

Motivational Interviewing in Social Work

“Change can become difficult for service users when they are ambivalent about the extent to which the change will be beneficial” (Davies, 2013, p. 451).

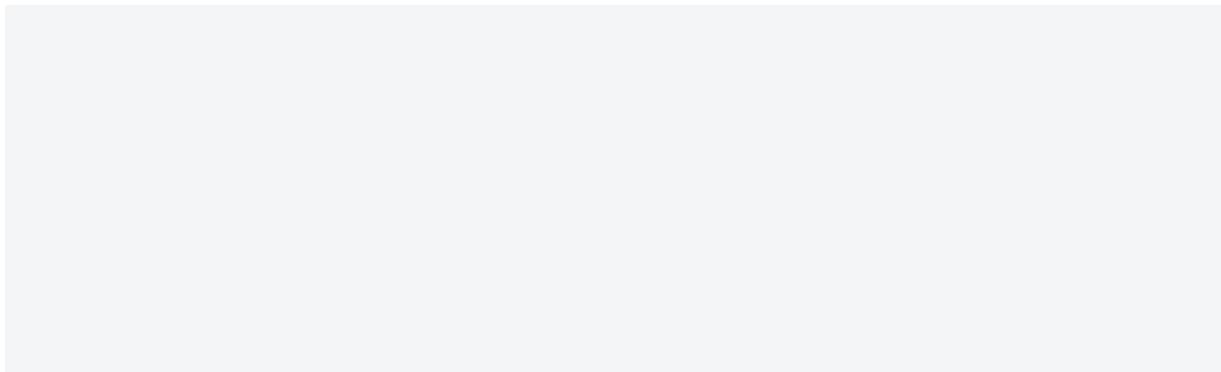
One method used by social workers to explore their clients' intrinsic values and ambivalence is through motivational interviewing (MI). MI has four basic principles (modified from Davies, 2013):

- **Expressing empathy** – displaying a clear and genuine interest in the client's needs, feelings, and perspective.
- **Developing discrepancy** – watching and listening for discrepancies between a client's present behavior and values and future goals.
- **Rolling with resistance** – avoiding getting into arguments or pushing for change.
- **Supporting self-efficacy** – believing in the capacity of the client to change.

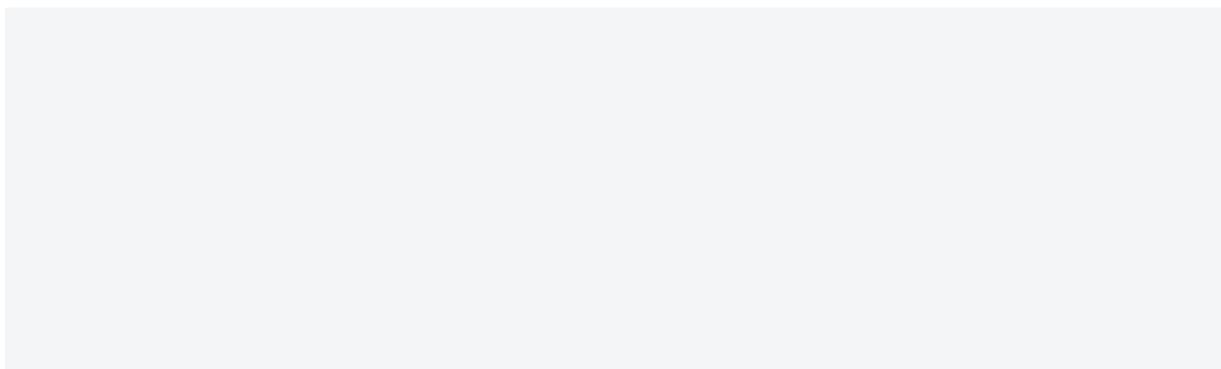
This template uses the five stages of change to consider the client's readiness for change and the appropriate interventions to use (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986; Davies, 2013).

Consider the following for the client:

