

You Had Me at Hello:

How to Engage Your Most Challenging Parents, Caregivers, and Foster Parents



The Problem

Parent engagement is critical to successful child and family treatment. But parents are difficult to motivate. Recent studies show that current *no show rates* are as high as 42% and up to 50% of these never return for a second appointment.

Parents often want the counselor to simply fix their child and leave them out of treatment completely. However, without parent involvement and change, child and adolescent relapse rates are high.

A Solution

At the [Family Trauma Institute](#), we discovered a key reason why parents are so difficult to motivate and more importantly how to fix it.

- Mental health treatment often begins with a **harsh start-up**.
- We engage our parents with a phone call to set up the first appointment.
- There is no initial rapport or strengths-based building prior to the first face to face session.

In sharp contrast, Table 1, illustrates a simple 5-question script that will begin your treatment with a **soft start-up**.

- This means that in a 15 minute, FST | Family Systems Trauma Motivational Phone Call, you can inspire your most resistant parents to quickly engage and show-up to your first session ready to participate.
- OR use same questions for face to face meetings

Table 1: The FST Motivational Script

Question #1:	What are some of the difficult experiences that you have had to suffer in the last year because of the problems you have been having with your child or teenager? <i>[Estimated time of completion = 5 minutes]</i>
Question #2:	When I get to know you better, what qualities and strengths will I come to admire about you as a [person, parent, spouse, etc.]? <i>[Estimated time of completion = 3-5 minutes]</i>
Question #3:	What do you think will happen to [your teen, child, marriage, or you personally] if the problems you described earlier remain unfixed in the next three months, six months, or even a year from now? <i>[Estimated time of completion = 3-5 minutes]</i>
Question #4:	Have you seen a counselor for any of these problems before? [If yes] What have other counselors missed with you? The reason I ask is that I do not want to make the same mistakes twice. <i>[Estimated time of completion = 2-3 minutes]</i>
Question #5:	Do you want to fix the problem or problems you listed [list them] fast, medium, or slow speed? <i>[Estimated time of completion = 1 minute]</i>

3 Simple Action Steps

For your next referral or session, please follow these 3 simple steps:

Step 1- Use script when you call or see your next parent, foster parent, or kinship caregiver

Step 2- Stick and Move. Don't let the parent go on and on. Interrupt if you need to (stick) and summarize what they said (move).

Step 3- Look for Milestones: Try it and look for (1) Increase in your show rate to 80%-90%
(2) Soft-start - Move them into contemplation, more hope, softer body language

For More Information and Additional FST Techniques

✓ Go to www.familytrauma.com to attend our next live or on demand free monthly webinar

About the Author

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