



Alberta Mentoring Partnership

Strength-Based and Deficit-Based Concepts – A Comparison



Strength-Based Concepts

Deficit-Based Concepts

At-potential	At-risk
Strengths	Problems
Engage	Intervene
Persistent	Resistant
Understand	Diagnose
Opportunity	Crisis
Celebrate (i.e. successes)	Punish (i.e. non-compliance)
Time-in	Time-out
Adapt to	Reform
Empower	Control
Process-focused	Behaviour-focused
Dynamic	Static
Movement	Epidemic
Unique	Deviant
Avoids imposition	Dominant knowledge
Validates people's experience	Diagnosis based on norms
People's context is primary	Professional's context is primary
Identifies and builds on strengths	Minimizes people's strengths
Client-centred	Mandate-focused
Professionals adapt to clients	Clients expected to adapt
Meet clients in their environment	Clients always go to professionals
Flexible	Rigid
Focus on potential	Focus on problems
People are inherently social/good	People are inherently selfish/bad
People do the best they can	People do as little as possible
Support	Fix
Authentic relationship focused	Expert oriented
Inclusive	Exclusive

