



Wraparound's Bones

Creating an Infrastructure that
Supports and Sustain Strength-Based
Practice

The Bones of An Agency

- Every human services agency is built around a basic infrastructure that includes:
 - Hiring, training and supervising staff
 - Obtaining and carrying out contracts or implementing mandated programs
 - Obtaining and maintaining needed licensure or certification for staff or the agency as a whole
 - Establishing and gaining approval for an annual budget
 - Documenting and billing for services
 - Evaluating program and client performance and outcomes

The Influence of Infrastructure

- The way the bones are designed and operate can have a significant impact on the services that the agency delivers
- Sometimes a hidden imperative in the bones can over-ride an explicit directive about practice
- For example, an overt message that staff should use a strength-based approach can be undermined by a covert message sent by an infrastructure element that focuses on client deficits.

Evolving Role of the Strengths Perspective

- Instinct
- Philosophy
- Espoused value
- Practice model
- Disruptor
- Blueprint



Strength-Based Practice

- Six components of a strength-based approach:
 - **A**ttitude
 - **D**iscovery
 - **M**irroring
 - **I**ntervention
 - **R**ecording
 - **E**valuation



Attitude

- A willingness to observe, appreciate, speak to and reinforce the capacity for resilience and recovery that resides in each person and family we encounter.
 - **Understand** why identifying strengths will support positive engagement and change
 - **Know** how to express this understanding in a variety of client encounters
 - **Be able** to maintain the attitude in negative situations

Discovery

- The capacity to reliably identify the functional strengths of family members and the family as a group and use these strengths as the foundation for an effective action plan:
 - **Understand** what functional strengths are and why discovering them is important
 - **Know** how to use a variety of formal and informal strengths-discovery techniques and tools
 - **Be able** to apply the right technique or tool in the right situation.

Mirroring

- Sharing your observations of families' strengths with them to insure accuracy and mutual understanding, and to facilitate engagement.
 - **Understand** why families must see and validate the potential strengths that the practitioner has observed
 - **Know** how to use a variety of techniques to provide feedback without cueing defensiveness or appearing phony
 - **Be able** to facilitate reciprocal relationships with families from a wide variety of backgrounds who may have highly idiosyncratic characteristics.

Intervention

- To move from observation to action, the practitioner must have a repertoire of competency building responses and services that can be matched with each family's unique profile of strengths and needs and create an environment where the child and family can prosper
 - **Understand** that the most effective interventions help families acquire or improve key personal and interpersonal competencies to counteract the challenges they are facing
 - **Know** enough about the available range of interventions to achieve a good fit
 - **Be able** to either implement a chosen intervention or link the family with someone who can.

Recording

- An effective practitioner should have a reliable system for documenting observations, assessments, interventions and impacts, as well as family opinions, responses and outcomes.
 - **Understand** that without consistent and accurate documentation the practice model will erode
 - **Know** how to gather and record important information and how to use the information management system
 - **Be able** to accurately, succinctly and quickly report appropriate data

Evaluation

- To assess the fidelity and effectiveness of our current practices and to build a foundation for service improvement, we need a system that tells us whether we are **doing** what we said we would do, whether it is **helping**, whether we are **learning** how to do it better, and what our families **think** about the help they are getting
 - **Understand** why data about performance and its effects should drive practice improvement
 - **Know** how to use evaluation tools and interpret their results
 - **Be able** to translate evaluative information into service improvements.

The ADMIRE Test

- In your organization, or in the organization that helps you, to what extent:
 - Do staff members consistently and confidently express a S/B **attitude** with each other, with families and with system partners?
 - Does each service encounter include formal or informal strengths **discovery**?
 - Do staff **mirror** the strengths discovery process and results with the families they are assisting?
 - Do the **services and interventions** used build on strengths to meet needs and progress toward accomplishing the family's mission?
 - Do staff **document** strengths among the essential elements of the service encounter?
 - Does the organization **evaluate** its actions, the results produced by those actions, and its clients' responses?

Score Your Agency

Type of Agency:	Your Role:				
Element of Strength-Based Practice	How much is it present? (1 = not at all, 5 = always)				
Expression of strength-based attitude	1	2	3	4	5
Consistent practice of strengths discovery	1	2	3	4	5
Mirroring discovered strengths with families	1	2	3	4	5
Services and interventions based on strengths	1	2	3	4	5
Strengths are recorded in agency documents	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluation based on strengths improvement	1	2	3	4	5

Supporting the Change Process

- In order to make strength-based practice the standard operating procedure for an agency, the organizational climate (the bones) should include performance drivers, such as:
 - **Incentives** for strength-based practice
 - **Disincentives** for not using this approach
 - **Resources** to support its use
 - **Removal** of barriers to its use
 - **Encouragement** from leadership

Identifying Performance Drivers

- From your perspective, what aspects of the agency or organization where you work or that helps you have the biggest influence on how people carry out their jobs (whatever those jobs are)?
- Have you noticed a difference between what people might expect to be the biggest performance drivers, and what they really are?
- Which drivers have a beneficial impact on job performance, and which have a negative impact?

Discussion Notes

- List 5 key performance drivers from your discussion in the table below, then indicate the degree of impact each driver has (1 = low, 5 = high) and the type of impact (P = Positive, N = Negative, M = Mixed)

Performance Driver	Target	Impact

Amplifying Performance

- Measure and talk about performance drivers
- Identify the best of what is actually happening in the organization and spread the learning
- Work from the senior manager through the direct services and administrative support staff
- Clarify and continuously adapt tasks, accountabilities, expectations and deliverables
- Regular, brief data-informed meetings of managers and supervisors
- Explicit measurement and reinforcement of success
- Compelling incentives aligned with performance
- Expect change to come from employees seeing each other excel in full view of leaders.

Bushe, G.E. & Pitman, T. Performance Amplification: Building a Strength-Based Organization. *The Appreciative Inquiry Practitioner*, November, 2008, pp. 23 – 26. Online publication, retrieved from <http://209.34.253.86/upload/Building%20Strength%20Based%20Organizations.pdf>

Leveraging Improvement

- Thinking about the agency or organization where you work or that helps you, and the realities that it faces, what one element of the infrastructure might be adjusted that would support more consistent implementation of strength-based practice?
- What changes would you make?
- How would those changes impact performance?

Discussion Notes

Infrastructure element you would adjust

How that element currently affects practice

How you would change the element

How that change would amplify strength-based performance