

A Client-Centered Approach to Assessing Reproductive Intention

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Disclosures

- Advisory Board/Consultant

Cooper Surgical, Teva, Merck, ContraMed

- Trainer/speaker

Merck, Medicines 360, Teva, ContraMed

Objectives

- Describe the complexity that exists in people's thoughts and feelings about reproduction and pregnancy as a future life event
- Demonstrate the use of PATH questions with adolescents
- Display patient-centered counseling skills
- Address reproductive goals with clients of all genders and any sexual orientation

What dimensions of people's thoughts and feelings about reproduction and pregnancy might be important?

A Multidimensional Concept

Plans ≠ Intentions ≠ Desires ≠ Feelings

- All different concepts
- Someone may find all or only some meaningful
- Often appear inconsistent with each other

A Multidimensional Concept

- **Plans:** Decisions about if/when to get pregnant and formulation of actions
- **Intentions:** Timing-based ideas about if/when to get pregnant, sometimes includes “wants”

Planning: Definition

“Pregnancy planning, distinct from pregnancy intention, was described as a **very deliberate act in which both partners discuss and reach consensus about the timing of pregnancy and then take steps to prepare for a potential pregnancy, including “getting your finances in order”.**

Planning: Foreclosed

“Because nearly all of the women in our study had strong feelings about the ideal circumstances (specifically, being in a committed relationship and financially stable) in which one should plan a pregnancy, yet few, if any, women actually achieved either relationship or financial stability, **pregnancy planning seemed irrelevant and rarely occurred.**”

A Multidimensional Concept

- **Feelings:** Emotional orientations towards pregnancy
- **Desires:** Strength of inclination to get pregnant or avoid pregnancy
- **Acceptability**

Intention ≠ Acceptability

“Because preconception intention and planning do not necessarily occur, decisions about the acceptability of a pregnancy are often determined after the pregnancy has already occurred.

Many women express happiness with a pregnancy, regardless of their intention.”

“Another pregnancy is definitely not the right path for me and I’m being very careful with birth control. But if I somehow ended up pregnant would I embrace it and think it’s for the best? Absolutely.”

“I don’t want more kids and was hoping to get my tubes tied. We can’t afford another one. But if it happened I’d still be happy. I’d be really excited. We’d rise to the occasion...nothing would really change.”

“It Just Happens”

The current conceptual framework that views pregnancy-related behaviors from a planned behavior perspective may be limited among low-income populations

Stratified Reproduction

The differential valuing of reproduction such that the procreation of some people and groups is valued by those with social and political power, and the fertility of other people and groups is not.



Self Assessment

- How comfortable are you talking with sexual minorities about childbearing?
- What are your thoughts/feelings/beliefs about people who live in poverty having children before their finances are in order?

What should be the focus of counseling conversations aimed at helping people to achieve their reproductive desires?

Reproductive Intention/Goals

Clarifies
motivation
and degree
of
acceptability
regarding
pregnancy

...so we can
offer
appropriate
interventions

+/-
Preconception
Care

+/-
Contraception

Infertility
Services or
Adoption

Designed for **ALL**

- Teens
- Older clients
- All genders
- Any sexual orientation
- Does not stigmatize those struggling with infertility

Reproductive Intention/Goals

PATH Questions

- 1. Do you think you would like to have (more) children some day?**
2. When do you think that might be?
3. How important is it to you to prevent pregnancy (until then)?

Listen Actively



1. Do you think you would like to have (more) children some day?

"Yes! I definitely want to be a parent someday. I am pretty traditional and family is one of the most important things in my life but I definitely want to be married first which I don't see happening any time soon."

“No” to Question 1

1. Do you think you would like to have
(more) children some day?

~~2. When do you think that might be?~~

**3. How important is it to you to prevent
pregnancy?**

“Yes” to Question 1

1. Do you think you would like to have (more) children some day?
- 2. When do you think that might be?**
3. How important is it to you to prevent pregnancy (until then)?

“Now” to Question 2

1. Do you think you would like to have
(more) children some day?
- 2. When do you think that might be?**
- ~~3. How important is it to you to prevent
pregnancy?~~

Preconception Care

“Since _____ would you like to discuss ways **to be prepared** for a healthy pregnancy?”

