



Culturally Responsive Evidence-Based and Community-Defined Practices for Mental Health | Session 4: Motivational Interviewing

Presenters:

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Participant Question & Presenter Response

Q1 *What are some basic strategies and techniques for practitioners new to using Motivational Interviewing in their work?*

A1 The OARS (Open questions, Affirmations, Reflections, Summaries) strategy is a good place to start. This strategy is an excellent foundation and encompasses several basic Motivational Interviewing skills that help with communication and effective listening. The next step is to use, listen for and elicit “change talk.” To do this, you can listen for DARN CAT (Desire, Ability, Reasons, Need, Commitment, Activation, Taking steps); listen for moments when the client says anything that implies any of these themes and follow through on it. When clients talk about these themes, it demonstrates a motivation to change.

Q2 *How can practitioners ask the right questions using Motivational Interviewing?*

A2 In Motivational Interviewing, we are trying to minimize the number of questions we ask clients. Each question really needs to count. You need listen attentively in order to intentionally and selectively reflect back things that the client says that demonstrate hope and a desire to change. Your reflecting must go beyond simply repeating the words that the client says to elicit deeper meaning and motivation for change.

Q3 *Do you have any advice on how to use Motivational Interviewing with clients who have trouble naming or explaining their feelings?*

A3 You need to meet people where they are. Be sure to acknowledge when people are struggling with naming their emotions and validate that it is a hard thing to do. It’s about moving with the person and helping to name what they are describing. You can try reflecting back some possible emotions that you feel may describe what the client is experiencing and check to see if those emotions are correct.

Q4 *Is there an effective way to use Motivational Interviewing with someone who is grieving due to a recent traumatic loss?*

A4 Motivational Interviewing focuses on pulling people out of ambivalence. If the client is experiencing ambivalence or struggling to move forward with their life after a loss, Motivational Interviewing skills can be very useful. If the client is not ambivalent about the loss and is showing acceptance and motivation to move forward, you can use other skills such as validation. When using Motivational Interviewing skills in these situations, you should begin by reflecting back the feelings the person is experiencing in order to help them identify and process those feelings. Helping the person get in touch with their emotions will guide them through the grieving process. Loss always requires us to reassess our identities. As clinicians, we help people by aiding them in processing their feelings about loss and what it means for them. Make sure to give them as much support and time as they need.

Q5 *Can the indecision and ambivalence that someone experiences be linked to fear, ineffective thoughts or other behavioral concepts?*

A5 Yes, the root cause of a person's ambivalence is likely to be complex. You don't need to delve into the etiology of the ambivalence; you just need to acknowledge it, be empathic, encourage hope and move them into a space where they consider the *possibility* of change.

Q6 *Can Motivational Interviewing work for child-parent dyads, or is it really only effective for adult individuals?*

A6 Motivational Interviewing can absolutely work for child-parent dyads. Laura used Motivational Interviewing in a research setting with kiddos with Type I Diabetes and their parents. The sessions focused on learning to affirm one another, respect autonomy, and recognize the futility of nagging. Motivational Interviewing proved successful at changing behaviors and unburdening parents.



Q7 *How does Motivational Interviewing function in non-English speaking communities? Is there any research about linguistically specific cultural responsiveness in Motivational Interviewing?*

A7 Motivational Interviewing trainings are offered in 45 different languages, and the Motivational Interviewing textbook is available in 50 different languages. This modality is in use with indigenous populations in Australia and New Zealand. A good place to begin looking for resources on this topic is the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) website:
<https://motivationalinterviewing.org/>.

Additional Resources:

- For information about mental health training and technical assistance activities, access your MHTTC Regional Center [here](#).
- [Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers](#)
- [OARS Strategy Description](#)
- [Motivational Interviewing Change Talk Description](#)

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