

Motivational
Interviewing with
Criminal Justice
Populations

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Introduction

Objectives

- Discuss Criminal Justice Culture and how it may effect client attitude towards VR system
- Look at Self-Determination Theory within the Criminal Justice System and how we can support an environment for change.
- Look at some of the Challenges of assisting offenders with behavior change
- Where Does Motivation Come From?
- VR Considerations

Motivational and the Criminal Justice Culture

- Instead of asking the question “What Works? Ask “What can be done to help offenders engage and remain in programs that focus on changing criminal behavior?”
- The difference in the mindset of asking these questions are whether we as professionals are looking for a quick fix that works for us rather than focusing on the client and what works for them.
- We can’t fix them, we can only facilitate the motivation for change.

Motivation and the Criminal Justice Culture

- When you get a referral from DOC or someone comes in with an extensive criminal history, what are some observations you’ve noticed in their attitude and/or motivation?
- Traditionally, the view has been that society must “get tough” with offenders and treat them accordingly.
- This philosophy combined with the idea that punishment reduces recidivism, has led to “boot camp” and “scared straight” treatment programs and regimes which maximize the level of confrontation and external control

Does this work for you?

- Video

Motivation and the Criminal Justice Culture

- The strong adversarial culture tends to create a “them vs. us” situation, which is contradictory to an MI adherent environment.
- The belief that harsh treatment will be good for offenders is simply untrue¹

¹Andrews, D.A., Zinger, I., Hoge, R.D., Bonta, J., Gendreau, P., & Cullen, F.T. (1990)

Motivation and the Criminal Justice Culture

- Motivational Interviewing and its focus on reducing resistance has the potential to increase the effectiveness of our ability to work with offenders and improve the environment in which the clients have become accustomed too. This climate has traditionally been moralistic, judgmental, punitive, and demeaning.

Self-Determination Theory and the Criminal Justice Culture

“Amotivation”

- Distinct lack of motivation to engage in new behavior
- What are some VR examples where we see this?

Extrinsic Motivation

- Behavior change may occur in response to specific environmental changes
- What are some VR examples where we see this?

“Autonomous” Intrinsic Motivation

- Behavior Change occurs in response to the individual’s self-determined reasons and desires.
- What are some VR examples where we see this?

How can we create environments supportive of intrinsic motivation?



Autonomy

- The need for personal **autonomy** or experiencing one's behavior as determined by oneself and under one's own control rather than the control of external forces.
- In terms of **autonomy**, personal responsibility is emphasized - where the individual always has a choice of how to respond to internal and external demands.

How can we create environments supportive of intrinsic motivation?



Relatedness

- The need for **relatedness** or believing that others value and respect one's thoughts, beliefs, and feelings as part of a supportive, caring group
- **Relatedness** is addressed through an empathic context in which autonomy is supported and a genuine attempt is made to consider the individual's perspective.

How can we create environments supportive of intrinsic motivation?



Competence

- The need for **competence** or coming to believe that one's behavior is capable of producing desired outcomes
- **Competence** is enhanced by reinforcing the attempts and commitments the individual makes toward positive change.

Resistant Offenders

- Some offenders, especially repeat offenders, are well conditioned to resist all attempts at autonomy, relatedness, and competence
- They can demonstrate massive reactance and become more resistant to change
- Professionals may have a preconceived notion that offenders are “unmotivated” group who lie and are in denial.
- By understanding the principles of Self-Determination Theory and implementing strategies to enhance **autonomy**, **relatedness**, and **competence** we may be able to reverse some of the damage done to offender motivation while in the corrections system.

Challenges of Assisting Offenders with Behavior Change

Offenders are Frequently Mandated for Treatment

Some clients view a compliance measure as an infringement upon their rights and will refuse to consider behavior change.

When the idea of change or treatment is forced on an unwilling recipient it is not uncommon for the individual to engage in the problem behavior to a greater extent in an attempt to assert his or her freedom.

Others simply “jump through the hoops” by participating in programs but show little personal investment in behavior change.

Challenges of Assisting Offenders with Behavior Change

“Correctional Plans” often dictate the therapeutic goals, giving the offender little input

- These documents often mandate programs or assignments to be completed by the offender, which by definition diminish freedom of choice and responsibility, and may even contain descriptors or labels (i.e. substance abuser, anti-social)
- Correctional Plans set up an authoritarian setting that too clearly differentiates the keeper from the kept.

Challenges of Assisting Offenders with Behavior Change

Correction Plan

- Example: "Client will participate in a substance abuse program and attend AA as a result of his alcoholism and his inability to stop on his own with the goal of improving his harmful behavior by learning to abstain from drinking and practice relapse prevention."

Challenges of Assisting Offenders with Behavior Change

- There is a temptation to "fix" offenders by telling them what they "should" do.
- By arguing for change and telling offenders what to do, we create resistance behavior.
- Many outside agencies may be forcing compliance measures, threatening to punish clients who do not follow correctional plans or meet imposed treatment goals.

Challenges of Assisting Offenders with Behavior Change

- Internal factors also make incarcerated clients

Some offenders categorically deny committing an offense

- 50% of sexual offenders denied committing their offense
- 54% of rapists denied committing their offense
- 66% of child molesters denied committing their offense²

- For these individuals who deny their offense, treatment options can be limited.
- Many offenders welcome Motivational Interviewing because it respects their viewpoint and does not force change

²Martens, Marshall, L.E., Fernandez, Y.M., & Mann, R.E. (2001). Treatment of sexual offenders who are in categorical denial: A pilot project. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 13(3), 205-216.

