

Case Studies/Activities

Chapter 24: Motivational interviewing

Commentary

At the outset of the interview it is useful to set out an agenda, this can help Mary focus on why she is here today. It is important to make Mary aware of how long the session will last and identify what she wants to get out of the meeting, that is what if any goal does she want to achieve. There may be an element of gathering procedural information with time at the end to summarise the content of the session and any actions that have been agreed. To begin the session it is important to use open questions whilst developing an empathic and trusting working relationship. The interview might take the following course:

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Worker	Mary, tell me why have you come here today?	<i>Open questions</i>
Mary	It's my drinking; I've been told I have to do something about my drinking.	
Worker	Who has told you to do something about your drinking?	
Mary	The social worker and my doctor.	
Worker	Why are they concerned about your drinking?	
Mary	It's my daughter, she's in care because of my drinking and I can't get her back until I have sorted myself out.	
Worker	How does that make you feel?	
Mary	Sad, guilty, angry.	
Worker	I can understand why you feel that way; it must be very hard for you to deal with these feelings at the moment.	<i>Expressing Empathy</i>
Mary	When I'm drinking I can get rid of these feelings. It helps numb the pain. I've always used alcohol when I don't want to feel things; that's how it started.	
Worker	What do you mean that's how it started; tell me a little more about how it started.	<i>Probing - demonstrating active listening</i>
Mary	My dad used to knock my mum about, he would shout and she would scream, sometimes it would all get too much. I just wanted to escape. My dad took a drink, it was always after he'd been to the pub that he would start on my mum. I'm scared I'm going to be like him. I've never hurt Kylie, but I know I'm not a good mother.	
Worker	And is that what is troubling you, the thought that you are not a good mother because of your drinking.	<i>Reflective listening</i>
Mary	Yes, I want to be a good mum, it's just the drink gets in the way. She deserves better.	

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Worker	How does drink get in the way of you being a good mum?	<i>Developing discrepancy</i>
Mary	I am drunk a lot of the time, or at least boozy when she is around and that's not good for her to see. She doesn't have a routine which kids need, because I don't have a routine. I sometimes forget to cook meals, or it might just be a snack, nothing healthy like she should have and that's what concerned the social workers. I don't want to be like this, but I don't know what to do.	
Worker	It also sounds as though it concerns you as well and perhaps one of the reasons you came here today is to do something to change your behaviour.	<i>Eliciting self change talk through Reframing</i>
Mary	It's hard. I've been drinking so long now, I don't know how I'll cope and I'm not sure I can stop drinking. I feel under pressure from the social worker and that makes me drink more.	<i>Ambivalence Resistance, blaming someone else</i>
Worker	So what you are saying is that you could cut down your drinking if the social worker backed off. Does that seem right to you? What do you think the social worker might say to what you have said?	<i>Roll with resistance Reflection with closed question. Encourage perspective taking</i>
Mary	She would say I was drinking too much, full stop!	
Worker	Why do you think she would say you drink too much?	<i>Leading question</i>
Mary	I drink every day, vodka, cider whatever I can afford. Most of the time I don't even feel drunk. That's the problem I guess, money goes on drink and that doesn't leave much for food, which is how I got into this mess and I don't know how to get out of it.	
Worker	From what you are saying it sounds to me as though you accept that your drinking is a problem for you and your daughter. That social services are concerned about your ability to look after your daughter because you struggle to provide a routine for her, food on the table and at times her safety might be compromised. It also sounds as though you do want to do something about your drinking but at the moment you are unsure if you can.	<i>Reflective summary</i>

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Worker	Perhaps it would be helpful to look at what the options might be for you to consider. One option would be to stop drinking altogether; another would be to cut down your drinking.	<i>Providing non-dogmatic information and promoting service-user choice</i>
Mary	I'm not sure, the thought of not drinking scares me, how will I manage to block out these memories I have and how they make me feel?	
Worker	I realise this must be difficult for you, I would like to help you, perhaps dealing with these memories through counselling might be helpful to you. Have you considered approaching your GP for a referral to a counselling service to look at what happened in the past?	<i>Affirmation</i> <i>Providing information</i> <i>Seeking clarification</i>
	What would be the worst thing that could happen to you if you cut down your drinking?	<i>Leading question</i>
Mary	I don't know, perhaps I could try, but how would I go about it?	
Worker	We can explore different ways you might do this, one option might be to set a limit on how much you drink each day, or perhaps, have a day when you don't drink. It might be helpful if you kept a diary in which you record what you have been drinking, how it makes you feel and what thoughts you have each day. You could bring this back and we can discuss it at our next meeting.	<i>Providing information</i> <i>Supporting self efficacy</i> <i>Links to use of cognitive behavioural approach</i>
Mary	I think I could try this and see if it helps, but what happens if I can't stick to the limit.	
Worker	It's natural to be concerned but if you go over, just write in the diary why you did and we can talk about it next time.	<i>Empathic response, acknowledging service-user concerns</i>
	We are coming to the end of our session; I think it would be helpful if I recap what we have discussed and what has been agreed before we meet next week. You came here today, to discuss how your drinking was affecting your life, in particular your ability to care for your daughter, Kylie. You acknowledged that you were drinking too much and wanted to do something about it but was unsure how to do this. You have agreed to keep a diary and set a limit on how much you drink each day, together with your thoughts and feelings which we can discuss next week.	<i>Reflective summary of session</i>