Learning Outcomes for a Motivational Interview Approach

- For students to understand the core principles of Motivational Interviewing.

- For students to understand that changing behaviour relies primarily upon the motivation to do so.

- For students to understand the goal of Motivational Interviewing as resolving 'ambivalence', that is, conflict about changing their behaviour.

- For students to be more able to recognise high-risk behaviours via personalised feedback.

- For students to become more skilled at evaluating how much of a problem their behaviour might be in relation to other issues in their lives.

- For students to understand and recognise that they may or may not share the aspirations of concerned adults or peers.

- For students to become more skilled in exploring their own patterns of behaviour and to understand further the process and benefits of change.

- For students to understand and practice a range of Motivational Interviewing skills including: the use of open-ended questions, reflective listening, reframing, developing discrepancy and looking forward.

- For students to experience an increase in self-efficacy, self-esteem and internal attribution.

- For students to feel confident that they can make use of these skills in order to support the process of change in both themselves and within the peer group.

- For students to more fully understand and recognise the power of peer support as a means of positively motivating individuals.

Introduction

Motivational Interviewing (MI) was originally developed by Miller and Rollnick (1991, 2002) and was defined as a person-centred, directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence. Unlike non-directive counselling, this approach has been described as more focused and goal-directed. The examination and resolution of ambivalence is the key purpose and the facilitator adopting this approach will therefore be intentionally directive in pursuing this goal.

The approach was originally developed within medical settings in order to support individuals with addiction problems. A central premise was that people are not always ready to change their patterns of behaviour and the approach does not presume or assume that people actually want to change particular aspects of their behaviour. Behaviour change is, in effect, reliant upon the individual's motivation.

Motivation

So, what is the concept of motivation? It is a condition characterised by ambivalence and resistance. It is a fluid and dynamic state which can change from a commitment directed towards some course of action through to a return (or relapse) into the 'old' behaviour. It is important to highlight the fact that motivation is a complex state. In order to be successful in the change process, an individual must believe that the change is important and necessary and have confidence that she can be successful and be ready to work on the change in the immediate future.

Adults who are this motivated and recognise that they have a difficulty will generally seek support and help from friends or appropriate professionals. They might access support to give up smoking or drinking or seek counselling for specific emotional issues or problems. Unfortunately for children and students in the learning context, the situation may not always be theirs. For example, when school staff have concerns regarding a student's behaviour, it may not always be the case that the student shares these concerns. He may also not share the same values, aspirations and goals and this can lead to difficulties and tensions. It is this tension that has led us to develop this programme which aims to teach the key principles and some of the key strategies within Motivational Interviewing. It also focuses upon providing students with opportunities to explore their own behaviour and to further develop an understanding of the change process and potential personal benefits of their own behaviour change. In order to do this, the programme aims to introduce and also remain within what Rollnick and Miller (1995) define as 'the spirit of Motivational Interviewing'.

The Spirit of Motivational Interviewing

Rollnick and Miller (1995) identify seven key elements which they define as being the spirit of this approach.

Firstly they suggest that the motivation to change should be elicited from the client and not imposed. As stated earlier, this has some very real implications for adults working with young people in schools who have been labelled as 'problematic' and in need of 'changing'. Other motivational approaches frequently incorporate or emphasise coercion, persuasion or constructive confrontation. None of these fall within the spirit of this

approach. The key aim is to identify and mobilise the client's values and personal goals in order to subsequently stimulate behaviour change.

The second key element is that it is the client's task and not the counsellor's to articulate and resolve her ambivalence. For example, the student who knows that she needs to stop swearing at certain members of staff will need to be encouraged to express the conflicting and often confusing elements of this conflict, that is, 'If I stop swearing then the teachers will stop giving me detentions and getting angry with me but if I stop swearing then my friends will think I've gone soft and I'll lose them.' The counsellor's task here is to guide the client towards the best resolution that will then trigger change.

The third key element is the fact that direct persuasion is not seen to be an effective method for resolving ambivalence. This perhaps presupposes the fourth element: that the counsellor's style will generally be quiet and eliciting.

The only way in which the counsellor will be regarded as 'directive', the fifth key element, is when he supports the client to examine and resolve ambivalence.

The sixth key element is the acceptance of the fact that readiness to change is not a client 'trait' but a fluctuating product of interpersonal interaction. The resilience and denial associated with the change process are not regarded as client 'traits' but rather as feedback on the therapist's approach and behaviour. If a client is resistant this is generally an indication that the counsellor has wrongly assumed a greater readiness to change than is the case in reality. This will lead to the counsellor's approach being modified.

