

Is Motivational Interviewing a Part of Your Rehabilitation Counseling Practice?

At-a-Glance:

Current and potential uses for motivational interviewing in rehabilitation counseling. Motivational interviewing is an evidence-based practice that addresses consumer motivation, reluctance, and barriers to change.

Key Findings

Motivational interviewing and rehabilitation counseling are both based on the assumption that ambivalence, or difficulty making decisions, is normal and can be resolved through a shared and supportive process. Counselor and consumer work together to help the consumer identify their own hopes, strengths, and decide what they want for themselves. Together the counselor and consumer set achievable goals, while cultivating self-reliance and independence. The process helps consumers build confidence by providing information, scaffolding problem solving, and developing decision-making skills. This research highlights that:

- Both motivational interviewing and rehabilitation counseling focus on consumer self-determination through decision-making, goal setting, and achievement
- Motivational interviewing is a useful and efficient counseling approach to help clients build confidence and self-sufficiency
- Consumer success in dealing with health and disability issues requires strong motivation
- Perceived consumer value of services, chances of a successful outcome, and the odds of overcoming barriers contribute to motivation

Putting It into Practice

Motivational Interviewing and Decision-making

- Support consumers to choose between options
- Keep an open mind about the rationale behind consumer behaviors. View them as predictable, moldable, and situationally responsive

- View options from the consumer’s point of view, recognize their values, and focus on positive traits

The Four Principles of Motivational Interviewing

- Remain empathetic—put yourself in the consumer’s shoes—to provide a safe environment for decision-making
- Build trust by expressing understanding and acceptance. This enables consumers to explore their own resistance to change, be vulnerable, and take risks
- Point out ways that their effective behavior choices are helping them achieve their goals
- Support consumer efforts toward building confidence, achieving goals, and celebrating milestones to change

Remember “OARS” to Develop Good Counseling Relationships

- **Open-ended questions** help clients come to their own conclusions about change
- **Affirmation** reinforces the consumer’s subjective experiences, values, and points-of-view
- **Reflections** on the part of the counselor help maintain a consumer-centered focus on behavior changes
- **Summarizing** is a reflective listening method the counselor uses to make sure both parties are on the same page regarding goal-setting, and decision-making

More about this Research

This research clarifies the similarities between vocational rehabilitation counseling and motivational interviewing. Motivational interviewing is an effective tool for addressing issues and achieving positive outcomes. The motivational interviewing process guides consumers through the five stages of change: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. Motivational interviewing has been proven effective in resolving addictive behaviors, facilitating health behavior change, treating psychiatric/mental health issues, and helping with vocational issues.

Learn More

Access this research by visiting the [Project E3 Research Database](#)

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Questions? Feedback?

Do you have questions or feedback about putting this research into practice? We’re waiting to hear from you! Send us your [questions or feedback](#).

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Have you tried any of these practices? Have you had success working with these populations in your area? Tell us more and [join our conversation](#).