

Closing The Gap: Connecting With Parents on Multiple Levels

An Introduction to Issues Related to
Parent-Teacher Relationships

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What Type of Relationship Should Exist Between Parents and Teachers?

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- “mutually respectful and supportive” (Pendergast & Bahr, 2006)
- “open communication, as well as emotional and academic support” (Pianta, 1999)
- “empathy, warmth, and genuineness” (Motshinig-Pitrik, Cornelius-White, Hoey, & Cornelius-White 2004)
- “mutual acceptance, understanding, trust, respect, and cooperation” (Leitão & Waugh, 2007)

What Makes Parent-Teacher Relationships Unique?

What Makes Parent-Teacher Relationships Unique?

- Power differential
- Boundaries
- Age/generational differences
- Forced interactions/lack of choice
- Socio-economic differences
- Time limited
- *It's personal* - when it involves your kids or your job.

What type of parent do you have difficulty dealing with?

* Fundamental Attribution Error *

Why are Parent-Teacher Relationships Important?

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- It's an important predictor of academic achievement.
 - A positive parent-teacher relationship helps your child feel good about school and be successful.
- It demonstrates to a child that he can trust his teacher.
 - Children that are securely attached to positive role models are able to go out and experience the world with resilience and initiative.
- Children model the type of relationships they see.
 - Studies show that if parents show trust and respect for teachers their children will be more likely to reflect the same.
 - Students learn to trust teachers and can build a positive relationship with them instead of simply seeing them as an authority figure.

Parent-Student-Teacher Relationships

Why are Parent-Teacher Relationships Important?

Research suggests:

- better attendance
- increased time studying
- reduced problem behavior
- higher school satisfaction
- increased motivation
- improved self-esteem
- better grades
- increased enjoyment of the teacher and subject matter
- pay more attention in class

- Many of these outcomes are due to improved student-teacher relationships.

Why are Parent-Teacher Relationships Important?

- Positive parent-teacher-student relationships seem to be particularly protective for children with disabilities, who are 'at-risk' because they are less likely to have the requisite school skills and are more likely to start school with behavior problems, cognitive difficulties or social problems.
- For these children, a positive parent-teacher-student relationship in the early school years can change the trajectory of school experiences, setting them on a path of positive school adjustment and academic achievement.

Why are Parent-Teacher Relationships Important?

- The nature of teacher-student-parent relationships strongly affects student performance, including the decision to drop out of school.
- After accounting for many of the traditional risk factors, research shows that schools with more than 1,500 students, a curriculum that lacks academic rigor for all students, and negative teacher-student-parent relationships can actually “push students out.”
- Much of the research on why students drop out points to negative teacher-student-parent interactions (i.e., teacher disparagement). Likewise, students who stay in school often cite a “good teacher” as one of the most positive elements of their school experience.

What Teacher Traits Increase the Likelihood of Positive Relationships With Parents and Students?

What Teacher Traits Increase the Likelihood of Positive Relationships With Students-Parents?

Engaging teachers are:

- effective communicators
- care about students
- fulfill students' needs for competence, extrinsic rewards, intrinsic interests, social support, and ownership
- strong classroom leaders
- friendly
- understanding
- secure in their role as teacher
- satisfied with their job and their life
- less critical of themselves and their students
- allow students more freedom
- person-centered rather than rule-oriented

What Factors Decrease the Likelihood of Positive Relationships With Students-Parents?

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Teachers Report:

- Lack of time
- Large class size
- Short class duration
- Non-teaching duties
- Mandated curriculum standards
- Focus on school achievement scores
- Teacher's place / responsibilities
- Lack of training
- Lack of training/unprepared
- Unaware of the issues/lack of knowledge
- Fear of making mistakes
- Not knowing what to do
- Fear of overstepping boundaries
- Administration/legal restrictions
- Conflicting with parent views/values

What Factors Decrease the Likelihood of Positive Relationships With Students-Parents?

