Authentic Trainings, LLC

PRACTICAL, RELATABLE, & COMPASSIONATE

Greetings!

Welcome to your monthly dose of expert insights for professional development in SUD. It's a short list of articles and evidence-based tools to help you foster high engagement and retention and nurture the ideal conditions for lasting change. I've also included a self-care tip to help you kindle joy and excitement in your work.

If so moved, please forward this email to another SUD professional who could use it.

On Gratitude & 2024

I wrapped up 2024 in a state of extreme gratitude that Authentic Trainings started to thrive.

When I left my full-time job in 2019, I had great expectations for a successful launch of Authentic Trainings LLC. There was a nice menu of training options that could improve treatment outcomes, enhance peer services, and bring new and innovative ideas to the treatment table.

Then COVID hit, and everything that was scheduled was canceled. As with the rest of the training world, I pivoted to online learning, and that has allowed me to reach a wider audience.

In 2024, I thought to myself, "You made it."

The five-year mark is traditionally when a company makes or breaks it. I had an epiphany. Not only had I made it, but I had exceeded my expectations.

My journey over the last five years was full of people who believed in me, supported my vision, and hired me. I'd like to highlight a few of those people here.

During these five years, Lisa Ardner was my co-developer and co-trainer. Lisa has her own company, A Purpose4Life. We own two dynamic companies that offer similar and distinctly different training.

Our collaboration led to an MI training for leadership, two asynchronous courses for MI in criminal justice, and an incredible Embracing Families Program that we offer to organizations that want to include families in treatment.

We still do training for individuals, but we have shifted focus to training for

organizations. There was not a month that we didn't have training we facilitated together.

As members of the NYCB Trainers Registry, we have remained active in providing quality training to the emerging and existing workforce. We just completed the last course that will allow us to apply to become CCAR Recovery Coach Professionals, and we are going on to become trainers for Central NY and beyond.

Thank you, Lisa, for your unending support and willingness to push the limits as we grow.

One of the joys of my life is learning, and when you can use your learning to make a difference, you can look back at your life with pride.

Now we both teach at SUNY Empire in the Addictions and Human Services Department. When I sought my MAAL (Master's in Adult Learning), there were many naysayers who thought I should work toward an MSW (Master's in Social Work), but I resisted.

I stayed true to my mission, which was to improve the quality of care in SUD and Mental Health Treatment Centers.

I want to thank two of my favorite people, Tom Karl and Frank Bomher from R1 Discover for having the faith to include me in what has turned out to be a highlight of my career.

I have been assisting Tom and Frank with their initiative to train trainers who will, in turn, train peers in the Department of Corrections across the state of California. This is a monumental initiative, and I am hopeful other states will pick it up.

An added bonus has been that I have spent four days at a time with these two dedicated individuals with a vision that aligns with mine in California. I have traveled more this past year than I have in many years and loved every bit of it.

Those who go through the training work with the other individuals who are incarcerated, providing much-needed, positive peer support. Participants who will be released can take their California Peer Specialist test and go right to work.

The R1 Learning system is a new and innovative learning process that includes tangible card decks with exercises and an online version. It is changing the face of psychoeducation as it naturally encourages self-reflection in a way that a lecture can never match.

Another highlight of my career was presenting at the NAADAC Conference with Sandy Sabene of the Liverpool Art Center, my djembe drum instructor and mentor.

We brought 30 djembe drums, small percussion instruments, and an expressive art activity to a packed double room. The feedback was exceptional, and it furthered my hope that we will look to rhythm, expressive art, sound, and movement to help people with SUD heal.

Each of these activities encourages the release of dopamine and helps to pull

people out of the depression they often experience in the early months and years of recovery.

It also fosters community. Entrainment is real, and it allows individuals to feel connected to others, which helps them to let down their guard and become part of a community.

We have already trained facilitators in facilities and will support their mission to bring non-verbal strategies to treatment and recovery centers.

Kirstin Onderdonk of Enjoy Chi and the author of Stop N Flow has been a friend for 11 years since she first came to Crouse Health Substance Use Treatment Center and offered her Tai Chi-based program to staff and patients.

I was honored to work with Kirstin to collect statistics and grow this program to what it is today: a book, structured program, and train-the-trainers. Kirstin's vision aligned closely with mine in her belief that the body has to be part of the healing process, and learning to be safe in stillness is crucial to the recovery process.

