



Solution-focused communication skills training in sickness absence counselling of sick-listed workers without an employment contract

Development and implementation

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EUMASS 2018



Conflict of interest

- None to declare
- Joint team effort of sickness absence counsellors, social insurance physicians, educational department, and many other colleagues



Background (1)

- Adequate communication skills essential for good care
- Sick-listed workers without permanent employment relationship:
 - higher risk for prolonged work disability
 - important to use the most appropriate communication strategies in sickness absence counselling
- Social Security Institute has role of employer

Background (2)

- New process starting January 2019
- Short period of sickness absence



Over
300.000
people/year
report sick



Self-reported digital
questionnaire and
triage tool



Sickness absence
counsellor



Sickness absence
counsellor



Social insurance
physician

Aim

- Develop a training course in solution-focused communication for sickness absence counsellors of the Social Security Institute (SSI) in the Netherlands, who assist sick-listed workers without an employment contract in their return to work process



Methods

Intervention Mapping*

- Interviews / expert opinion
- Literature search
- Pilot test and evaluation
- Development in cooperation with experts:
 - Communication
 - Education
 - Practice



* Bartholomew, Parcel, et al., 2009

Results – needs



- Early start of sickness absence counselling
- Counselling only by telephone
- Adhere to (new) privacy/data protection regulation
- Focus on mindset and motivation
- Do not discuss medical situation
- Free from judgement

Results - literature

Motivational Interviewing Improves Sustainable Return to Work in Injured Workers After Rehabilitation: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial

Douglas P. Gross, PhD, BScPT, Joanne Park, PhD, MA, BScOT, Fahreen Rayani, MA, BSc Spec Psychology, Colleen M. Norris, PhD, MScN, BScN, Shaniff F Small, PhD, MScOT, BScOT

PlumX Metrics

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2017.06.003>

Check for updates

J Occup Rehabil
DOI 10.1007/s10926-017-9731-0

Use of Motivational Interviewing to Improve Return-to-work and Work-related Outcomes: A Review

Kathryn M. Page (a1) and Irina Tchernitskaya (a1)
<https://doi.org/10.1017/jrc.2014.5> Published online: 10 June 2014

Introducing Motivational Interviewing in a Sickness Insurance Context: Translation and Implementation Challenges

Christian Ståhl^{1,3} · Maria Gustavsson²

Hoving, EUMASS 2016: Motivational interviewing by professionals working in the field of disability evaluation: a qualitative study

Results – objectives

- Sickness absence counsellors apply solution-focused strategies, by which they promote self-regulation and changes in mindset regarding return to work, in sick-listed workers without an employment contract

- Non-judgemental listening
- Ask questions in such a way that the worker finds answers
- No exploration of (medical) problems or history



Old versus new approach

Problem-focused

- What's wrong and how to fix it
- What does the worker want to lose
- Weaknesses
- Coach is advising expert
- Goal is solving problems

Solution-focused

- What's right and how to expand it
- What does the worker want, which goals
- Strengths
- Coach asks questions and is co-expert
- Goal is changing thoughts, acts, feelings

Results – methods and strategies

Effective training strategies for teaching communication skills to physicians: An overview of systematic reviews

[Marianne Berkhof](#), [H. Jolanda van Rijssen](#), [Antonius J.M. Schellart](#), [Johannes R. Anema](#), [Allard J. van der Beek](#)

Results

Twelve systematic reviews on communication skills training focused on specific training strategies, whereas other strategies. Training programmes were effective if they focused on practising skills. The best training strategy was small group discussions.

- E-learning
- Reader
- Conversation card
- Role-play with feedback
- On site learning
- Colleagues at the same office to turn to for questions

Solution-focused communication skills training

Results – pilot test

■ Customer satisfaction

Satisfaction with:	All groups	Sickness absence counsellors
Possibility to tell your story	7,5	7,5
Asking of questions	7,2	7,2
Clarity	7,4	7,4
Treatment during communication	7,6	7,6
Not having to repeat yourself	7,0	7,0
Usability of answers	7,3	7,2
Expertise	7,3	7,3
N	1116	458

Conclusions

- Practical relevance and feasibility of a solution-focused communication skills training for sickness absence counsellors of the SSI is promising
- Implementation in Dutch SSI in January 2019 for ±200 sickness absence counselors
- Possible to tailor solution-focused communication to specific practices
- Also for other professionals in field of work and health

Contact information



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