

Motivational Interviewing with Criminal Justice Populations

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Are criminal justice employers actively looking for potential employees who have M.I. training?

A: I am not aware that this is occurring, but there is a growing interest and, as I noted in my presentation, research seems to be pointing to MI's effectiveness in making effective connections with inmates, probationers and parolees.

Is there one complex reflection that's "better?"

A: Keep in mind that a complex reflection involves making a guess as to what the client means that goes beyond what he or she said. So a "better" complex reflection is one that is relatively accurate and allows the client to feel that he/she is being understood. Also, whereas a simple reflection merely paraphrases back what the client says, a complex reflection is "good listening" guess at what the client is feeling or experiencing. So a "better" complex reflection is one that results in a willingness by the client to continue to be open while developing trust toward the counselor (and this could lead to change talk and intrinsic motivation by the client).

I'm a peer recovery coach working alongside peers who are in the CJS [Criminal Justice System]. Is it wise of me to show the reasons why I am empathetic with their situations due to my own experience with addiction and being in the CJS for many years throughout my life?

A: My best advice is to show empathy and interest in others, such as the other peer recovery coaches. Unless you are in a position to train or supervise those you work alongside, *showing the reasons* you are empathetic may not be productive. It's better to model empathic communication – it thus becomes a more indirect way of learning for others. We often learn from the behavior of those we come in contact with and especially from those who we feel a good connection with. Modeling empathic behavior strengthens relationship and trust – it works as well with peers and co-worker as it does with clients. It gets people to feel they are being heard and understood.

What is the "TC model"?

A: This is the old Therapeutic Community Model that, in the past, was the mainstay in criminal justice programs. The original TCs were residential or jail-based programs where participants were assigned jobs or chores and where the group itself, in essence, became the primary form of therapy. Participants take on roles that support the daily operations of the program with a focus on a strengthening a sense of community. The community itself becomes a vehicle for learning, self-development, and recovery as peers become role models and can move up a hierarchical ladder and given positions of authority. A general theme was to use the community as the therapist thus resulting in many interventions and confrontations. Consequently, in many of these programs the atmosphere could become demeaning to those who struggled or didn't follow the rules (or as I said in the webinar, this could be seen as the antithesis of motivational interviewing). Modified TCs are more common today where confrontations and threats are **not** seen as being therapeutic and where approaches such as motivational interviewing can be effectively utilized.

What is the difference between Motivational Interviewing and the Socratic Method?

A: The best way to answer this is that the Socratic Method is a way of teaching – it involves asking questions to draw out ideas by stimulating critical thinking; whereas MI is a way of connecting and encouraging internal recognition for change. Indeed Socratic questioning could lead to intrinsic motivation, as MI does, but the processes and primary goals of the two approaches are different. Another thing they have in common is evocation: One evokes ideas and thinking while the other evokes desires, abilities, reasons, and needs to change.