

Engaging in Energy Efficiency

Honing in on What Really Matters
May 28, 2014



Open with some oomph – ask a question?

Why are we here, what are you going to get out of it. Some complexity here, not just a checklist of best practice, diving into some new, emergent concepts. Why it's important that you're here, what kind of impact we want to make together.

Agenda

1. Clues for Energy Efficiency
2. The Psychosocial Approach
3. "Compassionate Conversations" Exercise

Brand Cool & NYSERDA

- Brand Cool's focus:
 - Energy and sustainability sectors
 - Brand strategy
 - Integrated marketing
 - B Corp, WBE, WBENC, WOSB
- NYSERDA programs
 - EmPower New York, Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®, Assisted Home Performance, Green Jobs Green NY, Products & Lighting, Multifamily Energy Performance Portfolio

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For sustainability and energy sector clients, including utilities, government and private sector corporations

About EmPower New York



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For those of you who might not be familiar with EmPower NY, the program's objective is to provide energy efficiency services to eligible homeowners and renters in New York, who fit into the low-income household profile or those who are eligible for LIHEAP are typically a candidate. There will be a more comprehensive session on the EmPower program specifically tomorrow.

The program looks at...

“Decoding” the clues for energy efficiency

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We know through all of our work, on every program for EE, for the most part it's invisible. They don't recognize that some obvious problems can be solved with EE work.

Recognize that these folks live in owned homes, might be renters, etc. Some is the building, some is the behavior, some is specific technologies.



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Dealing with discomfort, inconsistent temperatures in the home



They're heating their home with their stove – higher incidents of burns, carbon monoxide and air quality issues



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There's a chronically ill family member in the household – air quality, inconsistent temperatures, dampness, etc.



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When you visit, the lights are often turned off – they may even be using hurricane lamps



Lighting fixtures are missing bulbs



There are holes in the walls, floors or ceilings. Most of the time they can be even more vulnerable because they have landlords who might get exposed, might have resistance.



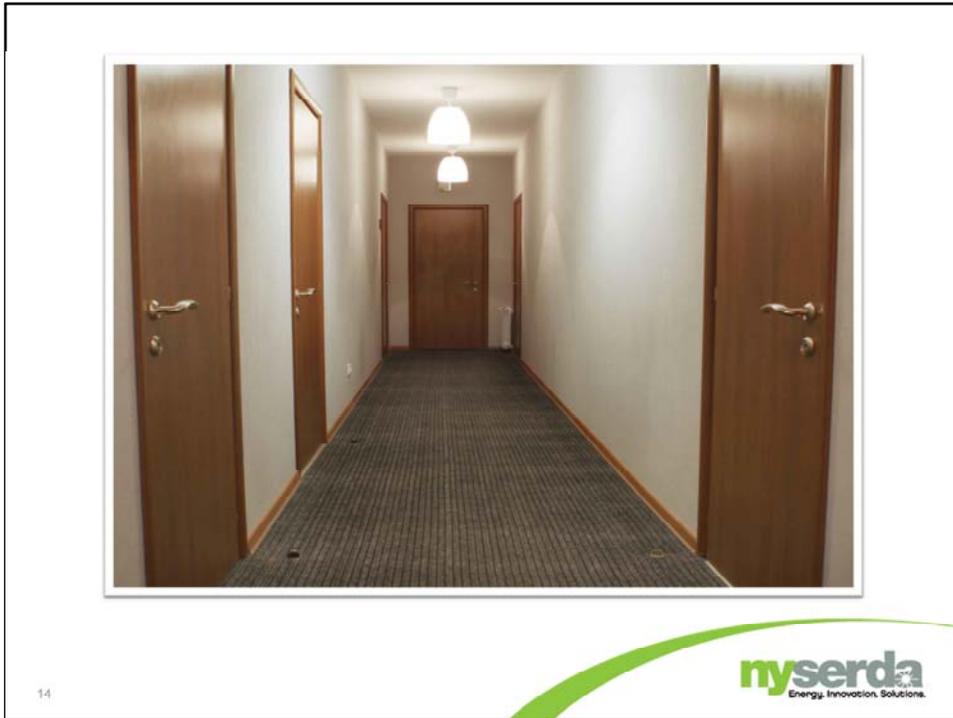
There are visible cracks around windows or in the window panes where air is leaking



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The exterior of the home shows ice damming in the winter – a visible sign of the need for insulation and air sealing.