The seventh and final key element is the fact that this so called therapeutic relationship is really more like a partnership of equals as opposed to the expert and client roles found in many other approaches. There is a genuine sense of the client as an autonomous being who has freedom of choice as to how she behaves and deals with the consequences of that behaviour.

> Viewed in this way, it is inappropriate to think of Motivational Interviewing as a technique or set of techniques that are applied to or (worse) 'used on' people. Rather, it is an interpersonal style, not at all restricted to formal counselling settings. It is a subtle balance of directive and client-centred components, shaped by a guiding philosophy and understanding of what triggers change. If it becomes a trick or a manipulative technique, its essence has been lost.
>
> (Miller 1994)

They further emphasise the difference between Motivational Interviewing and more confrontational approaches, highlighting the fact that Motivational Interviewing is not on offer when the therapist:

- argues that the person has a problem and needs to change
- offers direct advice or prescribes solutions to the problem without the person's permission, or without actively encouraging the person to make his or her own choices
- takes an authoritative/expert stance leaving the client in a passive role
- does most of the talking, or functions as a unidirectional information delivery system
- imposes a diagnostic label
- behaves in a punitive or coercive manner.

In their book, these kinds of techniques violate what they call the essential 'spirit' of Motivational Interviewing.

Four Broad Principles

Miller and Rollnick (2002) not only define the spirit of this process but also identify four broad principles that underlie the approach. These are as follows:

1. The Expression of Empathy

This is essential for adults working with adults but perhaps more so when they are working with students and young people. It is essential that a non-judgemental approach is maintained and that the young person's perspective is respected and listened to. It is also essential that the feelings of ambivalence are seen as necessary and a normal part of the change process. If the young person becomes defensive or stuck then the adult should take action in terms of changing his approach. It is therefore given that skilful reflective listening is a key requirement of the counsellor or adult who is supporting a student using this approach.

2. Developing Discrepancy

Miller and Rollnicks (2002) approach is directive compared to other person-centred approaches. The approach supports the young person in developing a discrepancy between how things are and how they might wish them to be in the future. This can be done, as in this programme, by prompting an understanding of the costs and benefits of changing and not changing the behaviour in question. The potential advantages of change can be clarified and the young person can make their own assessment as to the value of change or otherwise. Key, once again, is the fact that the young person herself needs to articulate the discrepancy and present the arguments for and against change.

3. Rolling with Resistance

The approach abides by the dictum that attempting to persuade or coerce a young person into changing their behaviour is unlikely to succeed. This approach will probably increase resistance and denial and these should then be reframed by the therapist or adult in order to turn the problem back towards the young person. The use of such active listening is promoted throughout this programme and helps to facilitate the young person as a 'problem-solver', that is, one who can identify and develop their own solutions and ideas.

4. Supporting Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is central to the whole process which promotes the notion of one's belief that the ability to succeed will ultimately ensure that success. If the person does not believe that they can, or should, change then they will be very unlikely to do so. What is essential is that the young person, and not the adults, is responsible for identifying and choosing new behaviours and then putting her plans into action.
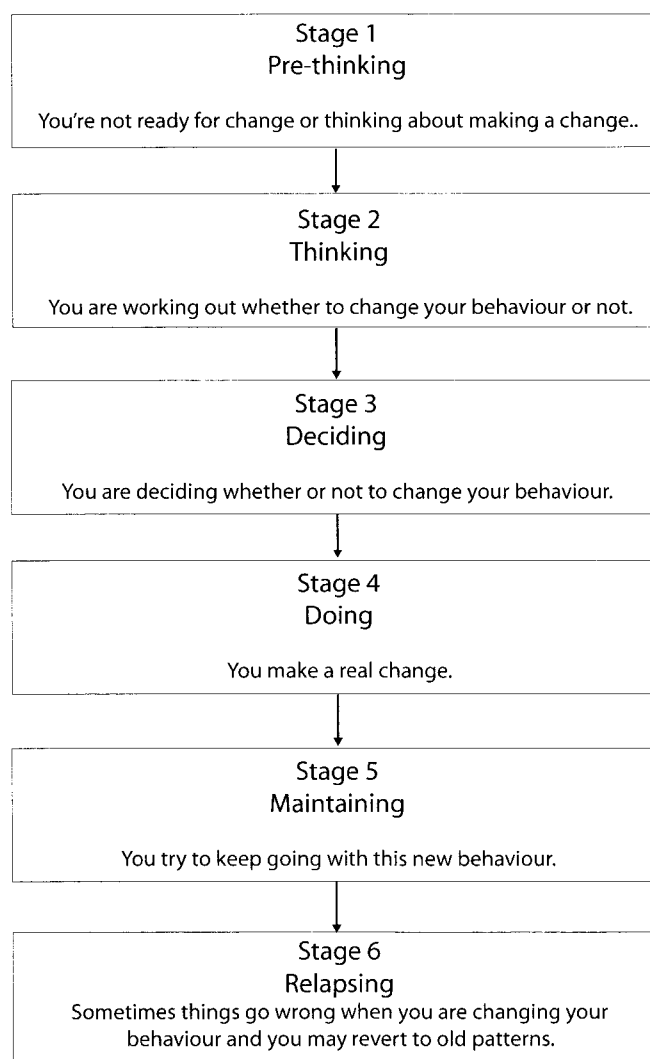
The Change Process

