

Being a Learning Partner for an Unmotivated Colleague

So you've agreed to be someone's Learning Partner which would be easy if everyone was highly motivated. But that's like saying great art would be simple if only everyone could draw! Most of the time, reality (and busyness) intervenes.

Perhaps the relationship has even started well and you've had a meeting or two, but now it's all gone quiet. Should you do anything? Should you even care?

Every pharmacist is responsible for their own Continual Professional Development. As a learning partner you are not (and won't be held) accountable for their activity or inactivity.



For some pharmacists the commitment to and engagement with life-long learning is seen as just part of the job, for others it feels much more like a chore or burden.

Barriers to participation in continuing education exist. These include: time constraints, lack of resources, lack of motivation and interest, cost, and poor understanding of CPD requirements.

These are real barriers, but an individual's attitude towards them often make the difference to how easy they are to overcome. Somebody can always find a way to do something they want to do!

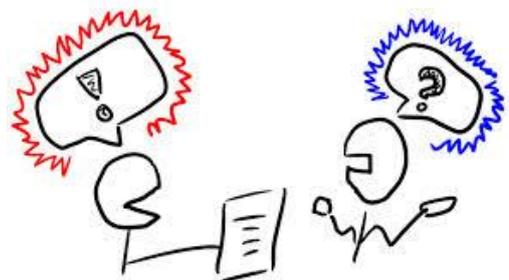
The learning partner concept was introduced into ENHANCE to provide some collegial support and help pharmacists overcome some of these barriers to learning, and maintaining their professional development. Sometimes all it takes is another view of the situation, but sometimes it takes a whole lot more.....

What you should do as a learning partner

Your role is to affirm, encourage and where appropriate or required, advise or challenge your partner, providing support, feedback and encouragement about their planned and completed learning. In summary, to support your partner and motivate them to participate and achieve their professional development goals.

You are expected to:

- be available for meetings with your partner (as many as are reasonably required)
- affirm, encourage and where appropriate, advise or challenge your partner
- discuss the process and outcomes of the review of their day to day work (however they have done it), the application of Competence Standards or other standards to their professional role and provide feedback about whether this has been appropriate and how they have selected accepted standards and used them to review their work
- discuss the results for each step of their Group 3 goals – this doesn't have to be (and is not intended to be) onerous. Think of yourself as a sounding board.
- review the final outcomes of their group 3 goal – where are they going from here?
- discuss and maybe provide some advice about their choice (or lack of) learning resources
- discuss the relevance of their chosen learning goals to their current or future practice
- perhaps discuss their Professional Development Plan on an annual basis, and how they're tracking with that



But what if this is not happening?

Part of your commitment to being someone's learning partner is to ensure that you can be available to meet and discuss their learning needs and progress and perhaps you have a professional obligation to at least try to increase their engagement and lift the level of their participation by providing help and advice as best you can.

For that to happen, you need to find out why they are feeling unmotivated and the best way to do this is to have a heart to heart conversation with them. Take some time to talk to your colleague privately and try to discover if there is any problem.

Ask them how they see their level of progress and achievement and provide some honest (but kind) feedback about how you see their motivation levels and lack of progress.



*“Excuse me John.... I know that you don't like to be disturbed when you're in the middle of playing **solitaire**....but as your colleague, I was thinking that you might.... well perhaps I could make a few suggestions regarding your CPD....if you don't mind.”*

Having a conversation like this can be difficult. Using the 'STAR' Tool can give you a framework to work with, especially if you are uncomfortable with giving negative feedback.

★ **Specify** the exact nature of the situation - Focus on facts, not the person. Choose positively phrased statements, such as "Forgetting to do that caused a delay," rather than saying "You're completely disorganized."

★ **Talk** it through to establish each of your views and discuss possible causes. Share your thoughts on alternative approaches while remembering to seek the other person's ideas.

★ **Agree** an action plan, including a review date. Provide your partner with support to act on your feedback.

★ **Review** the situation at the agreed time.

How you could help

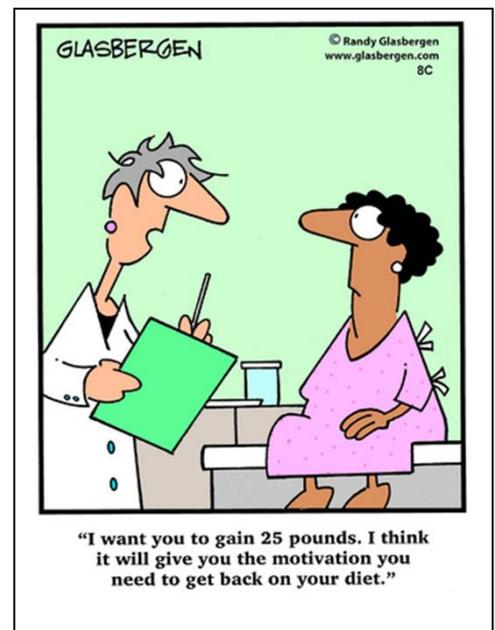
Motivation is never one sided. You cannot motivate a person by showering them with positivity.

On the other hand pointing out all their shortcomings will really finish them off!

For someone to be truly motivated, the motivation needs to come from within. Forget any idea that motivation is something you do to others.

Try and keep the connection and relationship alive. Connecting with others can motivate the unmotivated.

- Make yourself available to meet as a priority if your colleague requests it. Perhaps suggest meeting in the first place
- Empathise with them and support them to participate.
- Let them know of upcoming learning opportunities - perhaps you could both undertake some learning activities together
- Provide examples on what has worked well for you



Try to provide positive suggestions for a way out of the situation



- Help them to identify their barriers to learning and provide some suggestions on how they could overcome these barriers e.g. if cost is a barrier then direct them to some free learning resources (Note the ENHANCE website contains many free learning resources)
 - Ensure they understand what a group 3 goal is and what they need to do - Show them the help icons throughout the website. By clicking on these “?” advice pages open up and can demystify many issues. Your colleague may be unaware they are even there.
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- Help them to reflect on their practice and identify areas where they need to learn more
 - Encourage your colleague to begin. Often getting started is the thing that holds back progress. Suggest they log onto the ENHANCE website and start typing up some titles for group 3 goals
 - Brain storm learning goal ideas. If you work in a similar practice area then you could share some of your own ideas.
 - Give them a framework to work in - let them know what you expect them to do and provide a timeframe for meeting again to check how the agreed actions are progressing.

Try to find out what interests them.

You don't have to pressure or motivate people to do what interests them. Help them to discover the type of learning that appeals to them.

Sometimes the nature or presentation of an activity can make a vast difference in how someone approaches their learning.

If you can find the right match that sparks someone's interest, the results can be surprising – and exceptional.



You don't have to do this by yourself!

The ENHANCE cavalry is here! Contact us at enhance@psnz.org.nz or (04) 802 0030 ext 5

Either suggest they contact the ENHANCE team directly if they need help or perhaps you could do it for them (with their permission). This is especially important if you don't know the answers to their questions. Don't guess or worry - the ENHANCE team are here to help.

Recommend they contact ENHANCE to have their records reviewed.

Finally – when you've tried everything else

If the relationship is not working out then you need be honest and let them know so that they can reflect on the reasons why and have the opportunity to seek help elsewhere.