
Does Not Take Responsibility

RECEPTIVE TO CONSULTATION

tary tasks which will help the consultee, who is to retain full authority over the classroom and the student. The consultant should take care to perform only (or primarily) interventions with the student which have been identified by the consultee.

- Often consultants who are very confident and self assured give the consultee the impression that they will “handle everything.” Phrases such as, “trust me” or “I had a student once just like X”, communicate to the consultee that the consultant might be interested in assuming responsibility for direct service. The consultant should exercise caution regarding the impression he/she gives the consultee about his/her future involvement with direct service.

Stage: Implementation

GENERAL COMMENTS:

During a consultation meeting, the consultee may agree to try an intervention, however, fail to actually follow through with implementation. The consultee could be lacking in confidence or afraid to try an unfamiliar strategy. Excuses such as lack of time or opportunity could be used to hide fears based on a perceived lack of skill. Also, it is possible that the consultee believes the suggested solution is not really appropriate or feasible, but up to this point has failed to say so.

GENERAL PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES:

- Make a written contract with the consultee.
- Encourage the consultee by having him/her record progress (e.g., baseline; work examples). Set a target date for comparing the progress to the baseline data. Have the consultee acknowledge and commit to this time period.
- Consultants should plan to make frequent contact with the consultee during the initial stages of implementation.

- Encourage the consultee to try implementing the recommended solution on a trial or limited basis, perhaps with the assistance of the consultant. Provide support to the consultee by acknowledging any fears he/she might have.

RESPONSES TO CONSULTEE-INITIATED TRAPS:

CONSULTEE: “I just don’t know what you mean. If you could show me by taking over Tom’s program for a while, I think it would help.” Whereas a consultant should utilize modeling techniques when appropriate, caution should be exercised to ensure that all that is occurring is modeling. The consultant might respond by pointing out that taking over Tom’s program will not be the best solution, nor utilize time efficiently. Also, the consultant may want to respond to the consultee’s message that he/she feels uncertain about using a particular technique.

CONSULTEE: “I just didn’t have time to follow through. Do you think you could help me by doing...?” The consultant should respond firmly with one of the following messages: “When do you think you might have time?” or “Maybe that’s an indication that it wasn’t a good plan. Why don’t we rethink what needs to be done and generate a new plan?”

CONSULTEE: “If you do it this one time, I’ll make sure I do it next time.” This type of deal making can put the consultant on the spot. If the consultant has established a good relationship with the consultee and feels comfortable taking on the extra responsibility “just this once,” then it probably will not create long-term problems. However, if the consultant feels trapped, then it is best to say so: “What you are asking me to do would be an imposition. Can we think of some other arrangement which would be more mutually attractive?” Sometimes humor can be effective, as in the following statement: “Yeah, yeah, I used to say the same thing to my father when he asked me to mow the lawn and I had baseball on my agenda.”

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The consultee may try to explain to the consultant why the recommended or agreed-upon solution might be difficult to implement in the regular classroom (e.g., classroom teacher lacks necessary skill; technique does not fit class structure; parents or school might object). The consultant should be sensitive to the consultee, but should not offer to take over. Support the consultee with a lot of encouragement.

CONSULTEE: “I just didn’t have time to get to our plan.” Responses such as this should signal to the consultant that a commitment is lacking from the consultee. The plan may need to be scrutinized to determine if it is too demanding. Or, the consultee may need more support (e.g., consultant present on the first day of implementation).

STRATEGIES FOR CONSULTANT-INITIATED TRAPS:

- If the consultee is unskilled or having difficulty implementing the agreed-upon strategy, the consultant may be tempted to “help out.” Instead, the consultant should reevaluate the strategy to determine whether or not it is appropriate for this particular consultee.
- Some consultants do not follow through with support, encouragement and problem solving at this stage. They seem to take the approach that, “Well, the problem’s solved, let’s move on.” The consultee is left to fend for him/herself during the difficult implementation period. This behavior could be a direct response to an insensitive consultant.

