

Understanding and Reducing “Resistance” Motivational Interviewing Summary Sheet

In Motivational Interviewing (MI), "resistance" is viewed as a normal part of ambivalence and a client's reaction to the interviewer's approach, rather than a problem with the client. MI emphasizes "rolling with resistance" by acknowledging and exploring it. The goal is to promote self-motivation by eliciting the participant's own reasons for resisting change and using a nonjudgmental, empathetic therapeutic style. Interviewers evoke the participant's own motivations for change through self-directed goals, drawing upon strengths, and emphasizing the client's responsibility for change.

What is resistance?

- Resistance is what happens when we expect or push for change when the participant is not ready for that change.
- Conscious or unconscious defenses against change.
- Participants who exhibit resistance are less likely to change.

Why does resistance occur?

- It arises as a normal, expected product of the interaction.
- When resistance emerges, there are good reasons the participant is not ready to change in the way we are asking.
 - The reasons may not be clear to us or to the participant, but they exist.
 - Ignoring them gets us nowhere.

Why Roll with Resistance?

- It can help reduce defensiveness and create a more collaborative relationship.
- It can help the participant explore their own motivations for change.
- It can help the participant feel heard and understood.
- It can help the participants move towards change in a more sustainable way.

The very concept of resistance can say more about the interviewers agenda, strategies and objectives than the participant they are working with.

Four Principles of MI

1. **Roll with resistance:** Statements demonstrating resistance are not challenged; Invite participants to examine new perspectives, but do not impose new ways of thinking on clients.
2. **Express empathy:** See the world through the client's eyes, share in the participant 's experiences.
3. **Develop discrepancy:** Help participants see the value of change by exploring the discrepancy between how participant want their lives to be vs. how they currently are between their stated values and their day-to-day behavior.
4. **Support self-efficacy:** This guides facilitators to explicitly embrace participant autonomy (even when participant choose to not change)

Four Skills = OARS

1. **Open ended questions:** Questions not easily answered with a “yes/no” or short answer. Open-ended questions invite elaboration and thinking more deeply about an issue.
2. **Affirmations:** Statements that recognize participants’ strengths. They build rapport and help participants feel change is possible. They often involve reframing behaviors or concerns as evidence of positive qualities. To be effective they must be genuine.
3. **Reflective listening:** Affirms understanding of the participant’s perspective and guides the participant toward resolving ambivalence by a focus on the negative aspects of the status quo and the positive aspects of making change.
4. **Summary statements:** Reflection where all or part of the session is recapped to communicate interest and understanding. It is used to call attention to important elements of the discussion.

