Assessing the Impacts of Engaged Research and Its Use

Session 6: Organizational Conditions and Capacities for Trust Building

Allison Metz, Ph.D.
School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Systems Level Insights for Evidence Use

- Implementation and evidence use efforts often focus on what we can see – tangible events such as trainings, data collection activities, and meetings.

- Mental models affect the structures we put in place, the way we interpret information and interact with others, the relationships we form, and how we make decisions and address power differentials.

https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/
Case Example

Implementation stakeholders and community partners involved in initiative to expand evidence-based prevention services in child welfare were asked:

- What do we need to achieve transformational change?
- What might hinder our ability to achieve such change?
What do we need to do as a team to focus on the bottom of the triangle (mental models) and achieve transformational change?

Build relationships within the group
- Build trust so that we can be vulnerable with one another (which is where courage lives)

Build Trust within the group
- Be open to each other's perspectives and ideas as we may have different roles in working with families
- Be open to having our own mental models pointed out to us
- Be vulnerable and share our mental models with each other

Be self reflective about our own mental models
- Learn from people who experienced the system

Be open to new ideas and new ways of being.

Leave room for laughter and joy
- Give ourselves time, not rush into decision making
- Complete an exercise to identify shared values and beliefs

Communicate openly

Be open and curious

Bring wonder

Ensure a safe space to for sharing
- Learn to laugh and create a safe space

Open communication

Established shared values

Be committed to a vision for why we want to create change

Be willing to be patient, transformational change takes time
What might hinder our ability to focus on the bottom of the triangle (mental models)?

- Lack of information about models
- Lack of being seen - person centered design versus organizationally centered design
- Lack of engagement with people who experience our system.
- Rush to making decisions
- Lack of buy-in to the process
- Competing demands
- Desire to produce results quickly
- Lack of money
- Fear of doing things differently
- Fear of being vulnerable
- Lack of trust
  - Lack of trust (not just within the group) but are afraid of what maybe revealed about ourselves that we didn’t know about ourselves; we do not view the room as a safe space; we still see the world as it is and do not see change
  - Assuming that, although the end goal might be the same, your reasons/beliefs are the same as everyone else (when that might not be true)
- Not being open to others ideas
  - Not listening to voices of those most impacted by the transformational change
  - Not listening to those most impacted for the transformational change

FEAR
- Resistance to change; fear of cost and time
- Conflicting policies, procedures, etc.
- Different expectations regarding family success
- How big and many the problems some families face
- Thinking about systems reform rather than systems transformation
Theoretical Underpinnings

• *Relational cohesion theory* – relationships that emerge from **positive affective experiences** are valuable and contribute to trusting relationships as well as resilience and commitment in the face of challenges

• *Relational cultural theory* – the **ability to understand the perspective of others** (i.e., empathy) increases a sense of mutual interdependence and leads to positive affective response
Building Capacity for Implementation & Evidence Use

- Use of **specific trust building strategies** in child welfare agency to increase empathy and create space to share emotional response to the work

- **Positive affective responses** by team members to the focus on trust building

- Increased trust and psychological safety, which promoted a culture of learning

- Increases in motivation, commitment and **capability** to use evidence and support implementation
Building Capacity for Implementation & Evidence Use

Use of specific trust building strategies in child welfare agency to increase empathy and create space to share emotional response to the work

Positive affective responses by team members to the focus on trust building

Increased trust and psychological safety, which promoted a culture of learning

Increases in motivation, commitment and capability to use evidence and support implementation

Use of specific skills and competencies, (relationship building, co-learning, tailoring) to support use of implementation science within private foundation

Positive affective responses from funding partners

Increased sense of psychological safety, openness to learning, trust, and authentic partnership

Increases in perceived acceptability, appropriateness, and feasibility of evidence use and implementation science

Funding demonstrated sustainable use of evidence-based implementation strategies
Organizational Conditions and Capacities for Building Trust for Evidence Use

• Positive affective experiences on teams can contribute to greater motivation and capability for evidence use and implementation in the long term.

• Mechanisms for change include psychological safety, openness to learning and trusting relationships, moderated by emotional experience.

• Positive affective responses can be triggered by implementation and research partners using a specific set of relationship building, engagement and co-creation skills.

• Positive affective responses seem particularly important when organizational culture values speed and short-term results at the expense of evidence use and implementation quality.


• FSG Water of Systems Change
  