Teachers versus Counselors

- Teachers are trained to:
 - talk more
 - be directive
 - multi-task
 - correct or fix things
- Counselors are trained to:
 - listen more than they talk
 - avoid giving advice
 - be “with” the client
 - allow the “client” to find his or her own solutions

How Can Teachers Enhance the Quality of Relationships with Their Students-Parents?

How Can Teachers Enhance the Quality of Relationships with Their Students-Parents?

Love and Respect Yourself:

- Be clear on your values and live by them
- Know what triggers you
- Make sure your actions and words are congruent; when you say you'll do something - do it.

Learn About Your Students:

- Show a genuine interest in their lives, their hobbies, sport, family, likes and dislikes.
- Find out what's important to them and respect it.
- Convey these things to parents.
 - Correspondence, phone calls, P-T Conferences

How Can Teachers Enhance the Quality of Relationships with Their Students-Parents?

Appreciate and Acknowledge Your Students and Their Parents:

- Take time to understand the challenges and pressures your students-parents face.
- Understand what makes them tick, why they do what they do.
- Be aware of peer, academic, and home pressures.
- Take time to positively affirm each student every day and each parents at any opportunity.
- Thank them for the little and big things they do.
- Give verbal praise, write notes, give smiles and warm gestures.

How Can Teachers Enhance the Quality of Relationships with Their Students-Parents?

Respect Your Students-Parents:

- Always honor their decisions and never use put downs or sarcasm.
- Enforce rules and give appropriate responsibilities.
 - Never judge.

Be Open With Students:

- Let your them know who you are. Share your thoughts, ideas, challenges and past experiences with them.
- Let them know you are real. Tell them if you are happy, sad, frustrated, anxious, or excited.

How Can Teachers Enhance the Quality of Relationships with Their Students-Parents?

Attending:

- Give a speaker your total, complete, and undivided interest using your body, face, and especially eyes.
- Resist distractions, face the speaker fully, maintain eye contact.
- Use nonverbal behaviors and verbal encouragement to communicate your interest .

How Can Teachers Enhance the Quality of Relationships with Their Students-Parents?

Active Listening:

- Clear your mind.
- Empathize.
- Get inside the speaker's skin.
- Concentrate completely.
- Watch carefully for nonverbal cues.
- Don't just listen, but really hear.
- Ask yourself what the person is really saying.
- Identify underlying feelings, as well as surface content.
- Use your heart, as well as your head, to determine meaning.

How Can Teachers Enhance the Quality of Relationships with Their Students-Parents?

Reflection:

- How are you (over or under) reacting to what is going on?
- What might you be expecting from the student-parent that s/he is either unwilling or unable to do?
- Who does this person remind you of?
- How might you be distorting the way your student appears based on your own projected feelings?
- What needs of yours are not being met in this relationship?
- Which buttons of yours are constantly being pushed by this student-parent?

Specific Actions for Developing Positive Relationships With Students-Parents:

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Show the student-parent he or she matters:

- greet by name, smile
- show an interest by comments and questions
- find something about the most challenging to like or admire and comment positively on qualities and strengths
 - this may position them and their behavior differently
- give regular positive feedback which is specific, genuine, and brief
- show belief, trust, and high expectations
- show that their success and well-being is of concern

Specific Actions for Developing Positive Relationships With Students-Parents:

Show acceptance of the person but not their behavior:

- State what students-parents are expected to do rather than what they shouldn't be doing – information is much easier to hear than an accusation
- Use ' I ' statements rather than 'you' statements which refer to behavior not people
- Offer comfort in distress
- Give choices which give the student some control and promote self efficacy

Specific Actions for Developing Positive Relationships With Students-Parents:

Ask parents their opinions.

- Consider sending out parent surveys.
- Two to three weeks after school starts
- The survey might asks questions such as:
 - What was your child like as a baby?
 - What are your child's strengths and weaknesses?
 - What does your child do in his spare time?
 - How does your child learn best?
 - What is her favorite subject?
- Seeking the advice of parents shows respect and helps gain and sustain their support.

Specific Actions for Developing Positive Relationships With Students-Parents:

Contact parents with good news regularly.

