

Motivational Interviewing: Home Visit

Narrator: A home visitor, Sarah, is meeting with Tammy, and Early Head Start mom with three children. Tammy and her children live with Tammy's mother. Tammy and her youngest child, Amalia, are enrolled in the Early Head Start home visiting program in their community. Sarah has been working with Tammy regularly throughout her pregnancy. This Early Head Start program offers a depression screening for all the mothers and fathers in the program. At the home visit last week Tammy completed the depression screening. At today's home visit Sarah and Tammy had planned to discuss the results.

Sarah: Hi Tammy. It is great to see you this week. How are you doing?

Tammy: I'm ok

Sarah: How is Amalia?

Tammy: She is doing OK. You know day by day.

Sarah: Tell me more about what you mean by OK?

Tammy: I think maybe she is getting more fussy. I wish she wasn't crying so often. I'm exhausted all the time.

Sarah: So you're exhausted because of Amalia's fussiness. Do you want to spend some time talking about that or do you have other things on your mind?

Tammy: It is fine. I don't really need or want to talk about her fussiness. I mean what is there to talk about it? Sometimes I really think someone is out to punish me. If I keep thinking about how tough it is or how cranky she is, it will just make it worse.

Sarah: It can feel overwhelming to deal with a new baby, especially with everything else you have on your plate.

Tammy: I don't know what the point would be to talk about how she cries so much. She is the way she is. It's not like anyone can change her.

Sarah: You are right that babies come to the world with their own temperament or way of being. It doesn't sound like Amalia's crying is a priority for you right now, but, do know if you decide you want to talk about it we can.

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Tammy: Ok. Like I said she is the way she is.

Sarah: I wonder then if it makes sense to share what the depression screening we did last week told us. Would it be OK to talk about that today?

Tammy: Sure. Whatever. You know me. I'm easy. We can talk about anything.

Sarah: I do really appreciate your being so open to discuss things with me. I know we spoke a little bit about depression last week when I gave you the screening but I'd like to talk more about it today. What is your understanding of depression?

Tammy: Oh, you know, when you feel sad all the time like on those commercials when the mom looks so sad as if someone just died.

Sarah: You are right that depression can mean feeling sad often. It can also mean things like feeling very tired much of time, changes in your weight or appetite, changes in your energy level or lack of interest in doing things you used to enjoy, or feeling irritable. Sometimes people experiencing depression feel very guilty or have trouble concentrating.

Tammy: Oh that's a lot more than I thought was.

Sarah: I wanted to share with you that your depression screening came back showing that you may be experiencing some of these signs of depression like feeling like you have little interest in doing things and feeling down and tired a large portion of the time. What are your thoughts about that?

Tammy: Well, hello. Isn't that what every mom feels? How could I not be tired all the time? Amalia never sleeps at night and then she wakes up Tommie and then he is up. So I'm never sleeping. Of course, I don't ever feel like doing anything because I'm just too tired all the time. That is not depression that is just being a mom with these crazy kids.

Sarah: You have a lot to deal with and it's really impacting your sleep schedule, not to mention whether you have any energy left for other things. It seems like the idea that you might be experiencing depression doesn't fit with how you see things. My goal here isn't to convince you that you are depressed. You may not be. I'm curious if there is something else you want to know more or someone else you'd like to talk more about depression?

Tammy: I really don't have time to go to talk to someone, let alone, think about whether I'm depressed. I mean I know I'm tired and I never want to do anything but "oh well" I still have to take care of the kids and get to work. It's not like I can say "oh, hey everybody, I'm depressed so I'm not going to do anything."

Sarah: You put your children's needs first. It sounds like you don't have time for anything else. I respect that. Would it be OK if I just shared one more piece of information with you?

Tammy: Sure.

Sarah: Well, sometimes when a parent is depressed it can impact their children. For example, some infants whose parents are experience depression may cry more often than other infants. Children are very sensitive to the moods of their parents even when we think we are doing a good job of just powering through or hiding our feelings.

Sarah: This has been a tough discussion. I've shared a lot of what might be new information with you. Let me check in with you. How are you feeling about this?

Tammy: Well, I never thought about being depressed. I don't know that I am. But I hate the idea that maybe I could be damaging my kids. I want to be the best mom I can but that still doesn't change my situation. I don't have time to focus on this.

Sarah: I don't think you are damaging your kids. The fact that you are even worried about that shows what a caring mom you are.

Sarah: It must be overwhelming thinking about this. You have done such a good job focusing on your children so much for so many years. Maybe it feels odd or strange to focus on yourself? We've talked a lot about it today. How about as a first step I leave some of the information about depression that I shared with you so you can think it over this week? Would it be OK if I call you tomorrow just to check in about this?

Tammy: Yeah, OK.