Researchers adopt play-by-play method to understand how counsellors can promote health
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"I realized when I was working with sports psychologists that they are studying every single interaction of the coaches and the athletes," says Gainforth.

It's an idea she wanted to try in her own field of expertise.

"When a person goes for behaviour change counselling it either works or it doesn't," she says. "But we couldn't actually determine exactly why. What makes it work? Why did it fail? And I kept thinking, how can we figure out what makes these interventions work?"

While working with clients hoping to quit smoking, Gainforth tried the video play-by-play analysis. With permission, she used audio and video recordings to scrutinize minuscule details of sessions between a client and counsellor.

By examining behaviour change counselling second-by-second, she looked at the frequency, sequence and duration of each interaction between a client and a counsellor. Behaviour change happens, she explains, during a conversion between a client and a practitioner.

"I wanted to know what happens in that conversation," she adds. "I wanted a second-by-second analysis of these interactions to understand what works to help clients change their behaviour."

Gainforth developed a method to analyze these videotaped sessions verbatim.

She then used state-space grids to map each interaction in real time and monitor how the practitioner and the client interact together. Gainforth says the grids allow researchers to examine the dynamics between the client and the
practitioner. It's the first time in behavioural science, she adds, that researchers have been able to understand how these interactions actually make a difference.

"We have created a new method for people working in behavioural science," she says. "By coding the interactions second-by-second, we've created a method to visualize the counselling sessions over time. We can map everything the practitioner says and how the client reacts and then we examine how they interact with each other over time."


Provided by University of British Columbia


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