



Workshop Description: This workshop supports youth program staff in developing and practicing effective communication skills in youth program settings. Successful implementation of this workshop will ultimately help youth program staff to reflect on how they support youth’s communication skills and how they use communication to further support the positive development of youth within the program.

This workshop guide will ask participants to examine and reflect on their communication strategies to better assist youth in their development. This workshop guide and all others within the Effective Communication series are intended to build skills in youth program staff that help address unhealthy or negative behaviors and better assist youth in their development.

Preparation Time: The preparation time for this workshop is approximately 15 to 20 minutes. This preparation time should include reading background information on the Effective Communication and Positive Youth Development website and in this workshop guide, collecting materials, and gathering any additional information you may need.

Instruction Time: It will take approximately 85 to 90 minutes to complete all activities within this guide. If you do not have time for the full workshop, use only the most relevant activities to make the workshop fit within your timeframe, or split the workshop into multiple sessions. Be sure to keep the reflection portion of the activities and workshop as this is where staff should consider how the activities and knowledge apply to their work.

Materials:

- Printed copies of the Handout: *Spirit of Motivational Interviewing* (one per small group)
- Flip chart paper or whiteboard
- Laptop and projector to show videos

Preparation Instructions: You should read the content related to this topic on the Effective Communication and Positive Youth Development website, specifically the content related to Effective Communication and Youth Program Staff. In addition, you should review the background information in this workshop guide, gather all necessary materials, and prepare for the activities.

In this series of workshops, youth program staff will learn skills that build on one another in a specific sequence. We recommend you complete this set of workshops in the following order:

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| 1. <i>Understanding Effective Communication</i> | 5. <i>Understanding Stages of Change and Motivational Interviewing</i> |
| 2. <i>Effective Communication and Youth Development Factors</i> | 6. <i>Understanding Change Talk</i> |
| 3. <i>Effective Communication Strategy: Active Listening</i> | 7. <i>Motivational Interviewing Strategies</i> |
| 4. <i>Effective Communication Strategy: Clear Expectations and Direction</i> | 8. <i>Practicing Motivational Interviewing</i> |



Knowledge: Effective Communication and Youth Program Staff

Sometimes youth exhibit unhealthy or harmful behaviors or express a desire to adopt new healthy behaviors. One technique called motivational interviewing can be used to help youth adjust behaviors and at the same time drive the process of change. This technique uses effective communication skills and our understanding of how behaviors change in order to engage individuals in conversations to reconcile their behaviors with their goals. Motivational interviewing is a person-centered approach to behavior change that reinforces positive youth development, autonomy, agency, youth voice, and accountability. At its core, motivational interviewing is a communication strategy that combines active-listening and facilitated decision-making to promote better choices and positive change.^{109, 110}

Although motivational interviewing in its entirety takes practice to perfect, components can be used when working with youth to support their self-efficacy and strengthen adult-youth relationships. It can also be used to support prosocial norms, the adoption of healthy behaviors, decision-making, and critical thinking. Motivational interviewing works best in an environment that practices positive youth development and fosters supportive adult-youth relationships. This technique fits well within a program that focuses on youth's strengths and goals and tries to help them feel motivated to engage in positive change.¹¹¹

As noted earlier, motivational interviewing is complex. To be truly successful, youth program staff must keep some key components in mind. The youth program staff's mindset is one component and describes what guides all of their interactions. This mindset is often called the *spirit* of motivational interviewing. Youth program staff approach interactions with compassion, acceptance, evocation, and partnership and help to build rapport and an alliance with the youth on any subject (whether related to behavior change or not.) Another component is often called the *principles* of motivational interviewing. These principles guide how youth program staff work with youth and guide youth's internal motivation for change. They include expressing empathy, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance, and supporting self-efficacy. These principles help staff decide which strategy to use to support youth as they discover their internal motivation. A third component of motivational interviewing has to do with understanding ambivalence, resistance, and discord. This component requires the staff to use active-listening skills to listen for *change talk* or the youth's expression of desire, ability, reason, or need to change. The final component is a set of strategies represented by the acronym OARS and involves program staff using open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summaries to guide conversations with youth and help them to discover their internal motivation to adopt or change behaviors.

Although there have been no empirical studies of motivational interviewing use in youth programs, motivational interviewing demonstrates promise as a tool for staff who work with youth^{112, 113, 114} and who are tasked with applying communication strategies that help to manage youth's behavior and overall experience within a youth program.

