

## EFFECTIVE CONVERSATIONS

# Motivational interviewing

Motivational interviewing is a person-focused method of guiding a person to elicit and strengthen their own personal motivation for change.

**Key concept 1:** In order to have effective conversations, we have to be good listeners, as well as ask questions that reveal biases and beliefs in a nonjudgmental way. It is not manipulative, judgmental, a “gotcha” moment, or a “clap-back.”

**Notes:**

**Key concept 2:** Motivational interviewing is a technique typically used in counseling. While we’re not all counselors, we can apply the same deep listening techniques in order to build trust and guide behavior change.

**Notes:**

**Key concept 3:** This technique is a listening tool that can be used in individual conversations where a certain degree of trust is present—like with friends or family, but not exclusively. You could also use it when first meeting someone, such as during canvassing. Just note that it will not work in every situation, and these conversations typically work best in person, when people are more likely to exercise moderation, compassion, and empathy.

**Notes:**

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## Framework for Motivational Interviewing

**Exploring:** Asking probing and reflective questions with the person you are speaking with in order to establish rapport and get to the root of why the person believes what they believe.

### Exploring Techniques

- 1) **Content reflection:** "Given what you said, it sounds like you..."
- 2) **Feeling reflection:** "It seems that you felt x, y, z at that time... am I correct?"

*Pro-tip: It's okay to get the reflection wrong. The speaker will rephrase and hopefully clarify their position, belief, or value.*

**Remember:** Be careful not to respond with premature advice or questions that are biased in what you want to hear! This phase contains multiple questions—think of yourself as an anthropologist looking to gain as much information about the person as you can.

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**Guiding:** This phase allows you to push areas of the conversation, listen for values, and ask unbiased questions that allow you to surface contradictions between a person's actions and beliefs.

### Guiding Techniques

- 1) **Double-sided reflection:** "On the one hand, it seems that you feel X, and on the other hand, you feel Y."
- 2) **Invert barrier:** "It sounds like, in order to move forward, you might want to address these barriers...."

**Remember:** Be careful not to let your biases creep into this phase or put value on the statements the person is saying!

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**Choosing:** Once you've successfully guided the speaker into identifying a discrepancy or conflict, this final phase opens the door for you to ask them if they would like to do anything to be closer to their values. It can be as simple as asking them to think about whether their position has been challenged at all, or as big as inviting them to go to an event.

**Remember:** Change takes time. As you develop a relationship with the person you are listening to, you may see their opinions change over the course of multiple conversations, and that's okay!

### Choosing Techniques

- 1) **Questions:** "On a scale of 1-10, how important is it to you that you change X, Y, Z? What would it take to get you to a higher number? Why did you not choose a lower number?"
- 2) **Invite:** Have another conversation, join a group, attend an event, or even support a cause.

**Remember:** Don't try to jump to this phase too soon! You have to build a certain level of trust and rapport before allowing the other person to express their beliefs and values before you get here.

## **Activity #1: Reacting to a tough statement**

**In order to complete this section, you will need to watch the following reference video: [bit.ly/motivationinterview](http://bit.ly/motivationinterview)  
Stop the video at :50 seconds.**

- 1) If you were the canvasser at the door, and you heard the person you are speaking with say, “I’m not judgmental, but I also don’t want them around our children,” what would you say? What exploring questions might you ask?

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## **Activity #2: Exploring**

**Finish the video above and answer the following questions:**

- 1) What exploring questions did you hear the canvasser ask? What other exploring questions came to mind as you heard the woman speaking that you would like to ask?
- 2) Did watching the way the canvasser reacted to the woman’s position on transgender rights change the way you would normally react in a situation like this? Explain why or why not.

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## **Activity #3: Guiding questions**

- 1) What examples of guiding questions did you hear the canvasser ask the woman?
  - 2) In what instances did you hear the woman voice her values, as well as contradictions with her initially stated beliefs? How did that make you feel?

## **Activity #4: Choosing**

- 1) How did the canvasser ask this woman to choose an action, further conversation, or consider a thought?
  - 2) What would you ask the woman at this point?
  - 3) Are you surprised by the outcome of this conversation?

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