Motivation and Treatment Progress

- “Inadequate Motivation” is frequently the reason offenders drop out of programs.
 - In your experiences why do you feel offenders drop out of the VR program?
- Evidence indicates that failure to complete treatment increases the risk of recidivism.

Where does Motivation Come From? Is it a Client Trait or a reaction to the Therapist’s Style?

- Client Trait
- Often times it can come across as Cheerleading or a “personal power guru” who will energize the client to great achievement.



Where does Motivation Come From? Is it a Client Trait or a reaction to the Therapist’s Style?

Reaction to Therapist’s Style



- Focus on Creating a situation that will encourage the client to engage in self-exploration, contemplation of change, and foster change talk.
- Motivation to change is best elicited from clients rather than imposed on them.

If a Client Participates in Treatment are they Motivated to Change?

- Was Motivation intrinsic or extrinsic?
- When an internal commitment to abstain from a behavior is lacking, client's may exit with skills and strategies for avoiding reoffending, but they lacked the motivation to actually apply these strategies.

Relapse Prevention

- Must assume that motivation is already present.
 - The client must want to avoid relapse before he or she will apply whatever skills they have learned.
- Without focusing on motivation as a treatment target with offenders it is believed as many as 50% can complete lengthy relapse prevention interventions without any apparent increase in motivation to change their own behavior.
- **Motivation must be a critical component of offender treatment.**

Motivational Interviewing with Sexual Offenders

- Motivational Interviewing is a respectful, humanistic approach to working with clients, which seems particularly important for sexual offenders³
- Sexual Offenders know that they are vilified and respond by developing self-serving biases such as denying or minimizing their crimes, seeing themselves as victims, and resisting trust and collaboration with others.
- A successful intervention for sexual offenders needs to communicate clearly that the client is respected despite his or her harmful behaviors. Only with such an approach can a sexual offender recover the self-esteem necessary to contemplate behavior change.⁴

³Bradley, G.W. (1978). Self-serving biases in the attribution process: A re-examination of fact or fiction question. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36(1), 56-71.
⁴Marshall, W.L., Anderson, D. & Fernandez, Y.M. (1999). *Cognitive Behavioral Treatment of Sexual Offenders*. Chichester, UK: Wiley.

Motivational Interviewing with Sexual Offenders

- Sexual Offenders often present with the same motivational issues as do substance abusers.
- They feel angry about attending compulsory treatment, frightened about what might happen, reluctant to examine their abusive behavior and the feelings which surround it, and unwilling to relinquish their only sense of control in a judgmental environment, and they have difficulty accepting responsibility for their behavior.⁵

⁵Mann, R.E. (Ed.). (1996). *Motivational Interviewing with sex offenders: A practice manual*. Hull, UK: National Organization for the Treatment of Abusers.

What do I do when an Offender is in Pre-Contemplation?

- These offenders may be mandated to treatment or to find employment, but they can be unwilling to enter treatment or do what is necessary to look for work and sometimes completely deny committing their offenses.
 - Using Motivational Interviewing to create a safe environment for exploration could enhance contemplation in such offenders.
 - Empathy is crucial
 - Try Reflective listening

Comprehensive Assessment with Offender Population

- What assessments do you currently use when working with offenders?
 - Do these assessment tools incorporate the client's agenda?
 - Warning: Avoid assessments that are used as tools to label the of offender or to specifically rule out options that the client may not yet be considering. (childcare, hospital)
- Assessments should engage the offenders collaboratively in Vocational Options so that the offenders' interests are served and the public is protected.

Motivational Interviewing Tools and Techniques for Offenders

Behavior on Trial

- Before Offenders end up in prison, most realize their behavior and choices are causing problems in their lives, or maybe even ruining their lives. At the same time, though, common behavior is hard to give up. One reason people have so much trouble making changes is that when things become difficult or uncomfortable they remember all the things they used to like about the original behavior.

Decisional Balance

- Very useful when someone is tempted to revert to problem behavior
- Reminds people why they wanted to make a change in the first place

The Inner Struggle

- Helpful in Relapse Prevention
- Devil/Angel Scenario
- Encourages participant to argue against problem behavior

What can be done when an offender is at risk of dropping out of the program?

- Offenders are at constant risk of becoming resistant to what they feel can be a stigmatization of being an offender in a state program.
 - VR is one of the few voluntary programs they may be involved in. They often do not differentiate between compliance and choice amongst agencies.
- If an offender is at risk of dropping out of the program components of Motivational Interviewing such as empathy and emphasis on personal choice can assist the client work through their ambivalence.

VR Considerations

- Is it acceptable to use MI and allow the client to exercise personal choice when they are not contemplating change, even when we feel the change may be in their best interest?
 - Substance Abuse
 - Poor Lifestyle Choices
 - Behavior that negatively impacts employability
 - Quitting Job
 - Poor Relationships

Conclusion

- Although low intrinsic motivation is common in the offender population, it is easy to neglect considering the external pressures such as mandated treatment, anti-treatment peer approval, and, anti-rehabilitation criminal justice cultures.
- The motivational interviewing “spirit” of encouraging choice about behavior change in an accepting environment is the first step and the KEY to working with and using Motivational Interviewing with offenders.

Questions or Comments?