Objectives:

- Establish basic understanding of stages of change as defined by the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change
- Establish basic understanding of the spirit and principles of motivational interviewing and how they apply to positive youth development work



Introduction (5 minutes):

- Describe motivational interviewing and how it relates to effective communication.
 - What to say: “Today we are going to talk about motivational interviewing, a technique often used in counseling to help people find internal motivation to change their behavior. We will also discuss how it can be used to support positive youth development. It seems simple and straight-forward, but there are many steps and components to motivational interviewing. In this workshop, we will learn about the stages of change and explore the ideas that make up the spirit and key aspects of motivational interviewing.”
- Transition into Prior Knowledge activity:
 - What to say: “To start, we are going to gauge how familiar you are with motivational interviewing.”

Prior Knowledge (5-7 minutes):

- Ask the participants if they have anything to add to the definition of motivational interviewing you have given (i.e., techniques to help people find internal motivation to change their behavior). You may need to assist with these definitions using the background information provided for you to jumpstart the conversation. Record these responses where participants can see.
- Ask the participants if there is anything they are unsure of in regards to motivational interviewing or if there is anything they want to learn through this workshop. Again, record responses.

Activities:

Activity: *Understanding Change Theory* (25 minutes)

- Describe the *Understanding Change Theory* activity:
 - What to say: “Before we can help youth change behavior, we should understand what behavior scientists think about behavior change. One way of thinking about change we will consider is the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change.”
- Lead the *Understanding Change Theory* activity:
 - Watch *Improve Your Life Using the Stages of Change (Transtheoretical) Model* video: <https://youtu.be/Twlow2pXsv0>
 - Lead a large group discussion on the five stages of change outlined in the video.
 - Ask the group to list the five stages in the Stages of Change, and write them in a place where all participants can see.
 - Ask the group to share their ideas about signs or indicators a person might show in each stage. Write these indicators where participants can see along with the five stages of change.
 - Instructor Note: The following chart lists the stages of change and some common indicators as discussion prompts.

Stage	Signs and Indicators
Precontemplation	Not aware, not recognized



Effective Communication Workshop
Understanding Stages of Change and Motivational Interviewing

Contemplation	Aware but ambivalent
Preparation	Intent on taking action
Action	Actively modifying behavior
Maintenance	Sustaining new behavior

- Ask the group to think about what their role is at each of these stages? Make notes next to each Stage and Sign.

Stage	Staff Role
Precontemplation	Encourage youth to think about their behaviors
Contemplation	Help youth evaluate their choices regarding their behaviors
Preparation	Help youth get ready to change their behaviors
Action	Affirm and support youth’s moves to change their behaviors
Maintenance	Process behavior change successes and challenges and reinforce youth’s commitment to change

Adapted from Motivational interviewing: Enhancing motivation for change—a learner’s manual for the American Indian/Alaska Native counselor.

Activity: Spirit of Motivational Interviewing (25 minutes)

- Describe the *Spirit of Motivational Interviewing* activity:
 - What to say: “Motivational interviewing is relational in that it is a way to interact with the youth. This relational aspect is referred to as the *spirit* of motivational interviewing. Mastering the four components of the spirit will help you build rapport and an alliance with the youth.”
- Lead the *Spirit of Motivational Interviewing* activity:
 - Instruct the participants to brainstorm behaviors youth may want to change and write them down for all to see. Examples might include: no longer partying, no longer drinking alcohol, no longer smoking marijuana, getting in shape, improving grades, or making friends, etc.
 - Watch the *Spirit of Motivational Interviewing* video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wctWZD9aPvg>
 - Provide several copies of the Handout: *Spirit of Motivational Interviewing*, and lead a discussion on what compassion, acceptance, evocation, and partnership look like in conversations with youth in the program and how these concepts link to the elements of positive youth development (e.g., skill building, efficacy and mattering, etc.).
 - Instructor Note: Challenge the participants to think about how compassion, acceptance, evocation, and partnership link to the Eight Essential Elements of positive youth development, and ask them to provide concrete examples. For example, acceptance links with supportive relationships by showing youth that staff see the good in them and demonstrating a believe in youth’s capacity for change. Concrete examples would include attempting to understand the youth’s point of view and giving sincere compliments.
 - Record the examples generated.