For example

- ...you have said “if it happens, it happens...”
- ...many people using this method of contraception get pregnant...

Semilla G₄ P₂ age 33 BMI 42
HbA1c 12

Individualized Question 2

"It is important for people with diabetes to be prepared for a health pregnancy by getting their blood sugars in good control and making sure they are on the right medicines before they get pregnant."



Semilla G₄ P₂ age 33 BMI 42
HbA1c 12

“You have said you would love to have another child at some point, do you think you might like to get pregnant soon?”



“No time soon” for Question 2

1. Do you think you would like to have (more) children some day?
2. When do you think that might be?
3. **How important is it to you to prevent pregnancy (until then)?**

Examples for Question 3

Use the information the client has already shared to individualize question 3

How important is it to you to prevent pregnancy_____:

- until you are out of school
- until your partner gets back
- for the next 5 years

Probing Questions and Paraphrasing

- *“I am hearing you say that you would really like to wait until after you finish school to think about having a baby. Do I have that right?”*
- *“Yes, at least five years. I also want to have some time to start my career.”*
- *“It sounds like you have put a lot of thought into your future. How important would you say it is to you to prevent pregnancy until you finish school?”*

Brandon Age 23 Cis Male



“It sounds like....(it’s very important to you right now that your partner doesn’t get pregnant because you want to be able to decide for yourself about being a dad or not) is that what you mean?”

Paraphrase Alternates

- “Many of my clients say that they_____. Is that what you mean?”
- “So you feel pretty strong about_____. Is that accurate?”

Tone of Voice, Body Language and Facial Expression

Example

“Yeah, I want to have kids... some day”



- And they pull their body back and hold their arms up as if to protect them self
- If their face were to light up with a grin and they were to be leaning forward they might be telling you that the idea of becoming a parent is joyful

Sam G₀ Age 22



- Transman preferred pronoun: he, his, him
- Type 1 diabetes since age 6
- Current partner is a cis gay male
- Sam is in the office for genital warts

Would you ask PATH questions if he had said he was un-partnered?

What if he had said he only has sex with women?

Additional Open-ended Clarifying Questions

- "How would you feel if you became pregnant (or caused a pregnancy) now?"
- "How would it be for you if you became pregnant (or caused a pregnancy) over the next few months?"
- "If you were to become pregnant, do you have a sense of how it would affect your _____ (finances, health, family, relationship, job, schooling, other children, parents etc)?"

Other Open-ended Clarifying Questions

- *"How ready are you to become a parent?"*
- *"Do you have a sense that you will be able to maintain your health during pregnancy?"*
- *"What are your thoughts about your situation financially in regard to having a child?"*
- *"Is your health condition (e.g., chronic illness) stable?"*
- *"Do you have a sense of how your partner would be with the idea of starting a family (or having another child)?"*

Empathy Without Labeling

- Rather than using a negative label:
 - “You sound angry” (or anxious)
- Use neutral words:
 - “It sounds like ___ is concerning to you”
 - “I can see that was really hard to deal with!”
- Not: “I know how you feel.”

Try NOT to Disagree or Correct “Find the YES”

**Find something in what the patient is
saying to agree with or support**

Instead of “No” or “But”

“Yes! And _____”

Ways to Say “Yes”

START with either:

1. Display of empathy
2. Validation
3. Agreement

Examples of Ways to Say “Yes”

Emma Age 16

“I’ve had sex without using anything for a while now and I haven't gotten pregnant so I doubt it’s even possible.”

1. Display of empathy
2. Validation
3. Agreement



Examples of Ways to Say “Yes”

- Display of empathy:

“It seems like this is concerning to you...”

- Validation:

“You know, many of my patient’s say that...”

- Agreement:

“I can see how you would think that...”

