

Bridging To Students Through Motivational Engagement



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Goals For Today's presentation

- Describe an integrated model for helping college students discover and strengthen personal motivation to succeed academically
 - Review assumptions we often make when working with students
 - Discuss factors influencing student motivation
 - Review methods for assessing student motivation
 - Helping students increase their own motivation

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Goals For Today's presentation



- Review application of the model to specific academic performance issues
- Discuss the applicability of the model to differing student populations

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Context for Model Development



- College counseling center on a 60,000 student campus in the United States (University of Minnesota Twin Cities Minneapolis Minnesota)
- Multiple programs within the center
 - Personal concerns/mental health counseling
 - Learning & academic skills counseling
 - Career Counseling
 - Student Academic Success Services

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Context for Model Development



- Many students have more than one type of concern
- Counseling addresses multiple issues interfering with academic success

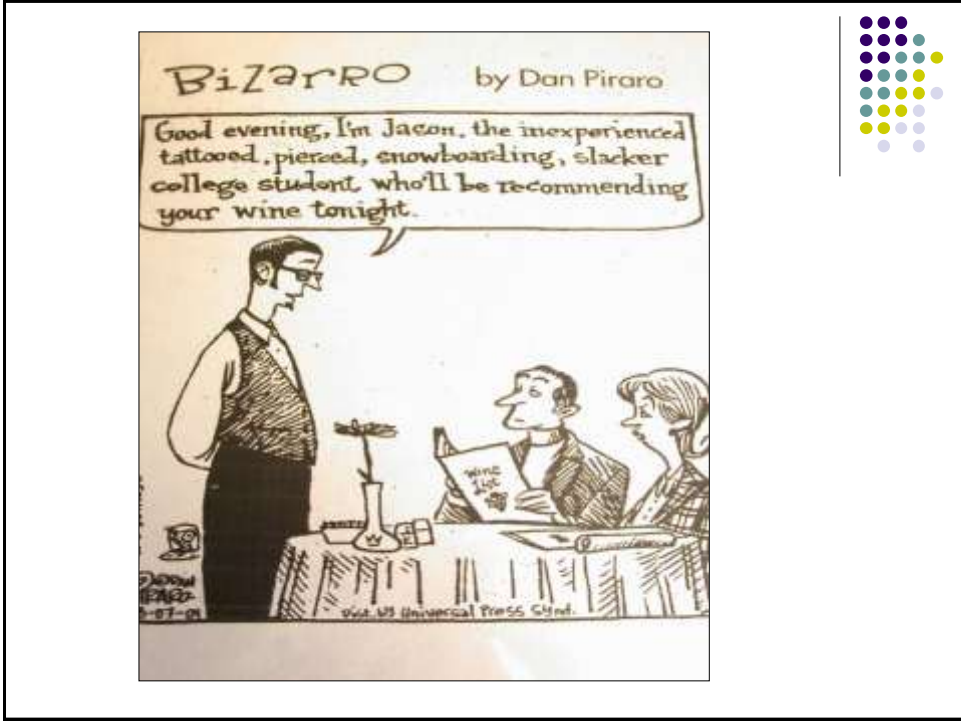
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What motivates your students to seek your services?

How do they first describe what brings them in for help?

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Assumptions We Had About Students Asking for Academic Assistance:



- The student had the motivation to do the work necessary to accomplish academic goals
- The student was ready to do this work
- Our primary job as counselors was to get the student to improve school performance and we bore the responsibility if they did not improve

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Have you found these assumptions to be true for the students seeking assistance in your programs?

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We Realized that students asking for academic assistance often:



- Were coming in on someone else's agenda
- Did not have a clear sense of what he/she wanted
- Were not always aware or honest with self about his/her motivation/readiness for change



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As an outcome of the difference between our assumptions and the student's experiences:



- We were jumping in too quickly
- Students often did not respond to our interventions with them in session
- Students would often not do the homework we assigned them

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As an outcome of the difference between our assumptions and the student's experiences:



- Students complained that they tried many things but nothing worked
- Or, students could explain in great detail why they had certain problems, but took little action to change them



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We realized we needed a new set of assumptions:

- Students enter the helping process with differing levels of motivation and readiness to change
- To maximize intervention effectiveness helpers need to modify their approaches to match the motivation/readiness level of each student

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- It is *not* our role as helpers for students in academic difficulty to help them become better students! It *is* our role to help students *come to terms* with the disparity between the type of students they want to be and the type of students they currently are, and what choices they want to make about that disparity.

