

COMMUNICATION PATTERNS OF FAMILIES FACING ADDICTION: HELPING CLIENTS WITH DIFFERENT PARENTING STYLES

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Romans 12:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.



Objectives

1. Attendees will analyze results from a qualitative study evaluating communication patterns of families facing addiction that will enable them to support those who are family members with a loved one in recovery or struggling with addiction through establishing healthier communication habits.
2. Attendees will examine the cognitive patterns of parents whose children are in recovery or struggle with addiction to incorporate in a clinical setting to establish communication goals in a treatment plan.
3. Attendees will practice using Switch Theory, applying it to parenting styles and writing questions that can be utilized to better help clients identify ineffective communication strategies and improve their parenting skills.



Oakland City University

- Undergraduate BS Psychology students specializing in Addictions Counseling
- Interview requirements: Speak with a loved one of someone struggling with a SUD or other addictive behavior. Ask a series of questions with the focus being on communication patterns. Was the addictive behavior spoken about in your relationship? If so, what did the conversations look like? How did the addicted loved one respond to communication efforts?



Oakland City University

Themes in the Interviews:

- * Many individuals only spoke about the addictive behavior **ONE** time and then decided not to bring up the issue in the future due to the poor reaction by the family.
- * This is consistent with findings from other researchers who report that family members choose topic avoidance (Kam & Miller-Day, 2017; Middleton et al., 2017; Glowacki, 2017).



Oakland City University

Themes in the Interviews:

- * Many expressed strong negative emotions such as worry, feeling out of control, and experiencing anxiety regarding communication with their loved one.
- * This is consistent with research of Orford and Associates (2009).

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Themes in the Interviews:

* Power Dynamic

Elizabeth Glowacki found that younger siblings face challenges regarding speaking up about an older sibling's problematic drinking (2017).

Children were the least likely group to speak to a parent about unhealthy behavior. Perhaps this was due to the tendency for the power differential (Barstow, 2008) to be greatest between child and parent compared to other groups.



What empowered parents to
speak up?



What empowered parents to speak up?

1. Parents already have gained experience communicating with their children about difficult topics.
2. Parents experience less threat regarding their status of power.

YET MANY PARENTS STILL FIND IT INCREDIBLY CHALLENGING TO SPEAK ABOUT THE SUD OR ADDICTION WITH THEIR LOVED ONE.



Why Do Parents Remain Silent?

In our interviews as well as the research in the field, parents chose topic avoidance for numerous reasons.

Middleton and colleagues (2017) found that some parents remained quiet due to:

1. uncertainty if their child's behavior was truly problematic
2. questioning their credibility due to personal substance use
3. fearing that intervening would fail to facilitate growth

EACH OF THESE CAN BE ADDRESSED THROUGH
COUNSELING AND EDUCATION.



Have we mentioned that
parenting is hard?



Parenting Styles

Acceptance

Permissive

Authoritative

Demand

Demand

Neglectful

Authoritarian

Acceptance

A stylized logo consisting of the letters 'C' and 'A' intertwined in a decorative, calligraphic font.

Parenting Styles

Research reveals that parents using an authoritative parenting style tend to be the most effective (Berge, Sundell, Ojehagen, & Hakansson, 2016; Zeinali, Sharifi, Enayati, Asgari, & Pasha, 2011; Zeinali, Vahdat, & Garadingeh, 2010; Sartaj, B. & Aslam, N., 2010).

Parenting styles have been found malleable and can be improved upon or may worsen depending upon circumstances such as divorce, illness, etc. (Holliday, 2014; Lee, 2014; Schmidt, 1994; Steinberg, 1991; Sykes 1998; Williams, 2012; Zandiyeh, Zare, & Hedayati, 2015).

