



## Project E3: Educate, Empower, and Employ

Motivational Interviewing in Vocational Rehabilitation:  
Theory to Practice

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# Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

- ⇒ The contents of this presentation were developed with support from the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Targeted Communities (VR TAC TC: Project E3) at the Department of Rehabilitation and Disability Studies, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (Grant# H264F15003).
- ⇒ The ideas, opinions, and conclusions expressed, however, are those of the presenters and do not represent recommendations, endorsements, or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.



# Motivational Interviewing

## A Tool for the VR Process

### Case Study Examples



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# Seeking Change

- Clients are accessing VR services because they are seeking change, meaning, and/or purpose.
- Our job is to help clients identify what the change is through exploring their values, beliefs, and strengths.
- Most clients are wanting to achieve a goal but may need guidance and support to identify what those goals are.



# The Spirit of Motivational Interviewing

- The spirit of the counselor sets the tone of the meetings.
- Create safe and supportive opportunities based on client choice to establish rapport and momentum to change.
- Compassion, acceptance, partnership, and respect
- Be aware of the “Righting Reflex”- counselor wants to fix everything.
- Counselors using MI should not persuade, advise without permission, or attempt to change your client by “fixing” problems.

# Client-centered communication- OARS

## Open-ended questions, Affirm, Reflect, Summarize

- Express empathy through reflective listening.
- Develop discrepancy between clients' goals or values and their current behavior.
- Avoid argument and direct confrontation.
- Adjust to client resistance rather than opposing it directly.
- Support self-efficacy and optimism.



# Change talk

- What is their desire to change? “I want to...”
- What is their ability to change? “I could...”
- What are their reasons for change? “I would if...”
- What is their need for change? “I have to..”
- Listening for key words that promote the idea that the client is ready for change.

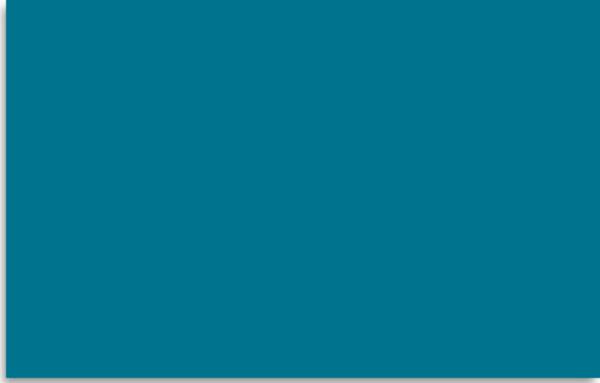
**Activation** ☐ **Commitment** ☐ **Taking Steps**

# What stage is your client in?

- **Pre-contemplation**- may be seen in younger clients receiving transition age services (Their values may not align with the desire to work at this time-meet them where they are)
- **Contemplation**- considering change.
- **Preparation**- preparing for action.
- **Action**- actively implementing a plan.
- **Maintenance**







“My reason for change was to prove it to myself.”



# Stroke Survivor Reaches Milestones

- 32 year old woman that survived multiple strokes and is now coping with PTSD and anxiety.
- Initial meetings were in the community once a week (counselor exhibited compassion and empathy about her story)
- Wanted to work but fine with what she knew before the strokes (restaurant hostess or office secretary)
- Counselor evoked change talk around the desire to support other people with disabilities through a helping profession...

# Ambivalence: Approach Avoid Conflict

- I want to find a career!
- I am afraid of starting over from what I already know.
- I am afraid of what people will think of me.
- I am afraid I will not be accepted for who I am with a disability.
- I am afraid I will be judged for having to process different than I used to.
- I am afraid that stressful changes could cause another stroke.



# Open-ended questions

- What could that look like?
- What would you enjoy about it?
- What steps would have to be taken to achieve that goal?
- What support do you need to get there?

**Tool to gather more information and gain client perspective**

# Affirmations

- You do have choice in this process.
- Your dedication shows by consistently communicating.
- Your commitment to this process shows through your engagement and willingness.
- You are resilient and it shows through wanting to work.