Doors to other parts of the home are closed or whole areas of a residence are shut off



The refrigerator is empty, terribly frosted over or very old

Income Eligibility

- **LIHEAP Recipient**
- **Household Size* Maximum Income Level (Per Year)**
 - 1 \$17,505
 - 2 \$23,595
 - 3 \$29,685
 - 4 \$35,775
 - 5 \$41,865
 - 6 \$47,955
 - 7 \$54,045
 - 8 \$60,135

Being able to diagnose the problem, then being able to enter into being part of the solution WITH the homeowner.

The psychosocial approach: Meeting people where they are

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This is about compassion, dignity and acknowledgement. Let's unpack what that is and what it might look like



Let's take a couple of minutes and set the context, look at the numbers we're dealing with, the "cold hard facts."

Currently there are

47.5 million people in low-income working families – in the U.S?

6 million New Yorkers who are behind on paying for their utility bills

Nearly 1.5 million New Yorkers received LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) services last year

Energy costs represent a larger portion of low-income families' budget – equaling one-fifth or more

Electricity, once deemed inexpensive, is no longer. Virtually 51% of all residential electricity price increases over the last two decades have occurred since 2000.

(Americaspower.org:

http://www.americaspower.org/sites/default/files/Energy_Cost_Impacts_2012_FINAL.pdf)

Perceived Value of Energy Improvements

- Value energy efficiency
 - 77% agree that it is important
- Want to save money
 - 84% cite savings as a main reason to take on energy improvements
- Seek comfort
 - 65% cite comfort as another main reason

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Split this into a couple different slides – add percentages

We executed some benchmark research for NYSERDA 2 years ago.

In many ways, low-income audiences have very similar attitudes to everyone else, but they diverge in some significant ways.

77% agree that EE is important – but are less likely to think they can take action. There is a myth that low-income people don't care about the environment, or don't have room to consider global issues, but this is not correct. While it may not be top-of-mind, they track with the rest of the population in terms of **wanting** to make good choices for the planet, **wanting** to be more responsible and less wasteful. The desire and aspiration is there, but the power to act may not be. Or at least they may think they don't have that power.

84% say saving money would be a main reason to be more efficient

As income goes down, so does perceived comfort in the home – 65% of low income residents say comfort is a driver for energy improvement. They are much more likely to experience discomfort because they know the impact of turning the a/c up, turning the heat up, etc. Can't afford: Literally, but also this is what they believe. 48% say they won't do EE work because they can't afford it, 38% because they have to save for other priorities
Repair/replace is the second main reason to take on energy improvements – after saving money

Research:

NYSERDA engaged in research to understand attitudes, behaviors and preferences related to household energy among residents with HH incomes of less than \$35,000. This included research on the market, such as energy and pricing trends, and the challenges that low-income residents face when struggling to pay their energy bill. What they found was that the majority believe energy efficiency is important, that most problems come from windows and doors, and the chief reason to consider it is to save money. *Sample size was 400.

Perceived Value of Energy Improvements

- Can't afford energy improvements
 - 48% won't take it on because they believe they cannot afford it
 - 38% say they have to save for other priorities
- Need to fix what is broken
 - Repair and replacement are second main reason for taking on energy improvements
- Are wary of "free"

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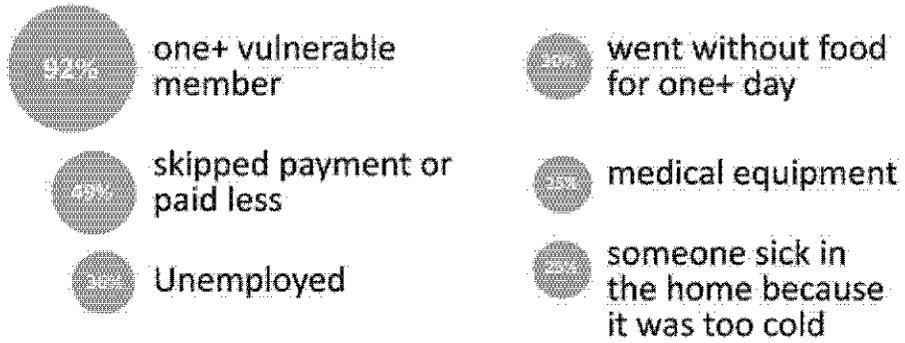
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The Context