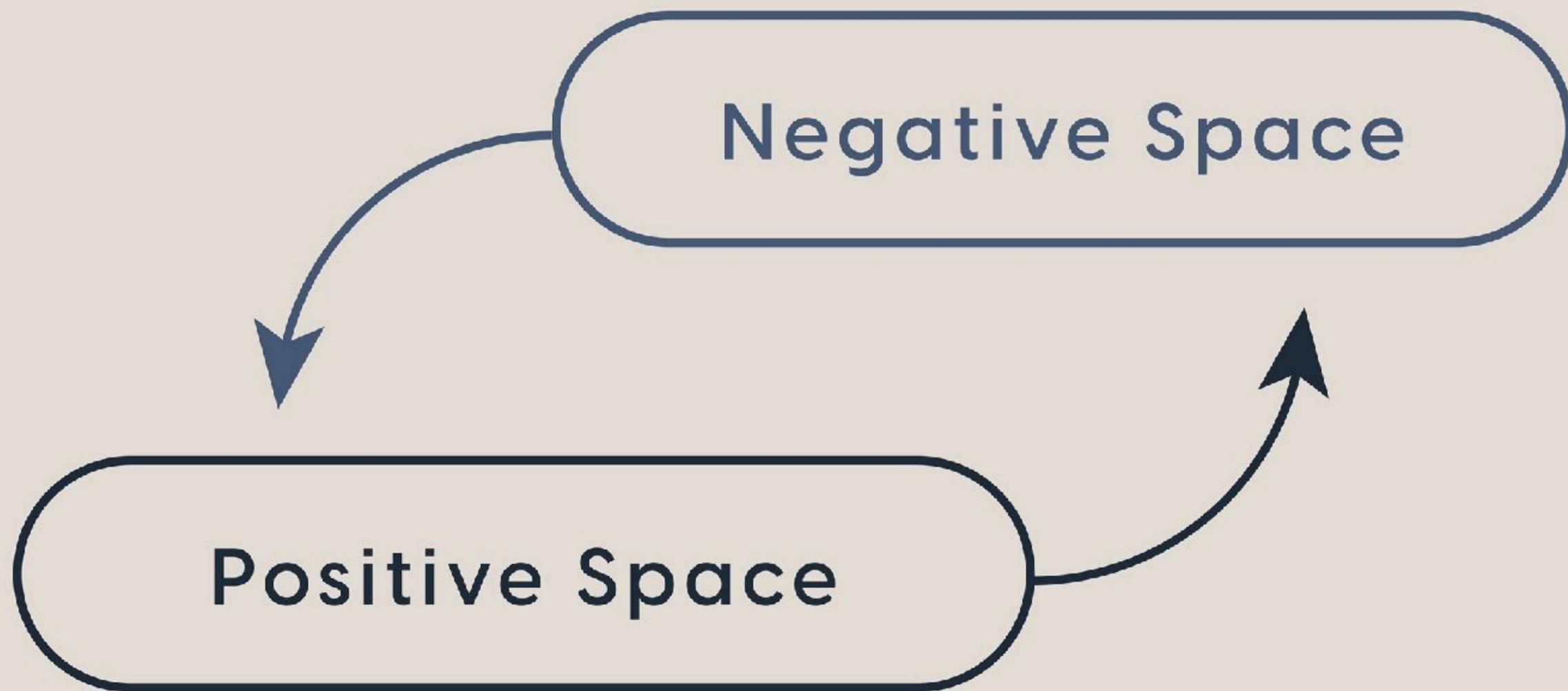


Maintaining a Positive Mindset

Regardless of the parenting style used, there are *thoughts* and *needs* behind each parent's behavior, and all parents switch from a positive to a negative mental space at different times for various reasons.

It seems that parents who remain in a **positive space** are likely to meet their own needs outside of the parent-child relationship, enabling them to focus on the needs of the child rather than themselves.