- Make commendation calls or emails regularly.
- Too much time and energy is devoted to negative behaviors.
- Attempt to make these calls weekly during a planning period.
 - Even if it's just one call per week.
 - Helps with Hope/Burn-out.
- Schedule the calls in your planner.

Specific Actions for Developing Positive Relationships With Students-Parents:

What parents say:

- Teachers should get to know my child.
 - Ask my opinion. Listen to it.
 - Understand where I'm coming from.
 - Don't talk down to me.
 - Understand that I'm not comfortable.
 - Remember that I know my child better than they do.
 - Know that I'm doing the best I can.
 - I don't know what they want me to do.
 - I'm embarrassed
 - I feel like a failure.
-
- I dread going up to the school, getting that phone call, facing the teacher, hearing what she says.

Specific Actions for Developing Positive Relationships With Students:

What Students Ask For:

- Interact more, lecture less - emphasize active learning
- Reward student comments and questions with verbal praise
- Be enthusiastic about teaching and passionate about your subject matter
- Lighten up - crack a joke now and then
- Be humble and, when appropriate, self-deprecating
- Make eye contact with each student - without staring, glaring, or flaring
- Be respectful
- When all else fails, smile - students will think you like them and your job

Specific Actions for Developing Positive Relationships With Students:

What Students Ask For:

- Talk as an equal – not talking down to students is good
- It's good to have teachers you can approach, who don't make you feel stupid when you don't know something
- Teachers should walk the talk. They shouldn't expect things from students they aren't prepared to do themselves
- Teachers who don't shout get more respect – though doing it occasionally is OK
- Understanding that students occasionally have problems arise that inadvertently hinder their progress in their courses
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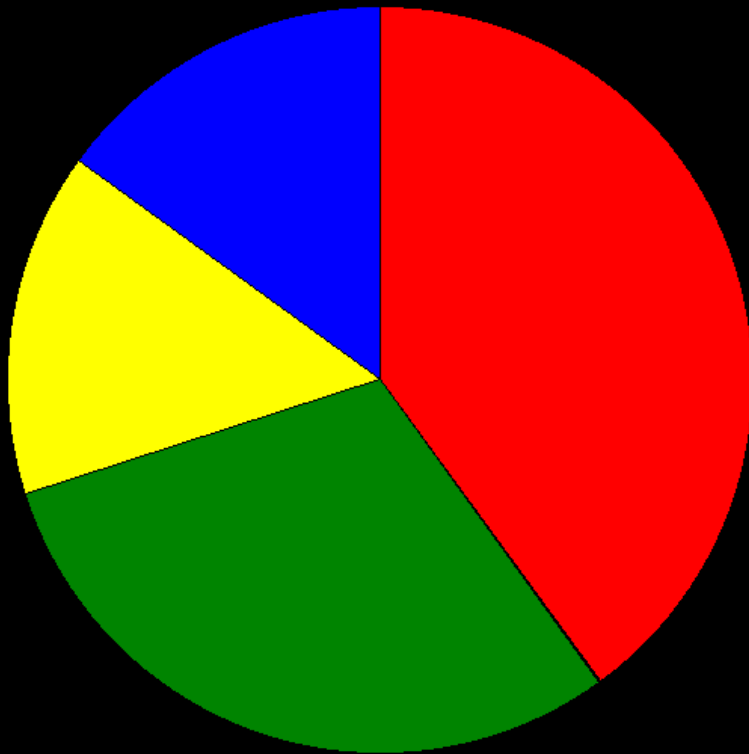
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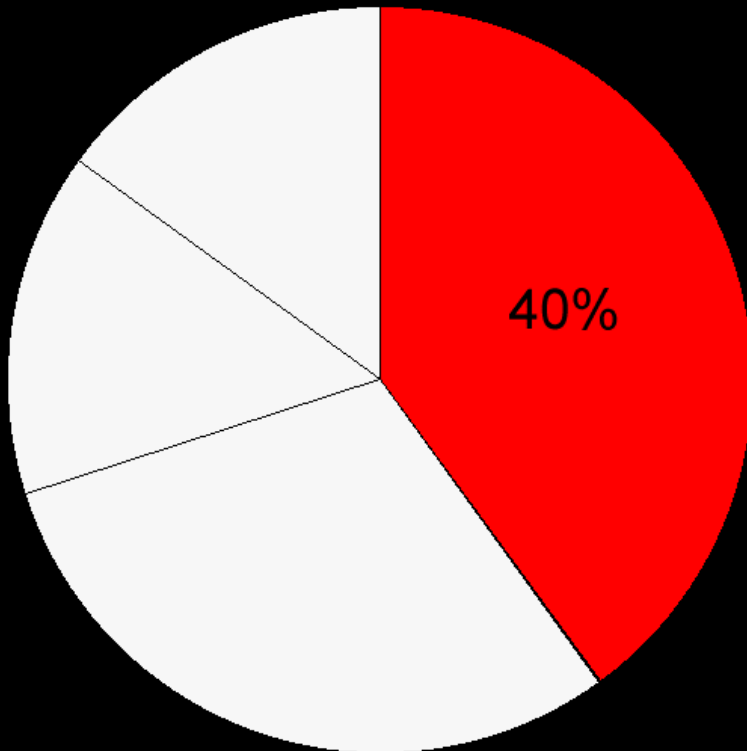
So What Does the Research Suggest?

