Therapy-on-Sea with ReKindled Relationship Counselling

Motivational Interviewing in Couples Counselling

To effectively implement Motivational Interviewing in couples counselling, therapists will need to employ several key strategies and techniques:

1. Addressing Ambivalence in Couples Using Motivational Interviewing

Ambivalence is a common obstacle in couples counselling, where individuals may have conflicting desires or goals. To address ambivalence, therapists can:

– Explore both sides: Encourage couples to openly express their reasons for change as well as their reservations or concerns. By exploring both sides of ambivalence, therapists can help couples gain clarity and make informed decisions.

– Highlight discrepancies: Guide couples in identifying the discrepancy between their current relationship dynamics and their desired goals or values. This highlights the potential benefits of change and motivates couples to explore new possibilities.

– Normalise ambivalence: Make couples aware that ambivalence is a normal part of the change process. Normalise their conflicting feelings and emphasise that ambivalence does not mean failure or lack of commitment.

Statements and Questions to encourage change talk

"You have said that you know _____ is the best choice, but that it won't fit with your lifestyle. What are some of your concerns about fitting _____ into your current lifestyle?"

"What is it about your _____ that others may see as reasons for concern?"

"How has _____ stopped you from doing what you want to do?"

"How do you feel about _____?"

"The fact that you are sharing with me indicates that you are interested in learning about _____. Why do you want to learn about _____?"

"What makes you think that you need to make a change?"

"If things worked out exactly as you like, what would be different?"

"If you decided to change, what do you think would work for you?"

"What concerns do you have about making changes?"

"What things make you think that this is a problem?"

"What difficulties have you encountered trying to change your _____?"

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2. Enhancing Motivation for Change in Couples through Motivational Interviewing

Motivation is a crucial factor in couples counselling, as it determines the level of engagement and commitment to making positive changes. To enhance motivation for change, therapists can:

- Encourage couples to reflect on the positive aspects of change and express their desires for a better relationship. By eliciting change talk, therapists amplify clients' motivation and commitment to making improvements.
- Help couples recognize the potential negative consequences of maintaining the status quo. By exploring the cost of inaction, therapists can strengthen couples' motivation to address their relationship issues.
- Highlight couples past successes and strengths to boost their confidence in making positive changes. Provide opportunities for couples to practice and experience small wins, reinforcing their belief in their ability to create meaningful change.

Statements and Questions for Reinforcing Positive Change-talk, new behaviours and motivation

"That sounds like a good idea."

"That's a good point."

"You are very considerate of how your decisions affect other people."

"It seems you've changed the way you think about _____. How do you feel about that?"

3. Building Rapport and Trust in Couples Counselling Using Motivational Interviewing Techniques

Rapport and trust are essential in couples counselling, as they create a foundation for effective communication and collaboration. To build rapport and trust, therapists can:

- Teach and encourage active listening, firstly by giving couples their full attention, maintaining eye contact, and using verbal and non-verbal cues to show understanding and empathy. Then take it further by inviting the couples to do the same.
- Reflect back couples' thoughts and feelings to demonstrate understanding and validate their experiences. This helps build trust and encourages couples to explore their emotions more deeply.

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Statements for active and reflective listening

"You're feeling uncomfortable with your _____."

"You are angry with/about _____."

"You've tried to do _____ before and it has not worked for you."

"You are frustrated with trying to _____."

"So, if I understand you so far, you _____."

"You are wondering if you should do something about _____."

"I can see how you might feel _____ at this point."

- Involve couples in setting their own goals for counselling. By giving the couple, a sense of ownership and control over their therapeutic journey we as therapists are strengthen the therapeutic alliance and promote active engagement between the couple.

  Think back to module 1 when I introduced the

  What do I want

  Why do I need it

  What do I have

  Those are the goals that will be supported by MI. In essence motivation Interviewing starts from the very first session

Questions to Support Self-efficacy and trust building

"How important is this to you?"

"How much do you want to _____?"

"How confident are you that you can make this change?"

"I know that it seems like such an uphill battle to _____, but now that we've discussed some options that have worked for other participants, which ones sound like the best fit for you?"

"It sounds like you want to continue to _____. What personal strengths do you both have that will help you succeed? Who could offer helpful support so you can continue to _____?"

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4. Overcoming Resistance and Barriers in Couples Counselling with Motivational Interviewing

Resistance is a common challenge in couples counselling, there is resistance in singles counselling so it undoubtedly going to be present in couples. To overcome resistance, try:

- To normalize resistance, acknowledge resistance as a natural response to change. Help couples understand that resistance does not mean failure or lack of commitment.
- Explore underlying concerns, what are the underlying fears, concerns, or beliefs that contribute to resistance. By addressing these concerns, the couples can be helped to overcome resistance and move towards positive change.
- Encourage couples to express their desires for change and explore the potential benefits of making positive changes. By evoking and amplifying change talk, therapists help shift couples' focus towards the possibilities of a better future.

Statements and Questions to Roll with Resistance

"It's okay if you don't think any of these ideas will work for you, perhaps you've been thinking about something that might work instead?"

"Ultimately, it is your decision. So, what would you like to try?"

"You're feeling uncomfortable with your _____."

"I don't understand everything you are going through, but if you want to share what you've tried, maybe together we can find something that could work for you both."