



Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) Virtual Group

Ambi Daniel



As the pandemic continues, we are seeing an increase in use and so many unsure of how to support people they love. Most of us are here because we have been on this journey or are newly realizing that we can make an impact to support our loved one in their addiction and recovery. Our 1pm Tuesday Zoom will be fully focused on using the CRAFT method for us to work through.

CRAFT was created by Dr. Robert Meyers to help family members with 3 key goals:

1. Help someone reduce their use
2. Help get a loved one to treatment/other recovery program
3. To increase wellness and decrease stress for the whole family

Research shows that individuals who have the opportunity to read his book are able to engage these 3 goals with a 40% success rate. When we add in person community and family training, this success rate goes up to 70%. Seventy Percent. Take a second and go back to those 3 key goals.....and go back to 70%. Those are some pretty amazing odds. When we love someone, we are pretty powerful warriors and maybe we too, can be in that 70%

As loved ones, we have a unique experience and with that a unique expertise. We know them, we know their why, we can see behaviors, actions, and their use a mile away. We can use this expertise to help move someone into their recovery journey. At the same time, when we've been fighting so hard, we also know that our wellness takes a hit and that this family journey is a delicate balance between our fight for them and our fight for our own wellness. CRAFT gives us an amazing set of tools that tackles both.

Each week we will move through a different CRAFT tool with discussion, practice, healing, and most importantly community. We are not alone. I'll share our first exploration with you and some of the lightbulb moments from our zoom meeting below. **Next, on 5/19, we are going to focus on enabling, its role in our why,**

how we can shift from it, and the purpose it serves, before delving into the second half of our behavioral assessment chart.

I have to tell you my heart left the Zoom full of love for our family warriors and in awe of how amazing the insight and the journey is for this group. We welcome anyone to join us for our next explorations.

You can connect with us through this zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/507054277>

You can also join us in our closed Facebook group for regular tools, discussion topics, resources, and hope here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/3910803405604230/>

This class is specifically for those who are engaging with personal loved ones in their recovery process.





Behavioral Assessment of a Loved One's Using Behavior

Ambi Daniel

This week we started with sharing what we hope to get from this group. Many of us could relate to the struggle of balancing helping someone be ok, and being ok. We want to be ok, we want our loved ones to be ok, we want to balance the world to help others, while having our own escape too. We wanted to have a place where we could learn how to do things differently, because right now things are just not working the way we think they should. We could all relate to the challenge of how hard it is to help someone drive their life....when really, no one responds well to a backseat driver. Yet.... It's funny....we still tell them there is a car right in front of them anyway :)



"Watch out! It's right in front of your, I don't trust that you see it!"

Recovery is not rocket science. Really it's not....ask a 5 year old, "What does a responsible adult do?" They seriously can pretty much hit that nail on the head. The challenge isn't knowing, it's about practicing and living it. You may have heard me share this, but it's helpful for me to remember this and I share it often!

I asked my Godson this when he was 6-years old, and he said:

"Mom has to go to work, play with me, take me to the Red Store (That's Target)...." btw...Dad doesn't come into the description...."She has to make me dinner, clean the house, take me to school....etc., etc." This translates to go to work/responsibilities/chores/fun time etc. If you ask about bed time, he'll tell you why it's important to sleep before school too! The biggest thing he was missing was mom's socialization with friends. At this age, his primary social time is family....but he does already get it. It was soon after we had this conversation, still at this age, when I took him to the playground, that he first wanted to go play with "the kid with bubbles" and not his Godmother.....shattered my heart into a million pieces. For the record, I'm the

reason there were even bubbles to share! PS. His dad is amazing, and a wonderful, responsible adult, I can attest to that :P

The moral of the story is, for the most part, we do know what we have to do. Our loved ones know they have to stop using, go to treatment, get a job, take care of their kids, do chores, have a social life, exercise, sleep etc. And yet, many of us struggle with feeling like we have to tell them they need to do these things. CRAFT teaches us that we can support our loved ones into engaging in these recovery pieces by helping them build their own plan, invite them to options, and support the good and the bad choices, while seeing the “why” and seeing progress.

