

## **LANGUAGE COUNTS: Using Empowering Language**

### **What is Motivational Interviewing and how does Motivational Interviewing apply to our everyday work with young people?**

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a method for facilitating conversations that works to foster intrinsic motivation and connection. MI techniques can be used in everyday conversations to empower young people by eliciting their authentic ideas. As more adults embrace and use the principles and techniques of MI, students' perceptions of the interpersonal atmosphere of the school will improve.

#### **1. Principles of Motivational Interviewing**

The acronym RULE will help you remember the key principles of MI:

##### **R-Resist the righting reflex**

- Resist the urge to fix problems described by the young person
- Avoid downplaying the problem or suggesting it does not exist

##### **U-Understand the young person's motivation**

- Show curiosity toward the young person's experiences
- Create an environment where young people can share what they would like to see changed and how they would like to change it

##### **L-Listen to the young person**

- Listen for information about goals, beliefs, and aspirations
- Maintain a respectful attitude

##### **E-Empower the young person**

- Support the young person's ideas for solutions
- Encourage the young person's ability to enact changes

#### **2. Philosophy of the Motivational Interviewer**

Three characteristics comprise the philosophy of the motivational interviewer: Collaboration, Autonomy, and Evocation. As you become more fluent with motivational interviewing skills, you will find that you infuse them throughout your daily life.

##### **Collaboration**

- Be in partnership with young people
- Take a collaborative stance
- Respect young persons' expertise
- Avoid prescriptive/proscriptive advice

##### **Autonomy**

- Leave the decision-making to the young person
- Avoid coercion: Do not force change in views, ideas, or actions

##### **Evocation**

- Draw out ideas from young people
- Acknowledge multiple solutions and routes to answers
- Draw out goals, values, and aspirations

### **3. Key Techniques for Motivational Interviewing**

Use a few simple MI techniques as often as you can when working with young people.

#### **Open-Ended Questions**

- Questions have an information gathering purpose
- Questions create forward momentum to explore opportunities
- Avoid rhetorical questions

#### **Affirmations**

- Acknowledge and affirm strengths
- Instill hope and encouragement
- Be clear and genuine
- Avoid sarcasm

#### **Reflective Listening**

- Avoid simple repetition
- Help provide shape for ideas that may be less clearly articulated by the young person, but are implicit in the message
- Express empathy

#### **Summaries**

- Link ideas together to form more coherence
- Invite young people to correct or add to summary statements

## **Activity: Personal Reflections & Sharing**

### **Step 1: Personal Reflection**

Quietly in your own space, reflect on the following question:

*When you were 15 years old, what adult (school adult or adult at home) inspired you to learn and grow (academically, interpersonally, or both)? Consider the characteristics that she/he displayed and answer the following questions:*

1. What was his/her role in your life?
2. What MI Principles and Philosophy Characteristics did he/she embody, and what MI common practices/techniques did he/she use, even if she/he didn't know he/she was using them?

### **Step 2: Paired Sharing**

In pairs, share your personal reflections and discuss the following:

1. What are the common characteristics of adults that empower young people?
2. Can practicing motivational interviewing principles and techniques help improve an adult's ability to connect with young people? How and why?
3. How would using school adults' use of MI lead to improvements in student perceptions of school climate?