What Works in Helping People Change



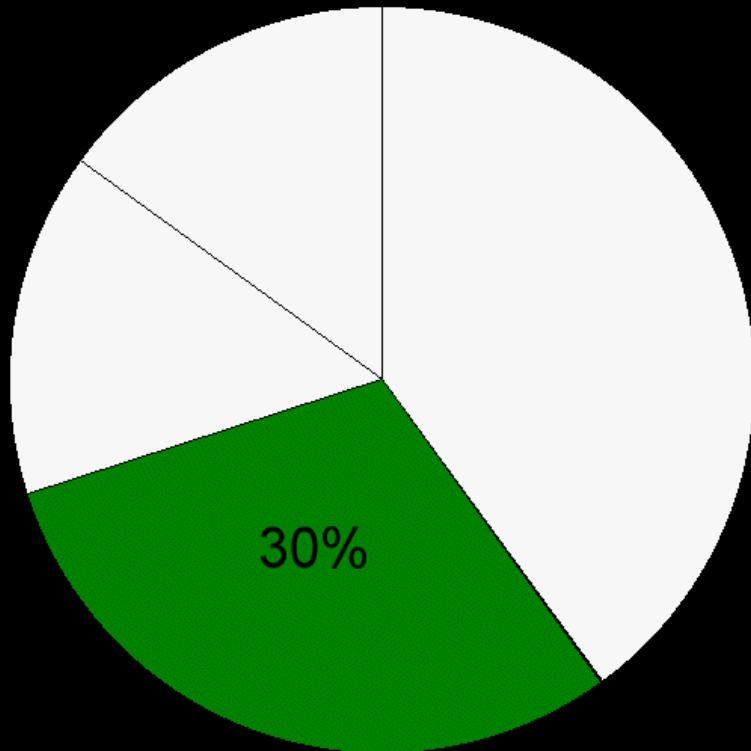
- Intervention *Does Work*
 - 40 years of outcome research on “what works” in helping people change
 - the power of *common factors*
 - *Impossible Clients Experiment*

Client Factors



- 40% Contribution to Successful Change
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Beliefs, Knowledge, Skills, & Abilities
 - Special Interests, Talents, Hobbies
 - Resilience and Coping
 - Personality