Misinformation...Misconceptions

1. About relative effectiveness of methods
2. Underestimates their own or their partner's fertility
3. Pregnancy is safer than contraception

Make an Information Sandwich



An “Information Sandwich” to **Integrate** Information

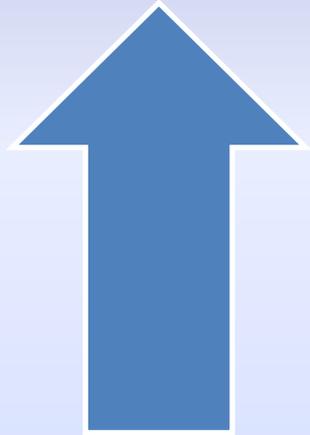
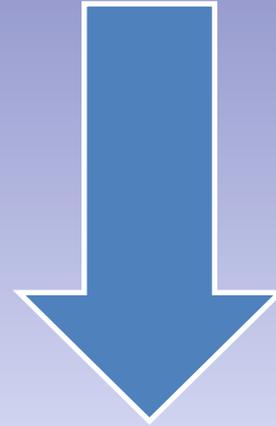
- How would that be for you?
- Has that ever happened before?
- How did you manage it?
- Do you have a sense of how you would manage it?

Self Assessment

- What are your feelings/beliefs about adolescent sexuality?
- How comfortable are you talking with adolescents?

Obstacles

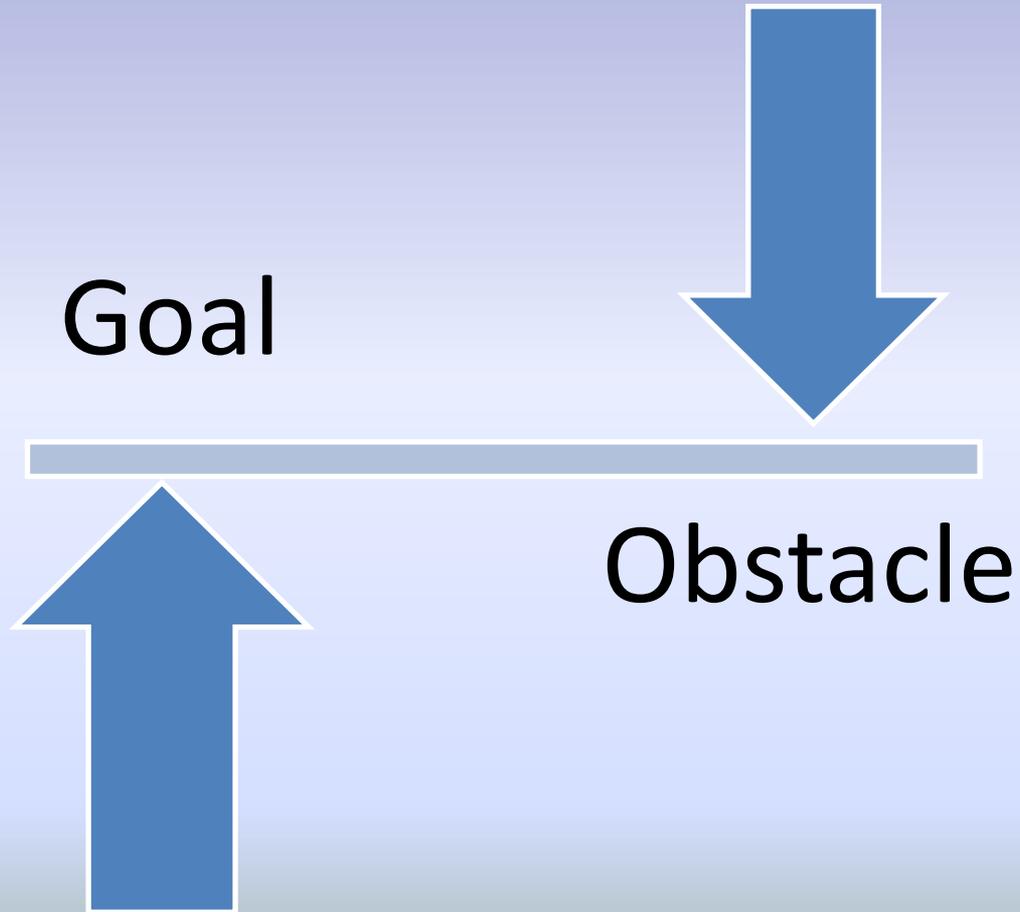
On one
hand
Goal



Behavior

On the other
hand

Find the Obstacle



Checking Our Biases

- How do you react when confronted with a client situation that does not fit your expectations?
- Does the situation provoke feelings of anxiety and discomfort?

