

Rethink Obesity[®]

LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT

Using positive communication techniques with your patients

Obesity management is a long-term undertaking for both you and your patient. As your patient engages in and moves through the process there can be roadblocks, setbacks and maybe even reversals. You can help your patients understand that this is normal and should be seen as feedback and not failure. Planning strategies for this together will allow acceptance, a reset and renewed commitment.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a collaborative style of communication designed not to solve the patient's problem, but to help them believe that change is possible, resolve ambivalence about change and develop momentum toward achieving their health goals. This strategy coincides with the patient's perspective while avoiding judgment, confrontation and unwelcome advice.¹

There are four key elements of MI that address what you discuss with patients and how you discuss it: 1) expressing empathy, 2) rolling with resistance, 3) dealing with discrepancy, and 4) supporting self-efficacy.¹



Expressing empathy¹

An empathic response reassures your patients that you are listening to them and seeing their point of view. As a result, patients are more likely to honestly share their experiences and perspectives.

"You're sharing some very difficult things with me, and I respect your courage."



Rolling with resistance¹

It is best to 'roll with' any resistance, and to avoid trying to fix or solve each problem. Instead, seek to understand the patient's reluctance to change.



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Dealing with discrepancies¹

Throughout discussions of weight management, you and your patients will begin to see the differences between where they are (current habit) and where they want to be (goals). Help patients recognise these discrepancies and guide them to self-identify ways to bridge the gap.

"You've said physical activity is important to reaching your goals, yet you find morning walks difficult. Can we talk about what might be getting in your way?"



Supporting self-efficacy¹

MI builds upon patients' pre-existing capacity for change. Focusing on previous successes can help them feel capable of achieving and maintaining desired change.

"I know that losing weight can be very challenging, but I've seen you overcome other challenges, and I believe you can do this."



Setting goals²

Aligning with your patients on realistic and individualised goals was the first step toward creating sustainable long-term changes. Recognising and communicating when and how these goals should change is a part of ongoing management.