CONTINUED

- Sex offender treatment is different than traditional psychotherapy in that treatment is mandated structured, victim centered, and the treatment provider imposes values and limits. Providers cannot remain neutral because of the risk of colluding with, adding to, and/or contributing to the offender's denial. In sex offender treatment, confidentiality is not maintained due to the enormous public safety issues.

### Vermont's Successful Sexual Offender Program Is Undergoing Big Changes

By CHARLOTTE ALBRICHT • AUG 13, 2015

SHARE  
Twitter  
Facebook  
Google+  
Email



Vermont's Corrections Department is moving its program for sexual offenders to the Northwest Correctional Center in St. Albans and none of the program's previous therapists are coming with it.

33

CBS Minnesota Buy Tickets Health More FOLLOW US Facebook Twitter YouTube LOG IN

**ST. PAUL, Minn. (WCCO)** — Sex offenders in Minnesota's high security treatment centers say they are frustrated but hopeful they can someday be released.

That's after a federal judge found the program unconstitutional, and ordered the state to find ways to release sex offenders.

Minnesota confines 733 people to sex offender programs at St. Peter and Moose Lake. So far, none of them has gone home.

"Not everybody here is the monster you think they are," said Craig Bolte, a sex offender housed at Moose Lake.

Bolte served four years in juvenile detention for sexually assaulting his 11-year-old sister, and the last nine years in a sex offender treatment program at Moose Lake. Bolte says he realized immediately sex offender treatment is different from a jail.

"And I asked somebody, 'How do you get out of here?' And I was given a very simple answer: 'You get out by dying,'" he said.

Sex offenders like Bolte were civilly committed after they served their sentences.

34

### ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

2015 PULITZER PRIZE WINNER

Home News LOCAL Law & Order

### U.S. judge rules handling of state's sexual predator program is unconstitutional

Recommended 222 | Tweet 42 | G+ 3 | Email 23 | Print | Email

September 12, 2015 12:45 am • By Jesse Bogan © 20



**ST. LOUIS** • In an awaited ruling from the federal bench, U.S. District Judge Audrey G. Fleboig ruled late Friday afternoon that Missouri's sexually violent predator law is constitutional, but not how it's applied.

The judge wrote that there is a "pervasive sense of hopelessness" at the Department of Mental Health's Sex Offender Rehabilitation and Treatment Services, or SORTS program, because patients aren't being properly released.

With help from the state attorney general's office, SORTS is indefinitely committing about 200 people to treatment in the belief that they might reoffend. The program has been praised and criticized since it began in 1999.

35

Criminal MURDER, THEFT, AND OTHER WICKEDNESS. OCT. 21 2015 3:41 PM

### England Refuses to Extradite an Alleged Sex Offender

Judges rule that California's civil commitment law could result in a "flagrant" violation of the suspect's human rights.

347 92



Roger Alan Giese was out on bond and preparing to stand trial in California when he vanished. It was March 2007—about three years after he was charged in connection with the sexual abuse of a young boy he had met through his work as a voice coach with the All-American Boys Chorus in Orange County. The abuse was alleged to have started in May 1998, after Giese moved into a house with the boy and his parents, and continued for several years.

36

## THESE DAYS

- We know better
- We do worse

TREATMENT IS SOMETHING WE  
DO FOR AND WITH CLIENTS,  
NOT TO AND ON THEM  
(MILLER & ROLLNICK, 2013)

## MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

2002: BEST-KNOWN DEFINITION

Motivational interviewing is  
a person-centered,  
directive



method of communication

for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by  
exploring and resolving ambivalence.

## STEVE ROLLNICK, 2/28/10



- *Motivational interviewing involves helping patients to say why and how they might change, and is based on the use of a guiding style*
- Mission critical: The client makes the case for change.
  - This is easily forgotten in sexual offender treatment

## MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

- In widespread use around the world
- But.....
- Hettema, Steele, & Miller, 2005:
- *Observed effect sizes of MI were larger... when the practice of MI was not manual-guided.*

## WALFISH ET AL 2012

- No differences in how clinicians rated their overall skill level and effectiveness levels between disciplines.
- On average, clinicians rated themselves at the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile
- Less than 4% considered themselves average
- No one rated themselves below average
- Only 8% rated themselves lower than the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile
- 25% rated their performance at the 90<sup>th</sup> or higher compared to their peers

## DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS

- ... from outcome studies
  - More difference between the best and the worst therapists **within** any treatment method, than there is **between** treatment methods
  - Some therapists are better than others
  - Hiatt & Hargrave (1995) asked therapists to estimate their effectiveness in a treatment study
    - The LEAST effective therapists rated themselves as being among the most helpful

## WAMPOLD & BROWN, 2005



- 581 therapists
- 6,146 real world clients
- Average sessions = 10
- 46% depression, 30% adjustment disorder, 11% anxiety, plus other diagnoses
- Who got the best outcomes?
  - Training makes no difference
  - Profession makes no difference
  - EXPERIENCE makes no difference
  - Diagnosis makes no difference

## HOW CAN WE GET BETTER?

Routine, structured feedback

## EXAMPLE



- Anker, Duncan, & Sparks (2009) in JCCP
- Couples therapy (n = 410)
- Feedback condition
  - nearly 4 times the rate of clinically significant change
  - maintained a significant advantage at 6-month follow-up while attaining a significantly lower rate of separation or divorce.

## MILLER, DUNCAN, ET AL. 2006

- 75 therapists and 6,424 clients over two years
- Formal, ongoing feedback about the alliance and progress in treatment resulted in significant improvements
  - client retention and outcome
- Clients of therapists who did not seek feedback regarding the alliance were three times less likely to return for a second session and had significantly poorer outcomes

## THE KEY

- Treatment means building willing partners in change.

## THE SAFEST SEX OFFENDER

- Someone who has a place to live
- connected to support people to which he or she is accountable,
- has work
- has everything to lose by repeating a sexual assault.

• Gwenda Willis, personal communication, August 2012

## HOW DO PEOPLE CHANGE?

- Challenging “distorted cognitions”?
- Completing assignments?
- Following the manual?
- Through their experiences and discoveries?
- Or via a relationship experience where hope and possibility are renewed... or born.



## EMPATHIC, ATTUNED INTERVENTIONS

- Unexpected
- Welcome
- Impactful

## WHAT WE NEED

- Mindset
- Heartset
- Spirit
- Attitude
- Intention

## COMPASSION



## POLITICAL CLIMATE

- Coercion
- Shame
- Blame
- Threats
- Punishment



## WE CAN LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND



## NEURO-RESEARCH REMINDS US:

- Compassion
- Respect
- Social justice for all, including our clients
- Prizing differences
- Human potential
- Collaboration

TO BE CONTINUED...

• By you