On the One Hand

- “So it sounds like **on one hand** you are saying that it’s very important to you to wait until you are ready, and yet **on the other hand**, a part of you would like to have a baby now? Do I have that right?”
- “**On the one hand** you would really like to finish school before you become a parent yet **on the other hand** it’s hard to be consistent with your birth control...”

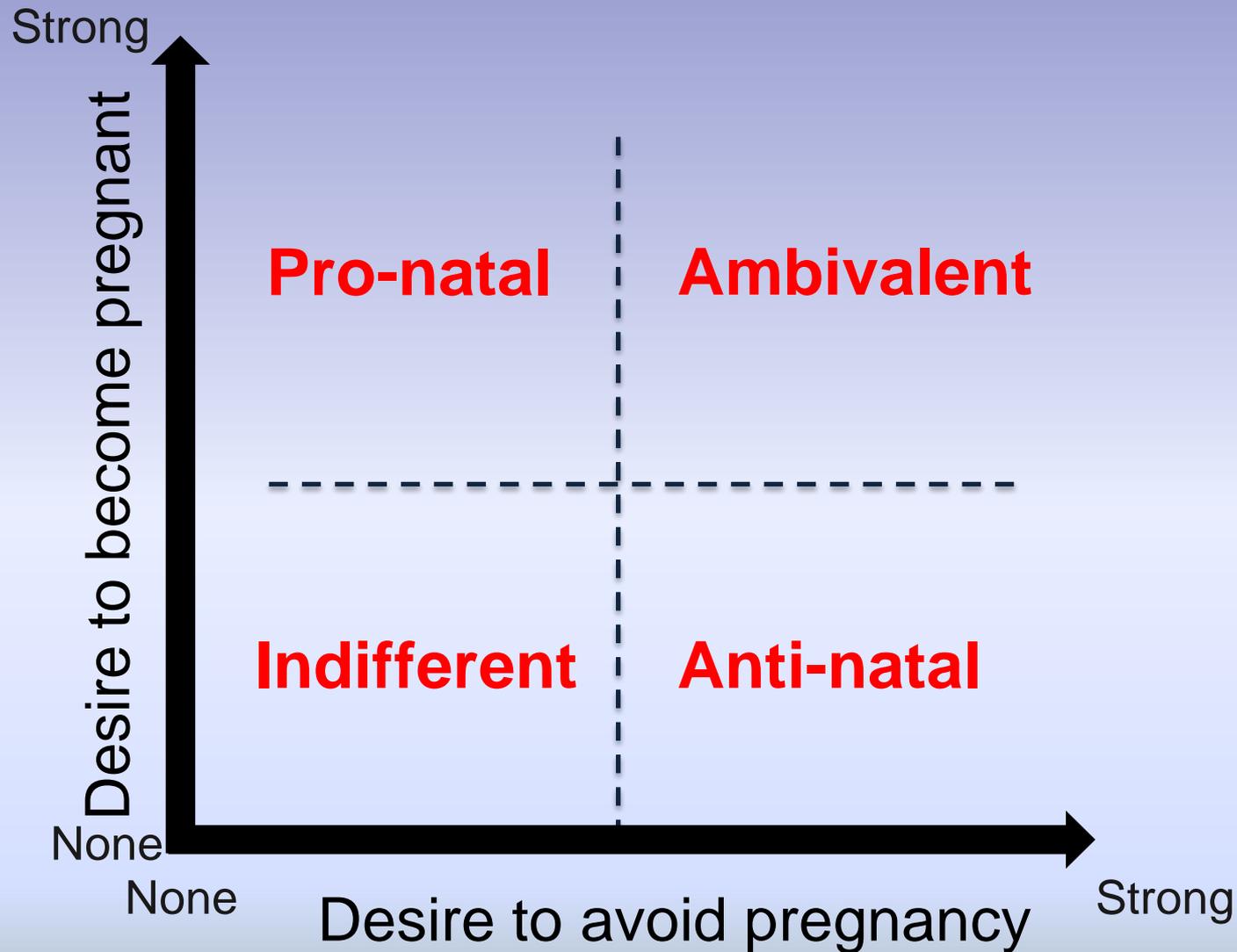
pause for a reply

Obstacles

Ambivalence or...?

- Wants to please or hold onto a mate
- Reassurance that they are fertile

Desires May be Ambivalent or Indifferent



How frequently should reproductive goals be addressed in the clinical setting?

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