Competing Needs



OR



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As a service provider, you're aware that the numbers shared in the previous slide paint a picture that is most often framed as the "OR" complex for low-income households. And, when it comes to energy, this OR complex manifests itself in common situations such as "heat or eat", "heat or medicate", "heat or transportation to work" or "heat or pay your rent on time".

As service providers, given our agency's focus, we in some ways compound this competition by taking a siloed [fragmented/piecemeal] approach to the individual – we can help in one area, so we often only engage with individuals on that particular topic. This limits us in our ability to really engage the person on all that's really going on.

This is the reframe: Having compassion for these conflicts, bringing an understanding and acknowledgement to our interactions with the people we serve is important to moving them forward and truly serving. Often they don't "have time" for energy efficiency, they don't think there's anything in it for them, they don't feel they have control. So, they take energy costs as a given and adjust around that. Energy is a part of all of this.

Stress = Resistance



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When we are stressed, we are far less open to new things, new ideas, new solutions. Try this on: when you're dealing with funding loss, or incredibly challenging constituents, it's harder to think of new ways to bring in income, or putting yourself in their shoes to understand where they're coming from. If you've got a toddler at home approaching the terrible two's, how open are you to mom-in-law's "this is what I did."?

People dealing with extreme stressors like meeting basic needs have a feeling of now power, no real control over these huge issues. If we can be mindful of this, frame our solutions to give them agency, to give them control they didn't think they had, we will be massively more successful.

So, when we look at the facts, it seems clear, right? Tell people this work can save them money, tell people there is financial assistance, tell them they'll be more comfortable, and we're done. Right?

Psychosocial - Definition

Engaging with the whole person
(psyche), in their full context
(social)

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Not quite.

Psycho social is the intersection of the psychological, behavioral, social and cultural factors that influence a person's relationship with energy. Energy isn't something that people are thinking about very often – In fact, on average, people only think about energy for 6 minutes a year – when they're paying their bills. For the low-income population, this number is higher, given that energy is a higher portion of their available income regardless of whether they need energy to heat, light, and support devices.

Using this approach recognizes that people have psychological and emotional responses with these issues, not just rational or logical ones. It requires that we acknowledge that there is no real separation between our emotions and attitudes and our social context: community, family, our "tribe" of similar people. We are emotionally driven and emotionally attached to doing certain things.

So, what does this look like?



One way to think about the concept of psychosocial approach is to think about swim goggles. You put them on, they help you see underwater, you get a single view straight ahead that is clearer than without them. You give goggles to people you want to swim with, they get the same. This is your current viewpoint – if you're an energy practitioner, you want people to see and understand energy issues and how they can benefit from changing, etc.

What happens though, is they can get fogged up over time, they limit your ability to see all sides, they can generally miss things. So, you perhaps don't identify energy issues when you're talking with someone about X, our vice versa.

If you're community outreach, etc.. What are you mainly focused on? A couple people, what is the content of most of your conversations with people? What's most top of mind? Take a moment to gather your thoughts.

THIS is the view we want to expand, these are the conversations we want to ask you to explore more holistically.

In reality, it looks like this.

These issues, ways of thinking lead into what we call the three A's.

Anxiety about what's happening in our homes and in the world re: energy – this is different for everyone. EXAMPLE: Worries about cost, how much will it cost, can I afford to make changes?

Ambivalence because we are deeply attached to the things we do, our behaviors, we are satisfied with the “way things are” in the sense that we are not motivated to change. It's not about not caring, it's about wanting to do two or more competing things at the same time. This creates ambivalence about what to do about how we use energy, we recognize the problem but are pulled in different directions. EXAMPLE: I want to waste less energy, but I like a warm home, I like to be comfortable.

Aspirations – we believe that all people need and want to be in alignment, want to DO something about it, do what's right, do what's “smart”. This is true for all segments of the population re: income. EXAMPLE:

All three of these elements are at play when people think about energy, the environment, sustainability. This is how we currently respond and come to terms with our environmental problems.