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NOT RECEPTIVE TO CONSULTATION

Stage: Problem Identification

GENERAL COMMENTS:

The consultee may be convinced that the problem is not his/her responsibility and should be addressed through referral or the setting up of other special services such as counseling. Also, it is possible that the unmotivated consultee wants to shift as much of the “work” of consultation onto the consultant as possible. The consultee may therefore claim that he/she does not have the time or the expertise to perform the data collection and analysis procedures necessary for problem identification. In those cases where the consultee is being forced by higher authorities to engage in consultation, the behavior may be used to send a strong message of dissatisfaction to the consultant.

GENERAL PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES:

- Make a written contract with the consultee.
- Ask the consultee to bring to the initial consultation meeting examples of the pupil’s classroom work which might contain evidence of academic/learning problems. Focus the opening discussion on the consultee’s presentation. Encourage the consultee by making statements concerning the importance of his/her involvement.
- In cases where the consultant either does not know the consultee or, based on past experience, knows to expect this situation, a workable tactic is to begin the session by reviewing the contract. Sometimes, by summarizing and redefining his/her role, the consultant can prevent the consultee from initiating this problematic interaction.
- Spend time in the classroom in order to get a clear picture of the consultee’s program and teaching competencies. Often the consultant is pressured into assuming too much responsibility for implementing recommended techniques

because they do not fit the consultee’s program and capabilities.

- Have the consultee provide details about the handicapped pupil’s interaction with the regular class setting. Encourage the consultee by pointing out his/her contribution to a positive climate or relationship with the pupil. Remind the consultee that the goal is for him/her to have total responsibility for classroom operations.
- The consultant may need to clarify the consultation contract (e.g., responsibilities of consultant and consultee at each stage of the process; their relationship; etc.).
- Have the consultee describe in as much concrete detail as possible what he/she has observed concerning the pupil’s problem behavior. This will encourage the consultee to feel that he/she is an equal contributor.
- Establish at the initial meeting the importance of accurate problem identification, based on input from both parties, the consultee and the consultant.
- Some consultees do not understand that their behavior has effects on students and classroom functioning. The consultant may need to provide some staff development prior to solving the problem.

RESPONSES TO CONSULTEE-INITIATED TRAPS:

The consultee does not take any responsibility for the student’s education or problems. Further, the consultee views the consultant as having ownership for the student. In cases such as this, the consultant may need to spend additional time clarifying who has responsibility for whom. The consultant may want to explore with the consultee the conditions under which he/she would welcome responsibility for the student. The consultant also can ask the consultee to identify barriers to his/her

Does Not Take Responsibility

NOT RECEPTIVE TO CONSULTATION

accepting responsibility and explore the problem from this angle.

CONSULTEE: “I just didn’t have a chance to collect that information you asked for.” The consultant should first determine if the task was really not feasible. If it was, then the consultant should try to obtain a stronger commitment from the consultee (e.g., “That information is very important. Let me call you tomorrow to see how it’s coming.”). The consultant may need to structure the task so that it is cooperative (e.g., the consultant collects some of the information).

STRATEGIES FOR CONSULTANT-INITIATED TRAPS:

- Faced with an unmotivated consultee, the consultant may be tempted to assume responsibility for collecting and analyzing data on the problem pupil. The consultant should not be quick to make such offers of assistance, but rather should try to work out a plan which requires the consultee to provide some data regarding the problem situation (e.g., baseline; anecdotal records; etc.).
- Some consultants may use specialized terminology or jargon when discussing the problem. This may lead the consultee to decide that this is really a problem for which he/she should not be responsible.

Stage: Generation of Solutions

GENERAL COMMENTS:

If the consultee believes that neither the consultant nor consultation can help, he/she may remain passive at this stage. With this behavior, the consultee is in essence challenging the consultant to come up with a solution or risk a “stalled” consultation.

GENERAL PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES:

- Spend time in the classroom in order to get a clear picture of the consultee’s program and teaching competencies. Often the consultant is pressured into assuming too much responsibility for implementing recommended techniques because they do not fit the consultee’s program and capabilities.
- Some consultees do not understand that their behavior has effects on students and classroom functioning. The consultant may need to provide some staff development prior to solving the problem.

