

# Family Trauma Institute

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TRAINING PROFESSIONALS TO  
BECOME FAMILY TRAUMA EXPERTS

## Video Transcript

### Motivating Even the Toughest Parents

This particular topic on how to motivate tough parents to cooperate, show up, and this could extend to couples, individuals, is by far to me one of the most challenging I've had in my career. Early on my career, I had a real trouble getting parents to show up to my first meeting or caregiver. If you're like me, if they did show up, they would oftentimes say, "Hey, I'm only here so you can fix my child." So now, indeed I have a grumpy parent on my hand, but how could I get them to get inspired? How could I get them to want to participate in treatment? Because as I saw over and over again, if I was able to help the child, but the family remained unchanged, the relapse rate would just go through the roof.

So I had to go back to the drawing board and see if there was a better way that I might've been missing along with my colleagues. So today's webinar represents years and years of work and tools you're going to be able to use the next day, I feel, and you're going to get immediate results with this particular

tool and the motivational phone call. So with that, let me go ahead and share my screen with you.

Again, this is the topic, *How to Motivate Even Your Toughest Parents*. So in this webinar to summarize what you're going to walk away with, let me show you really two strategies from this technique. It's called the Soft Start-Up, how to create one with your parents even before the therapy officially begins.

This doesn't have to be a therapy session. If you're a case manager, this could be your case management meeting. If you are a probation officer, this is trying to get the parents to come to your meeting. If you're a schoolteacher, you're going to be able to use this and I'm going to show you the motivational phone script that you actually use. I'll be highlighting, for sake of time, one particular question and be showing you an audio of an actual call where you get to be in the middle.

One of the things that, when I attend the webinar, I always want to know how is this going to help me. So what I want to try to do through this webinar and my work with you is so that you can walk in the next trauma session with confidence and equipped with step-by-step tools and quickly engage your toughest parents and treat the whole family. I want to first talk about what the reasons are, why you would be here and why you want to continue learning from me. The first reason is that, if you have a pain point, like I talked about at the beginning, where you do not want to have more meetings, where the parents don't show up for the first meeting, that's a reason one to be on this webinar today.

The second reason is you want step-by-step tools. Now you want to get results quickly, but they also have to work.

And reason number three, you want to feel more confident, not just treating the child, but the whole family.

There's actually questions here I'm going to show that you use on a script, where you call them up on the phone and you ask them what their difficult experiences are they've had to suffer because parents have to tell you to vent the 10,000 defeats. But here's the question that shifts the call from problem-saturated talk to hope-talk. Hey can I shift gears here for a second? "When I get to know you better, what qualities and strengths would I come to admire about you as a person? And further, what you're going to see when I ask this mom, what qualities and strengths would I admire about your daughter?"

So, after that question, then I get into question three. "What do you think will happen if these problems remain unfixed? Have you seen a counselor with these problems before? What have they missed with you because they don't want to make the same mistakes twice." And, "Do you want to fix these problems fast, medium, or slow?"

For sake of time, I'm going to focus on number two. This alone is going to increase the odds of success for you. So let's focus on this. Now when I ask it, I might ask it about the parent. I might ask the parents to tell me about their child. I might even ask the parents to talk about their stuffs, depends on the family and the situation.

So let's talk about Lucy. I'm asked as a consultant to come in because this case is really, really stuck, and you can use this phone call at any point in treatment. You can use it at the beginning of treatment, middle or end. I'll show you in a moment how this is done. So, Lucy is 16. Here's the symptoms that she's faced with, self-harming, cutting, depression, aggression, and here's the traumatic event she faced. She was bullied in ninth grade, it was so bad that she's now homeschooled. Her confidence is shaken. It's never really healed. Since the

traumatic event, time does not always heal with these kids, it actually makes it worse.

So I'm calling them because basically the parents are telling the therapist, "We're burnt out, we're done." I also ask, "Was there any extended family involvement?" "No, there wasn't." So I come in and I say, "Okay, can I do this motivational phone call to see if I can get the parents re-energized, hopeful. So to the consultation session, but they'll show up excited, inspired and hopeful." The therapist is skeptical just like says, "Go for it. I mean, these parents are pretty crispy. They're pretty fried. I don't think a phone call is going to do much." And I said, "Oh, that's okay, can we experiment? What are we got to lose?"

There's a, but the delivery is important. I'll show you a few places where mom trips me up and if I do not have these process moves down, the technique will fall flat as a pancake. So you'll see that. I want you to see the effect that a strength based question out of this motivational phone call, what it does right out of the gate to create the soft start-up.

(Recording plays)

"If I get to know Lucy better, what are some qualities that I would really admire about Lucy?"

She is very creative, she's really good at music. That's one of our passions. She is great at photography. She's really talented in photography. She does draw here and there. She doesn't think she's good, but I think she's pretty good at it. She's very strong willed-

(End recording)

Okay. Process step number one, when you ask a family strengths question, it may be the first time they've talked about this in months or years. The pole like a tractor beam in Star Trek is going to be that the parent or caregiver will start out strong and say, "Yeah, he has some qualities." But before you know it, they'll go right back to status quo. They'll say, "Yeah, my daughter or son is great, however, they're stubborn, they won't listen." If you don't use a process step called stick and move where you're poised at the end of your seat and say you block the parents, say, "Yeah mom, we'll get to that, but can we go back to say more about the strengths." You're going to lose the family.

Again. When I learned treatment, I was taught to be non-directive and reflective listening. I would never interrupt a client. In fact, I thought more was more but what I found is that the more the client can talk, they can talk themselves into a corner and they can undo all the goodness. It's called the compliment sandwich. Have any of you done this with your kids? "Hey John, great job at school, I saw your grades, but, you know what? I still don't think you have the effort you need to." My kid will say to me, "When you said "but," all of good stuff was just washed away or however." So, just like with our parents, the parallel processes will have to be poised with these process steps, did not take the bait. Let's go on.

(Recording plays)

... which can be a good and a bad thing but she's very creative, she's very intelligent, she has a lot of potential and [crosstalk 00:12:13]

When you say she's creative, Jennifer, does that make you really proud of her?

It does. Yeah

Okay. Give me an example of her creative side, like is she creative with the art? Is she creative with people?

Yeah.

How is she creative?

With photography and her music, and she's always coming up with ideas to try and make money, so she's very entrepreneurial.

(End recording)

Okay, so the second process step is fan the flames of hope talk or utilization. What I used to do in the old days, when I first started this technique, the family would say, "Yeah, she's creative." "Oh, great, next question." Instead, fan the flames. "Hey, could you give me an example? When you say you're proud of her, what do you mean?" Now Lucy is hearing this and then what you don't hear on the audio tape is then I asked Lucy to return the favor and say the strengths that she admires about her mom, and then the dad was on the phone and I asked them what are the strengths of the dad? What do you admire about your wife?

By the time we are done with the call, which lasts about 15 to 20 minutes, this family is not only ready to come in, they're curious. The mom says to me later when I asked her what was most helpful about this call, she said, "I started to feel hope. I started talking about hope. I started seeing my daughter differently."

Then Lucy chimes in and says, "I didn't know mom still cared about me. I thought she was basically just wrote me off." So this is what's called a soft start up, and this is why the parent not only came in motivated but engaged.

Now, is this going to work every time that way? No, sometimes we're like Las Vegas bookies. Sorry, that maybe a bad metaphor. Our job is to increase the odds that we're moving the needle to go from, okay, 30% effectiveness. Hey let's try this technique to go from 30% to 50% effectiveness. Every time we

move the needle and go from point A to point B in our success path, guess who benefits? We do and the client does.