The Three A's In Reality



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EXAMPLE OF ALL THREE AT PLAY – NARRATIVE, STORY, DEMONSTRATE 3A'S AND “DOUBLE BIND”

What would come up when someone comes to talk to her about making adjustments to how her home uses energy. Anxiety about being able to afford upgrades, whether she'd be allowed to make improvements to her apartment, worry about having contractors, strangers in her home. Being seen as not a good mom or caretaker because she has issues, potentially ashamed of the state of her home. Huge amount of vulnerability when you're in her home, you're in their safe place, and you have to conduct yourself accordingly. Ambivalence – tuned in, hip, resonates with the basic premise of EE, but actually can't make space for it when she's dealing with affording child care and supporting her mom too. Aspiration – would love for things to feel easier, to be more comfortable, she wants to get on board and be part of something bigger, make smart decisions.

Our job is to address and acknowledge the 3 A's, to help people sort through it. “I get it, your anxious, you have mixed feelings but you want to do the right things.”

Compassionate Conversations



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We need to reframe how we think about engaging people in our services such as energy efficiency by placing people's needs, concerns, dilemmas and anxieties at the center. By just trying to treat the symptom, we might not be able to gain the trust and build the relationship necessary to truly engage people in assistance. To be more effective energy efficiency advocates, for example, we need to view people's relationship with energy in an ecosystem that contains many factors. Our job is to be able to sensitively listen and understand what our customers need most and may be anxious about BEFORE we try to apply – or sell in – solutions that can help them.

If our communications can speak to and acknowledge these things, we can help them resolve and negotiate, break down the defenses and resistance. "We know it's difficult, here's how we can support you." If we listen and acknowledge, we can more effectively help them.

Builds trust, rapport, safety
People feel heard, understood and met
Enables more receptivity and engagement

Inspired by motivational interviewing and psychosocial methods – rich tradition informing this

What really matters

- Control and agency
- Acknowledgement of all needs
 - Safety
 - Comfort
 - Security
 - Identity
 - Belonging
 - Control

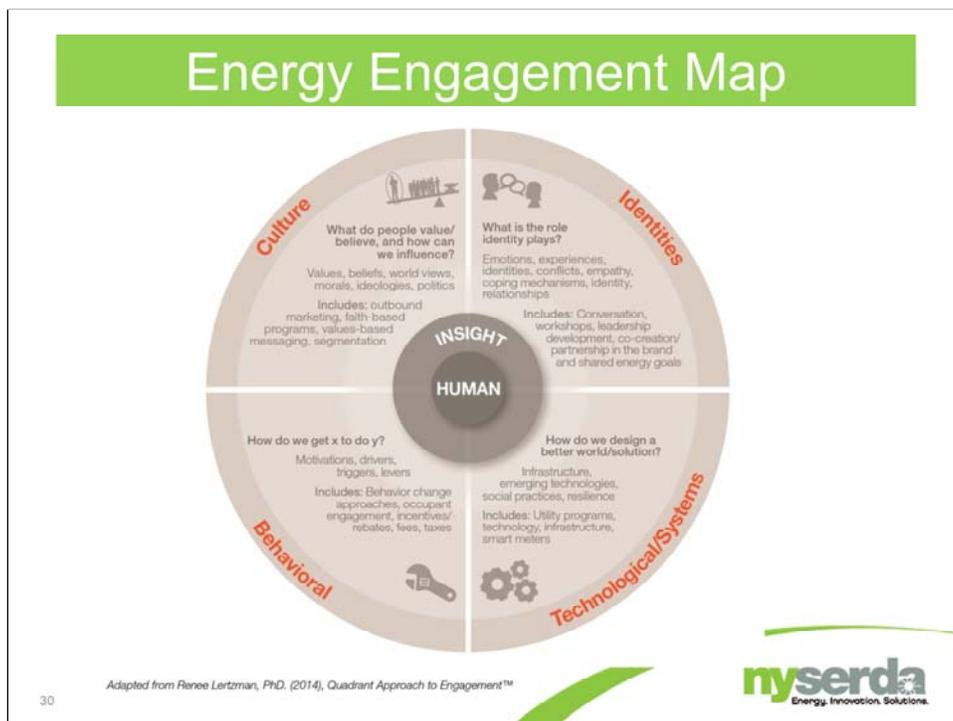
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Our homes are where we have the most influence and control

Energy use is about tangibly meeting our needs: safety, etc.

