

Engaging Families in MFIP Employment Services

October 4, 2017

Purpose:

To share highlights from the behavioral science and behavioral economics disciplines and then relate them to participant engagement.

But first.....

From DHS ES Manual 2.3

The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) is a comprehensive work-focused program for families in Minnesota. The MFIP grant includes cash and food benefits. MFIP participants are encouraged and expected to work. Supports are provided to enable them to go to work, and earnings disregards ensure they are better off financially when they work.

The goals of MFIP are to:

- Encourage and enable all families to find employment.
- Help families increase their income and move out of poverty.
- Prevent long-term dependence on welfare as primary source of family income.

“Participants come in for food and cash and ending in mandated employment services program.”

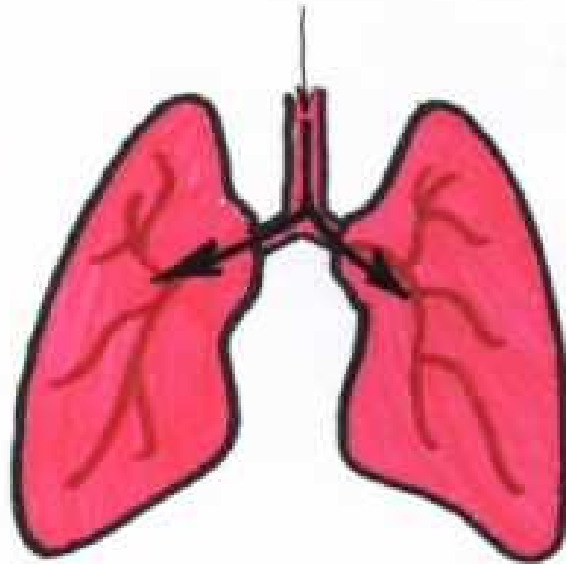
LaDonna Pavetti
Center or Budget Analysis

What causes a lack of engagement on the part of the participant?

Chronic Scarcity

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoVc_S_gd_0
(episode 2)

Chronic Scarcity – What is it?



Limited Bandwidth: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY



Limited Bandwidth

- Sharing knowledge does not guarantee action
- Only a certain amount of information can be processed at a time
- How do we expect people to act when given too much information?
- Creates tunneling

Bandwidth Tax/Tunneling

1. Reduces ability to process information
2. Diminishes our ability to evaluate options and make decisions
3. Impairs self-control

Hassle Factors

Hassle Factors: Minor difficulties or barriers that can trigger present bias and cause people to avoid or delay action

Note: This is a “universal phenomenon”—the idea of hassle factors is not specific to those living in poverty but under chronic scarcity—hassle factors have an even greater potential to distort decision making.

Present Bias: The tendency to let immediate costs outweigh far-off/long-term investments

“Delay of Gratification”

Previous MFIP Experience

- In the past, your participant may have been “punished” (i.e. sanctioned, loss of support services) for unsuccessful attempts to set and achieve goals.
- Because of previous unsuccessful attempts to exit MFIP your participant may have the mindset that it is easier, or less painful, to avoid trying and failing again.
- Previous interactions with Employment Services might have involved selecting from a short list of prescribed, approved activities with a focus on turning in documentation for participation hours.
- Mutual expectations and accountability may be a new concept for your participant, based on previous experience. Your participant may not have been asked or had the opportunity to play an active role in setting goals.

Participant MFIP Experience

BREAK

Reducing Chronic Scarcity to Increase Engagement

1. Cut the costs
 - a) Financial, temporal (time), and cognitive costs
2. Create slack
 - a) Providing a cushion through extra reserves of a resource
3. Reframe and empower
 - a) Reshaping participants understanding of who they are, where they fit in society, and what's possible for their future

Reducing Chronic Scarcity to Increase Engagement

Cut the costs - financial, temporal (time), and cognitive costs

- 1) Make communication clear and actionable
 - Avoid cognitive/information overload
 - Communicate in a language participants are familiar with
 - Break complex tasks into several concrete steps
- 2) Cut the strings
 - Requirements + restrictions = less participation
- 3) Reduce barriers to entry
 - Paperwork, documentation, information sessions
 - Lengthy and complex orientation
- 4) Increase accessibility
 - Geographic –
 - Temporal –
- 5) Create synergies
 - Time

Reducing Chronic Scarcity to Increase Engagement

Create slack - providing a cushion through extra reserves of a resource

Ensure critical information is easy to locate – prevent the participant from having to work harder than necessary

- “My case is closed and I can’t reach my worker.”
- If we are able to see case is closed due to a missing signature page on a HRF– why not notify the participant?

