



MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

The concept of motivational interviewing evolved from the work of William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick. These two psychologists developed similar approaches to working with clients in the 1980's. In 1983, Miller published a description of his method, which he called Motivational Interviewing, (Miller, 1983). After reading the article, Rollnick contacted Miller and the two have worked together for the past 20 years refining the model and teaching it to others.

DEFINITION OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

In 1995, Rollnick and Miller finally created a definition of motivational interviewing.

Motivational interviewing is a directive, client-centered counselling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence. (p. 325).

There are some key ideas within that definition motivation, ambivalence and behaviour change.

It is important to stress that Miller and Rollnick do not view motivational interviewing as a set of techniques or activities that counsellors use with or do to clients. Rather, they stress that *motivational interviewing is a way of being with people*. Indeed, Miller and Rollnick write more about the spirit of motivational interviewing than they do about its definition.

THE SPIRIT OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Rollnick and Miller write that

We believe it is vital to distinguish between the spirit of motivational interviewing and techniques that we have recommended to manifest that spirit. Clinicians and trainers who become too focused on matters of technique can lose sight of the spirit and style that are central to the approach. (1995, p. 326).

They identify seven key points that reflect the spirit of motivational interviewing.

1. ***Motivation to change is elicited from the client, and not imposed from without.*** Emphasis on coercion, persuasion, constructive confrontation and the use of external contingencies go against the spirit of motivational interviewing.
2. ***It is the client's task, not the counsellor's, to articulate and resolve his or her ambivalence.*** They describe ambivalence as a conflict between two courses of action. The counsellor's task is to facilitate expression of both sides of the ambivalence impasse, and guide the client toward an acceptable resolution that leads to behaviour change.
3. ***Direct persuasion is not an effective method for resolving ambivalence.*** While tempting to be helpful by offering persuasive arguments for change, counsellors usually create resistance to change in their clients.
4. ***The counselling style is generally a quiet and eliciting one.*** To a counsellor accustomed to confronting and giving advice, motivational interviewing can appear to be a hopelessly slow and passive process.
5. ***The counsellor is directive in helping the client to examine and resolve ambivalence.*** *The operational assumption in motivational interviewing is that ambivalence or lack of resolve is the principal obstacle to be overcome in triggering change.* Once that has been accomplished, there may or may not be a need for further intervention, such as skill training.
6. ***Readiness to change is not a client trait, but a fluctuating product of interpersonal interaction.*** Resistance and 'denial' are seen not as client traits, but as feedback regarding therapist behaviour. Client resistance is often a signal that the counsellor is assuming greater readiness to change than is the case.
7. ***The therapeutic relationship is more like a partnership or companionship than expert/recipient roles.*** The counsellor respects the client's right to make choices about behaviour and consequences of the chosen behaviour.