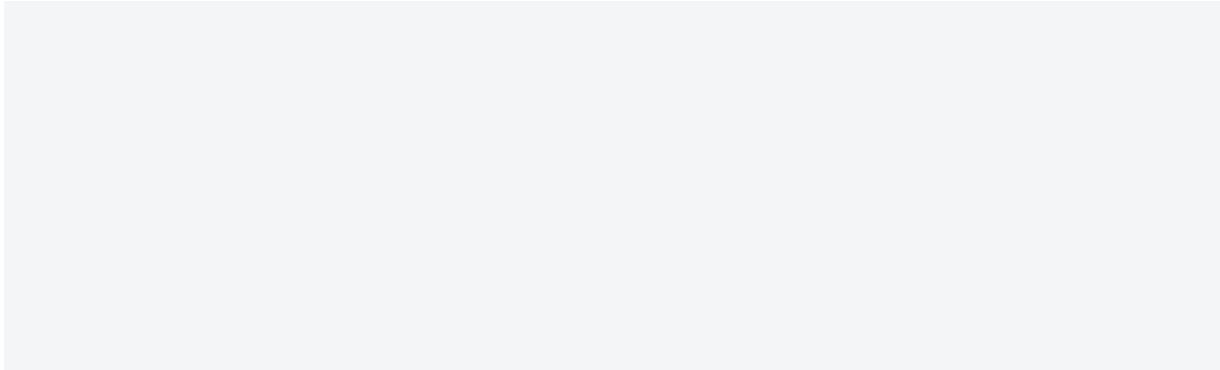
Precontemplation: Is the client ready for change? Why? Why not?



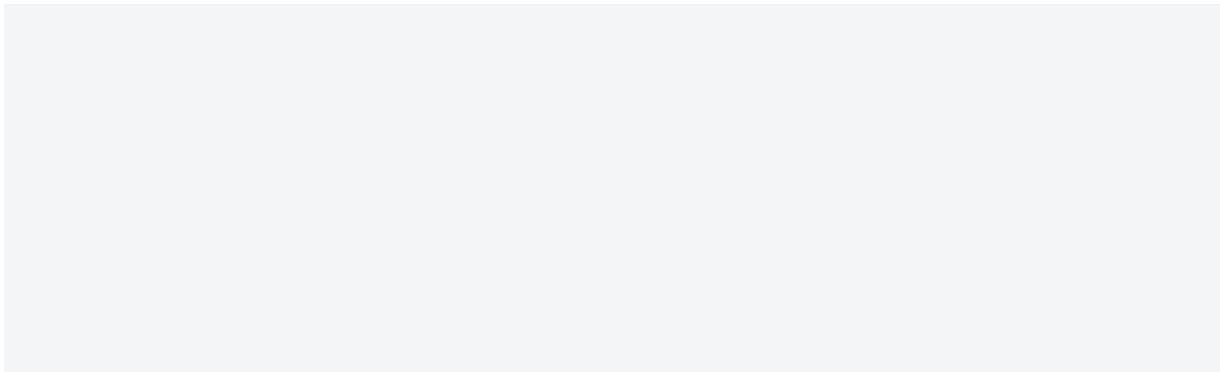
Contemplation: Does the client acknowledge their problem? How?



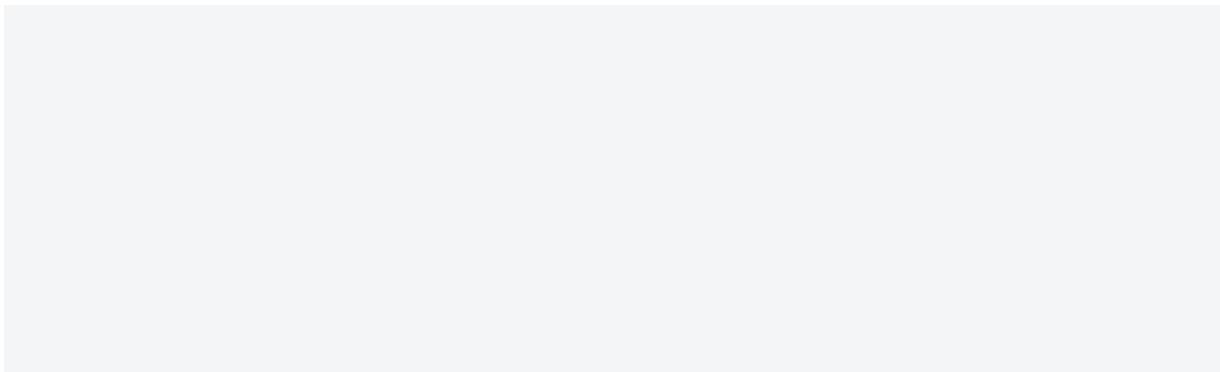
Preparation: Is the client taking the necessary steps to fix the problem and make the changes? How? And, if not, why not?



Action: Is the client taking the steps required? If not, how can they be supported?



Maintenance: Has the client maintained the change? What are they doing or not doing? How can they be supported?



The client should be encouraged to create and implement a plan, including goals and the specific tasks required.

MI is beneficial for clients wishing to make behavioral changes and overcome problems or challenging circumstances.

References

- Davies, M. (2013). *The Blackwell companion to social work*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell.
- Prochaska, J. O., & DiClemente, C. C. (1986). Toward a comprehensive model of change. In W. R. Miller & N. Heather (Eds.) *Treating addictive behaviors: Processes of change*. Springer.

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