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A Match Made in Heaven (or at least Academia)?



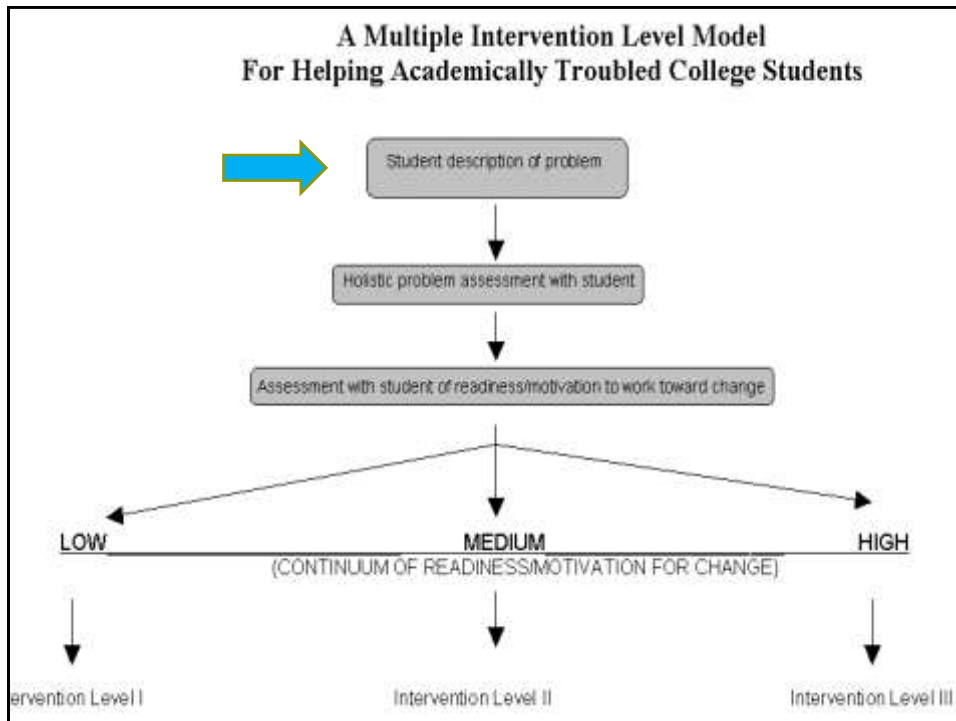
- What are the student's goals for improvement?
- What are your goals for the student?
- How close a match is there between the two sets of goals?

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A Model For Promoting College Student Academic Success Through Motivational Engagement



Mark S. B. / iStockphoto.com



"I really wanted to be a 'water doctor', someone who could live on the reservation and help my people solve their water shortage. But my science classes are too hard for me, and not that interesting. I really care about my homeland."

What is motivating this student?

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The FlashPoint Concept



- The helper must intervene with the student at the point of his or her level of readiness and motivation for change.
- This point is the *flash point* of change: the first level and focus of intervention at which the student feels just enough motivation and readiness to take at least one action step to improve academic performance.

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What Is the Flashpoint?



- *“My parents never went to college. They do ok, but they work too hard and don’t really like their jobs. I really want to make something of myself. So I decided to go to college. Now I am nervous I won’t succeed here.”*

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Non-Academic Factors Influencing Academic Motivation And Performance



Questions to Use in an Assessment Interview

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Non-Academic Factors Influencing Academic Motivation and Performance



- Relationship Issues
- Employment
- Financial Problems
- Family Relationships
- Mental Health
- Social/Cultural
- Chemical Abuse

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Holistic Interview Questions



- Are you involved in any relationships (boy/girlfriend, roommate, spousal, parent-child etc.) that are interfering with your ability to study?
- Do you have any financial problems that are interfering with your school work?