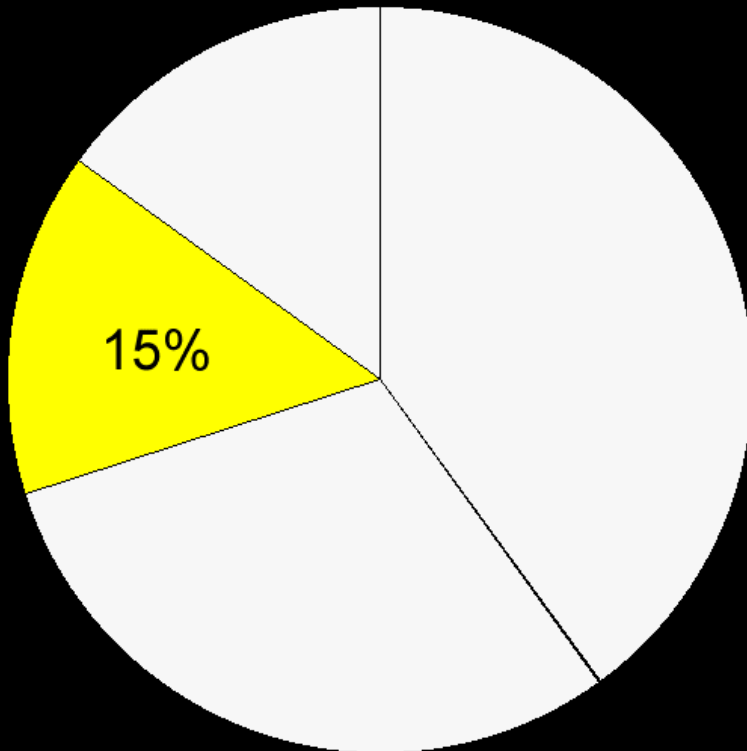
Relationship Factors



■ 30% Contribution to Successful Change

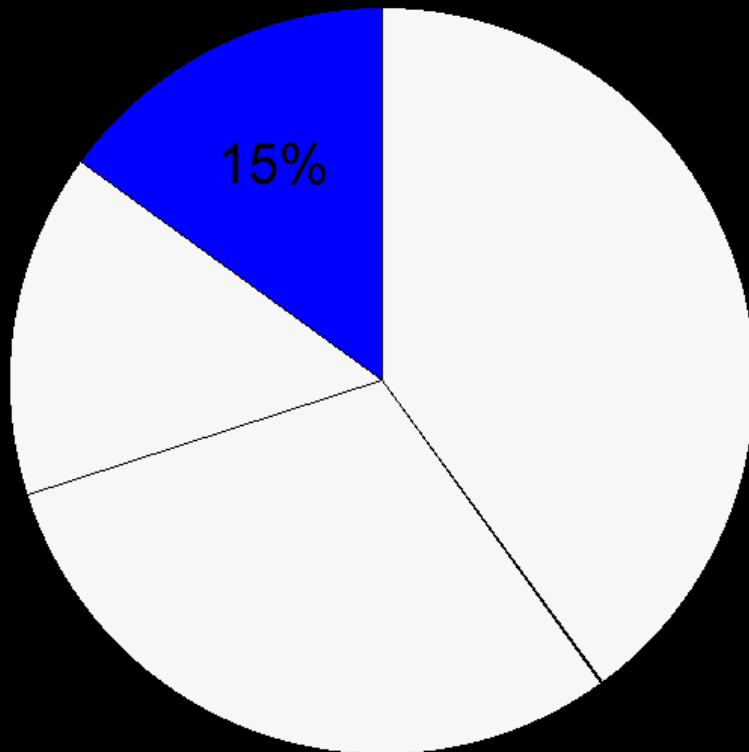
- Connection
- Rapport
- Empathy
- Acceptance
- Encouragement
- Collaboration