RESPONSES TO CONSULTEE-INITIATED TRAPS:

CONSULTEE: “What should I do?” The consultant can encourage the consultee to contribute by answering: “What do you want to do?” Another option is to extend the consultee’s question. Consultant: “What should you do? Well, you’ve told me you’d like Jeffrey to sit in his seat during reading group. Let’s figure out what some of the reasons might be for Jeffrey’s movement and then generate some possible strategies that will help Jeffrey reach that goal.”

In cases where the solutions generated by the consultee show no evidence of the consultee’s involvement (e.g., other people solving the problem), the consultant will need to structure the discussion. Ask the consultee if he/she was aware of this. Or, ask the consultee if he/she can think of a solution where he/she maintains more control.

If a consultee is not acting responsibly at this stage, then the consultant should return to the previous stage and obtain a commitment. Remind the consultee of what he/she agreed to do.

STRATEGIES FOR CONSULTANT-INITIATED TRAPS:

- Consultants may become frustrated with consultees who do not take responsibility. This

Does Not Take Responsibility

NOT RECEPTIVE TO CONSULTATION

may lead the consultant to take responsibility for the consultee's problem. Consultants who fall into this trap only perpetuate the problem.

- Often consultants who are very confident and self-assured give the consultee the impression that they will "handle everything." Phrases such as, "trust me" or "I had a student once just like X", communicate to the consultee that the consultant might be interested in assuming responsibility for direct service. The consultant should exercise caution regarding the impression he/she gives the consultee about his/her future involvement with direct service.

- Make a written contract with the consultee.
- Encourage the consultee to try implementing the recommended solution on a trial or limited basis, perhaps with the assistance of the consultant. Provide support to the consultee by acknowledging any fears he/she might have.

Stage: Implementation

GENERAL COMMENTS:

The consultee may agree, during a consultation meeting, to try an intervention. However, at the next meeting, he/she has all kinds of reasons for not having followed through with implementation (e.g., "I didn't have time."; "I didn't know how to do it."). In addition to whatever excuse is offered, the underlying reason for nonimplementation could be a lack of commitment to the agreed-upon strategy or even to the earlier definition of the problem.

GENERAL PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES:

- Do not be quick to offer to provide direct services to the handicapped pupil. This type of arrangement tends to result in individualized tutoring or counseling and defeats the purpose of teacher consultation.
- Encourage the consultee by having him/her record progress (e.g., baseline; work examples). Set a target date for comparing the progress to the baseline data. Have the consultee acknowledge and commit to this time period.
- Consultants should plan to make frequent contact with the consultee during the initial stages of implementation.

RESPONSES TO CONSULTEE-INITIATED TRAPS:

CONSULTEE: "If you do it this one time, I'll make sure I do it next time." This type of deal making can put the consultant on the spot. If the consultant has established a good relationship with the consultee and feels comfortable taking on the extra responsibility "just this once," then it probably will not create long-term problems. However, if the consultant feels trapped, then it is best to say so: "What you are asking me to do would be an imposition. Can we think of some other arrangement which would be more mutually attractive?" Sometimes humor can be effective, as in the following statement: "Yeah, yeah, I used to say the same thing to my father when he asked me to mow the lawn and I had baseball on my agenda."

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If a consultee is not acting responsibly at this stage, then the consultant should return to the previous stage and obtain a commitment. Remind the consultee of what he/she agreed to do.

Although not typical, a consultee may approach implementation in a less than committed way (e.g., not following through). As a result, the consultee may inform the consultant that the plan did not work and that the consultant needs to provide direct service until another plan is developed. The consultant should not accept this solution too quickly. Rather, the consultant should firmly request a discussion as to why the implementation is not working.

STRATEGIES FOR CONSULTANT-INITIATED TRAPS:

- If the consultee is unskilled or having difficulty implementing the agreed-upon strategy, the consultant may be tempted to “help out.” Instead, the consultant should reevaluate the strategy to determine whether or not it is appropriate for this particular consultee.

- Consultants may become frustrated with consultees who do not take responsibility. This may lead the consultant to take responsibility for the consultee’s problem. Consultants who fall into this trap only perpetuate the problem.
- Some consultants do not follow through with support, encouragement and problem solving at this stage. They seem to take the approach that, “Well, the problem’s solved, let’s move on.” The consultee is left to fend for him/herself during the difficult implementation period. This behavior could be a direct response to an insensitive consultant.