

Session three

Post information and resources

Holding on – How I kept communication open with my sons

(Taken from [Holding on – how I kept communication open with my sons - Parents Against Child Exploitation \(Pace\) UK \(paceuk.info\)](https://paceuk.info/holding-on-how-i-kept-communication-open-with-my-sons))

My sons were targeted by criminals for the purpose of criminal exploitation and one of them for sexual exploitation when they were in their early teens. It was heart-breaking to see the change in them and to not only feel like you are losing your child, your family but to witness them losing themselves- their care and respect for who they are, for their interests and hobbies and even their own personalities.

My sons were terrified of speaking out about what was and is still happening because of the levels of violence they have witnessed, been threatened with and have experienced.

I don't think I will ever fully know what they have gone through.

If criminal gangs feel that a child has 'snitched' on them, the child's life can be in serious danger.

I decided that I needed to hold on to my children, however I could, no matter what. I wanted to be someone that they could still talk to; a person that they could keep a bond with. As a parent you have anxieties and fears and anger about what is going on, but if I wanted my children to keep talking to me I needed another approach.

I tried to be non-judgemental, listen and take it at their pace.

If I felt that they were getting agitated or my question had disturbed them, I'd back off. It's really hard to do this when you have so many questions, but I felt as if this was the only way to keep any communication with them. To some degree, it worked. There are some things they still won't talk about it, but we still have a relationship- it is not the one I imagined we'd have before all this started, but at least I still have some strand of connection with them.

The tip I'd offer to any parents trying to keep the communication open with their child, is when they do talk, be prepared.

There are things that you are going to hear that are really difficult and distressing. It helps to think about the kinds of support you have and how you can look after yourself whilst you're carrying this.

Who is safe for you to talk to, what things can you do to look after yourself?

Despite the risks to my child I shared the information with the police and social services, building up a picture of the timelines, the networks of people involved, offences happening and places used. It felt as if I was feeding all this information in despite the risk of doing this simply for it to sit on services data bases. It made no difference to the safety of my family.

To anyone of you who share my experience I'd say, it can help to find the right person to share it with.

I'd been doing this for years and it wasn't until Pace got involved that it started being fed through to key professionals and they started paying attention.

There still needs to be a better understanding by statutory services of the kinds of risks to criminally exploited children and how to support affected families. To all of the other parents experiencing this I'd say. 'hold on.'

Restorative conversations

(Adapted from [Restorative Conversations - Conflict Center](#))

Here are six steps you can take to use Restorative Conversations and help your child through a difficult situation. Remember, these are suggestions. The most important thing is to convey compassion and authenticity with your child.

STEP 1. OPEN THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION. Let your child know that you will listen to them and their perspectives, then do just that. This is not the time for lectures or judgement. You could say something like:

- How's it going?
- I wanted to talk with you about _____ .

STEP 2. ALLOW THEM TO EXPLAIN THE SITUATION FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE. Try to see the situation from their point of view. Remember that children, as adults, may often feel very differently about the same event. You could say:

- What happened?
- Can you tell me more about _____ .
- What was going through your mind at the time?
- How did that make you feel?

STEP 3. IDENTIFY WHAT LED UP TO THE INCIDENT AND ANY ROOT CAUSES. Help your child gain a greater understanding of the situation by asking about what happened before or what else may have affected their behaviour. Remember young children may have a very blinkered view of what happened. You could say:

- It sounds like you felt _____ . What made you feel that way?
- What happened before it started?
- What else do you think was going on with _____ ?
- Has this happened before?

STEP 4. IDENTIFY THE IMPACT. Help your child see how their behaviour affected those around them. They may need help understanding consequences they can't see, such as hurt feelings. You could say:

- What have you thought about since?
- Who else do you think has been affected/upset/ by all this?
- How are you feeling about things now?

STEP 5. ADDRESS NEEDS AND REPAIR HARM. Draw out from your child if there is anything that needs to happen to put things right. You could say:

- What would you like to see happen?

- What could we do differently next time?
- How can we make things better?