This process of change is complex and frequently unpredictable and we feel that this point must be emphasised. There are often circumstances external to us or our particular

position that cannot be foreseen. For young people, in particular, their 'readiness' to change can be challenged, effected and influenced by a huge range of factors including peer pressure, peer group issues, home issues, curriculum stresses and so on. This programme therefore aims to highlight the complexity of change and to also consider some of the barriers to change that students may come across, both external and internal. Exploring the potential benefits of change is a key element and supported by increasing an understanding and appreciation of the stages of change.

The Stages of Change

The model adopted for the purposes of this programme is that of Prochaska and Diclemente (1982). They identified a series of stages through which we travel when addressing problems or concerning behaviours and these were redefined by McNamara (1992, 1998).

Figure 1: Model of Stages of Change (as described by McNamara,1998)


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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Stage 1                        │
│                  Pre-thinking                     │
│                                                   │
│  You're not ready for change or thinking about making a change.. │
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                          │
                          ▼
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│                    Stage 2                        │
│                   Thinking                        │
│                                                   │
│  You are working out whether to change your behaviour or not. │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Stage 3                        │
│                   Deciding                        │
│                                                   │
│  You are deciding whether or not to change your behaviour. │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Stage 4                        │
│                    Doing                          │
│                                                   │
│            You make a real change.                │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Stage 5                        │
│                  Maintaining                      │
│                                                   │
│     You try to keep going with this new behaviour. │
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                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Stage 6                        │
│                   Relapsing                       │
│   Sometimes things go wrong when you are changing your │
│      behaviour and you may revert to old patterns. │
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This model can be used by professionals supporting young people in schools, primarily to identify how ready, or otherwise, they are for making a change in their behaviour.

It has also been adapted for use in this programme in order to ensure that the young people targeted have appropriate opportunities to understand the process and make use of the cycle within problem-solving scenarios. The emphasis is on the 'cycle' of change and the fact that failure or 'relapsing' is an essential element of the process as are:

- pre-thinking
- thinking about change
- making the decision to change
- actively 'doing' the change
- maintaining it through a range of appropriate support systems.

Using Motivational Interviewing with Young People

In the school context concerns regarding an individual student's behaviour may well have come from a third part, for example, a parent, teacher, mentor. The young person concerned may not be motivated to change his behaviour and may not share the same aspirations or goals as these concerned adults. This resource is consequently aimed at students in order to encourage them to explore their own patterns of behaviour and to further develop an understanding of the change process and the benefits it might bring. The programme introduces students to MI and the basic MI skills:

1. Open-ended questions.
2. Reflective listening.
3. Reframing.
4. Developing discrepancy.
5. Looking forward.

McNamara (1998) identifies five goals for using MI to help students in addressing problem behaviours which are relevant to this programme to:

1. increase concern
2. increase knowledge
3. promote internal attribution
4. promote self-efficacy
5. promote and reinforce self-esteem.

These are key aims of the programme as a whole which is certainly not primarily focused on students exhibiting behavioural problems or other difficulties such as low self-esteem or anxiety. It is aimed at all young people in order to facilitate their success in the process of change.

The programme is both educational and therapeutic in design. However, it is important to stress that it should not be regarded, on any level, as a substitute for individualised interventions delivered by appropriately trained clinicians. The programme can provide some useful resources for the clinician engaged in individual interventions and the Learning Mentor, SENCO, Inclusion Manager or other professionals wishing to develop a programme of support for an individual student. A significant feature is the way in which students themselves are required to try out and make use of the key stills and strategies of the MI approach. The idea here is to promote this powerful notion of peer support

and to encourage young people to perceive themselves as change agents who are both motivated and motivating to others.

