

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Health care professionals can use motivational interviewing to support patients of all body sizes in making health behavior changes. Through a goal-oriented, patient-centered, and interactive listening style, motivational interviewing aims to understand the patient's perspective, reduce patient ambivalence about change, promote patient motivation and confidence in achieving goals, and assist the patient to identify their own solutions.

Examples of health behaviors that can be addressed with motivational interviewing:

- Dietary patterns (e.g., food choices, portions)
- Fluid intake (e.g., water vs sugar sweetened beverages)
- Physical activity (e.g., daily activities, exercise)
- Alcohol intake
- Sleep habits
- Stress management

Assessing Readiness for Health Behavior Change

Before you raise the topic of health behavior change with a patient, it is important to establish rapport and trust. Asking the patient for permission to address the topic of health behavior change demonstrates respect for the patient and his/her autonomy. After obtaining detailed information from patients about their health behaviors, the following types of questions can help you assess a patient's readiness, ambivalence, and motivation for making health behavior changes.

Readiness for Change:

How is your current health behavior affecting your life right now?

How would you like your health to be different?

How do you feel about changing your health behavior?

How ready are you to change your health behavior?

On a scale from 1-10, where 1 is not ready to change and 10 is absolutely ready to change, how ready are you to change?

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Identifying Facilitators and Barriers to Change:

What kinds of things have you done in the past to change your health behavior?

What strategies have worked for you in the past?

What are the benefits of changing your health behavior?

What concerns do you have about making these changes?

What things stand in the way of you taking a first step?

What barriers might interfere with success? (e.g., child care, transportation, distance, cost, time, accessibility)

Discussing Benefits and Drawbacks

As part of this dialogue, it can be helpful to understand what the patient perceives to be the short-term and long-term benefits and drawbacks of making health behavior changes. Encourage the patient to generate personal costs and benefits, and then openly discuss these to identify barriers and goals.

Short Term Benefits	Short Term Costs
1) 2) 3)	1) 2) 3)
Long Term Benefits	Long Term Costs
1) 2) 3)	1) 2) 3)

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Communicating with Patients at Different Stages of Change

There are different stages of change, and it's important to tailor motivational interviewing to the current stage a patient is in. If a patient is not interested in pursuing health behavior changes or discussing their weight-related health, it is important to respond with respect and empathy, leaving the door open for future communication. For example:

- *I hear you saying that you are not ready to change your health behavior right now.*
- *I can understand why you're feeling this way.*
- *I'm here if you change your mind and would like to talk about this in the future.*

You can reassess the patient's readiness for health behavior change in future clinic visits.

When a patient is in initial stages of readiness for change (*precontemplation* or *contemplation*), your objectives are to:

- 1** Validate the patient's experience
- 2** Acknowledge the patient's role in decisions about lifestyle change
- 3** Clarify the patient's views about the benefits and consequences of making behavioral changes
- 4** Encourage self-exploration and steps for change
- 5** Leave the door open for communication, preparation, and support

The following page provides examples of motivational interviewing questions that align with these objectives. You can select the questions that fit best to the situation and your patient.

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Motivational Interviewing Questions

Precontemplation Stage

Patient is not currently considering health behavior change.

- I can understand why you're feeling this way.
- I hear you saying that you are not ready to change your health behavior right now.
- Could you tell me what leads you to feel this way?
- What concerns you about making [health behavior] changes? What may happen if things stay the same?
- It's up to you to decide if, and when, you are ready to make [health behavior] changes.
- I believe your [health behavior] is putting you at risk. Would you be willing to hear or read some information from me about the health aspects of [health behavior]?
- Can you imagine how your [health behavior] might contribute to problems for your health in the future?
- It can be hard to initiate changes in your life when you feel pressured by others. I want to thank you for talking with me about this today. I'm here if you'd like to talk about this again in the future.

Contemplation Stage

Patient may realize the need for health behavior change but is ambivalent about it.

- I'm hearing that you are thinking about changing your [health behavior], but that you are not ready to take action right now.
- It's up to you to decide if, and when, you are ready to make lifestyle changes.
- What is a benefit of changing your [health behavior]? What is a drawback of making this change?
- It sounds like you are frustrated by your current behavior but feel change would be too difficult. It might be helpful to make a list of the pros and cons of each option.
- Would you be willing to think about this further and talk to me about it at our next visit?
- After thinking more about this, if you feel you would like to make some changes, I am here to help.

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For patients in later stages of change (*preparation* or *action*), who are preparing or beginning to make changes, it is important to encourage specific and realistic goals, prioritize behavior change opportunities, identify obstacles and assist in problem solving, and identify social supports. Goals should be reassessed and adjusted as needed. Clinician communication should remain collaborative and empathic, maintaining an atmosphere of support and acceptance.

Preparation Stage

Patient is committed to making health behavior change(s) and is clear that the benefits of behavior change outweigh the drawbacks.

- It's great that you feel good about your decision to make some lifestyle changes; you are taking important steps to improve your health.
- Have you attempted to make a change to your [health behavior] before? What was helpful? What kinds of problems would you expect in making these changes now? How might you deal with them?
- Considering your [health behavior], what is one change you could make that would be achievable and could be beneficial to your health?
- So, your initial goal is to try [health behavior change] _____ times this week.
- Which family members or friends could support you as you make this change? How could they support you? Is there anything else I can do to help?

Action Stage

Patient is actively engaged in changing their health behavior(s) and has begun to implement changes

- It's great that you are making these changes. I see you have a real commitment toward improving your health.
- What has been working for you?
- What challenges have you encountered? How did you deal with these obstacles? What coping skills have been most useful to you?
- Sometimes it's easy to fall back into previous lifestyle patterns. What can do you if that starts to happen? Who can support you in difficult situations?
- In what ways can I be helpful to you as you continue to make these changes?

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Creating SMART Goals for Health Behavior Change

When collaborating with patients to create goals for health behavior change, it is important to tailor specific goals to the patient and ensure that goals are feasible, appropriate, and clearly defined. The SMART criteria for goal specification involves setting goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound. These goal characteristics are described below.

- S** **SPECIFIC**
Include how much and what types of behavior the patient should engage in. *E.g., Walk 30 minutes at lunch time, 5 days/week.*
- M** **MEASURABLE**
The goal must be measurable to assess progress (e.g., using a number or percent). *E.g., Eat 1 serving of fruit at breakfast every day.*
- A** **ACHIEVABLE**
Consider the patient's resources and barriers to identify realistic and attainable goals. *E.g., Meditate 10 minutes each morning before breakfast.*
- R** **RELEVANT**
The targeted behavior must be relevant to the change the patient wants to achieve. *E.g., To lower cholesterol, limit fried foods to [target frequency].*
- T** **TIME-BOUND**
Include a target date for goal initiation and a date to review progress. *E.g., Go to bed at 10:30 each night starting this Sunday. Reassess in 4 weeks.*

Ensure that health behavior goals align with the patient's needs and preferences, with consideration of physical, social, cultural, spiritual, and economic factors.

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