Activity: *Principles of Motivational Interviewing* (20 minutes)

- Describe the *Principles of Motivational Interviewing* activity:
 - What to say: “In this activity, you’ll learn about the key aspects of motivational interviewing and how they apply to positive youth development work. In addition, we will be introduced to the acronym OARS. This activity will also begin to prepare you for moments when youth develop and discover discrepancies between their goals and actions that may be uncomfortable and how you might respond to those moments.”
- Lead the *Principles of Motivational Interviewing* activity:
 - What to say: “The principles of motivational interviewing are guide posts for how we work with youth behavior change—not a set of techniques but rather a way to decide which strategy is most effective in each situation.”
 - Watch *Change People’s Minds with MI: Motivational Interviewing* video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUAArxykCoc>
 - Lead a large group discussion on what the four key aspects of motivational interviewing are and what they mean.
 - List out the four key aspects of motivational interviewing discussed in the video for all the participants to see: express empathy, develop discrepancy, roll with resistance, support self-efficacy.
 - Ask the group to help you define them.
 - Express Empathy – seeing the world through the eyes of others
 - Develop Discrepancy – seeing how people want to live their lives versus how they are actually living them
 - Roll with Resistance/Reflect Discord – sometimes people push back against change—avoid arguing, reflect what you’ve heard
 - Support Self-Efficacy – embrace others’ autonomy
 - Lead a discussion on how OARS can be used in youth centers.
 - Next, list out the acronym OARS and ask the participants if they can remember what each letter of the acronym represents.
 - Ask the group to help you define them.
 - Open-Ended Questions – questions that are not easily answered with a yes, no, or other one word response (i.e., OK)
 - Affirmations – statements that highlight a person’s resources
 - Reflective Listening – active listening, not trying to ‘fix’ things when you hear a problem. Hear the content and add the emotion
 - Summarizing – reviewing what people say
 - Let the group know that you will be exploring each of these strategies in more detail in another workshop.

Instructor Note: You will explore OARS further in Effective Communication Workshops 7 and 8 (*Motivational Interviewing Strategies and Practicing Motivational Interviewing*)

Reflection and Recap (5 minutes):

- Return to the participants’ responses gathered at the start of the workshop (see Prior Knowledge activity). Ask the participants what they learned during the course of the workshop



Effective Communication Workshop

Understanding Stages of Change and Motivational Interviewing

and record the information. Draw attention to topics that were on the list generated earlier, new topics, and questions that were answered.

- Ask follow-up questions, such as “What part of the activity made you realize that?” and “How could you use these strategies with youth?”

Resources:

- Handout: *Spirit of Motivational Interviewing*

Sources:

Guess, W. [Dr. Wendy Guess]. (2015, November 4). *Improve your life using the stages of change (transtheoretical) model – Dr Wendy Guess* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Twlow2pXsv0>

Cohen, N. [myfamilydoc]. (2017, May 16). *The spirit of motivational interviewing* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wctWZD9aPvg>

Hudson, J. [Pinnacle Of Man TM]. (2017, May 21). *Change people’s minds with MI: Motivational interviewing* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUAArxykCoc>

Tomlin, K., Walker, R., Grover, J., Arquette, W., & Stewart, P. (n.d.). *Motivational interviewing: Enhancing motivation for change—a learner’s manual for the American Indian/Alaska Native counselor* [PDF file]. Portland, OR: SAMHSA. Retrieved from https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/samhsa_hrsa/american-indian-alaska-native-motivational-interviewing.pdf



How do youth program staff demonstrate these concepts in conversations and communications with youth in the program?

Compassion – To suffer together; demonstrating concern and awareness for the distress, suffering, or misfortune of others; feeling that arises when you are confronted with someone else’s suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering.

- Youth’s personal goals for change are the focus of what you discuss
- Youth’s agenda, not the staff’s leads the discussion
- Staff put youth’s priorities above their own
- Staff encourage youth
- Staff demonstrate kindness

What are concrete words and actions that youth program staff can use to demonstrate compassion?

Acceptance – Taking or receiving something offered; the act of agreement or believing in an idea, opinion, or explanation.

- Staff acknowledge and believe youth without judgement (i.e., avoid right vs. wrong choices)
- Staff believe in youth’s capacity for change
- Staff focus on the present

What are concrete words and actions that youth program staff can use to demonstrate acceptance?

Evocation – The action of bringing forth a response (feeling, memory, image, thought) to the conscious mind.

- Staff believe in youth and their capacity
- Staff understand that youth’s reasons are best and that they have their own experiences, thoughts, beliefs, values, and history on the subject
- Staff ask questions (inquiries, explanations, examples, history, plans for the future, scenarios) to pull out and build youth’s motivation and confidence

What are concrete words and actions that youth program staff can use to evoke feelings, memories, images, and thoughts to support youth behavior change?

Partnership – The association of two or more people who work together on the same activity, often for a common end.

- Staff understand youth are experts on their own lives
- Staff offer knowledge and advice outside youth’s expertise or experiences
- Staff support youth and do not try to change or persuade change
- Staff create a positive, inclusive environment or atmosphere through respect, support, and exploration
- Staff reflect back to the youth what they have done, said, etc.

What are concrete words and actions that youth program staff can use to show they are in partnership with youth?

Source: Developed by the University of Minnesota REACH Lab