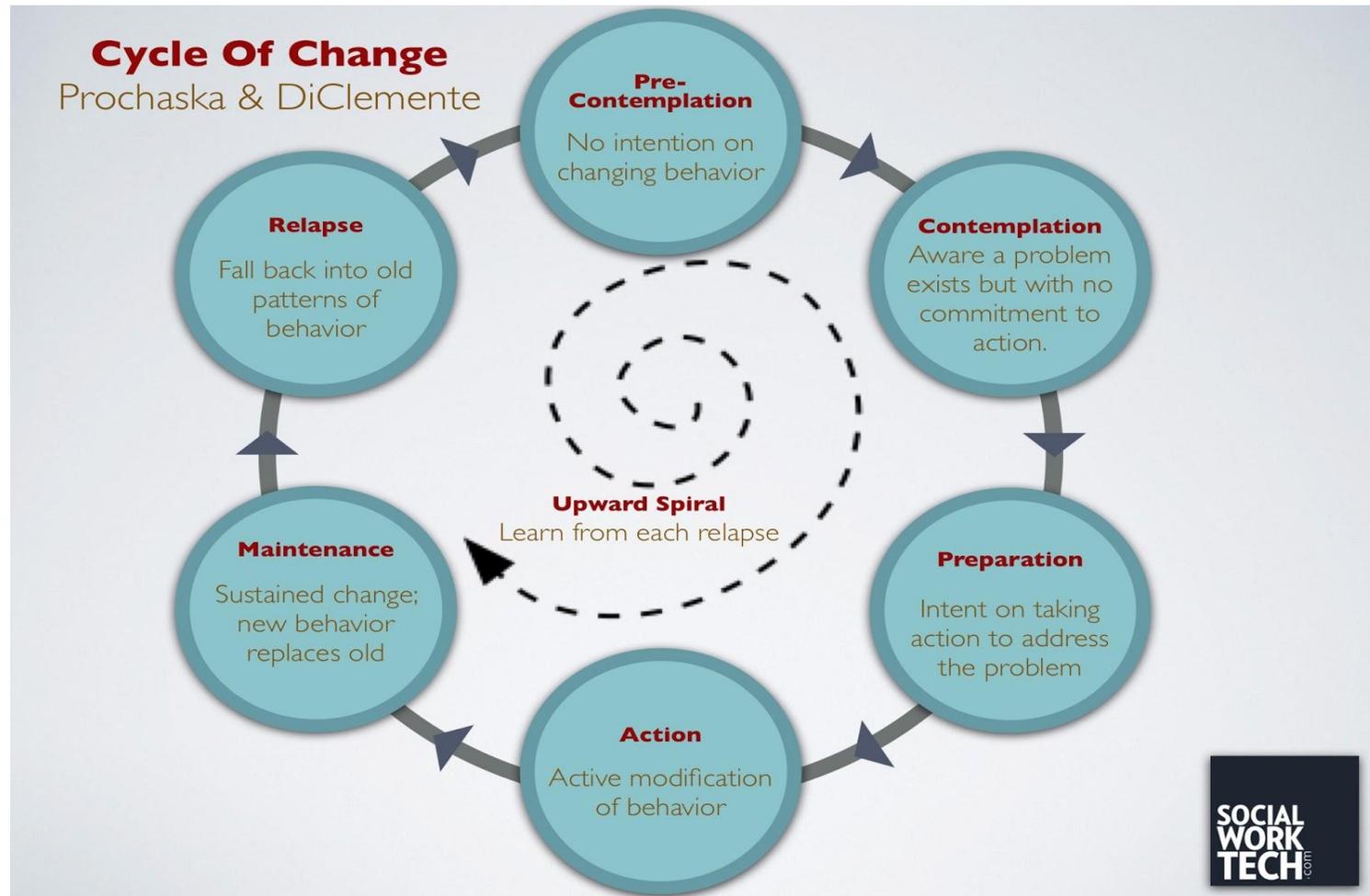
Motivational overviewing

(taken from [Motivational Interviewing :: Resilience Rehabilitation \(rrehab.org\)](http://ResilienceRehabilitation.org))

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING	
R	RESIST telling them what to do: <i>Avoid telling, directing, or convincing your friend about the right path to good health.</i>
U	UNDERSTAND their motivation: <i>Seek to understand their values, needs, abilities, motivations and potential barriers to changing behaviors.</i>
L	LISTEN with empathy: <i>Seek to understand their values, needs, abilities, motivations and potential barriers to changing behaviors.</i>
E	EMPOWER them: <i>Work with your friends to set achievable goals and to identify techniques to overcome barriers.</i>

Cycle of change

(Taken from [The Stages of Change \(Prochaska & DiClemente\) – Social Work Tech](#))



Stages

There are different **stages of the model:**

- **Precontemplation:** This is where there is no intention to change the behaviour; the person may be unaware that a problem exists or ok with it.
- **Contemplation:** The person starts to become aware that there could be a problem but has made no commitment to do anything about it yet.
- **Preparation:** The person is starting to think about making changes and how they will do this.
- **Action:** The person starts to change the behaviour.
- **Maintenance:** Change is sustained. This stage can also be temporary.
- **Relapse:** The person falls back into the old behaviour – This is where they could be pulled back into the activity.
- **Precontemplation:** The person may be unaware that there's a problem, and there is no intention to change behaviour.

The model does not show an end to the process of change and suggests that a person is ever progressing in the cycle. Some people will stay in maintenance and not return to old behaviours.

Further sources:

[Risk-Taking & the Adolescent Brain | Dustin Albert | TEDxLMSD - YouTube](#)

[Tips for Communicating With Your Teen | Child Mind Institute](#)

[Parents Guide to Problem Behavior | Child Mind Institute](#)

[HTF Online Forum - Criminal Child Exploitation & County Lines - YouTube](#)

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