



Tobacco Cessation Program

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Quit to Win



Motivational Interviewing: It's Use with Tobacco Cessation

What is Motivational Interviewing (MI)? "A directive, client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients explore and resolve ambivalence." –(Rollnick and Miller, 1995)

Why use Motivational Interviewing (MI) with your Tobacco Cessation (TC) clients? Because MI fits with TC like PB&J (peanut butter and jelly). In other words, Motivational Interviewing techniques are ideal for assisting most people in making health behavior changes. In future articles we will give you some specific MI techniques to use with your clients. However, in order to use Motivational Interviewing techniques effectively, it is important to appreciate and work within the spirit of the approach. The following are some key points about this approach's "spirit" from its developers:

- True motivation for change is most likely to occur when elicited from the client and not imposed from an outside source through coercion, persuasion, confrontation, or the use of external contingencies.
- Attempts to directly persuade behavioral change, rather than to facilitate it, increase the likelihood of *resistance*, especially when ambivalence exists. That is why this approach attempts to elicit motivation from the client.
- Counselor directiveness is limited to helping the client examine and resolve *ambivalence*. The assumption in MI is that the resolution of the ambivalence is crucial to bringing about change and the use of coping skills when needed.

- The client, *not the counselor*, must be the one to resolve the ambivalence about changing. The counselor facilitates this process by helping their clients objectively address both sides of their struggle/ambivalence, while moving them toward an acceptable resolution involving change.
- Attempts to motivate a client for change will work best when tied to the "stage of change" currently being experienced by that client.
- Readiness for change may be strongly influenced by the interpersonal style of a counselor. Client "resistance" may be a *reaction* to a counselor who is pushing for too much change too quickly.
- Ideally, the counselor/client relationship is perceived by the client to be more of a partnership than the typical expert/recipient role.

Why Use MI for Tobacco Cessation?

Although Rollnick and Miller developed Motivational Interviewing in the early eighties from their experiences in helping problem drinkers, it was soon applied to helping clients change other harmful behaviors. This approach was developed to avoid many of the pitfalls that traditional behavior change approaches face, such as *client dropout, resistance, and relapse*. Participants in tobacco cessation programs are often dealing with several factors that create intense ambivalence. Tobacco may harm one's health, shorten life expectancy, cost money, affect appearance, or be an inconvenience and embarrassment, yet ambivalence is often heard in a smoker's

statement that he or she intends to "try" to quit. In addition to the pleasurable physical and emotional effects often associated with tobacco use (and short-term unpleasant effects of stopping), other factors may add to this ambivalence. Some may react against the stigma of smoking with the feeling that "Nobody is going to tell me I can't smoke." Additionally, quitting may mean giving up breaks from a stressful work environment. Past failed attempts to quit may create a desire to avoid the frustration of yet another attempt to stop. MI allows the client and counselor to work together to constructively address these sources of ambivalence. Rather than treating them as causes of "resistance", they are addressed collaboratively as important elements of the change process.

Resources

Miller, W. & Rollnick, S. (1991) **Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People to Change Addictive Behavior.** The Guilford Press, New York.
Rollnick, S. & Miller, W. (1995) **What is motivational Interviewing? Behavior and Cognitive Psychotherapy**, 23, 325-334.

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