

## Motivational Interviewing

### Theory, Practice, and Applications with Children and Young People

Eddie McNamara (Ed.)  
Positive Behaviour Management  
£25.99

Review by David S. Prescott, LICSW <sup>1</sup>

Those working directly with children and adolescents are aware that the first minutes of any interaction can be vital to the success of treatment. Having used motivational interviewing with this population for the past decade, I was relieved to hear of this book (as well as others about using MI with this age group), and I became immediately interested in reviewing it. Like the book's editor, I am interested in motivational interviewing in contexts involving large treatment teams, whether in schools or inpatient treatment situations.

Recent discussions among members of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) have centered on the nature and limits of MI, particularly when the third edition of Miller & Rollnick's defining text has become available. Prominent members, including Bill Miller, have compared MI to a tent, and wondered whether changes in MI result in ever-changing placement of MI's conceptual tent stakes. In between the second and third editions, Miller and Rollnick's important 2009 article on "ten things that MI is not" followed Miller and Moyer's 2006 article proposing eight steps that people take in learning MI. Most recently, at his plenary address at the 2012 MINT Forum, Bill Miller invited attendees to "go outside of the tent" every once in a while.

Into this period of transition comes Eddie McNamara's book. Its target audience includes counselors and teachers, and to that end presents itself as friendly, sympathetic to professionals and young people alike, and easily accessible. Published in 2009, it pre-dates some of the recent evolution of MI. Just the same, many readers will find sections and passages that are well outside of the MI tent.

McNamara has assembled a group of authors who are no strangers to the front lines of MI in schools and counseling situations. The first section of the book focuses on theory and practice of motivational interviewing, with one chapter providing a general overview and an entire chapter devoted to "rolling with resistance", a concept deconstructed (into "sustain talk" and "dissonance" or "discord") in the current iteration of MI. Herein lies the dilemma. On one hand, teachers can benefit from the information contained in this book. Rolling with resistance is better than the aggressive alternatives in place in many schools. On the other hand, the book does not reflect the collective ambivalence experienced by many MI practitioners, as well as Miller and Rollnick themselves, regarding the concept of resistance.

Part Two of the book focuses on applications of MI with children, adolescents, their teachers, and families. These chapters are helpful, and focus on specialty areas of interest to many in the professional trenches. There is a chapter on educational settings generally, hard-to-

reach parents, and combining solution-focused approaches with MI. Part Three addresses systems-level intervention, and includes chapters on the stages of change model (which is not a part of MI, despite their close historical interactions) in facilitating change at the level of an entire school, and incorporating MI strategies into a consultation model for use within school-based behavior-management teams.

Overall, the book emphasizes the stages of change model. It focuses much less on the importance and elicitation of change talk than one might expect, given the attention this aspect has received since Amrhein's important research from 2003. Not surprisingly, there is a strong emphasis on Gordon's roadblocks model, which—like the stages of change model—is often-mentioned in MI trainings but is not actually MI. In some cases, the use of sections and sub-sections can be confusing. For example, in Chapter 9, one might come away believing that the OARS micro-skills are connected solely to the principle of supporting self-efficacy. Likewise, Chapter 2 lists some, but not all, of the OARS skills (reflective statements) and includes them with other strategies, such as coming alongside and reframing, which are specific to responding to discord or resistance. Chapter 1, however, states clearly that the goals of motivational interviewing include increasing knowledge and concern and promoting self-efficacy, internal attribution, and self-esteem (p. 17). Strikingly absent is the elicitation of the client's own goals or values. This kind of inaccuracy casts a shadow over the entire book. In fact, the book asserts that two of these purported goals are aimed at facilitating movement through the precontemplative and contemplative stages of change. While there is reference to MI spirit, it is woven in throughout the text rather than appearing for discussion in its own right.

Ultimately, MITI coders, and MI purists will have reason to take exception to much of the material in the book, even though it will doubtless be helpful to researchers. To some degree this book also suffers inadvertently from poor timing in that it was published three years prior to the most recent definitive MI text. McNamara's text, however, does offer helpful case examples and suggestions (such as understanding how the stages of change model can be useful in understanding parents' motivations and a potentially useful card sort for assessing some aspects of adolescent motivation that could be one alternative for challenging situation) of use to professionals, making it a worthwhile addition to a school's resource library. It would have been more helpful if it was packaged as a combination of motivational approaches alongside helpful models, such as Gordon's roadblocks and the stages of change. Although it was not intended as a definitive text, it is not without merit. It is, however, outside the MI tent.

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The author reports no conflicts of interest.



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