A couple of us shared the power in letting go of that responsibility to drive their recovery for them, while participating as true support. It was almost as if “treating them like an adult” shifted our stress. Many of us know the idea of treating people as “resources,” that individually we are the experts of our own lives. When we do this, we relieve ourselves of quite a responsibility while letting our loved ones truly practice “dignity of risk and right to fail.” Our loved ones get to be in charge of their journey and learn through their experiences, even when we see the collision course staring at them.



“Shhhhhh, I’m adulting.”

As family members, we do have an expertise in what’s going on. We know about the using behavior and the pieces that surround it. This week we practiced using a CRAFT behavioral assessment chart to explore what we know about our loved one’s using behavior. The chart gives us the opportunity to practice openness to their “why” and also to develop ways we can engage a person differently and more successfully taking these pieces into consideration. Through this our group came up with really fantastic ah ha moments and a couple changes in our actions at this point already.

We focused on 3 areas of the assessment with our conversation; The Drinking/Using Behavior, Internal Triggers, and External Triggers. With permission, I’d like to share some of our light bulb moments:

- When thinking about who our loved ones are using with, we can understand that it’s with people who are non-judgmental, providing support for their actions, and that there is a safety net with them.
- When thinking about where our loved ones use, it’s often a place they feel safe, can avoid us, or is fun. We also said, we could use this information to think about how to break a pattern of where.
- Focusing on when they are using, we could see that for some, it was all the time, others, during times of increased stress or higher responsibility, activities such as funerals, when the house is empty so use can be hidden, weekends, at night when others are sleeping, when things are far from normal, during social isolation.

- What are they thinking right before using....might be, “I need an escape, relief”, “I deserve this”, “She’s not coming over”, “This is normal”, “I hope I have enough to forget my problems”, “I’m gonna get loaded.”
- Before using, we think our loved ones might feel angry, overwhelmed, flooded with negative emotions, want to numb, anxiety, anticipation, excitement, boredom, stressed, afraid
- We talked about what, how much, and how long using lasts

Through this we were able to empathize with why the use happens, the reality is using serves a purpose. We reviewed Terrence Gorski’s theory that as someone goes through to the last few warning signs and phases of relapse one of 3 things may happen:

- They will use
- Deal with significant mental health/”go crazy”
- Or attempt/complete suicide

Taking all of this into consideration we were able to remember that using serves a purpose and is not always the worst evil. We can practice understanding, while acknowledging this is still not ok. We looked at recognizing they don’t feel ok and we know they are not ok. We do not have to backseat drive this. This exploration also gives us the opportunity to think about how we could interact differently that may make a difference:

- Choose a time they are more likely to be sober to talk to them.
- Remember that they are struggling.
- Remember that the little steps are some of the big ones.
- Maybe we can help break a pattern by, for example, changing a location.
- Maybe we can do something with them to keep them away from using a little longer.
- If I can remember they are not ok, I can be more patient and less angry.
- What they are expecting and what we are expecting might be different.
- I don’t have to focus on them sometimes, I can choose to take a break from it
- My wellness is in my control, their use is not.
- We might be enabling.....which leads us to....

Next week we are continuing with the behavioral assessment charting and how it impacts how we can engage differently! Join us at 1:00 on Tuesday 5/12 by clicking on the zoom link above to learn more!



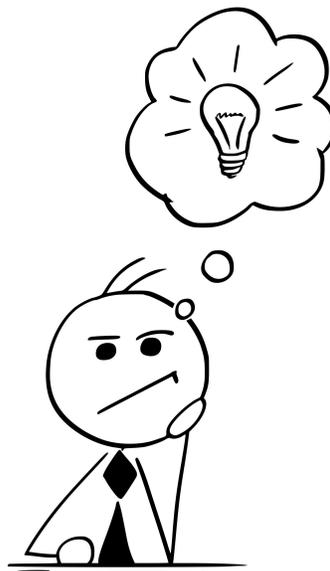


The Right Support

Ambi Daniel

In this week's CRAFT Zoom, we focused on the Positive Consequences section of the behavioral assessment chart. This part looks at the using behavior connected to positive results for our loved ones. The reality is, using serves a purpose. When we looked at the positive results of who they use with, when, they use, the thoughts, and the feelings we were reminded very quickly, that our loved ones were not ok, and they were using as part of a cycle of feeling better and not being ok. Through this discussion we hit on some really amazing topics related to our journey that happens often concurrently with theirs.