In our experience to date we have found two main approaches successful: using the resources to work with individual students and using the programme as a whole with groups of students as part of a schools wellbeing and PSHE curriculum. The latter appears to 'normalise' these therapeutic tools, reinforcing their importance as key life skills to aid future and present and wellbeing.

The programme is introduced to involved staff via an introductory PowerPoint presentation accompanied by facilitators' notes and training materials. These introduce MI as a therapeutic intervention, discuss the importance of identifying wellbeing issues at an early stage whilst also outlining the contents and aims of the student programme. The training materials provide prospective facilitators with opportunities to 'try out' some of the resources and practise some of the skills and techniques, for example, open-ended questioning, reflective listening, reframing and developing discrepancies. The student programme is further supported by appendices including fact sheets, letters to parents and information on referral routes to specialist agencies. We feel very strongly that this resource provides young people with the opportunity to develop a range of self-reflection and problem-solving skills that will contribute towards the prevention of more problematic mental health problems in future. They are introduced to concepts, skills and strategies that can be utilised throughout both adolescence and their adult lives.

The Structure of the Programme

The programme is structured as follows:

- Introduction
- PowerPoint presentation and notes
- Training session materials
- The eight session programme for students:

Session 1	Introduction and Ground Rules
Session 2	Positive Points
Session 3	Understanding Me and My World
Session 4	Motivation for Change – Developing a Script
Session 5	Understanding the Stages of Change
Session 6	Problem-solving Using the Stages
Session 7	The Personal Change Process
Session 8	Goal Identification, Planning a Pathway and Evaluation

- Appendices –   Information Sheet for Students

    Letter to Parents/Carers

    Information Sheet for Parents/Carers

    Mental Health Fact Sheet

    Referral Routes to Specialist Agencies

    Directory of National Mental Health Services

    Sample Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Each session of the student programme, apart from the introduction, is structured as follows:

- Introduction and Aims.
- Active Listening Icebreaker.
- Scenario (also presented on audio CD).
- Questions for Discussion.
- Skills Practice.
- Evaluation.

Each of the sessions is designed to be delivered in a 45-60 minute period and detailed facilitator notes are provided to ensure ease and safety of delivery. The facilitator(s) can choose to adapt the resources to fit the individual or group needs and also allow additional time for more complex strategies or concepts to be discussed and practised.

Using the Facilitator Checklist

We feel that the student programme can effectively be delivered by a range of school-based or external professionals including SENCOs, inclusion managers, Learning Mentors, Educational Psychologists and other professionals supporting young people within the school context.

The facilitator's checklist has been devised to both summarise and help staff focus on key issues that must be addressed at the planning stage. This includes raising awareness of the needs of more vulnerable pupils, practical considerations relating to resources and wider policy implications within the school.

As stated earlier, facilitator's notes are also provided in the introduction to all sessions and for some activities where more explanatory detail is needed. These provide some hints and pointers as to when things may or may not require more sensitive handling.

A Whole-school Approach

It is hoped that this programme will further prompt facilitators to consider how effectively this kind of work is embedded in the curriculum and how it can best be tailored to meet individual and whole-school needs. It may also prompt thinking as to how the school manages and supports those who are experiencing high levels of anxiety, low self-esteem and difficulties in managing change and maintaining overall wellbeing.

Facilitator Checklist

Preparation for delivery of this programme must include both practical considerations relating to room use, resources and so on, as well as reflection on your own experience of behaviour change and wellbeing, your skills as a facilitator and the need to reduce risk and create a learning environment which feels safe for students.

This checklist has been developed to help facilitators prepare thoroughly. It may be useful as an exercise to help you establish priorities for discussion or action. It is not definitive and it may be appropriate to add other points that relate more specifically to your situation.

While it is not essential that you have all the knowledge, skills and experience implied below, it is essential that you are aware of your strengths and weaknesses and that you take the necessary steps to ensure you are well prepared.

Remember, behavioural change is an emotional topic and may arouse strong feelings and reactions. It is important that the facilitator feels able to 'hold' a group and is prepared to deal with difficulties that arise. It is important that the learning process itself is 'emotionally literate' and that a supportive empathic and caring ethos is promoted from the start.

