Simplifying Non-Pharmacological Treatments for Chronic Pain: Motivational interviewing

Motivational interviewing is a collaborative, patient-centred approach for helping patients feel confident and motivated to make changes in their lives. Motivational interviewing tends to be most successful when patients are in the contemplative stage of change.

Precontemplation → Contemplation → Preparation → Action → Maintenance

OARS: The four basic interaction techniques used in motivational interviewing

- Open-ended questions
- Affirmative statements recognizing strengths
- Reflection and paraphrasing to better understand thoughts
- Summaries to ensure clear communication

DEARS-A: Steps for using motivational interviewing in your practice

- Develop Discrepancy: “You say that ________ is important to you, yet you continue to ________; help me understand.”
- Express Empathy: “I understand how difficult this is.”
- Aim at Ambivalence: “Tell me the pros and cons of changing and the pros and cons of staying the same.”
- Roll with Resistance: Don’t push if the patient resists: “What do you want to do? How do you want to proceed?”
- Support Self-efficacy: “It sounds like you have made some real progress. How does that make you feel?”
- Avoid the fix: Avoid providing advice or instructions; suggestions should come from the patient with you serving as a subject matter expert when they ask for your input.

The Readiness Ruler

Ask your patient to rate their responses to these questions on a scale from one (not ready) to 10 (ready):

- How important is making this change to you?
- How confident are you that you can make this change?

Interested in learning more? Visit https://cfpclearn.ca/ to view the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)’s four-part webinar and podcast series on non-pharmacological treatments for chronic pain. The CFPC has certified this Self-Learning series for up to four Mainpro® credits.

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