

## **“Service To Make A Difference”**

The trainer asked our group, “Do you feel you are making a difference?” As I looked around the room, I was quite surprised at the few hands that were raised. It was interesting to hear thoughts and explanations from my co-workers. Many people expressed feelings of being overwhelmed with their workload, tired of dealing with abusive clients and stressed, as though their daily tasks meant very little to the clients at all. As for the workers that raised their hands, they felt they made a difference through their interactions and communication with clients, but in the same breath felt it just wasn’t enough.

The trainer listened to all the comments and then stated a simple fact, “we all have the capability of making a difference, and we do so on a daily basis by providing services to our clients.” I looked around to find many of the workers were nodding their heads in agreement. She then introduced Tim Gard’s video entitled, “Interviewing With Style.”

Tim, a former eligibility worker, captured the audience with his humor and role play. He discussed the importance of workers paying attention to how they communicate with clients and how to modify their style and change their words especially during the interview. He mentioned that we have our own language and use a lot of jargon in the DSS world and no matter how many times we say something to our clients, they may or may not understand what we mean. For example, having a discussion with a client about income and using the words “gross” and “net.”

The training video talked about the bell curve and how a woman named “Tish” was definitely on one end of the curve. According to her, every client she came across was a liar and she always assumed the worse. Many of us began to chat and vowed never to be like “Tish.” There were some people in the group that were brave enough to admit, that they at one point felt that way, and may have come across, as her evil twin. It seemed to be a consensus among the workers around the room that everyone walking through the door is not a liar and that every client should be handled differently.

Overall, the video had a great impact on many of us in the training. We had the opportunity to witness other DSS workers from another state that had the same concerns, feelings and stress that we had, and as funny as it may sound, it was refreshing to know that these were people that we could relate to. We left feeling energized and ready to incorporate some of the new thoughts and ideas that were just discussed. In fact, later that day, I overheard several of my co-workers on the phone with clients using the phrase from the video “maximum benefit allowance.” Tim talked about using this phrase when dealing with difficult clients that were having a hard time with complying with certain requests. Low and behold it works, clients are less argumentative and willingly provide the information you need!

Thinking back from the day of the training until now, clearly some things have changed, definitely for the better. Workers are still using some of the buzz words or phrases from the training and mini conversations are taking place regarding attitudes and clients. Do we still have some difficult clients— absolutely, but now we are thinking about other ways in which to approach the situation to have a different outcome.

The most important thing is at the end of the day, you have done your best. Tim Gard mentioned in the video, that even after he changed careers the one thing he still remembers is how he made a difference by going an extra step. So after all of this has been said and done, the million dollar question is ..... “Do you make a difference?”

From the desk of Dana Anderson-”Stormy D”

