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Dear Colleague:

This month, we chose an article talking about Motivational Interviewing (MI) and the research which shows that helping someone find both their sense of agency and their will to live a healthy life may be as important as any skills or cognitive behavior technique. Although the focus of the article is on adults, we made the exception this month so that we could highlight this important perspective. We hope that the researchers will continue to explore the impact of MI and we hope you find the article helpful.

Please join us **Tuesday, June 10th** for the next webinar with Elizabeth Letourneau and Andrew Harris on the impact of registration and community notification on youth. [Click here](#) for more information.

Note we have changed our e-mail marketing company. We apologize if you unsubscribed previously but are still in our new system. If you still wish to unsubscribe, you may do so and will no longer receive NEARI Press communications (though we hope you will reconsider).

As always, if you have any other questions or suggestions for future newsletter topics, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely, Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis

The Significant Impact of Brief Motivational Interviewing Intervention

by Steven Bengis, David S. Prescott, and Joan Tabachnick

The Question

Does an offender's motivation to change reduce their risk of reoffending?

The Research

Brendan Anstiss, Devon Polaschek and Marc Wilson evaluated the effects of a brief Motivational Interviewing (MI) intervention on the reconviction in adult male prisoners convicted of a diverse set of crimes. Even though the population is an adult population (and we typically review articles addressing youth), the men were all considered high risk, and the crimes they committed were more diverse than sexual offenses, we believe that the findings here may be of interest to those working with adolescents who have sexually abused. The intervention is based upon research which shows that a lack of motivation to change behavior is a primary obstacle in safely returning offenders back into the community. The objectives are to increase the client's acceptance and recognition of the crime, address any ambivalence they may have, highlight the benefits of

change, and help the client make a commitment to changing their behaviors. The client's motivation is often measured through Prochaska and DiClemente's classic stages of change model. In this model people pass through five distinct stages of change to prevent a return to a previous criminal behavior: Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, and Maintenance (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1994).

Overall, the authors found that men who entered the MI program were significantly less likely to be reconvicted than those who did not. With just one four-hour intervention, men who took part in an MI intervention increased their stage of change scores by one full stage while the stage of change scores of the men who did not participate, remained unchanged. The researchers also found that the prisoners who participated in the program had a 21% lower reconviction and a 17% lower re-imprison rate than those who did not participate. Finally, the researchers found that whether or not the men participated in the MI program, a shift in their "stage of change" predicted reconviction. The authors suggest that the MI interventions may generate change by helping the men develop a strong sense of their own agency, competence, and sense of responsibility. This then raises the question about whether this sense of agency can be equally as important as learning the necessary lifestyle management skills, typically taught in treatment.

Implications for Professionals

While this article focuses upon high risk adults who commit a variety of crimes, the authors' findings about the importance of motivation are intriguing and likely applicable to those working with children and youth. Other research that this newsletter has previously quoted indicates that therapist qualities contribute more to change than the techniques they use. MI requires a collaborative, supportive and engaged therapeutic alliance to be successful. It is an optimistic approach based on a strong belief in the essential capacity of a client to be different and to alter his/her life. To be effective, it has to be delivered with compassion and understanding, particularly with youth, who feel shame about their behaviors, have significant trauma histories along with learning disabilities and other mental health problems. For these youth, MI can easily resonate with their reality. It is an invaluable addition to the toolkit of a therapist seeking to attune with his/her clients. Although the present article does not discuss it, MI can also be an extremely helpful approach to use with the families of adolescents who have sexually abused; properly used, it can support the autonomy of individuals and families alike.

Implications for the Field

There is a major shift taking place in our field as we continue to distance ourselves from adult practice and move towards a developmental and healing approach that recognizes both the low recidivism and the greater complexities of younger clients. While always acknowledging the small percentage of older, dangerous, and perhaps, violent adolescents for whom adult practices are applicable, the vast majority of our work is shifting to a youth who profiles very differently. The field is embracing healing rather than management, risk management rather than risk prediction, attunement rather than confrontation, and therapeutic alliance rather than manualized approaches. MI is one more important component of this welcomed shift. We have little doubt that outcome research will continue to support this evolution.

Citation

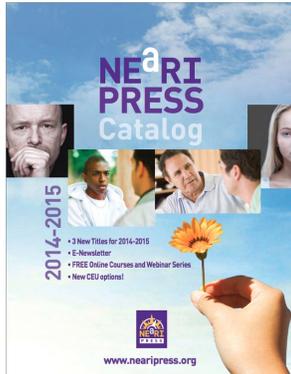
Anstiss, B; Devon, L.L.: Polaschek; and Wilson, M. (2011). A brief motivational interviewing intervention with prisoners: when you lead a horse to water, can it drink for itself? *Psychology Crime and Law*, 17, 689-710. Retrieved May 4, 2014 from www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10683160903524325.

Abstract

See www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10683160903524325.

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FEATURED NEARI RESOURCES

Enhancing Motivation in Treatment: A Case Study and Professional Development Planning Method

by David S. Prescott

In this brief text, the reader is offered an innovative self-examination process designed for building professional skills for engaging and motivating teens. This composite case example offers practical ideas and strategies for engaging a teen client from the very beginning of the process. The booklet describes how to build upon the initial engagement to create more successful outcomes with even the most challenging youth.

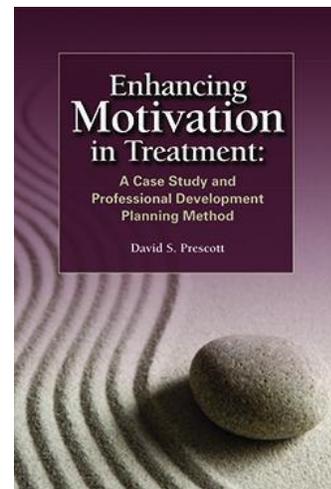
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