

Motivational Interviewing With Offenders: Engagement, Rehabilitation and Re-Entry

By Jill D. Stinson and Michael D. Clark. New York: The Guilford Press, 2017. 264 pp. \$29.00.

Reviewed by Chinmoy Gulrajani, MBBS

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Motivational Interviewing With Offenders: Engagement, Rehabilitation and Re-Entry is a recent addition to the Motivational Interviewing (MI) book series. The book is introduced to the reader by the creators of MI and series editors, Rollnick, Miller, and Moyers, who note that the book describes “how the collaborative, empathic, and affirming style of MI lends itself to a restorative approach” (p ix). The authors explain the applicability of MI all the way from shifting perceptions of offenders to promoting culture change in offender systems.

The book is divided into 15 chapters. In the first chapter, the authors introduce MI as an agent of lasting behavioral change. They review the evidence supporting the efficacy of MI with substance users, to enhance treatment compliance, and to support or enhance treatment engagement in offender populations. They then enumerate the factors to be considered when contemplating integrating MI into an offender system and explain how MI can work in conjunction with the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model to promote lasting positive behavioral change.

After setting the stage in the first chapter, the authors lay out the core techniques of MI. In Chapter 2, the authors emphasize the stance that the therapist needs to adopt to relate to the offender and discuss the various attributes (e.g., partnership, acceptance, compassion, and evocation) that help facilitate building this relationship. Chapter 3 is focused on the skill of reflective listening that is essential to successful MI. In Chapter 4, the authors describe the art of interviewing and cover the common traps and pitfalls to avoid. Chapters 5 to 11 entail a thorough

discussion of the stages of MI (engaging, focusing, evoking, and planning) and the utilization of five core communication skills (open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summaries) in traversing these stages. Chapter 12 is devoted to an examination of resistance. The authors make a distinction between “sustain talk” and mere discord and help readers understand how they themselves may be contributing to discord at various stages of MI. This is followed by a discussion of appropriate responses to discord and to violations of legal sanctions by the offender (e.g., remaining abstinent while on probation). The authors make a case for organizational implementation of MI in Chapters 13 and 14, providing readers with the steps for incorporating MI in their organizations.

The book is easy to read and provides a thorough and updated grounding in the techniques of MI (e.g., replacing the concept of “resistance” with “sustain talk”). While not intended to be a manual, it gives the reader a good grasp of the core concepts in MI and provides the framework for adoption of this technique into one’s practice. The authors utilize clinical vignettes using one continuous fictional example throughout the book to demonstrate how MI looks in practice and to underscore common mistakes and pitfalls.

What is not evident from the title is that the target audience for this book is probation officers who work with offenders on supervised release in the community. In that sense, this book is not directed toward seasoned therapists or psychiatrists with past training in MI. Also, notably, the book is not written with all offenders (i.e., incarcerated and discharged) in mind, though the principles of MI translate equally well to both settings. At times the hypothetical case example seemed a bit contrived and scripted. I would have liked to see a more authentic, real-world discussion of resistance, which is an all too familiar hurdle to engagement in MI. Nevertheless, I enjoyed reading the book and would recommend it to any clinicians in the forensic setting who are looking to incorporate MI into their therapeutic skillset.

Disclosures of financial or other potential conflicts of interest: None.