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Interview Protocol: Past Problem Solving Efforts

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One of the critical stages in helping someone resolve alcohol- and other-drug- (AOD) related problems is assessing how they have attempted to resolve these problems in the past. The goals of this exercise are to help the client identify what strategies have failed and what strategies have achieved at least short-term success. Another goal is to help us understand the pattern and recent progression of these problems. AOD-related problems tend to ebb and flow for those with chronic addiction careers. It is important that we and the client recognize the difference between short term episodes of abstinence or decelerated use (which are normal milestones in an addiction career) from true progress towards recovery.

The questions below are designed to review a client's past problem solving efforts and to establish benchmarks by which any attempted strategy can be monitored by the client or the professional helper.

Interview Protocol: Past Problem Solving Efforts

1. How many times have you attempted on your own to cut down your alcohol or other drug use?
2. What is the longest time you were able to sustain your goal of cutting down?
3. How many times have you attempted on your own to stop your alcohol and other drug use?
4. What is the longest time you were able to sustain your goal of not drinking or using drugs?
5. Is there an average time that your efforts to cut down or stop use started to fail for you?
6. In your best past prior efforts to cut down or stop your drinking and/or drug use, what were you doing that helped make this effort more successful?

7. Which do you think is most achievable for you in the future: cutting down your alcohol and/or drug use or stopping all non-medical use of alcohol and drugs?

8. If you use your past experience as a guide, what can you do in the next year to make your current efforts more successful?

9. How will you know if what you are trying now is working for you?

10. What are the earliest signs that would tell you that the strategy you are using this time is not working?

Adapted from White, W. & Kurtz, E. (2006). *Linking Addiction Treatment and Communities of Recovery: A Primer for Addiction Counselors and Recovery Coaches*. Pittsburgh, PA: IRETA/NeATTC