Hope Factors



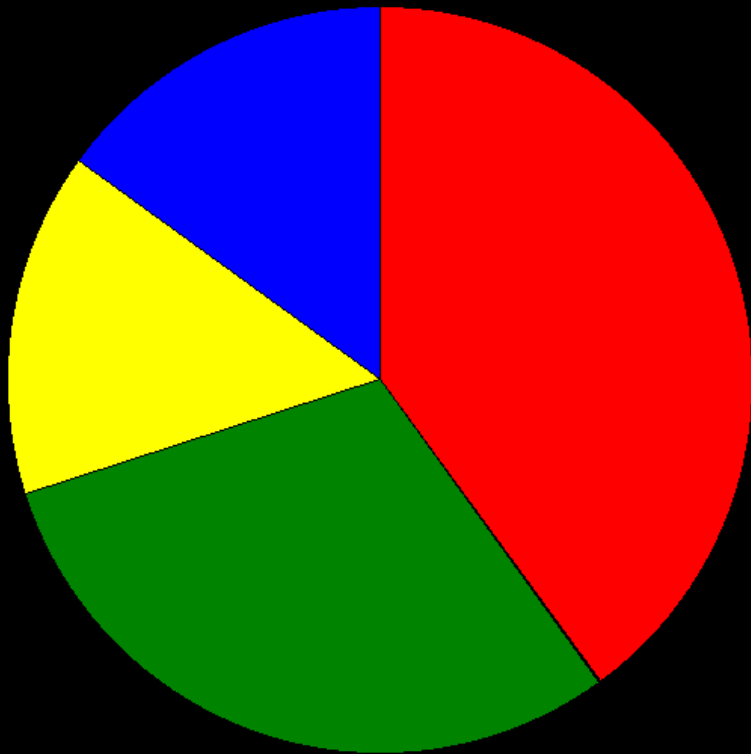
- 15% Contribution to Successful Change
 - Belief in one's own ability to bring about change
 - Anticipation of change
 - Belief by the student and teacher that change is possible

Technique Factors



- 15% Contribution to Successful Change
 - specific intervention techniques such as behavior contracting, reinforcement strategies, etc.

Summary of What Works

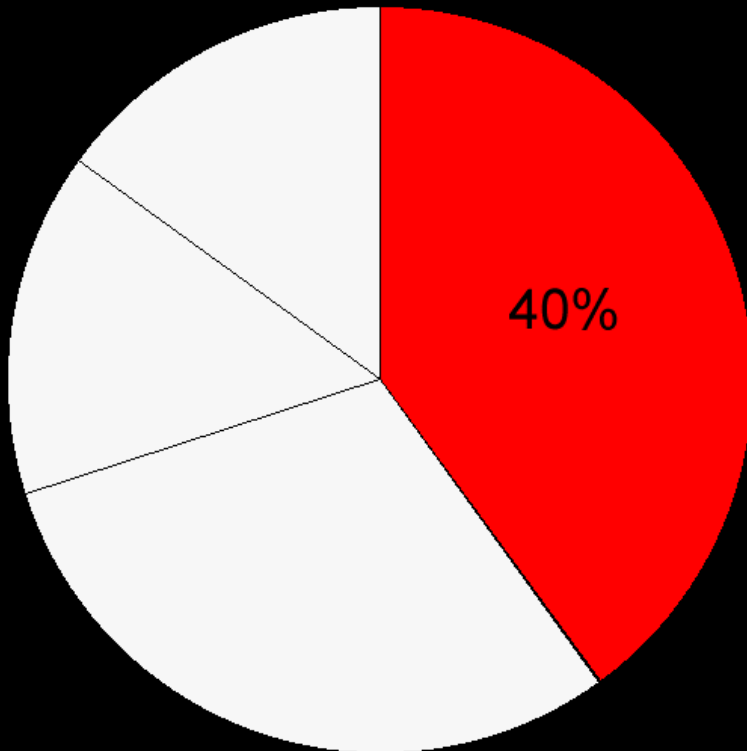


- Four Interrelated “Common Factors”
 - Client Factors
 - Relationship Factors
 - Hope Factors
 - Technique Factors

