



Insight: Keeping the Window Open

The morning after– Ty woke up from a hard night of partying the next day with a huge headache. The headache got even worse when she saw that ticket on her nightstand. She was arrested for Driving Under the Influence (DUI). The sad thing is that Ty could barely remember what even happened. Everything was foggy. However she knew she was in trouble and she was scared

Ty had been in outpatient counseling for a few months already as her family had pushed her into treatment because of her drinking and drug use. Ty stopped using drugs for several weeks however she had insisted to her counselor that she was willing to stop using illegal drugs but she was sure she had the drinking under control.

Ty's next session in counseling after the DUI arrest was a real eye opener. She told her counselor that she finally realized that she had to stop drinking. She even agreed to stop hanging around with her friend Liz who always wants to go to the bar and instead she agreed to start going to some AA meetings at least 3 times per week.

After about two weeks, Ty was back in session with her counselor and her counselor asked her how her plan to stop drinking was going. Ty admitted that she never went to AA as she promised. Ty also confessed that she made plans to go out with Liz again for this upcoming weekend. Ty also eventually admitted that she is still drinking. Ty's counselor asked Ty about what had happened to her realization that she needed to stop drinking and make some changes that she spoke about two weeks ago. Ty reported that over time she just felt like all that wasn't necessary anymore and she would be just fine even if she kept on drinking.

- ▶ **Discuss as a group** – *How would you describe what happened to Ty?*
- ▶ *Has anyone in the group ever had a similar experience?*

The Window of Self Awareness

It is critical to remember that insight is not a fixed state of consciousness. Actually, insight is a lot like a window that closes and opens with changing life experiences. Someone may have a full understanding of an issue one day but after only a few days or weeks later, excuses can creep in as to why what was once believed to be true no longer applies. The window of self-awareness can therefore open and close as our level of insight changes in differing circumstances

Open Window of Self Awareness



Closed Window – Closed mind; Denial





Things that OPEN the Window of Self Awareness:

- ▶ **Honest, self-reflection:** Asking yourself the tough, soul searching questions can open up your window of self-awareness if you take the time to ask them, and more importantly display the courage to answer them honestly. Some examples:
 - Am I really doing all that I can do to improve?
 - Instead of blaming others, what can I actually do to make things better?
 - What role did I play in that situation? What could I have done differently?
- ▶ **Playing “Devil’s Advocate”** – It is natural to think of all of the reasons why you may be right when it comes to certain issues. It can be much more challenging to really consider the possibility that you may be wrong. You can learn from being open minded in this way. Consider the following example
 - *Thought* – “Other people keep telling me I have an attitude problem. They don’t know what they are talking about, I’m a nice person - I am fine, they all just need to shut up and leave me alone”
 - *Same Thought reframed for self-awareness-* “With all of these people telling me I have an attitude problem, maybe I should think about how I am acting and what I am doing that gives people that idea. Maybe I need to adjust the way I speak to people”
- ▶ **Consequences** – One of the positive things about consequences is that when something negative happens as a result of our choices and behavior, it can be a wakeup call and open the window of self-awareness. Consider these examples:
 - “I was late to work again after a night of drinking and now I am in trouble with my boss. I promised myself I wasn’t going to let that happen again but I did. Maybe it’s time to consider taking an honest look at my drinking”
 - “I told my significant other I would get help for being depressed but then I didn’t. I called out of work again to sleep all day because I was too depressed to get up. I think I may need help this time”

Things that CLOSE the Window of Awareness

- ▶ **Time** – Sometimes just the passage of time can trigger a false sense of security. A person may feel motivated to change something one day but then if that motivation is not nurtured, with time it can fade
- ▶ **Excuses** – Blaming, rationalizing etc. – Making excuses is usually just a way to deny or deflect reality. Excuse making is often rooted in an effort to avoid responsibility for one’s own role in a situation and therefore avoid responsibility for being part of the solution
- ▶ **Self-Deception-** Similar to making excuses, people can close the window of insight by simply lying to themselves. Refusal to recognize the truth by burying your head in the sand just keeps the window of awareness closed thus preventing the “light” of self-awareness and reality from shining in

Discuss as a group:

- ▶ *Can you describe what it is like for you when your window of insight is open?*
- ▶ *What about when the window closes? What is that like for you and what can be the cause?*



The Three R's that make up Insight

- ▶ **Recognition** that there is a problem at hand.
- ▶ **Realization** that some personal change is going to have to occur in order for things to get better
- ▶ **Readiness** to try to understand and learn more about yourself and to try to understand what you really need to do to get better, regardless of how uncomfortable that learning and changing process may be.

Three R's – Three Activities:

1- Recognition – The Group-Self Awareness Game

Materials – Everyone in the group needs two objects that are small enough to conceal and small enough to put into a cup or other container. **Suggestion**– Get two large boxes of different sized paperclips, one small and one large. Most offices have paper clips available but if not find something similar. Also get one cup or other small container.

Directions – In this exercise, group members have a chance to share their thoughts collectively about different possible life problems in an anonymous way which should help increase honesty rather than just telling others what you think they may want to hear.

Each person in the group should get a pile of two different sized paper clips (large and small). The large paper clips mean **YES** and the small paperclips mean **NO**.

