

Discord Dodgeball

Responding to sustain talk and discord

Time

About 30 minutes

Group

6 or more, in two teams

You need

A soft ball, this sheet

Why we stopped saying “resistance”

MI used to call some client behavior “resistance.” The word causes problems:

- It labels the person and can bring judgment or stigma.
- It says more about the helper than the person being helped.
- It doesn’t point to a next step.

Newer MI splits it into two ideas, sustain talk and discord. Smaller pieces are easier to understand, and easier to meet with empathy.

Sustain talk

Arguments for keeping things as they are. It is often the easiest, default path, so it shows up in everyone’s talk, including ours. When we’re not sure how to work with it, frustration can build into discord.

Discord

Strain in the working relationship between helper and client: arguing, interrupting, discounting, ignoring. Repairing it is the helper’s part of the work.

Try it 5 minutes

Write down two things you often hear from clients that sound like sustain talk, and two that sound like discord.

Sustain talk

Discord

Ways to respond

Sustain talk: anything a person says that favors keeping things as they are. Pick a response, then jot an example in your own words.

Straight reflection

Amplified reflection

Double-sided reflection

Reframing

Agreeing with a twist

Coming alongside

Emphasizing autonomy

How to play

- 1 Split the group into two teams.
- 2 Teams take turns throwing and catching the ball.
- 3 The throwing team says a line of sustain talk or discord from their worksheet.
- 4 The catching team answers with one of the responses above (or the one written on the ball).