

# Motivational Interviewing for Campus Police

By David Closson

## What is motivational interviewing?

- A person centered form of guiding to elicit and strengthen motivation for change.
- It is a way of talking to people that builds their internal motivation to change.
- It uses questions and statements to think and talk in a positive, forward direction.

*The objective is not to solve the problem or even to develop a plan; the goal is to help the person resolve his or her ambivalence, develop some momentum and believe that behavior change is possible.*

Compared to nondirective counseling, it is more focused and goal directed. The resolving of ambivalence is the central goal, and the counselor is pushing towards it.

**Outperformed traditional advice giving by 80%**

(Walters, 2006)

## Who currently uses it?

- Counselors
- Student Conduct Officers
- Housing Staff
- Alcohol Education Programs
- Medical Staff
- Corrections and Probation Officers
- **Police Officers – new!**

\*\*Almost all drinkers in college interact with people who are concerned about their health and safety, such as health-care workers, administrators, faculty, or resident assistants.

In contrast, very few are referred to counselors who specialize in alcohol or drug abuse treatment.

This means that more non-specialists will ultimately talk with a large number of college drinkers than specialized counselors will. Fortunately, there is good evidence that under certain circumstances, individuals with relatively little counseling training can impact college students' drinking.

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## The Spirit of Motivational Interviewing

- Collaboration
  - Students are their own expert.
  - Create an atmosphere that is conducive rather than coercive.
  - Think partnership.
- Evocation
  - Students have the resources, knowledge and motivation to change within.
  - Work to evoke this from the student.
- Autonomy
  - Self-direction; the student has the right and capacity.
  - Respect and affirm

*\*\*It isn't a script. The power comes from the style of interaction!*

## Key Principles

**Engaging:** Your goal is to create a collaborative working relationship with the student. You will work to make the student feel comfortable and like an active participant in the conversation. During the engaging process, you should focus on building rapport, trust and mutual respect.

**Focusing:** This is the part of the process where you guide students in an effort to clarify the picture of where they are headed. You may use this step to focus on specific steps they can take to get where they want to be. During focusing, you need to find the balance between actively directing the student and allowing the student to lead the conversation.

**Evoking:** You will work to bring to mind students' values and goals; help them recall past experiences that have been successful and reflect on what is working well in their lives. Open-ended questions will help evoke what is important to the students, which will then evolve into the planning phase.

**Planning:** This is the final step of the process, where the student begins change talk and you can guide him or her to form a plan of action. People are much more likely to follow through with a plan that they've said aloud and shared with someone else.

While these steps are somewhat linear, it's important to stress that MI is a fluid process. You will not necessarily go through each stage progressively; in fact, during a successful change conversation, I have often found myself circling back in order to move forward.

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## Fundamental Skills - OARS

**Open-ended** questions help you understand the other person's point of view and encourage the person to share their feelings about the situation; questions facilitate dialogue.

**Affirming** is done right, it supports self-efficacy and promotes the idea that change is possible. Affirmations can strengthen motivation, confidence and rapport.

**Reflections** are your way to check in with the student to ensure you know what's going on, rather than assuming you understand what they mean, and take the conversation to a deeper level.

**Summarizing** will help the student understand the problem more clearly, and it is from this understanding that you can guide the student to consider change.

## Why MI for campus police...

1. *Motivation is already elevated* –Students ranked being arrested or receiving a citation as one of the most negative consequences. The presence of a police officer will automatically get students to think about their behavior. (\*\*speed trap example)
2. *Close the "life goes on" time gap* - Court is minimum 30 days out, then later referred to alcohol education/treatment. Student conduct, few weeks until they get in the office, then longer until their class.
3. *Consistent MI* – receive MI in the field and then throughout the entire student conduct process. More support = better results.
4. *The style of interaction* -Value diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, acquire and incorporate cultural knowledge, adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the individuals they serve.