

Appendix 1: Motivational Interviewing Principles, Strategies, and Skills

Motivational interviewing is a directive, client-centered counseling style for eliciting behaviour change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence. It is most centrally defined not by technique but by its spirit as a facilitative style for interpersonal relationship (Rollnick & Miller, 1995).

CHAMPS II adopted the “spirit” of motivational interviewing as the primary style behind the interpersonal relationships between program staff and program participants. Staff members were trained in the techniques and strategies that are used to promote productive interactions with program participants, with “*a focus on exploring and resolving ambivalence, which is a key obstacle to change.*” (Rollnick & Miller, 1995)

How is the “spirit” of motivational interviewing used to encourage behavior change such as increased physical activity? Paraphrasing from Rollnick and Miller’s 1995 article, the key points are:

1. Staff help participants identify their own values and goals to evoke motivation to change.
2. It is the participant’s responsibility to articulate the costs and benefits of taking on new activities or changing behaviors. The staff task is to facilitate discussion of both sides of the dilemma and guide participant toward a resolution of the ambivalence, hopefully in a positive direction.
3. Direct persuasion, advice giving, argumentation, and aggressive confrontation are avoided as methods to encourage change. While there is a place for advice-giving when a participant asks for suggestions, motivational interviewing is based on an *eliciting* style.
4. Staff must be very attentive and responsive to participant’s motivational signals in order to support but not push for change. If a participant makes comments that imply resistance, that may be a sign that a staff member has assumed greater participant readiness to make a change than is the reality.
5. The relationship between staff and participant is a partnership, with the staff respecting each participant’s freedom to make choices, regardless of the consequences. The only caveat occurs when a participant reports excessive physical activity that could be unsafe due to medical and physical circumstances, such as pre-existing cardiac conditions. In such an instance, the participant is strongly advised to make changes to ensure safety.

Behaviors that are characteristic of the motivational interview style can be learned and skills will develop with practice. The most important techniques include:

1. Reflective listening to understand what a participant is trying to communicate.
2. Expressing support and acceptance.
3. Eliciting and selectively reinforcing any mention of positive change from the participant.
4. Checking on the participant’s readiness to make changes, making sure not to get ahead of the participant or make assumptions about readiness, willingness, and ability to make changes.
5. Encouraging self-determination and problem-solving. “You’re probably the best judge of what will work for you.” “What do you think about this situation?”

CHAMPS staff when discussing physical activity behavior with participants used **open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summaries**, recalled with the acronym “OARS”. These techniques are taught in many communication courses and are useful tools for all types of interpersonal interactions.

For more information on motivational interviewing, refer to:

- www.motivationalinterview.org
- Rollnick, S. and Miller, W. R. (1995). What Is Motivational Interviewing? *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 23, 325-334.

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Or read one of William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick's books on the subject:

- Miller, W. R. & Rollnick, S. (1991). *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People to Change Addictive Behavior*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Miller, W. R. & Rollnick, S. (2002). *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change* (2nd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.