What is Motivational Interviewing (MI)?
While MI is normally defined as a counseling approach, it can be more broadly thought of as a communication approach, as it is just as applicable to our relationships with our friends, family, & ourselves.
It is often engaged when we want to help others make changes that would enhance their wellbeing.
Anyone can engage in an MI approach, it is not just for counselors; we often want to help our kids, parents, friends & coworkers in this way too.
Where did the name come from?
Motivational Interviewing was originally developed in part by...

WILLIAM MILLER & STEPHEN ROLLNICK
The reason we say ‘in part’ is because MI builds on the work and writings of many other philosophies and theories, such as Carl Rogers.
The name MI refers to the process of inviting another (interviewing) to share the values, beliefs, preferences & desires that impact the decisions they make (motivation).
What is the research?
Over 90 clinical trials of MI

Showing its **effectiveness** in helping people make behavior changes.
MI is trans theoretical, meaning we can engage in an MI approach within any other technique, such as CBT. It is why we can engage it in our daily lives too, outside of work.
MI is trans-theoretical, meaning it is a larger philosophy and set of practices that can be used with any therapy technique.
What is the spirit of MI?
The spirit of MI is non-judgmental, & empathic. It is one of walking shoulder to shoulder, as a fellow traveler with another. There is no pushing or pulling to get someone to do something, no expert/patient dichotomies, no sense that one person knows best what the other ‘should’ do; in fact there is no ‘shoulding’ in MI.
MI assumes that we all deeply want to do what is best for our wellbeing; we don’t need to ‘get’ motivation from someone outside of us; instead, another can help us elevate and amplify our own intrinsic motivation.
MI is only used to support someone to change something their deepest self wants, never to coerce or manipulate someone to do something only we want them to do, even if we think it is for someone’s own good.
What are the core elements?
1. Empathic Presence

2. Skilful listening

3. Non-judgmental eliciting of thoughts and feelings, around behavior changes we are struggling with.
What are the main strategies?
An MI approach usually involves lots of reflective listening, open ended questions, normalizing, affirming & acknowledging feelings; it can also involve eliciting self-assessments of how important someone thinks a particular change is, or how much of a struggle they think it will be to change.
What does MI not do?
It would be uncommon in an MI approach to give advice. Cajoling, threatening, scaring, or shaming someone, even subtly, is never consistent with MI.
What is so hard about it?
Most of us have been raised with people trying to get us to do things through fear.
‘If you keep getting grades like this, you’ll never get into a good college’

‘Next time I catch you with pot, you will be grounded for months’

‘I’m really disappointed in you. I thought you were better than that’

FEAR

PUNISHMENT

SHAME
We’ve also likely been conditioned to give advice to try and ‘fix’ other’s problems, since we probably received this too.
Often we are habituated to reassuring or cheerleading others, instead of reflecting or asking how they feel. While all of these things were likely done to us and by us with good intentions, they usually don’t feel very good.
These communication habits are tough to break; we sometimes feel helpless if we don’t give advice, or are at a loss of what to do without the tool of punishment.
Practicing an MI approach takes time and purposeful practice; soon we start to feel the reward of closer and more rewarding relationships with those we practice with, whether they are our patients, family or friends.
Sometimes the behavior change we were worried about, for ourselves or others, fades out in importance, as the sunlight of connection and love for others dwarfs it.
For more useful resources please visit:

www.rsourced.com