Conversation Exercise

Instructions: You will work with others on this; it may help to have one person reading the client part and one reading the counselor part to make the conversation more alive. Discuss your observations together and decide on what observations you want to report in the large group.

Key: **CL** is client; **CO** is counselor: hopefully you can tell them apart! We will assume the introductions have been made and the conversation is starting.

Read the conversation in Column A and in Column B write your observations focusing on:

* Type of client speech: sustain or change talk or a mix of both
* Method (s) used by the counselor from OARS and any specific type of method from the skills list: there may be more than one, ie reflection, open question, affirmation
* What process is represented: Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, Planning
* Identify the type of summary when instructed: gathering, linking and transitional and key question: comment on how change talk is acknowledged and invited.

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| Conversation | Observation |
| CO: What are your main concerns today? |  |
| CL: My doctor said I needed to focus on my stress, that the way I do or do not handle it is causing me health problems. |  |
| CO: It was more of your doctor’s idea for you to be here than yours. |  |
| CL: Well, I would not be here otherwise, but I don’t think it is a bad idea. |  |
| CO: You have some concerns yourself. |  |
| CL: I’m 55 years old, work at a high stress job where I see others my age or younger getting laid off. I work lots of hours to make sure they see me as productive. This keeps me pretty tense and I guess my doctor thinks my high blood pressure stays up because of this and how I do or do not handle the stress. |  |
| CO: You mentioned that earlier. Tell me what goes on with you and stress. |  |
| CL: I guess I am like a lot of people, maybe men. I don’t take time for lunch, just eat something fast, like a slice of pizza; I drink coffee or some kind of caffeine all day. Once I leave work and get home, I have a few drinks at night and just sit on the sofa and watch tv until bedtime and then I don’t sleep well. Then I get up and do it all again. I often work on at least one day on the weekend and the other day, I just sit around, drink some beer and watch sports on tv. |  |
| CO: A very tiring vicious cycle of your life where you are never quite off duty, relaxed. You do things during the day to keep going and then just collapse at home. And your doctor has concerns about your blood pressure as well.  | Type of summary:  |
| CL: You got it right! At this rate I may not even make it to retirement! I might have a heart attack or stroke before they can even lay me off! |  |
| CO: This is serious. What concerns you the most? |  |
| CL: Well, my own father died when he was 59 from a heart attack; he had high blood pressure, never took any time to relax, worked himself into the grave.  |  |
| CO: You can see yourself on the same path. |  |
| CL: Right! I don’t want that to happen to me but I don’t have a clue what to do. Like you said, I am in a cycle here and just keep doing the same thing. I’m gaining weight, feel tired all the time.  |  |
| CO: It’s not just what is going on with you; it is also what you saw happen to your father that is getting your attention. You want to avoid the same outcome but are not sure where to start. | Type of summary: |
| Cl: When Dr. Jones said it is time to get serious, to come talk to you, I guess I was a little relieved, that he was saying I didn’t have to just let this happen. |  |
| CO: You recognize it is time to do something.You are taking responsibility. Let me see if I understand thus far, you want to be healthier but the way you handle the stress from your job is not helping. You mentioned not eating well, sitting around, getting no exercise and drinking.Where do you think we should start? | What is the process thus far?MI Method:Type of summary: What process is next with this question?Why does the counselor ask the client rather than decide?What way of responding could have created discord? |
| CL: My doctor thinks I should make a change in how much I drink, kind of a shock. |  |
| CO: You were surprised. What is your understanding about why he is focusing on alcohol? |  |
| CL: This is what he told me: alcohol can raise blood pressure, disrupt sleep, and cause weight gain. He said if I did better with how much I drink, that might help. Now he didn’t say I am an alcoholic and I don’t think I am! |  |
| CO: You don’t want to be labeled and at the same time, you are paying attention to what your doctor said. | What specific kind of reflection is this?How could discord have been created? |
| CL: I like drinking but I don’t want to make it worse for myself. |  |
| CO: You feel two ways about this, not wanting to give up a pleasure and also not wanting to risk your health. | What process is starting now? |
| CL: Drinking helps me relax, unwind so if I don’t do that as much, what will I do? |  |
| CO: You don’t want to be left with no way to unwind. If you were considering changing how you use alcohol and looking at some others ways to relax, what are some ideas you have? |  |
| CL: In the past I exercised and that helped in lots of ways: weight, stress, sleep. I just stopped when this job became so stressful. I got so worried about being laid off at my age that I just let myself go. |  |
| CO: Not losing your job is an important priority and you are a serious worker. You have used exercise in the past; tell me what you did and how that worked for you. |  |
| CL: After work, I had several things I could do: play tennis, take a vigorous walk, ride my bike, do yoga. |  |
| CO: Quite a variety! If you were considering anything now, what might you want to do? |  |
| CL: I guess getting back to all of those but it seems very hard to think about. |  |
| CO: What gets in the way, outside on the worry about the job security?  |  |
| CL: I think just starting back; it has become so easy to go home, open a beer, make a drink and turn on the television. |  |
| CO: Easy to slide into habits that are not so good and at the same time you are recognizing this now. Let me see if I have it right, the conversation with your doctor got your attention, you are concerned about your health/how the way you handle stress is not helping you, that you don’t want to end up like your father and have to look at the habit you have developed with drinking and just being a couch potato. I want to hear from you where you are in being ready to plan on some changes. | Methods in first sentenceType of summaryMoving into what process?How could discord have been created? |