We recommend that two facilitators run the programme. This could be a 'lead facilitator', for example, a Learning Mentor or teacher, supported by a Learning Support Assistant. Having two facilitator's means you can withdraw individuals for additional support if necessary. It also means one of you can take on an observer role if appropriate.

The lead facilitator should:

- have experience or a secure understanding of Motivational Interviewing processes and techniques

- have a commitment to the 'spirit' of Motivational Interviewing

- have experience of delivering group work and Circle Time

- have a positive approach and proven skills in relation to social inclusion

- be committed to developing their own emotional literacy and wellbeing

- have a reflective approach to their teaching and learning

- understand how emotional literacy promotes mental health and school achievement.

Before starting this programme, facilitators should discuss any personal experience of positive and negative behaviour change with each other. Consideration should also be given to ways in which you will support each other during the programme.

Whole-school Readiness

- In your opinion, has the school dealt well with mental health issues amongst staff and pupils?

- Does the school have an active policy on behaviour and bullying?

- Does the school have a member of staff responsible for SEN, travellers, homeless, looked after, adopted children and refugees?

- Are school exclusions dealt with systematically, fairly and as a last resort?

- Will you be supported by senior management?

- How will you deal with colleagues or parents/carers who have a strong negative reaction to this work?

- How will you explain the work to parents/carers?

- Is there a whole-school policy on emotional literacy?

- To whom are you accountable in this role?

Reducing Risk

- Think about writing a letter to parents and carers to either secure their consent or inform them of your intentions. Alternatively utilise the fact sheet and letter for parents provided in the appendices.

- Identify potentially vulnerable children before starting the group.

- Do you feel confident to manage the contributions of pupils at risk of exclusion?

- Do you feel confident to manage the contributions of pupils underachieving?

- What self-management strategies will you use to prepare yourself for each session?

- Can you provide one-to-one time for pupils who need it? How will you identify those pupils?

- Will you evaluate each session on the same day as it is held?

- How will 'lessons learned' when running this group be fed into future planning for this work?

- When planning the programme identify 'What if...?' worst case scenarios. This will help you anticipate and prevent problems.

- Who will provide supervision for you? Do you have access to an experienced Motivational Interviewer professional who could talk on this role? How would this support ensure your safety and how will you access and find this support?

Inclusion

- Are the classroom and the curriculum accessible to all learners? Will your sessions include everyone?

- How will you manage the introduction of differentiated tasks for some learners?

- How will you pay attention to different learning styles?

- Will your resources and anecdotes portray the world as exclusively young, white, middle-class, able-bodied and heterosexual?

- Will your displays represent the cultural diversity of our society? Will they challenge stereotypes?

- Will you challenge discriminatory attitudes and practices of some pupils constructively?

- How are the needs of bi-lingual and ethnic minority learners met?

- What are your own beliefs about behaviour change and the use of therapeutic tools to achieve this?

- What are the dominant cultural values and/or religious beliefs in the school? In what ways will this help or hinder the effective delivery of the programme?

- Do you understand the difference between group work and working in groups?

Have you and your co-facilitator discussed:

- how much you will disclose
- how and when you will evaluate each session
- what happens if one of you is absent
- what you will do if a pupil is absent
- the benefits of having one of you taking an observer role for some activities
- a draft opening statement for your first session
- suggested ground rules
- how you will manage any resulting paperwork
- strategies for managing difficult individuals in groups
- a shared view on how you will manage difficulties
- how you would like to give each other feed back?

(Adapted from Rae, T. & Weymont, D. (2006))

A Final Important Note

As Stallard (2002) states:

> Children and adolescents often adapt a short-term problem-focused perspective. They are typically interested in addressing immediate presenting problems rather than embarking on longer-term work. Consequently with children and young people there is a greater emphasis on facilitating and developing cognitive coping skills rather than addressing underlying schemas or beliefs.

This is, in effect, the rationale for developing this programme. It is not intended to be a substitute for Motivational Interviewing as delivered by Clinicians on a one-to-one or small group basis. It is a skills-based programme aimed at adolescents who will all benefit from learning the tools of MI. It will support the development of wellbeing agendas both within and outside the school context alongside reinforcing the importance of peer support within an emotionally literate environment. The opportunity to learn skills and strategies that reduce anxiety and promote mental wellbeing should hopefully benefit all the students targeted whilst also de-stigmatising the therapeutic process. These tools should be in everyone's wellbeing tool-kit and consistently used both in adolescence and adult life.