Donna Knapp from Prevention Network trusted Lisa and me enough to give us a contract to provide SBIRT—Screening and Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment—along with Motivational Interviewing, free to our central NY providers. The first training is coming up on February 12, 2025. We are currently developing other offerings.

Leading the Charge in 2025

When I look back over 2024, I can see how setting my intention has brought all of these incredible people into my life.

I could not have done this without them, and I am looking forward to growing with them and **leading the charge to improve treatment outcomes, bring more humanity to the field, and adopt a holistic approach that reaches everyone on one level or another.**

Youth Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery

Lisa Ardner and I will present at the annual Joint Meeting on Youth Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery.

This annual national conference brings together practice, research, and policy to reduce the gaps in substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery services for youth and families.

Our topic is Embracing Families in Treatment and Recovery. We are very excited about this opportunity to embark on our 2025 mission of bringing family services into the mainstream of treatment and recovery.

In all my years working in treatment, one thing became very clear to me. As much as we may want people to separate from family members we believe are not good for them, the epigenetic connection makes that almost impossible without

suffering pain and strife.

We are taking a person-centered, harm-reduction approach to embrace families in treatment and recovery. In Motivational Interviewing, we say, "If you can't meet the individual where they are in the moment, you can't guide them towards change because they have no reason to partner with you."

I propose that we take that approach with families. If a family member is willing to engage, you have an opportunity to provide education and support. This translates into a better atmosphere for the person struggling to establish recovery.

Even if a temporary separation from family members exists, in my experience, most people return to their family of origin. Let's help them do that by helping them set good boundaries, develop healthy ways of coping, and practice acceptance.

My Talk with STOP & FLOW with KO

Kristin Onderdonk of the STOP and FLOW with KO podcast interviewed me about alternative approaches beyond talk therapy that create safe spaces.

In our discussion, I share the holistic and somatic approaches we use at Authentic Trainings to support substance use disorder recovery. We explore techniques like drum circles and the STOP & FLOW practice, which help create safe spaces for healing, especially for women overcoming trauma and isolation.

I share insights on how these methods can help individuals rebuild trust, manage stress, and connect deeply with themselves and their communities. My hope is that these practices can inspire and support others on their healing journeys.

Listen to the Podcast

On Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing: A Step-by-Step Guide

to Empower Others Toward Positive Change and Growth

Looking for general motivational interviewing training or a refresher? Take our introductory course, Motivation Interviewing: A Step-by-Step Guide to Empower Others Toward Positive Change and Growth.

In this on-demand course, you'll learn the most up-to-date foundational approaches to facilitating change. **You'll also discover easy-to-use conversation strategies to become a more confident, effective helper.**

Inside, get the practical conversation skills to transform...

- discord into collaboration,
- ambivalence into motivation, and
- blaming into empowerment.

Imagine empowering your clients toward better futures they truly want for themselves and their families.

Explore Motivational Interviewing: A Step-by-Step Guide

On MI for Criminal Justice Settings

Motivational Interviewing (MI) for Criminal Justice Professionals

This on-demand **Motivational Interviewing (MI) course** is designed specifically for **criminal justice professionals**. This course teaches the core components of MI, empowering those in the criminal justice system to effectively engage and motivate individuals toward positive change.

This training is an excellent resource for anyone working in criminal justice settings, including professionals in

- *treatment courts,*
- *family courts,*
- *substance use disorder (SUD) treatment,*
- *mental health services, and*
- *other allied fields.*

By completing this course, participants will gain

valuable skills to help people navigate complex challenges in these environments.

The course is built on the most up-to-date research and practices from the *Fourth Edition of Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change and Grow*, published in August 2023. It offers the latest evidence-based strategies that can be applied immediately to enhance client engagement and support positive behavioral outcomes.

Key Features:

- On-demand, flexible learning
- Tailored specifically for criminal justice and allied professionals
- Based on the latest edition of the MI guidebook, updated in August 2023

Enroll today and start using proven MI techniques to drive better outcomes in your professional practice.

Want to buy this training for your staff? or white-label this training? *Get started today. Email me.*

Explore Motivational Interviewing for Criminal Justice Professionals

As always, thanks for reading.