Have a group member volunteer to take the awareness challenge by asking the group a question about a potential life problem. The volunteer should ask their question to the rest of the group. It should be a question that can be answered by a YES or a NO answer.

- For example – Volunteer asks the group: ***“Do you think that I have a substance use problem?”***

The volunteer should be forewarned not to ask a question which may upset them. Be careful because in this group people may hear group opinions that they do not end up liking. The group should discuss any concerns about this ahead of time and if people are feeling like they are too sensitive this may not be a good exercise

After the volunteer asks the question, each person in the group member secretly can answer the question by placing either a large paperclip (meaning YES) or a small paperclip (meaning NO) discreetly in the cup as it is passed around the room. No one should look in the cup as it is being passed so as not to see others answers as this is best kept confidential

Once everyone answered by placing one paperclip in the cup (either large or small) the counselor or group leader should count the YES's (large paperclips) and NO's (small paperclips) If half or more of the group said YES, then the group's answer to the question, based on majority is YES. If most said NO then the answer is no

The goal is to increase insight and recognize problems based on honest, anonymous group feedback. Other possible suggestions to try could be

- “Do you think I have a _____ problem? – Fill in the blank with any problem – anger, gambling, sex addiction, lying, self-esteem, etc.”
- “Do you think that I am in a negative relationship?”
- “Do you think that I am making a good decision about _____?”(Fill in blank)
- “Do you think that I should _____ (add life choice)”

Each person should keep track of the group answers they received, to discuss them in the next section



2 – Realization – Processing group feedback

Directions: Discuss the previous exercise as a group with the goal of realizing what the group may have been telling you. Discuss some of the following:

- What did you learn from the group during the previous exercise (What are some things that you may need to work on?)
- How did you feel about the group's feedback?
- Be honest: What evidence is there in your own experience that shows that the group may have been right about their feedback?
- What is one thing that stood out the most for you that you need to change? – ***Write it down below so you do not forget it:***

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- Again, being honest with yourself and others – What excuses may have been holding you back from changing up until now? Write down a few:

1)

2)

3)

4)

3 – Readiness – Preparing to make a change and keeping the window of awareness OPEN

Group Discussion – Answer the following Readiness questions:

- *What can you do in order to overcome the excuses that might be in your way?*
- *What do you need to succeed?*
- *What do you need to stay motivated?*



Closing Exercise – The Video Self-Motivation Challenge

Is anyone ready?

This closing activity is more of a challenge than a group exercise, because some in the group may not feel ready. Only willing and ready participants should try this and anyone who feels too uncomfortable should be given a pass. If it is a cohesive group with a good amount of trust and sense of connection, it would be amazing if everyone was agreeable to give this a try.

What is the Video Self-Motivation Challenge?

The video self-motivation challenge involves creating a short motivational video **by yourself – for yourself**. Therefore to make the video each person must have their own phone or other electronic device that can record video.

Confidentiality rules for the video self-motivation challenge -

Each person must star alone in his or her own video. Because of confidentiality, no one else in the group should be seen or heard in your video. Any identifying information that does not belong to the person who being recorded should be left out. The video self-motivation challenge is a selfie video starring you alone and no one else in order to protect others confidentiality.

Suggested script for the selfie video:

The person making the video should use the information that they obtained from the previous exercises especially what was written down on the previous page. Hopefully the person making the video identified a problem that needs to be worked on and has identified some excuses that have been holding them back and ways to overcome those excuses.

A great way to start the video is with this line:

Person speaking to camera is speaking to his/her future self and says:

“If you are watching this video, then you probably are having a hard time with ____ (Identified problem)”

For example, if the problem was smoking cigarettes, then an appropriate opening video statement might be:

“If you are watching this video, then you probably are having a hard time with cigarette cravings right now and you want a cigarette but you know you shouldn’t have one...”

Then for the next 30 seconds or so the person making the video should share a positive and supportive message with their future self. Some things that may be helpful:

- Remember what you need to overcome excuses
- Be motivational and encouraging to yourself
- Think about what you need to hear when you are struggling – Below is an example:

“If you are watching this video right now Bob, then you probably are having a hard time with thinking about wanting to give up. Remember after you got arrested last time, you promised you were going to stop using and go to NA meetings at least three times per week. Why don’t you stop making excuses for sitting there alone right now and use the phone and call someone you can trust to pick you up and take you to a meeting. If no one answers the first time then call someone else. Bob, you know you will be happy if you do the right thing after you get up and get out of where you are right now. You know sitting there by yourself is a bad idea so you need to go do something positive right now. You can do it Bob- Do this for both of us – You and me! – Thanks, Bob...Sincerely - Bob



Conclusion

Once everyone who was willing to participate, has made a video confession challenge the group can discuss how it feels to try to self-motivate. People who chose not too can express what it was like to watch others make their video. Motivation can be so strong when it comes from within. The video self-motivation challenge is a way to be your own source of motivation by sending your future self a lasting message that can be used again and again. It is a tool that you will have in your pocket whenever you need it that can help you achieve what you now know that you need to work on. In future groups' people who gave this a try should discuss how the self-motivation challenge worked for them.