Be mindful of how a participant is responding during your meeting. Is he/she appear to be shutting down? Taking the path of least resistance? Defaulting to something familiar?

Make inflexible requirements easier to complete

- Utilize your appointment time to assist the participant in obtaining/completing what is needed

Reframe and Empower

Reframe and empower through **reshaping** participant's understanding of who they are, where they fit in society, and what's possible for their future.

- Use Intentional Language
- Treat Families as Experts
- Leverage Positive Identities
- Confront Biases

Use Intentional Language

Labels we use to describe others and ourselves can have a positive or negative impact

- Client or Customer. Cases or Participants.
- Counselor or Coach. Manager or Leader.

Words reinforce perceptions

- Needy/poor impoverished families v. living with low income
-

Treat Families as Experts

Old Case Manager Model

- First goal is to complete orientation and identify barriers
- Assumes role of case manager
- Looks for employment barriers
- Works with individuals

New Coaching Model

- First goal is to show respect and help parents feel empowered
- Assumes role of coach and explains role in obtaining and maintaining employment
- Looks for employment strengths
- Helps parents identify support and guides the employment process

Leverage Positive Identities



Viola Davis



Taraji Henson

Leverage Positive Identities

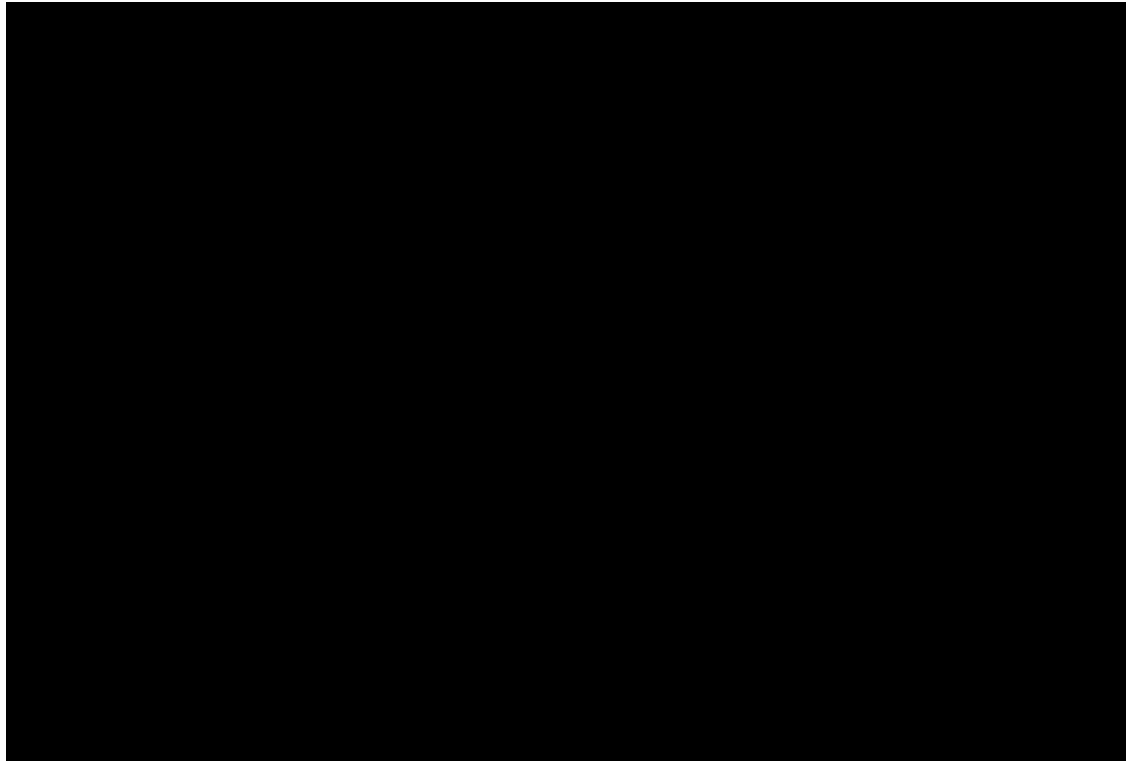


Dr. Ben Carson



Rep. Rena
Moran

Confronting Biases



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_3bKM7IXyY

Mindset

Take Care

Thank You.

Prince

Nicki

CJ

Tracy

Bruce