Energy efficiency must be engaged in terms of meeting these needs, at all levels. It's not just about an upgrade, not just about a free refrigerator, not just about energy bills. Any one thing will limit our ability to make long-term change and impact.



Cut up and build.

Explain, starting with behavioral and specific examples. These are the lenses, these are the goggles

Here's where it all comes together, sometimes we are SO focused on getting people to do one thing, adopt a specific behavior, buy a specific technology, we lose sight of all of the influencers, the other opportunities for change.

Invite them to think about where they spend the most time, chances are, you're in one of these primarily in your practice

Not one is wrong, but potentially incomplete without the others. Sometimes one makes more sense than another, but integration provides the most efficacy

Having a “Compassionate Conversation”

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More of a bridge from the map – there are complexities at play in ourselves as practitioners and with the people we’re engaging with. What we’ve found is that the most effective way forward is not to demand or try to get people to change, it’s about listening to people and engaging in a conversational mode of communicating. This is a practical approach.

“Compassionate Conversations” Exercise



Can we turn them into 3-d glasses, enable you to see and access all of the dimensions at play?

We'd like for people to have an experiential taste of having conversations that are based on techniques used in psychosocial research and motivational interviewing; this is a technique designed to help people feel more at ease, especially around topics that may be difficult or charged - and we realize energy use and modifications to how we use energy can be one of those. Using a set of guidelines presented to the group -- that include active listening, how to ask questions, reflecting back what has been heard, and active empathizing -- we ask participants to get into groups of three. Two of the participants will 'interview' one another, and the third is tasked with observing the interaction and providing feedback. Each person takes turns asking the other about how they use energy in their home, using our "lateral" approach (asking indirect questions, etc). After the groups engage in this brief exercise, we will come back together as a group and share reflections/comments/questions.

Key Principles

- Asking permission
 - *“Do you mind if we talk about energy use in your home?”*
 - *“Can we talk a bit about how you might be able to address energy efficiency?”*
- “Change talk”
 - *“What would you like to see different about how you use energy in your home?”*
 - *“What would be the good things about changing the situation?”*

Inspired by Motivational Interviewing

Key Principles

- Open-ended questions
- Reflective listening
 - *“It sounds like....”*
 - *“What I hear you saying...”*
 - *“So on the one hand it sounds like And, yet on the other hand....”*

Inspired by Motivational Interviewing

Key Principles

- Normalizing
 - *“A lot of people are concerned about changing their energy efficiency at home...”*
 - *“Most people report both good and less good things about their experiences dealing with a landlord ...”*
 - *“Many people report feeling like you do. They want to change their energy practices but often find it hard to do so for x reasons.”*
- Providing advice/information
 - *“Not many people are aware that x ...”*
 - *“Are you interested in learning a bit more about x or y?”*

Inspired by Motivational Interviewing

Experiential Exercise

- *“Is it ok with you if I ask you about how you use energy in your home?”*
- *“When you think about this, what comes to mind first? How you heat your home? Maybe how your kids use computers/TV, or anything else?”*
- *“Is there anything that you feel could be improved? What would that be? Why?”*
- *“What else would you like to share with me about this?”*
- Any other questions you’d like to ask to help you understand their energy situation at home, and how it may be addressed, or additional contexts that would be helpful for you.

Inspired by Motivational Interviewing

Discussion and Reactions

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Psychosocial Approach - Recap

- Addresses where the person is, in the context of their needs, concerns and dilemmas
- Acknowledges this through cultivating trust through conversations
- Enables people to negotiate competing needs by offering holistic solutions

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It's not about "getting people to sign up," it's about engaging and participating, creating opportunities for interaction and involvement.

You are the community of practitioners most well positioned to do this, to have these conversations. You are out in the communities, talking with these people one-on-one, creating the opportunities to signal understanding, create relationships and in the end, create long-term impact on our energy future.

Thank you.

Thank You

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