1. Sometimes we are not the "right support." Sometimes we are not and cannot walk this journey with them.... we are there.....but it's on a side road watching on, cheering when we can, instead of sharing a lane.
2. There is a balance of engaging and disengaging and we can choose both out of the same intense love.
3. Guilt and potential guilt drive us to make choices in our journey in how we engage and disengage, as well as how we relieve ourselves of the responsibility of "right support."
4. Our wellness and inner child are important.



"Hey there brain...what do you think about that?"

One of the parts of my own journey that I share is I'm not always the right support. Sometimes I am not practicing empathy, because I really am not walking with my loved ones. Sometimes their expectations of how I should be does not align with what I'm willing to do, or what is healthy for me. It is not my job to drive their recovery. Now I can know this and say this, and much of the time it is easy to even practice this, for me

buuuuuut as many related....it's not always easy to maintain this release of responsibility. And for as much as I can succeed it in, it's easy to slip back in.

When the concept of "sometimes we are not the right support," because the person's needs may require other interventions was brought up, it was amazing to see and feel the relief many felt.... even through our zoom screens. At the same time, it only took about 10 minutes for us to assume a large part of that responsibility again. I warned the group it would, and when it happened, I said ok,.... "Now why do we do that?"



*"I will give myself the Grace, to remember I am not always the right support.
I will let myself feel the relief in knowing it doesn't have to be me."*

Through this we talked about guilt and shame and how it drives us and pushes us to try to be more that we are supposed to be or capable of being. The idea that the person's failure is connected to our ability becomes really powerful. The idea that we should have been able to do more. The what ifs. Society has taught us that when we love someone we have to be there for them, and if we aren't or we choose not to, we might not be good people... and if you're a parent in the situation... society has said, parents are there to make everything better, be the protector and the hero. One of the things we are coming to terms with is through this journey, we spend time not being ok, and in our own journey of recovery. We will not always have the ability or desire, and maybe we shouldn't "be there" because if we are not ok, we are going to be less able to support and less able to handle the challenges what will happen. We can know this...and it often feeds our shame cycle, when really...taking care of our wellness is also an action of love for them too.



*"Shame and Guilt are powerful.
I am a mistake vs. I made a mistake. One can become us."*

There is a balance of engaging and disengaging. There are times we engage our loved ones, and times we disengage with love. I have to tell you; this was the first time I really felt everyone understood what that meant. They knew it didn't mean I'll abandon you, or I'm kicking you out to be alone on this journey. We recognized that disengaging from their journey just meant that we will step back from what we can't handle so we can be there for what we can. And this brought us right back to, sometimes we are not the right support. *Ah relief again...I feel a mantra coming from this! (If you'd like the mantra exercise/article just shoot me an email adaniel@cflrinc.org)*

In the final minutes of this group.... yes, we went a little bit long today...18 minutes to be exact. We looked at this week, how do we want to balance engaging and disengaging. More than one person talked about nurturing their inner child, doing something for themselves that felt good, acknowledging fear and anger, looking at how we are prepared to engage, and remembering our mantras that we worked on a few weeks ago.

We ended as we start, with just a few seconds of calm breathing and centered thinking/meditation. We focused on one thing that we'll do for maybe 2 minutes this week. We focused on letting it be ok that sometimes we are not the right support, and that our journey is one of wellness too.



*"We share this incredible journey with so many others.
Our wellness is as important as our love for them."*

Next week we are going to look at understanding enabling, what it is, what it means for our loved ones, and maybe in a bigger impact what it means for us. Enabling has become a stigmatized dirty shame word. But what if I told you, the reason it happens comes from a logical reasonable place, and when we give light to this, we can decide to change the behavior...or choose to keep it knowing that it is part of our wellness. **Join us at 1:00 on Tuesday 5/19 by clicking the zoom link above to learn more!**



Enabling; a Dirty Word, with a Powerful, Positive Impact

Ambi Daniel

This week in our CRAFT ZOOM (see below for information to join), we began our journey into understanding enabling. It serves such an important purpose, and at the same time, it has become such a stigmatized dirty word. We hear loved ones being called “enablers” because they made a choice that others perceive as wrong, or because that choice may be making it easier for a person to continue their use. When I bring up the option of exploring enabling, many family members hang their head and say, “Oh yeah...that’s me, I’m an enabler.” And it breaks my heart every time.