SWITCH THEORY

Positive Space

Negative Space

UNMET EXPECTATIONS

Positive Thoughts

Negative Thoughts

SPEAK

DON'T SPEAK

SPEAK

DON'T SPEAK

+

+

-

-

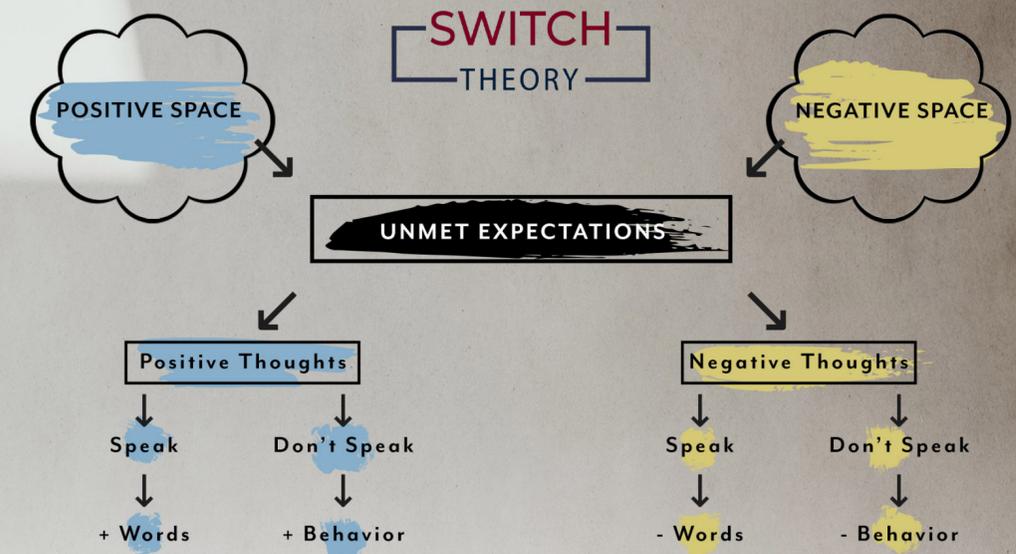
WORDS

BEHAVIOR

WORDS

BEHAVIOR

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Overall, are you in a positive or negative space?

Is there a specific relationship where you are in a negative space?

How do you tend to respond to unmet expectations? (For example, one may move to a negative space, not speaking with the person but complaining about the issue to others.)

Do you know how to move to a positive space once you get into a negative space?

How do parenting styles and
Switch Theory work together?



Possible Questions to Ask Parents:

- Are you in a positive or negative space?
- Have you prayed about this relationship?
- What type of parenting style do you use?
- What style would your child say that you use?
- What type of parenting style did you experience growing up?
- What needs are being met by the parenting style you choose to use?



Suggestions When Working with Neglectful Parents

Consider asking:

- In a day, which of your needs are being met?
- In a day, what needs are going unmet?
- When your needs are met, how does your parenting change?



Suggestions When Working with Authoritarian Parents

Consider asking:

- In what ways do you connect with your child?
- Do you experience fear regarding personal emotional expression? If so, how has this impacted your relationship with your child?
- Are there certain behaviors or expressions of emotion that make you feel weak?



Suggestions When Working with Permissive Parents

Consider asking:

- What does your behavior as a parent teach your child about what is acceptable?
- What need is met when you overlook inappropriate behavior?
- Has this caused a short-term gain but long-term suffering? If so, explain.



Suggestions When Working with Authoritative Parents

The 3 A's to Change

Become **Aware** of what works and does not **Assess**
what would be better in the future **Act!**



Applying Switch Theory to Parenting Children with a SUD

We're on the same team. We want to get back to a positive space.
Though it may not feel like it, we have the same goal.



SWITCH THEORY

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Negative Space

UNMET EXPECTATIONS

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SPEAK

DON'T SPEAK

SPEAK

DON'T SPEAK

+

+

-

-

WORDS

BEHAVIOR

WORDS

BEHAVIOR

Think about a parent you've worked with. Brainstorm some questions you could ask regarding their communication with their loved one? Consider asking questions about Switch Theory, their parenting style, and/or personal needs that may need addressed.



Additional Questions to Consider

- In other areas of your life, are you in a positive or negative space?
- Have you noticed changes in your parenting style?
- Do you ever find yourself acting more permissive or authoritarian as a result of personal stressors in your life apart from your child's behavior?

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