

**November 2016**

 **Coaching Tip of the Month for Staff**

Relationship Building through Influence

Influence is a powerful relationship-building tool. The beauty of influence is that it only requires us to be our best, authentic self. You have the potential to significantly influence the lives of your participants. Your influence can be positive, but – if you’re not mindful – influence can quickly transition to persuasion, which shifts the power away from the participant and back to you. We often think that influence and persuasion are one in the same, but they aren’t, as you can see from the table below.

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| **Influence** | **Persuasion** |
| The power to cause changes ***without directly*** forcing them to happen. | The act of causing people to do or believe something |
| Silent – doesn’t require communication | Verbal – requires communication |
| Changes others’ actions based on someone personality | Changes others’ actions based on what someone says |
| Based on modeled behavior | Based on appealing to another person’s emotions |
| Usually unconscious/unintentionally – fortuitous | Usually conscious/intentional – deliberate |

When working with participants to develop goals, they may lean on you as the expert and even mimic your behavior and the things you say because they have been influenced by you in some way. As you continue to develop the relationship with them, remind them that they are the experts over their own life and encourage them to operate from that perspective. Keep the following tips in mind:

**Personal:** Have personal exchanges and interactions with your participants. Find out what matters to them, what they value and care about. Get to know them and help build trust by letting them get to know a little about you. Be mindful of the professional boundaries, and do not go beyond the extent that you both are comfortable.

**Reliability:** Action speaks louder than words! Your participants ***may hear*** what you say but ***will see*** what you do, and they are paying attention. They observe how you respond to the things that they share with you, and whether or not your actions correspond with your words. Participants need to know that you are reliable and consistent and that they can count on you.

**Authenticity (Be Real):** It’s much easier to be who you are than it is to be someone else! Let participants see the “real” you! People respect and appreciate those who are comfortable in their own skin, even if they don’t always care for some of the character traits. Be honest and truthful in your communication. Interactions and behavior. *“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.” - Oscar Wilde*

**Trust:** Trust is the key that unlocks the door to influence. When participants trust that you sincerely care about them, you will be true to your word and that your actions will support what you say, your influence will have the greatest impact.

*This month spend time reflecting on the power of influence and what you may be projecting to the participants you serve. Determine if you may need to make adjustments in your actions, conversations, or other areas in order to positively influence others. Make a concerted effort to make the adjustments.*