



# Engaging Challenging Adolescents

presentation by Margaret Ross

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## An oxymoron by design. . . .

Adolescents are all challenging in some way or another. . . I think as adults when we use this oxymoron we mean. . . adolescents that don't do what we want them to do!  
That's when I use it anyway. . . . .



So how do you get this.....





help!



help!

To do what you want...

engage with you so that you can change him  
or her for the better!



I have spent a large part of my working life

Having adolescents SENT to me.

Which is why I always carry a wand..

It doesn't work, but makes ME feel better!



# What happens in the adolescent head

While you are trying to engage them, particularly if they have been sent to you..things like

- I don't want to be separated out from the crowd
- I want to be different but in exactly the same way as my peers!
- What does this old dude want?
- I am not changing
- This is just another Dick in a long line of Dicks!



Given my methods are all based on...

William Glasser's.....

You cannot change anyone's behaviour but  
your own

But

You can influence the behaviour of others by  
the way you behave



# Behaviour is never random

Therefore the reason that students behaviour is challenging is because they want something that they are not getting, if I can fill that need they will engage with me!

I work on the 90% plus 50% theory  
Unfortunately there isn't a 100% option!



# Glasser on Needs

survival

love  
and  
belonging

freedom

fun

power



# Talk to the person next to you . .

- What do you think your greatest need is at this time in your life?
- How do you know?
- What do you do to meet it?
- Sometimes your needs get in the way and clash with others needs
- For example if you have a high need for L & B being ignored hurts!



# The most challenging students ...

In my experience fall into the following

- Love and Belonging
- Freedom
- Power

Give them what they want and it's all sweet!

(Make sure you give the right one!)



# To give you an example of the difference

between these 3 let's look at wagging...

- Love and belongings students wag and don't leave the school grounds
- Freedom students wag and head down the centre
- Power students don't wag but every teacher wishes they would!



# So what's the point of engagement?

For me the interview is usually to assist the student to:

- Show some concern about what they are doing
- Take control
- Question and evaluate what they are doing
- Move forward
- Extend themselves beyond
- Take risks
- Essentially CHANGE



# Change is the hardest thing of all in life

Turn to the person next to you and tell them why You haven't stuck to your New Years Resolution; You know

- Exercised regularly
- Lost weight
- Phoned your mother regularly
- Eat only healthy foods