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Holistic Interview Questions



- Are you worried about school? Do you ever feel blue, down, unhappy about how school is going for you?
- Do you feel supported in your cultural, ethnic or religious identity here?

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Holistic Interview Questions



- What choices do you make around alcohol use? Other drug use?

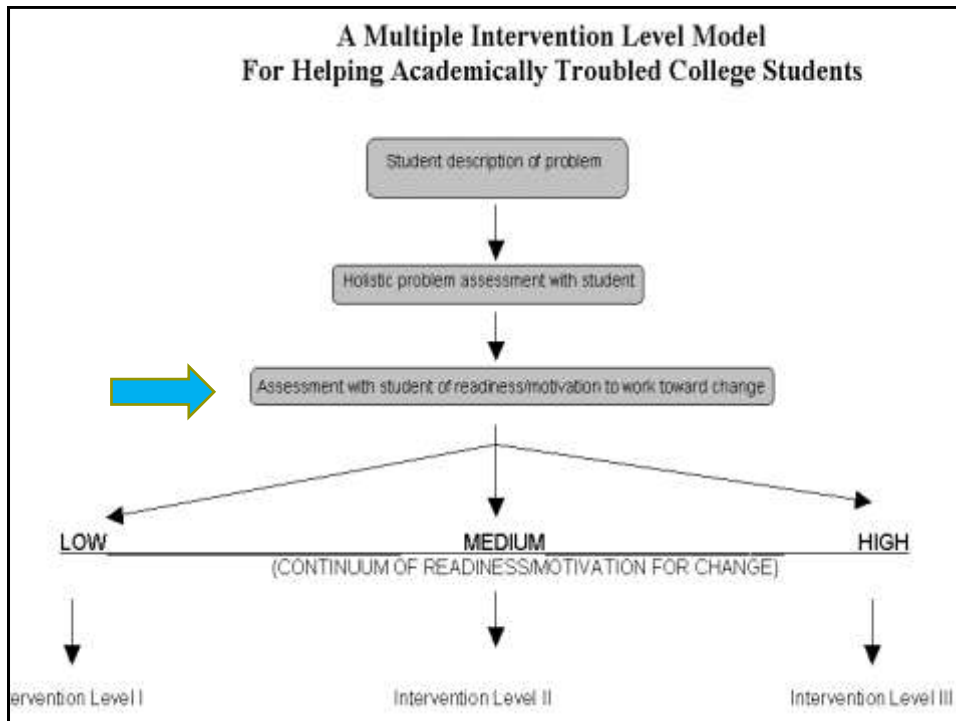
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Additional Assessment Strategies



- **The Learning & Study Strategy Inventory**
- **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**
- **Learning Style Inventories**
 - **VARK**
 - <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire>
 - **Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire**
 - <http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html>

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Sample Questions for Assessing Student Motivation/ Readiness for Change



- **“What do you think you would have to change to improve your school performance?”**
- **“On a ten-point scale where one means no motivation and ten means high motivation, at what level would you rate your motivation to do the work needed to improve your grades?”**

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Sample Questions for Assessing Student Motivation/ Readiness For Change



- **“What would you have to give up or do less of in order to do better in school? How willing are you to give up these things?”**
- **“How uncomfortable are you willing to be to improve your academic performance?”**

