



MOTIVATION

A counselor often judges a person's "motivation" from a number of behaviors such as the following:

- ❖ *Agreeing with the counselor*
- ❖ *Accepting the counselor's diagnosis (e.g., admitting that he or she is "an alcoholic")*
- ❖ *Expressing a desire or need for help*
- ❖ *Appearing to be distressed about his or her condition*
- ❖ *Following the counselor's advice*

Conversely, a counselor may tend to judge as "unmotivated" (or "resistant" or "in denial") and adhere to a specific change strategy.

"Motivation" can be defined as the probability that person will enter into, continue, and adhere to a specific change strategy.

Motivational interviewing wants to find an alternative to falling into what is called the confrontation-denial trap—we are each in rigid roles, or a tug of war—we play the costs and they play or pull for the benefits. The counselor knows what s/he is doing is right but they are just not succeeding with the client. So, in essence, we want the client, rather than the counselor, to experience and explore the ambivalence conflict and if it is appropriate, present reasons to be concerned about substance use and arguments for change.

To be clear, the counselor has the desire or point of view to encourage change. And motivational interviewing has a clear directive component but it is also client-centered, empathizing with the client's experience of the ambivalence conflict. Working with it, rather than getting ahead of it. Psychological judo. Sometimes the counselor will take the lead. Sometimes s/he will follow. The conscious direction pursued by the counselor is the understanding of the client's ambivalence.

So, our working definition of motivational interviewing is as follows: a directive, client-centered counseling style for helping clients express, experience, explore and resolve ambivalence about behavioral change.

The appearance of a motivational interviewing session is quite client-centered, yet the counselor maintains a strong sense of purpose and direction, and actively chooses the right moment to intervene with incisive approaches. Motivational interviewing specifically avoids argumentative persuasion, and instead operationally assumes the validity of the client's subjective experiences and perspectives. This involves listening to, acknowledging, and practicing acceptance of (though not acquiescence to) a broad range of client concerns, opinions, preferences, beliefs, emotions, styles, and motivations.

Motivational interviewing is a particular tool to help people recognize and do something about their present or potential problems. It is particularly useful with

people who are reluctant to change and ambivalent about changing. It is intended to help resolve ambivalence and get the person moving along the path to change. For some people this is all they really need. Once they are unstuck they have the skills and resources they need in order to make a lasting change. For others, motivational interviewing is only a prelude to treatment. It creates an openness to change, which paves the way for further important therapeutic work.

This model is a strength-based approach that relies on a client rediscovering the skills, competencies and resources to solve their problem. It is a way of pointing a client towards health and positive choices; guiding not leading.

Review

- ❖ *Counselor style is a powerful determinant of client resistance and change.*
- ❖ *Confrontation is a goal, not a style.*
- ❖ *Argumentation is a poor method for inducing change.*
- ❖ *When resistance is evoked, clients tend not to change.*
- ❖ *Client motivation can be increased by a variety of counselor strategies.*
- ❖ *Even relatively brief interventions can have a substantial impact on problem behavior.*
- ❖ *Motivation emerges from the interpersonal interaction between client and counselor.*
- ❖ *Ambivalence is normal, not pathological. Helping people resolve ambivalence is a key to change.*

CONTRASTS BETWEEN CLIENT-CENTERED AND MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Centered Approach	Motivational Interviewing Approach
<i>Allows the client to determine the content and direction of the counseling.</i>	<i>Systematically directs the client toward motivation for change.</i>
<i>Avoids injecting the counselor's own advice and feedback.</i>	<i>Offers the counselor's own advice and feedback where appropriate.</i>
<i>Empathic reflection is used non-contingently.</i>	<i>Empathic reflection is used selectively, to reinforce certain processes.</i>
<i>Explores the client's conflicts and emotions as they exist currently.</i>	<i>Seeks to create and amplify the client's consciousness of discrepancy in order to enhance motivation for change.</i>

Content drawn from: Texas HIV Connection (Austin, TX) and Steps Toward Change: Training Resource Book (2nd Edition) S.U.S.E., Gay Men's Health Crisis, New York, NY, 1999