



## The 'Motivation' in motivational interviewing

Motivation can be defined as the probability that a person will enter into, continue, and adhere to a specific change strategy (Council for Philosophical Studies, 1981; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). In terms of motivational interviewing, it is a key worker's task to motivate – to increase the likelihood that the client will follow a recommended course of action towards change.

Lopez, Viets, Walker and Miller (2002, cited in McMurrin, 2002) outlined the following cornerstones of motivation. They identified six key points:

1. **Motivation is modifiable.** Like overt behaviour, it can be increased or decreased via lawful principles of human nature
2. **Motivation is a matter of probabilities.** How likely is the person to initiate and persist in a particular action? It is about initiating and directing action. Therefore interventions to influence motivation are those that effectively increase or decrease the probability of action.
3. **Motivation is an interpersonal phenomenon,** something that occurs and changes within the context of human relationships.
4. **Motivation is often specific to a course of action.** A person may be unmotivated (low probability) for one type of treatment or change, but quite ready to participate in another. Drug users, for example are often more motivated to stop or reduce their use of one drug rather than another.
5. **Motivation is intrinsic as well as extrinsic.** Although it is possible to coerce behaviour change when one has control over external contingencies, intrinsically motivated change is more likely to last.
6. **Intrinsic motivation for change is engaged by eliciting** it from rather than installing it in the person.

From these perspectives it is not sensible for the key worker to blame a person for being unmotivated to change, any more than a sales person would blame a potential customer for being unmotivated to buy. Developing motivation is an intrinsic and central part of the key workers task in helping clients to live a good life.

Motivational interviewing is a particular way to help people recognise and do something about their current and/or potential problems. It is very useful with people who are reluctant to change or who are ambivalent about changing. It is intended to assist the person resolve ambivalence and to get them moving along a path of change.

Strategies of motivational interviewing are more persuasive than coercive, and more supportive than argumentative. The key worker seeks to create a positive atmosphere that can facilitate change. The overall goal is to increase a client's intrinsic motivation so that change occurs within rather than being imposed from outside. When this approach is done properly it is the client who presents arguments for change, rather than the key worker.

Take the frustration out of helping people change! Would you like the ability to quickly engage with clients, elicit loads of change talk, and ultimately help clients to help themselves?

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