



Effectiveness of Motivational Interviewing in a WIC Clinic Setting

FY 2003 WIC Special Project Grant

Background

Historically, nutrition educators, including WIC nutrition professionals, have been providers of information with the nutrition education focus being the client's nutrient needs as identified by the educator. The North Dakota WIC Program evaluated the needs for nutrition education in their State and found that (1) significant change in "traditional" nutrition education methodology was needed, (2) that it was necessary to look beyond the provision of nutrition education materials/resources, and traditional nutrition education modalities. Motivational Interviewing was seen as perhaps the "extra step" that would facilitate client involvement, active participation, increase motivation, and provide coaching to achieve desirable, measurable behavioral change.

Motivational interviewing is a participant-centered approach that intentionally directs participants to examine, explore, and resolve the ambivalence they have about their own behavior (Miller, 2004).

To facilitate this process, the nutrition educator must develop new skills including setting an agenda with the participant's input, reflective listening, learning to summarize, assessing and creating motivation to move on the elicited, participant-generated statements, and to close the educational session with the participant's commitment to a specific, measurable behavioral goal. The *Effectiveness of Motivational Interviewing in a WIC Clinic Setting* project was designed to compare the effectiveness of motivational interviewing (MI) versus their usual counseling approach in affecting behavior change and satisfaction with the WIC Program among participants.

Methods

WIC participants from four local agencies participated in one of the following groups:

- Usual counseling with 15-minute appointments
- Usual counseling with 30-minute appointments



- MI with 15-minute appointments
- MI with 30-minute appointments

Participants were surveyed for eight participant behaviors and satisfaction with WIC before and after six months of counseling. After six months focus groups were conducted with participants to discuss the WIC program and the counseling they received as well as with all WIC staff to assess their perceptions of the participants and the WIC program. Additionally, staff trained in motivational interviewing answered questions relating to the effectiveness of MI and their comfort with using the counseling approach.

Key Findings

- Overall, participants exposed to motivational interviewing were more likely to be in compliance with health recommendations.
- MI participants in the focus groups described communication in two-way terms, as engaging, and centered on their behaviors.
- Usual care participants described the WIC communication style largely as one way from the staff to the client and in terms surrounding services offered.
- Staff trained in MI differed in their acceptance of the approach as a counseling tool. However, these counselors agreed that MI has made them understand the clients better and that it helps them address their clients' issues.

- All MI counselors agreed that some motivational interviewing techniques, such as reflective listening, have improved their counseling skills, whereas others are too complicated and hard to use.
- Extending appointments appeared to have little impact on satisfaction with WIC or behavior change.

Conclusions

Motivational Interviewing can be an effective tool both in increasing participant satisfaction with the education component of the WIC Program and also initiating positive health behaviors. In particular, it seems that MI is most effective with behaviors that are complex. Presenting MI as one of several tools that can be used to impact participant behaviors may make this counseling approach acceptable to WIC nutrition professionals.

Motivational Interviewing Tools to Try

The following two pages highlight two core techniques used in MI, change talk and values clarification. Nutrition educators can use these tools with their participants when using this counseling method.



Conducting Motivational Interviews: Change Talk

Change Talk, a core strategy of Motivational Interviewing (MI), elicits from participants their own reasons and arguments for change. This strategy is based on the principles that people are more likely to accept and act on what they say and the more they defend a position, the greater their commitment to it becomes. During MI it is the counselor's objective to have the participant take the positive side of the argument and verbalize it in self-motivational statements as the counselor listens and reflects. If someone is "resistant" or against change, the counselor should respond in a reflective, supportive manner that acknowledges what is said and then return to eliciting and summarizing the participant's own reasons for change. Through this process the participant establishes:

- Perceptions about her/his current behavior,
- Reasons why changing the behavior is beneficial to her/ him,
- Reasons why she/he wants to make changes, and
- Solutions to her/his barriers.

Use these questions to engage your WIC participants in "Change Talk" and begin the process of helping them change their behaviors with MI.

Interest

On a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being very interested, how interested are you in changing (TARGETED BEHAVIOR)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
not at all				somewhat				very	

Probe 1: Could have been lower:

- If response is 2-10: Your interest was a (#). Tell me why you chose a (#) instead of a 0 or 1.
- If response is 0-1: Your interest was a (#). Tell me why you chose a 0 or 1.

Probe 2: Could have been higher:

- If response is 0-9: **What would it take you to get your interest to a 9 or 10?**
- If response is a 10: Skip probe. Reflect: Sounds like you are extremely interested in changing...

Reflect and paraphrase



Cut here to use the strip below with participants. Attach strip to thick paper for easy use.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
not at all			somewhat				very		

Conducting Motivational Interviews: Values Clarification

The purpose of this activity is to help participants establish discrepancies between their current behavior and their personal core values or life goals. Participants are asked to choose from a list the values that are most important to them. The nutrition educator then inquires to see whether participants can make any connection between their current health behavior (or changing the behavior) and their ability to achieve these goals or live out these values.

INTRODUCTION: Looking at the list in front of you, these are a few traits/values/characteristics that are important to some people. I would like you to pick 3 or 4 of these traits/values or characteristics that are most important to you, your child or your family. Please feel free to add to this list if any of yours are not here.

Values for You

Good parent	Respected at home	Athletic
Good spouse/partner	Successful	Not hypocritical
Good community partner	Popular	Energetic
Strong	Attractive	Considerate
On top of things	Disciplined	Youthful
Competent	Responsible	Independent
Spiritual/faith	In control	
	Respected at work	

Values for Your Child

Have high esteem
Be strong
Have many friends
Being fit
Not feeling different
Not feeling left out
Be able to communicate
his/her feelings
Fulfill his/her potential

Values for Your Family

Unified
Spending time together
Peaceful meals
Getting along

PROBE 1: How, if at all, is (*TARGET BEHAVIOR*) related to any of these values? Reflect and paraphrase.

PROBE 2: How, if at all, would changing (*TARGET BEHAVIOR*) affect you and your family's ability to achieve these goals or live out these values? Reflect and paraphrase.

PROBE 3: How, if at all, is your health or your child's health related to these values? Reflect and paraphrase.

ALTERNATIVE: If this list does not seem to work for the client: Think about the things in your life that are important to you. How, if at all, would changing (*TARGET BEHAVIOR*) affect the things that are important to you and your family. Proceed to ask the other questions in relation to what they have said here. Paraphrase and reflect.