

## APPENDIX B

### Motivational Interviewing: Conversation Starters and Common Objections

This information on motivational interviewing (MI) approaches, conversation starters and common objections is just a starting point for increasing or refreshing your skills related to MI. Additional and ongoing CE in MI is often needed. Consider taking the session [Coaching at the Counter ... Opportunities for Enhancing Communication with a Patient-Centered Approach](#), available for CE credit on Health Mart University.

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Medication adherence is a complex and personal issue, requiring a delicate discussion with patients. To facilitate these conversations, it's important to use the right approach. Motivational interviewing has proven to be more effective than traditional approaches, leading to a higher success rate for more efficient and longer-lasting health behavior change. The first step in improving adherence is using a MI-based coaching session to have open conversations with patients to determine their personal reasons for not being adherent.

#### Four Key Motivational Interviewing Skills to Develop<sup>1</sup>

- **Engaging:** Establishing a connection and working relationship.
- **Focusing:** Developing and maintaining a specific direction in the conversation about change.
- **Evoking:** Eliciting the patient's own motivations for change. Uncovering motivation is key to changing the conversation perspective from being an "expert" to being a "partner."
- **Planning:** Developing commitment and formulating a plan of action.

#### Steps in Motivational Interviewing<sup>2</sup>

##### 1. Develop rapport

- Remember to use open-ended questions
  - What did the doctor tell you this medication is for?
  - What concerns do you have about your medication?
  - Tell me about how the past few weeks have gone with taking your medication ...

##### 2. Reflect back your understanding of the patient's sense making

- What I am hearing you saying is ...

##### 3. Ask permission to proceed in providing the patient with new information to promote a sense of collaboration

##### 4. Provide new information

##### 5. Ask the patient what he/she thinks of this new information

##### 6. Summarize and discuss next steps

- Reflect overall on what was discussed by patient and outline next steps

## Motivational Interviewing Conversation Starters: Examples

Examples of open-ended questions and typical types of responses are listed below. Consider using these open-ended questions to begin an MI-based coaching session with patients.

Suggested Question	Suggested Responses
Initiation of therapy conversation:	Response choices:
"What did the doctor tell you this medication is for (or what it does)? How important is that to you?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Important: If the patient acknowledges importance, AFFIRM ("great"), and REFLECT back/restate) what they know and its importance.</li> <li>b. Unsure of importance: Ask permission to offer what you know about medication and importance (i.e., benefits). Then, ASK patient how information applies to them.</li> <li>c. Resistant: REFLECT what the person says without arguing. "At the moment, you are still not certain you really need this medication. It's true, only you can decide, and I do encourage you to talk to your physician."</li> </ul>
"What do you believe are the benefits of taking your medicine?"	<p>Response choices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provides benefits: AFFIRM and add, "What other reasons would you have for taking this medicine?"</li> <li>b. Unsure of benefits: WITH PERMISSION, offer possible benefits, and add, "How might any of these benefits be important to you?"</li> </ul>
"Would you mind if I mention an area where some patients run into trouble?"	EXAMPLE: "You may know that feeling 'well' is not what [medication name] helps with. Thus, as you start to feel better, continue to take your medication every day."

## Handling Common Objections Once on Therapy

Potential Patient Objections	Potential Pharmacist Response: Reflection or Open-Ended Questions
Asymptomatic: "I feel fine and I'm tired of taking it."	"It sounds like you are frustrated with having to take the medication every day, when you don't feel any better or different when you take it."  Listen, Reflect, Ask Permission: "Would you mind if I share some information and you tell me what you think?" [Share benefits/risk reduction of taking medication]
Already implemented lifestyle changes: "I exercise and/or eat healthy every day to stay healthy; I don't need my medication."	"That is great that you are [exercising or eating healthy] regularly and there are definitely benefits to improving your blood sugar with [exercise/diet]. You're feeling good, so you're wondering if the [exercise/diet] has eliminated the need to take your [medication]."  Listen, Reflect, Ask Permission: "You raise a good question. Would it be ok if we talk a little more about your medication, [exercise/diet], and how they can work together to manage your [condition]?"
Side effect(s): "I feel worse on the medication and I've developed this [side effect], I don't want to take my medicine anymore."	"You sound worried about this side effect. It sounds like if you weren't experiencing this side effect with the medication, that you would be more likely to take your medication."  Listen, Reflect, Ask Permission: "Would you be willing to discuss options for [side effect management] and/or a different medication to help lower your blood pressure that may have fewer [side effects]?"
Cost: "I can't afford my medication anymore."	"It sounds like you are worried about how you might be able to pay for your medications."  Listen, Reflect, Ask Permission: "Would you mind if I look into [patient assistance program, co-pay card, therapeutic interchange, etc.]?"
Forget to take: "It's hard to remember to take my medication."	"It sounds like it's challenging to remember to take your medication(s) every day/ every time."  Listen, Reflect, Ask Permission: "You raise a valid concern. Some of my other patients who also find it hard to remember to take their medication have benefited from [pill box, compliance packaging, reminder technology]."
Forget to refill: "I was doing good taking it, but I was really busy with my grandkids and forgot to refill all my pills."	"That is great that you were doing well remembering to take it before you ran out of pills. Would you mind if I [sign you up for refill reminders]? Some of my other patients who often forget to refill have benefited from it."

### Additional Resources

Consider taking or encouraging your staff to take CE courses on Health Mart University including ["Coaching at the Counter ... Opportunities for Enhancing Communication with a Patient-Centered Approach."](#)

1. Miller W. and Rollnick S. *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change*, 3rd Edition. New York, NY: Guilford Press; 2013.
2. Berger B, Vallaume W. "Motivational Interviewing for Health Care Professionals: A Sensible Approach." Washington, DC: American Pharmacists Association; 2013.