**Body language, voice tone, and eye contact are all forms of affirmations as well**

# Reflective Listening

- It sounds like you want to help others, but are afraid you may be seen as incompetent to help others.
- So you feel you want to step out of your comfort zone, but are afraid of stressful events affecting physical and mental health.
- You are wondering if you could help children with disabilities, but are afraid of triggers that may occur because of your own traumatic experiences.



**Use of overstating or understating reflections**

# Summaries...Stepping Stones to Change.


- Here is what I have heard so far, tell me if I am missing anything. You want to try something new but are afraid of changing from your comfort zone and failing.
- Let me see if I am understanding so far, you want to help others, but want to know you have the right support in the process, so having a plan and goals to help guide you.

**Tool to transition from one topic to the next and  
prepare for change**


# Maintenance

- Weekly prayer groups with peers
- Weekly communication with counselor
- Monthly MI based meetings with VR counselor
- Church every Sunday with family and friends
- Individual therapy
- Grounding and mindfulness techniques for emotional regulation
- Adjusting to change and developing new goals as needed...





“I love my job. I love working with all my  
coworkers because we are all creative.  
They just get me”.



# Young Man with Autism Gets Dream Job

- 24 year old male with Autism
- Artist/Photographer/Performer
- Thrives in creative/accepting environments
- First VR experience not a positive job match



# Ambivalence: Avoid-Avoid Conflict

- Volunteering for SPCA since 2014 and comfortable in the routine
- Previous employment did not foster strengths- will it be like that again?
- Do I really want to change and start all over again?
- It will take time creating new routines.
- Change is scary and hard.

# Engaging

## Values

*What is most important to you?*

- painting/photography
- chaotic-free environments

*What work would be most fulfilling for you?*

- being creative
- using artistic skill set
- being in a creative environment

# Focusing

## Strengths

*What are your strengths?*

- time management
- being creative
- attention to detail
- organization
- dedication

*How would you use these strengths?*

Using these strengths in employment would promote happiness/positive energy.

# Evoking

- *What do you want for yourself?*
- *What makes you happy?*
- *What brings you joy?*
- *What makes you feel good?*
- Body scan
- Envisioning

# Planning

- Implementing plans for positive change
- How can you be supported?
- Employment objectives that align with values/strengths
- Encouragement

# Maintenance

- Art is an outlet- doing what you love and value
- Open communication between support team
- Monthly or as needed MI based meetings
- Involved in creative projects





“I’ll do anything”.



# Woman with Multiple Sclerosis Adjusts to Physical Change

- 60 year old woman with Multiple Sclerosis
- Adjusting to physical change
- Fostering strengths of the mind
- Recognizing discrepancy between behavior and values

# Envisioning

- What could work look like for you?
- If you could be in any work environment, what would it be?
- Tell me about your perfect job.
- You got your dream job, what does that look like?
- What are the positives to this change?
- What would be different if you were in a successful job match?
- Where do you see yourself in 3 months? (quarterly review)

# Scaling Rulers to Elicit Change Talk

- Using a scale of 1-10 paired with questions
- Elicits change talk and motivation
- Identifies potential barriers to change
- Develop discrepancy between strengths/values and what she is saying.

# Evocative Questions

- Why is now a time to try something new?
- How can you make this happen?
- What would be the best way to get started?
- What obstacles/barriers might there be?
- How can you overcome these barriers to move toward the change you want?



# Double Approach-Avoid Conflict

- I don't want to try something new because I know I was good at this before and it will be a quick placement.
- I am comfortable with this skill.
- I will try something new so I can get back to work!
- I have learned new skills once, I can do it again!

# Maintenance

- Continue regular doctor visits
- Continue working with DARS and local training program for individuals 55 and up
- Meet monthly to review goals
- MI guided meetings
- Being involved in the community- doing what is important to you.

# Why MI for VR?

- **Motivation is important to seek employment**
- Promotes positive behavior change
- Client-centered approach
- Collaborative relationship between client and counselor
- Goal-oriented communication
- Less stressful exploration of reasons for change and goals



# Sponsors

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