

Introduction to Brief Motivational Interviewing



A technique that can be employed by health care providers to support women in having healthy weights when planning a pregnancy, during pregnancy, and postpartum.

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Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing is a tool to help clients/patients increase both their desire to change and their belief that they can do it. While initially developed as a technique for counsellors, a version called brief motivational interviewing is being developed for use in short appointments by health care providers.

Motivational interviewing recognizes that every client/patient faced with recommendations for behaviour change will experience ambivalence – contradictory feelings and attitudes towards the change. The goal of motivational interviewing is to resolve this ambivalence and increase motivation by:

- 1 having the client/patient talk about why she wants to change;
- 2 having the client/patient talk about her discontent with her current situation; and
- 3 having the client/patient develop strategies to overcome barriers to change.

In brief motivational interviewing a successful exchange might accomplish one of these tasks.

Instead of using logic or scare tactics to make the client/patient change, motivational interviewing uses the following 4 techniques:

- 1 **Express empathy:** express that you understand the client's/patient's experience – including their ambivalence. Be non-judgemental.
- 2 **Develop discrepancy:** listen to your client's/patient's motivations and then assist the client to highlight the discrepancy between her current behaviours and her personal goals.
- 3 **Avoid argumentation:** argumentation or direct persuasion is considered counter-productive because it leads the client/patient to further defend her reasons against behaviour change. The client/patient must be the source of her own answers and solutions. This can be difficult for health care providers because we need to resist our need to give advice.
- 4 **Support self-efficacy:** self-efficacy is believing in yourself that you can make a certain change. In supporting self-efficacy, the health care provider expresses his or her belief in the possibility of change and the client's/patient's abilities to make changes.

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Sample Questions/Responses:

These sample questions and statements demonstrate how to integrate motivational interviewing into your practice.

Express Empathy

- “It’s great that you made the time to come to see me today.”
- “You want to be more physically active but you feel guilty about taking the time away from the kids.”
- “The fact that you are here indicates that at least a part of you thinks that it’s time for a change.”

Develop Discrepancy

- “What, for you, are the three best reasons for eating out less?”
- “How is being inactive affecting your life?”
- “What worries you the most about your current situation?”

Avoid Argumentation

- “You’re feeling stuck. What do you see as a solution to this problem?”
- “What would be a first step that you could take?”
- “What would you be willing to try?”

Support Self-efficacy

- “I think that it’s great that despite how hard it’s been to find time to be active, you are willing to keep trying to fit it in. Between your family and your job, you manage a lot. I know that you can do this too.”
- “Quitting smoking is very hard and you did it. I know that you can use the skills that you developed in quitting smoking to be more physically active.”
- “So you found ways to increase your servings of vegetables and fruit to 7 a day for a while. But lately you’ve slipped into your old habits. It’s human to slip from time to time. I know that you will use what you learned last time to get back on track.”

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Healthy Eating & Physical Activity Strategies

These strategies are often helpful when adopting new behaviours.

Keep these in mind if a client/patient asks for advice.

Explore how the client/patient could incorporate them into her life.

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- Do it with a buddy - make a commitment with a partner, family member, or friend.
 - Set measurable goals.
 - Plan a menu for the week and write a grocery list.
 - Eat most meals at home.
 - Don't eat while distracted - e.g. watching TV, using the computer, driving.
 - Eat meals and snacks at about the same time each day - avoid skipping meals.
 - Schedule activity - write it in your calendar.
 - Do activities that you enjoy.
 - Sneak activity into the day - e.g. take the stairs, park at the far end of the lot, get off the bus a stop or two early.

For more information:

For other practice tools and client/patient handouts:
www.healthypregnancyBC.ca

Rollnick Stephen, Miller William R, & Christopher C. Butler. **Motivational Interviewing in Health Care: Helping Patients Change Behavior.** The Guilford Press, New York. 2008.