Utilization of Common Factors

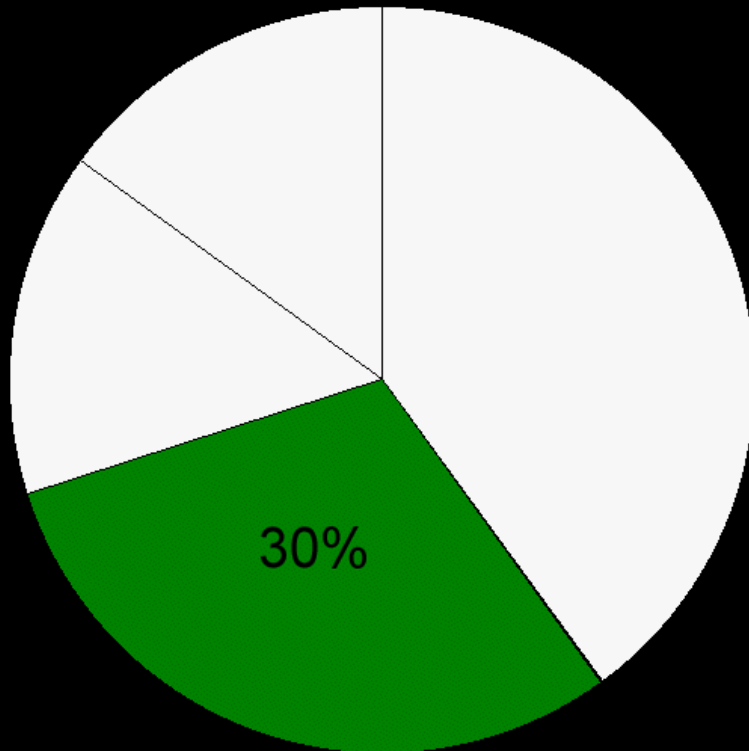
- How do you tap into these factors and what do you do with that information?
 - Let's look at each factor.

Client Factors



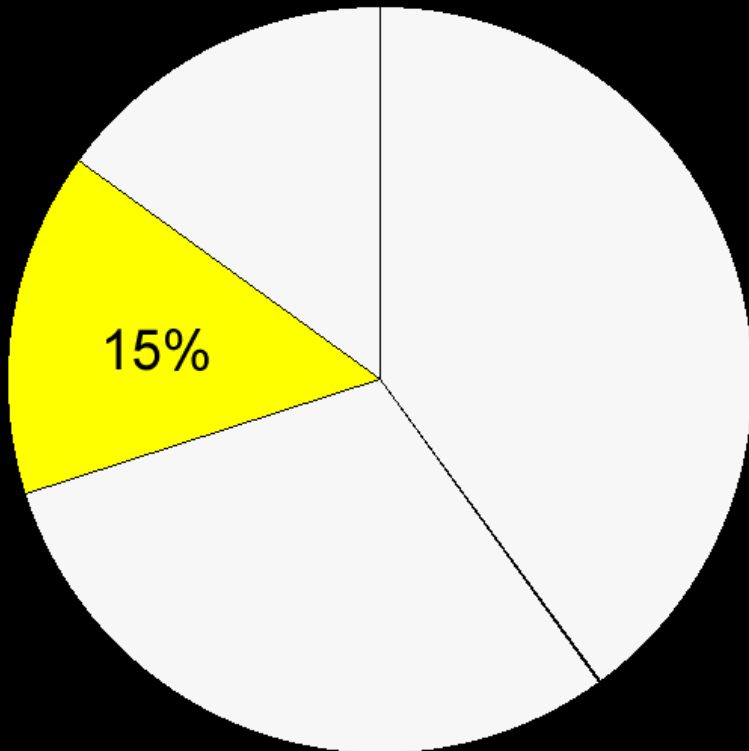
- 40% Contribution to Successful Change
 - Theory of Change
 - Exceptions to the Problem
 - Pretreatment Change
 - Between Session Change
 - Explore Exceptions
 - Acceptance of Client Values
 - Acceptance of Where Client "is" – past, future, present, problem focused, solution-focused
 - Respect
 - World Outside of Therapy

Relationship Factors



- 30% Contribution to Successful Change
 - Client theory of change
 - Best predictor of engagement, drop-out, and future change
 - Must measure early and often
 - Predicts need for referral
 - One down approach

Hope Factors



- 15% Contribution to Successful Change
 - Must be hopeful yourself
 - Burnout implications
 - Toughest to address
 - Magnify any change