# Motivational Interviewing Techniques & Understanding Harm Reduction
*StreetWorks, Training 6*

## SUMMARY

The spirit of motivational interviewing is designed to respectfully engage in collaborative conversations that help others to explore the possibility of change in their lives. Utilizing the principals of motivational interviewing and harm reduction are helpful and positive tools that can be used to help people move through the stages of change.

## KEY POINTS

- *Harm reduction* improves quality of life, not necessarily the cessation of all dangerous or harmful behavior. It acknowledges that some behaviors are clearly safer than others and true change is not going to happen until the client is ready.
- Harm Reduction and Motivational Interviewing (MI) are client centered and collaborative. Both allow the client to change their lives depending on their own concerns and values.
- MI focuses on exploring and resolving ambivalence and centers on the motivational processes within the individual, emphasizing autonomy.
- *Principles of MI* include expressing empathy, supporting self-efficacy, rolling with resistance, and developing discrepancy.
    - There is often resistance, or difficulty, in being able to see the possibilities between the problem and the solution.
    - Develop discrepancy between where a client is and where they want to be.
- *MI works by* eliciting and exploring the person's own argument for change by paying attention to the language of change. The professionals' job is to "draw out" the motivations and skills for change.
- *Stages of Change model* recognizes that change is a process in which people typically cycle through stages.
    - Stages of change are: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance. (The stages, process, goals and strategies for the stages of change are listed on a separate handout.)
    - Professionals can sometimes try to move a client through the stages of change too quickly, or try to push them into taking action on things the professional believes the youth should need or want.
    - If the provider tries to move faster than the client is ready to move, it can cause them to become defensive about their behaviors, and/or possibly turn them away from you and/or your agency.
    - Instead, providers should ask, and really hear, what the client wants and then offer suggestions and options that line up with their current needs, desires and values.
- There is a strong correlation between the maintenance of change and the degree to which clients attribute that change to their own efforts.
- Recognizing "change talk" can help the provider recognize movement through the stages of change.
    - DARN – C: Desire, Ability, Reasons, Needs, and Commitment
- Things to keep in mind:
    - The goal has to be the client's goal for themselves- not the professionals' goal for them.
    - If the provider is talking more than listening, it is likely they are trying to convince the client of something rather than meeting them where they are at.
    - Practice teaching transferable skills rather than simply giving directions.
    - MI and harm reduction techniques can be useful even if the client/provider relationship is brief or when there are external barriers to service.
    - Victims of sexual trauma have had the ownership of their body taken away from them. When asking questions, professionals need to be as noninvasive as possible, and help with autonomy by offering options.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*Motivational Interviewing and how it addresses ambivalence towards change*
1. What is motivational interviewing?
2. How is MI different than traditional approaches and why is it so effective?
3. The speaker spoke about developing discrepancy in order to create motivation for change. What kind of discrepancy is important to create, or what kind of discrepancy are you looking for in a client's current thinking?
4. How can you use MI to create discrepancy?
5. How do you develop and build trust using MI techniques?

*The philosophy of Motivational Interviewing and how it applies to The Stages of Change Model*
1. How does harm reduction and MI allow the client to determine the direction of your work with one another?
2. What are the four principles of motivational interviewing outlined in this training?
    - What does it mean to support self-efficacy?
    - What is the difference between self-efficacy and autonomy?
    - What kind of skills might a client already have that can be built on?
3. What are the five stages of change?
4. Why might it be tempting to try to push people into the next stages even if they are not ready?
    - When you look at past experiences with clients, can you recall a time where you might have pressed a client into doing something they were not ready for?
    - What happened? How did they respond?
    - What could have been done differently?

*Appling Motivational Interviewing techniques while doing outreach work*
1. Thinking about motivational interviewing and harm reduction in each stage of change:
    - What are some strategies professionals can use with clients who are in the pre-contemplation stage?
    - In the contemplation stage, it is important for clients to have an awareness that there are possible solutions to a problem, what are some strategies that can be used in order to create that awareness?
    - On the handout provided, look at the strategies listed for the preparations stage. What are some techniques and questions that were mentioned in the training video that you could use to implement those strategies?
    - What does it mean for a safety plan to be fluid? Why is this important?
    - What are ways we can support clients who are in the action and maintenance stages? Are there times in your own life when you have needed to practice new coping strategies? How can you relate your own experiences with your clients' need to practice those strategies?
2. What does the acronym OARS stand for?
    - What are you reflecting on with the client?
    - Why are reflections and summaries important?
3. What does it mean to recognize "change talk?"
    - What does the acronym DARN – C stand for?
    - What kind of statements would you hear at each different level of DARN - C?
4. How is success defined in motivational interviewing and how does this challenge traditional thinking about outcomes for youth?
5. What are the additional considerations when working with sexually exploited youth?

## FURTHER RESOURCES

- *Book: Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change*, 3rd Edition. By William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick.

**PHONE:** 612-354-3345 | **WEB:** www.streetworksmn.org | **EMAIL:** street.works@lssmn.org | **LOCATIONS:** StreetWorks outreach workers currently work in Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, Scott, Carver, Washington and Dakota counties of Minnesota.

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