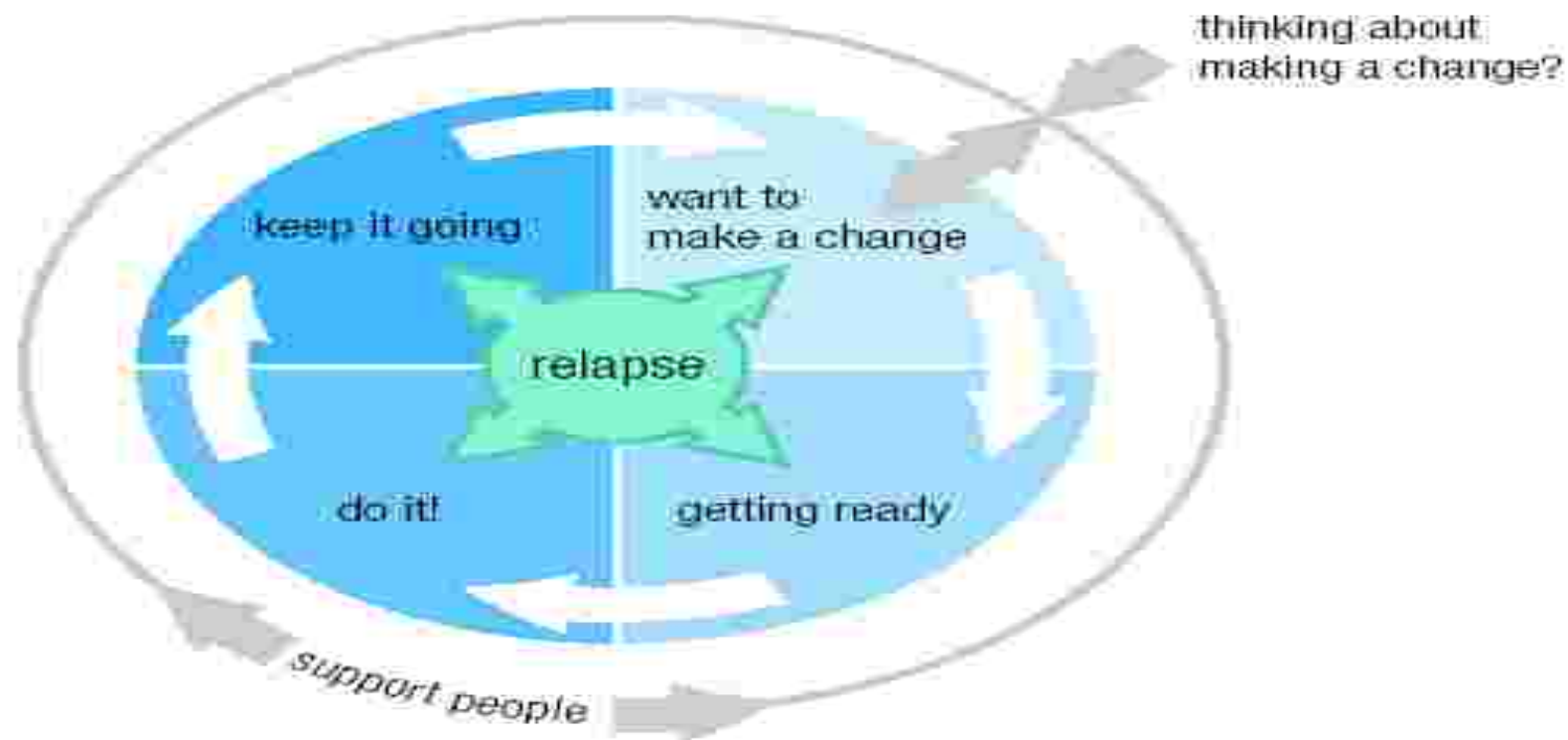
# So that was hard eh?

Tell a complete stranger about the thing that you are the most guarded/embarrassed about!!

How can you stack the odds in your favour?



# Circle of Behaviour Change



# When I am interviewing all adolescents

I have this circle in my head

To get them on may take time but if they are  
not on

**THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE**



# An idea...

- The mad professor
- Hi this is me
- Direct question
- Why do you think you are seeing me?
- What is going to be really good about seeing me
- What is going to be crap or challenging?



# The mad professor

This breaks the ice of a sometimes tense, difficult, unnatural situation. Teachers have great skill in this area. It is a nothing statement showing you are a kindly trustworthy but mad professor! This throws people off guard!

E.G. “What is that wind like! I just about got blown away driving here this morning, I am looking forward to a bit of calm weather are you?”

(Don't wait for answer)



# Hi this is me...

So Sarah I'm Margaret I have been a teacher for 30 years, I am from London originally but I have lived in New Zealand for over 20 years so I support the All Blacks now (you don't have to tell the truth!).

My job now is to interview young adults who have been sent to me, and I guess you must be one of them!



# Direct question

- So why do you think you are here?  
(wait)
- What sort of answers do you get?



# Shall we make something up?

What about...

- You said fuck in class
- You refused to do any work

(I am not going away...engage with me!)



# What do you think is going to be

- Good about seeing me?

Nothing

- What is going to be crap?

Everything

Cool I can live with that, I can do nothing and everything so lets get on with it.



# The purpose of the interview is...

For the adolescent to feel uncomfortable about what they are doing (in my case).

I am not trying to encourage them to like me, I am trying to encourage them to engage with me.

With adolescents 'intrigue' is far more engaging than NICE!



# Talk the person next to you . . .

What are your thoughts on ‘intrigue’?

Why is it harder to be intriguing than nice?

Why is it hard to create discomfort?

It is important to remember that change comes from concern NOT comfort! If that is what your engagement is about start as you mean to carry on. Adolescents will value your honesty in the long run!



Thanks and Good Luck

