Motivational Interviewing: A Compassionate Approach for Helping People Change

Motivational Interviewing (MI) Defined:
“A client-centered practitioner directed method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence,” as defined by William R. Miller and Steven Rollnick, the founders of Motivational Interviewing (2002).

The Spirit of MI and the Native Culture
Miller and Rollnick place much importance on the spirit and style of MI in that this Change Approach is more than just research supported behavioral counseling and technique. The spirit of MI embraces and supports values akin to those of the Native Culture.

Western Values vs. Traditional Values:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Culture</th>
<th>Native Culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the Individual</td>
<td>Focus on the Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Reliance</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directness and Openness</td>
<td>Indirectness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Achievement</td>
<td>Interpersonal Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Doing (Active, Restless)</td>
<td>Importance of Being (Passive, Calm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>Non-materialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Cooperation/Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and Effect Thinking</td>
<td>Relationship-Oriented Thinking</td>
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<td>Future and Past</td>
<td>Present &amp; to the Seventh Generation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change is Inevitable</td>
<td>Change is Upsetting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Motivation to change comes from the client and cannot be imposed through any action of doing on the part of the counselor. The spirit of MI relies upon the intrinsic internal wisdom of the client as motivation for change. Therefore the counselor’s role is one of trust and of being with the client.

Ambivalence is a natural part of the change process rather than evidence of non-cooperation. Therefore, the role of the counselor is not one of confrontation but one of guidance as the client is encouraged to articulate the characteristics of the ambivalence that arises as change is sought. The counselor’s job is to be directive yet respectful as the client is guided in the exploration of his or her ambivalence. The assumption is that change is indeed upsetting—even when it is needed in order to restore balance—and resistance to change is natural.
Resistance and denial are not seen as client traits but as a signal that the counselor may be moving out of step in the relationship and needs to modify his or her motivational strategies; in this, the client is respected for being where he or she is in the process.

The therapeutic relationship is one of partnership rather than possessing an expert/subordinate dynamic: There is again a sense of respect for the client’s ability to make his or her own choices regarding his or her behavior and what he or she wants to change if at all.

MI emphasizes validation of the client’s life experiences where there is an honoring of the client’s ability to heal him/herself as a path to balance, harmony and health is sought.

The following prayer offered by a Pueblo elder for the MI practicing counselor illustrates how the essence of MI and Native values align:

(You may use your own opening to the prayer)

**Guide** me to be a patient companion
To listen with a heart as open as the sky.

**Grant** me vision to see through (his/her) eyes
And eager ears to hear (his/her) story.

**Create** a safe and open meadow in which we may walk together
Make me a clear pool in which (he/she) may reflect.

**Guide** me to find (him/her) your beauty and wisdom
Knowing your desire for (him/her) to be in harmony – healthy, loving and strong.

**Let** me honor and respect (his/her) choosing of (his/her) own path
And bless (him/her) to walk it freely.

**May** I know once again that although he and I are different
Yet there is a peaceful place where we are one.

(Your own ending to the prayer.)

References