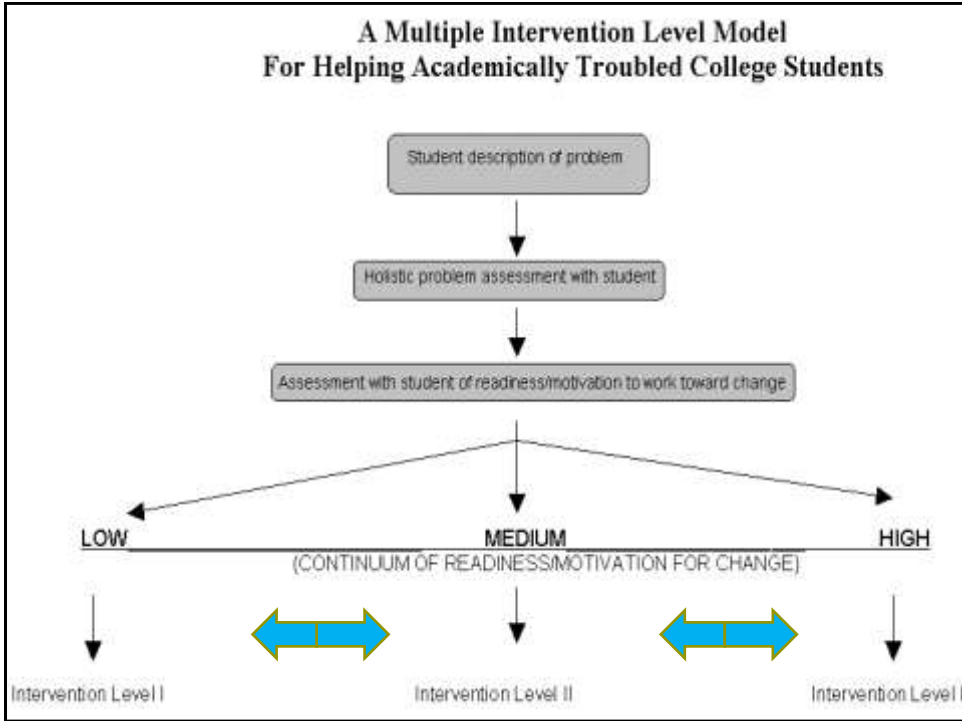
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Sample Questions for Assessing Student Motivation/ Readiness For Change



- **“Does your motivation to go to college come more from inside yourself, or from outside yourself, such as your parents, or your community?”**
- **“If you could put off worrying about your future for awhile and do anything you wanted to, would you be in college right now? If not what would you be doing?”**

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Students at Level 1 are under-motivated or under-prepared to change



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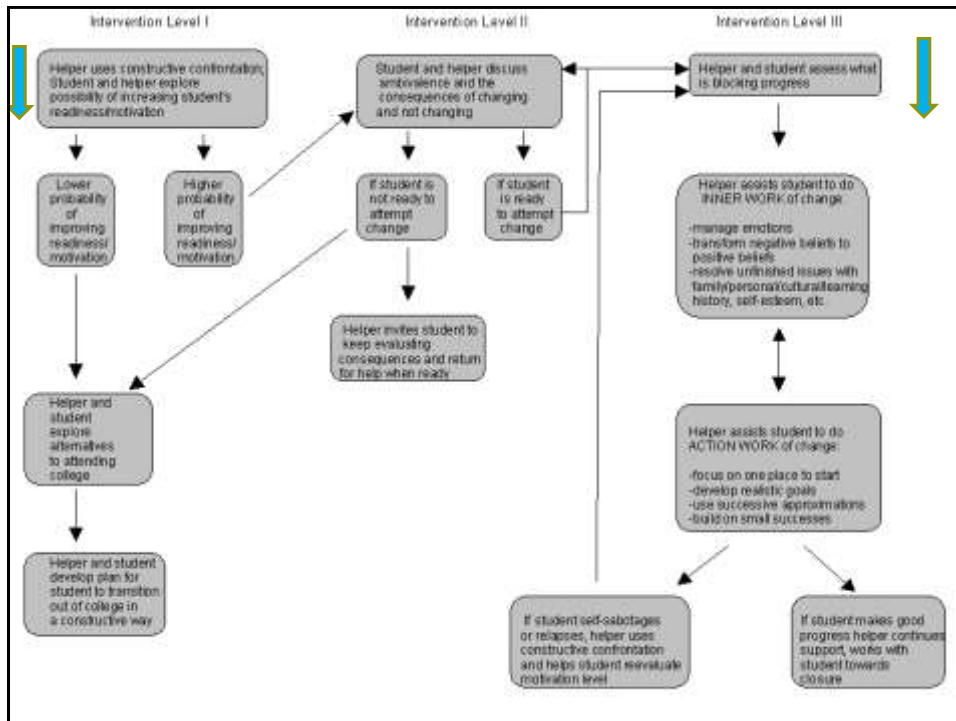
Students at Level II are ambivalent or unsure about the change process and about committing to change.



