



DO's & DON'Ts



of Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing is an evidence-based guiding style of communication that awakens an individual's own motivation for change when they are experiencing ambivalence. It is an effective communication tool to help the other person in their growth and development and is centered on the other person's well-being. It's a way of talking with them about their change goal, in a collaborative and supportive way.

+ Do's



Be a guide, not a director

Skillfully guide the conversation toward the change goal while only offering expertise where needed. Actively listen while exploring their ambivalence, evoking motivation, and seeking their wisdom.



Resist the righting reflex

Resist the urge and automatic response to tell the other person what you see wrong in what they are doing and how to fix it in an attempt to promptly set them on a better course. Not resisting the righting reflex is counterproductive and you become the opposite of a guide. You become a director.



Elicit change talk

Guide the other person in talking about their argument for changing. This calls forth their own internal motivators. The more people say aloud why it's important for them to change, the more likely they are to change.



Affirm the individual's own expertise and worth

Affirmations are a way to recognize the other person's worth, intentions, behaviors, and potential by searching for these positives and commenting on them. When they are accurate and expressed genuinely, they support self-efficacy and enhance rapport.

X Don'ts



Rush into problem solving

Take time to listen for understanding at the beginning of the engagement. Before exploring solutions, you want to build rapport, explain your role and understand their values, dilemma, and perspective.



Use threats or coercion

Using threats or coercion can backfire. It can lead to defensiveness or the individual simply saying what they think you want to hear. These conditions don't create the psychological safety for the individual to reflect on their own behaviors, attitudes, values, and internal motivators for change.



Elicit sustain talk

Sustain talk is an individual's argument against changing. While it's important not to ignore their argument/reason to stay the same, it's also important not to elicit this type of talk. Doing so will only strengthen it.



Give advice without getting permission

Ask permission before giving advice, and before doing so, first inquire into and understand what they already know. They too are the expert. After providing advice with permission, invite them to share their thoughts about the advice you provided.