What this response tells me is that they haven’t had the opportunity to understand where enabling comes from and the purpose behind it. Dr. Robert Meyers, the creator of Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT), shared his thoughts on this in our training. He defined enabling as, “The unintentional support of a negative behavior.” And I love this. How many of us actually want to support a negative behavior? The answer is none. No parent, or loved one, who wants to help a person succeed in recovery, *wants* to support the negative behavior. That said, enabling is the product of something that is monumentally important, it’s only half the story.

If we looked up “enable” in a dictionary... or Google, because who has a dictionary anymore... it would say something to the effect of “to make possible,” or “to provide means,” or maybe, “to provide an opportunity.” And this is *a part* of enabling. This is the part that many people focus on when they engage in stigmatizing shame language or feelings; the accusation that it’s your fault they continued “xyz.”

The reality is, enabling has little to do with impacting our loved one’s recovery journey. It’s about our journey and the motivation behind it. Ready for the key to why we do it?

**When we “unintentionally support the negative behavior of a loved one,”
we are receiving an important benefit.**



“Holding your hands, my strength of body has to carry mine first.”

Actions in general are about the benefit of the person doing the act. If I buy someone a gift, my benefit is feeling good and appreciated. If I give my begging dogs treats, my benefit is the joy I feel from their excitement. If I cleaned for someone, I feel purpose. If I hug you, especially after this hug free COVID time, I’ll feel comfort and joy....and get a boost of oxytocin! If I did something like commit murder, I might feel power or a thrill.

Feeling good, joy, purpose, comfort, power, a thrill. Take away the acts, most human beings in the world can relate to wanting to feel these things... and no, by the way, I’m not considering murder, I enjoy the power and thrill of beating my husband at chess or tennis! Many times, people don’t always have healthy ways to achieve these benefits.



“Even when I do for others, I place a coin in my purse.”

Now let’s look at this with some substance use issues:

What is the benefit to the wife who buys the bottle of wine for the alcoholic? Why would a dad give his son struggling with heroin, \$25? Why would a mom drive her daughter to their dealer? Why would a sister give her brother keys to her car when she knows he’ll drink and use marijuana? What’s the benefit to the wife, dad, mom, and sister? These are all real types of scenarios that I’ve encountered multiple times in my career.

The wives buy the wine so the husband won't buy liquor. Wine keeps the peace and she doesn't have to deal with even more significant drunkenness or arguments. The dads know that if he gives \$25, that the son won't steal and use more, or be arrested. For the dads it is about peace of mind, feeling like they made an impact to how much they use and avoiding legal records. The moms drive their children to the dealers so they can sleep at night knowing their loved one is alive. The keys are given so another argument and blow up can be avoided, you might believe how often this is a temper disaster that loved ones want to avoid for their own safety and anxiety. Not to mention, they get a break. The benefit is security, peace of mind, reduction of anxiety, a break... it's about survival for the loved ones.

When we look at it this way, we are helping more than one person survive. It's not just about a person avoiding overdose and death, it's about the security, safety, and mental health of everyone involved... including the family.



“What I need to survive gives me direction to how I can meet our needs.”

This also tells us that sometimes it's important that the loved ones continue the enabling. Take a minute with that statement. They may be unintentionally supporting use or addiction, but very importantly, the reason that enabling happens is that they are actually taking steps for their own wellness, safety, and health. We cannot overlook the importance of this. Our survival is important. In order to take care of the people we love; we have to be ok. On a plane, we put the oxygen mask on ourselves before we put it on the child.

Next time you feel yourself thinking or calling yourself or someone else an “enabler,” I encourage you to think about what it is you or they are really trying to do. There is so much power in recognizing the motivation and benefit, and also remembering, the last thing they want to do is make it easier for their loved one to use. When we start to pay homage to the motivation, we can then start the process to decide if we want to change it, and how do we meet those very important needs that drive it.

Next week 5/26, we were tasked with looking at moving through enabling with a 4-point check. We will continue with this exploration before moving into a very specific **boundary tool** to practice. Join us by clicking on the zoom link above!

CENTER FOR
FAMILY 
AND **RECOVERY**
WHEN THERE'S **HELP**, THERE'S **HOPE**.
