

## What is Motivational Interviewing? <sup>1</sup>

---

### Motivational Interviewing Is...

MI is a directive, client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence. The examination and resolution of ambivalence is its central purpose, and the counselor is intentionally directive in pursuing this goal.

### The Fundamentals of Motivational Interviewing

1. Motivation to change is elicited from the client, and not imposed from without.
2. It is the client's task, not the counselor's, to articulate and resolve his or her ambivalence.
3. Direct persuasion is not an effective method for resolving ambivalence.
4. The counseling style is generally a quiet and eliciting one.
5. The counselor is directive in helping the client to examine and resolve ambivalence.
6. Readiness to change is not a client trait, but a fluctuating product of interpersonal interaction.
7. The therapeutic relationship is more like a partnership or companionship than expert/recipient roles.

### Therapist Behaviors

- Seeking to understand the person's frame of reference, particularly via reflective listening
- Expressing acceptance and affirmation
- Eliciting and selectively reinforcing the client's own self motivational statements expressions of problem recognition, concern, desire and intention to change, and ability to change
- Monitoring the client's degree of readiness to change, and ensuring that resistance is not generated by jumping ahead of the client
- Affirming the client's freedom of choice and self-direction

### Interaction Techniques: OARS

**Open-Ended Questions** -A question that cannot be answered with yes or no, that opens up a larger conversation.

**Affirmations** -Recognition of the client's strengths

**Reflective Listening**-Listen to the client and focus on change talk. Reflect back to them what they have told you, making connections between themes.

**Summary**- Announce that you are going to summarize, list selected elements of what the client has told you, and ask them to make meaning of these things.

---

<sup>1</sup> Text is excerpted from: Rollnick S., & Miller, W.R.(1995) What is motivational interviewing? *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*,23,325-334. This and additional resources on Motivational Interviewing can be found on [www.motivationalinterview.org](http://www.motivationalinterview.org).

---

## OARS: Motivational Interviewing Interaction Techniques

---

The goal of using the **OARS** is to move the person forward by eliciting change talk, or self-motivational statements. Change talk involves statements that indicate the client may be considering the possibility of change. Change talk can be organized into four categories: problem recognition, concern about the problem, commitment to change and belief that change is possible.

### Open-Ended Questions

- **Cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no"**
- Begin treatment sessions with open-ended questions
- "What brings you here today?"
- "Tell me about what's been happening since we last met?"
- "So what makes you feel that it might be time for a change?"

### Affirmations

- Build rapport and confidence
- Must be congruent and genuine
- Recognition of strengths
- Communicate that change is possible and that they are capable of implementing that change
- Can be rare and valuable for individuals focused on failure

### Reflective Listening

- The key to this work: listen carefully to your clients
- Listen for what has worked and what hasn't
- When in doubt about what to do, listen
- Focus on their change talk and provide less attention to non-change talk
- "You are not quite sure you are ready to make a change, but you are concerned that..."
- Can be surface level reflection (repeating back what an individual says) or in reference to deeper, perhaps unstated feelings
- Keeps momentum moving forward (even if your reflections are incorrect, they create an opportunity for correction and re-articulation)

### Summaries

- A specialized form of reflective listening
  - Reflect back to the individual what he or she has been telling you
  - A way to communicate your interest in a client
  - Call attention to important elements of the discussion or shift attention or direction
  - Summarize frequently as too much information can be unwieldy
  - Highlight ambivalence
  - Announcement that you are about to summarize, list selected elements, give an invitation to correct anything, and conclude with an open-ended question
-