

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing holds a great deal of promise as an approach to individual-level behavior change.

OVERVIEW

Motivational interviewing is a client-centered behavior change counseling approach. The primary goal of motivational interviewing is to guide individuals in understanding the reasons for their mixed feelings about a desired behavior change, and to identify internal motivations that will help the individual move past their hesitance or unwillingness to make a behavior change.^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8}

Motivational interviewing is founded on four main principles used by counselors to affect behavior change in clients: 1) expressing empathy (or creating a sense of shared understanding), 2) developing discrepancy (or helping clients recognize how their values are or are not reflected in their behavior), 3) rolling with resistance (or avoiding challenging a client's hesitation), and 4) supporting self-efficacy (or encouraging the belief that clients can change their behavior).^{1,5,6,8}

EVIDENCE

There is mixed evidence as to the effectiveness of motivational interviewing, varying primarily by the type of behavior targeted.⁶ Still, the evidence is generally positive across settings and targeted behaviors.^{1-3,5-8}

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

In developing a behavior change program that includes motivational interviewing, the following factors should be considered: type and training of counselors, specific techniques, and time required.

Type and Training of Counselors

- One review of the evidence concluded no differences in outcomes per medical doctors, psychiatrists, or psychologists. However, effectiveness did generally decline in interventions that used other types of counselors.⁷
- Training of counselors has lacked consistency in terms of time required and content across interventions employing motivational interviewing;^{2,7} however, one review did highlight an average of 15 hours training time.² This variability in training may explain the disparate findings of effectiveness per type of counselor.

Motivational Interviewing Techniques

- A variety of techniques have been used to implement the founding principles of motivational interviewing. Those most commonly incorporated include monitoring readiness to change,

reflective listening, asking open-ended questions, affirming, reinforcing, and summarizing.^{1,4,5,6-8}

- Other techniques mentioned in relation to motivational interviewing are as follows: sharing others' successes with the same behavior change, agenda setting (or prioritizing what topic of conversation is most relevant to the individual), scaling questions (or helping individuals determine their values or motivations related to a behavior), avoiding argumentation, and respecting autonomy.^{1,6,8}

Time Required

- Both longer durations of individual motivational interviewing encounters and longer durations of the entire motivational interviewing period seem to perform better than brief encounters and shorter follow-up timeframes.^{2,7} However, there is some evidence that even 15-minute encounters can be effective in helping individuals achieve a desired behavior change.⁷

TIPS

- The FRAMES acronym can be used to ensure that key principles and techniques are incorporated in the motivational interviewing process: "Feedback, Responsibility for change lies within the individual, Advice giving, Menu of change options, Empathic style, and Self-efficacy."⁹
- Brief motivational interviewing encounters may be strengthened by adding follow-up components or providing written guidelines and strategies. Guidelines and strategies can be tailored to the individual and serve as cues to action.⁴
- Regardless of the type of counselor, training in motivational interviewing is important.^{2-5,7,8} Such training should focus on the founding principles of motivational interviewing and the skills in motivational interviewing techniques.⁴

REFERENCES

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⁹ Britt, Hudson, & Blampied, p. 148.