Students at Level III who are both motivated and ready for change



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- The model emphasizes the importance of integrating "Inner Work" (cognitive, affective, attributional factors) with "Action Work" specific behavioral action steps (study skill improvement etc.), and blending these to meet the specific needs of each student.

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● Level I Interventions



- Let person know they can return at any time
- Encourage them to see how things go, if they are not improving, come back
- Help them look at other options
- Deal with the loss of dreams issue, give them hope for another opportunity

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● Level II Interventions



- work out formal or informal weekly contract
- Anticipate sabotage, plan for failure to lead to success
- Encourage student to return whatever the outcome appointment regardless of what happens
- In the following week, process what happened, build on success, process and learn from failure

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Level III Interventions



- Jump right in
- Balance Action Work and Inner Work
- As in Level II work on exploring possible sabotage/relapse issues and inoculate against this
- Use relapse appropriately
- Don't lose focus on academic concerns, but also expand as needed to encompass whatever may impact on academics

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Process Issues



- Getting started
- Emphasizing successes over failures
- Going to school vs. being a student
- Discomfort tolerance
- The ongoing process
- Dealing with failure/setbacks
- Break things down into small, behavioral steps, see where the stuck point is

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Practical Applications

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Motivational Engagement and Making referrals



- Focus on the student's concerns and what (s)he would like to change
- Clarify how the person/unit referring to can help address the student's concerns
- When possible, give a specific name or list of people for the student to contact
- Share past referral success stories

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First Session Interventions



- Relationship building
- Find one problem the student seems most distressed about
- See if student is interested in focusing first on that problem (tie into flashpoint)

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- Ask. "If you could just change one thing this week that would start to make things better, what would that be?"

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First Session Interventions



- Work with the student to find one *small* change the student would be willing to attempt.
- Work out details of how student will make the change (times, locations, work to be done etc.)
- Explore ways student may sabotage and how to prevent this

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First Session Interventions



- Finalize agreement with student to attempt this change
- Discuss “no fail” concept
- See if student willing to return to discuss regardless of level of success or failure



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Second Session Intervention Follow Up



- Connection/relationship building
- Review how experiment went
- Support even very small degrees of success
- ONLY AFTER THIS, look at what did not go well



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Second Session Intervention Follow Up



- What would you do next time?—assess and add suggestions
- How motivated are you to try this again? (support any motivation that is there)
- Repeat steps from session 1 (Work out details of experiment etc.)

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Third Session Intervention Follow Up



- Relationship building
- Emphasize success
- Consider a different approach or a different problem or re-evaluate motivation (if experiment not successful)
- Expand the change (more study times, bigger goal etc.)

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Specific Interventions— Global Motivation



- Future Vision exercise
- Create a motivational mental image or experience to use before and while studying
- Develop positive self-coaching to use while studying
- Have something tangible that is a reminder of future goals
- Plan actions that bridge the gap between hard studying now and hoped for future career
- If the student cannot focus on the future, focus acutely on the present.

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Specific Interventions—Time Management



- Creating realistic, student-friendly time schedules
- The importance of *prioritized* “to do” lists
- Creating appointments with oneself
- Building Skills gradually
- Identifying and defeating self-sabotage

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Specific Interventions—Procrastination



- Review dangers of improvement/rewards of status quo
- Focus on flashpoint motivation
- Have student try simple experiments
- Assess successes and failures

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Specific Interventions—Procrastination



- Be prepared to address “relapses” constructively
- Help student develop realistic time management
- Address perfectionism if an issue
- Build in accountability

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Specific Interventions—Basic Study Skill Improvement



- Active vs. passive studying
- Effective reading strategies
- Effective note-taking
- Studying for the *real* test
- Using the “experts” (including yourself)

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Specific Interventions— Academic Anxiety



- Explore and address underlying causes of the anxiety
- Use cognitive and behavioral strategies used for other types of anxiety
- Use physical relaxation strategies
- Address perfectionism and other causes of anxiety

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Outcome



- How does one define outcome?
 - Grades?
 - Retention?
 - Global satisfaction?
- Of the students who continued in counseling and stayed at the University, 80% showed improvement in academic work.

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