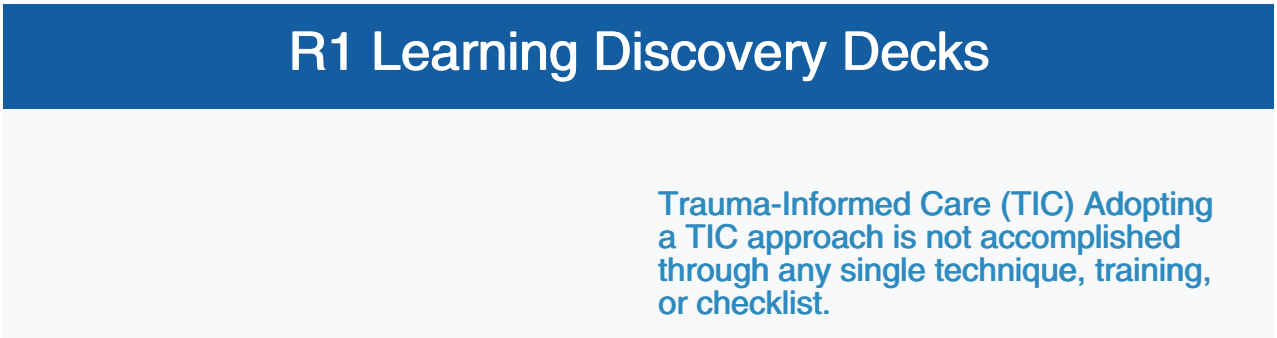
Sandy

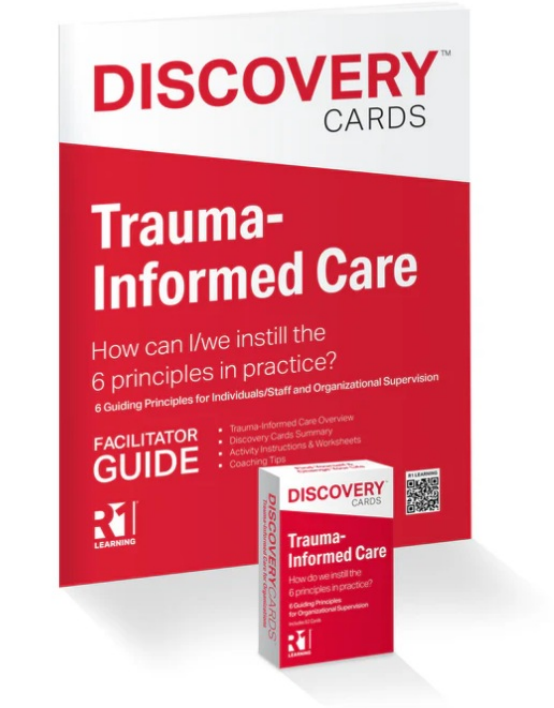
PS. Does your team need professional development in

- *embracing families,*
- *motivational interviewing, or*
- *trauma-informed care?*

Get a workforce development design to meet your organization's needs.*Email me to get started*.

R1 Learning Discovery Decks





Effective trauma-informed care requires constant awareness, attention, caring, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at the organizational level.

On-going individual and organizational assessment of the 6 Guiding Principles will help embed this approach into daily practices.

The purpose of this R1 Learning topic is to help organizations, staff, and practitioners assess services in conjunction with SAMHSA's TIC 6 Guiding Principles and improve the outcomes for individuals served.

Topic Kit includes one Discovery Cards deck and one Facilitator Guide – everything you need to run an effective session.

Buy additional card decks to match your typical group size. Using behavior-based and color-categorized cards, group members will gain a deeper understanding of 6 Guiding Principles and 3 Environment Types.

The Facilitator Guide provides group leaders with everything needed to run structured, action-oriented sessions, including activity worksheets, and coaching tips. Discovery Cards increase engagement, participation, and self-discovery and spark great discussions in group settings.

Buy today, and improve your engagement and outcomes.

Use the code **SANDY10%** to save on your own R1 Discovery Trauma Informed Care Deck.

Explore the TIC Discovery Deck.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) Topic Kit

This deck helps individuals identify which of ten (10) ACEs they experienced and which of the seven (7) Resilience Practices helped/help them

endure, survive, and thrive.

Topic Kit includes:

One Discovery Card Deck (one for each group member; buy additional decks to match your typical group size). Card decks include:

- Sorting cards
- Category model definition cards
- Activity cards with questions to explore

One Facilitator Guide, which includes:

- Model overview
- Card deck summary
- Activity instructions and worksheets
- Coaching tips

Use the code **SANDY10%** to save on your own R1 Discovery ACES Deck.

Explore the ACES Discovery Deck.

The New York Certification Board
Sandra Rivers
Proud Member
NYCB Trainer Registry
2025

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