

Key Concepts of Motivational Interviewing

THE MINDSET AND HEART-SET OF CONVERSATIONS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Partnership – using a collaborative style; demonstrating genuine respect for the other person; inviting and placing a premium on the other’s knowledge, experience, and wisdom; sharing your own expertise when useful; dancing rather than wrestling

Acceptance – meeting people “where they’re at” without judging them; seeking to understand the “backstory” and conveying genuine empathy; believing in others’ intrinsic value and worth; believing in them; shining a light on the strengths you see in them, not just their deficits; acknowledging and honoring people’s right to self-determination

Compassion – being in solidarity with people who are hurting or struggling without trying to jump in and “fix” the situation; being present to others in a manner that conveys “I’m here for you no matter what”; acting in ways that are in others’ best interests

Evocation – eliciting or “calling forth” from people what they already have inside—their concerns, hopes, knowledge, values, and wisdom; inviting them to imagine the possibility of change—their reasons if they were to change, how they might go about it, their sense of importance and confidence, who could help, what they might do as a next step.

FOUR PROCESSES THAT GUIDE MOTIVATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

Engaging – the process of establishing a mutually trusting and respectful helping relationship

- Goes beyond informal chat
- Includes being welcoming, offering a cup of coffee, showing genuine interest, offering hope
- Important to avoid traps that promote disengagement

Focusing – clarifying a particular goal or direction for change

- Focus can arise from the individual, the external context, or the practitioner
- Three basic scenarios: 1) focus is already clear; 2) several options exist from which to choose; or 3) focus is unclear and there’s a need to explore

- Three styles of focusing: directing, following, guiding

Evoking – eliciting the person’s own motivation for a particular change

- Intended to help resolve ambivalence in the direction of change
- Emphasis on recognizing and evoking change talk
- Goal is to elicit preparatory and mobilizing change talk

Planning – developing a specific change plan that the person is willing to implement

- Includes looking for signals of readiness from the individual
- Developing a plan is not a final but a beginning step
- Implementation requires a specific plan and intention or commitment to carry it out

FOUR CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS

- Asking *evocative* questions
- *Affirming* strengths
- Offering *reflective statements* to convey empathy, highlight ambivalence, or shine a light on “change talk”
- Providing *summaries* to clarify what has been said and draw ideas together

SELECTED QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE AMBIVALENCE AND STRENGTHEN MOTIVATION

- Regarding this issue/dilemma, **what's okay** about how things are now? ... And **what's not okay**? What concerns do you have?
- If you choose not to do anything about it, **what would be at stake**?
- If you were to make a change, what would be your **reasons** for doing so?
- Of the reasons you just gave, what would you consider to be your **best reason**?
- If you were to make this change, **how** would you go about it to be successful? (e.g., What do you think would work for you?)
- Looking at your life currently, **how important** or urgent is it for you to make this change? For example, on a scale of 0–10 (0 = not at all important; 10 = totally important), where would you place yourself? What makes it already a ___ and not a ___ (several numbers lower)? What would it take to move from a ___ to a ___ (next higher number)? How might I or others help you with that?

- If you did decide to make this change, **how confident** are you that you could be successful in doing so? (Scaling questions work well here too.)
- **Who or what** could be helpful to you in supporting this change?
- What, if anything, do you think you might do as a very **next step** to move towards this change?

PROVIDING INFORMATION AND ADVICE

A few considerations

- It's all right to express your concerns
- There are many pathways to change; your way may not be the way of another
- Focus on helping the person evaluate options
- Offer information and advice, don't impose it

Method: Elicit–Provide–Elicit

- *Elicit*
 - Ask what the person already knows
 - Ask what the person would like to know
 - Ask permission to provide information/advice
- *Provide*
 - Prioritize what the person most wants to know
 - Be clear; use everyday language
 - Offer small amounts of information with time to reflect
 - Acknowledge freedom to disagree or ignore
- *Elicit*
 - Ask for person's response, interpretation, understanding