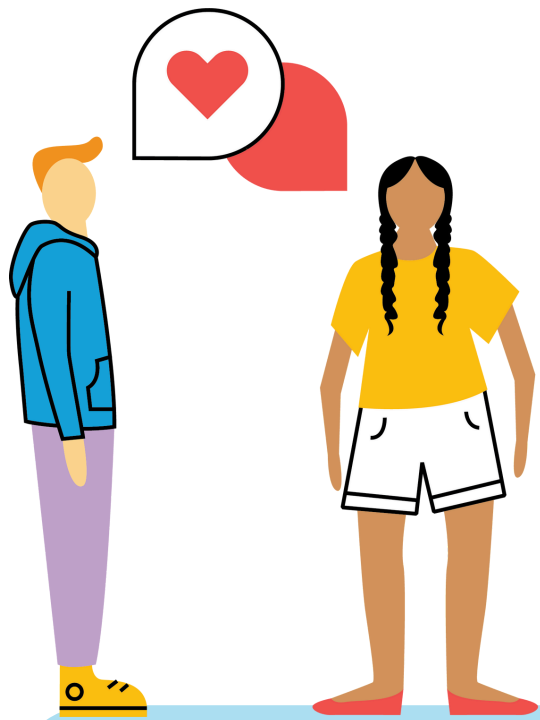


# Substance Use & Motivational Interviewing with Youth



**Motivational interviewing (MI)** is an evidence-based counselling approach characterized by a collaborative conversation style to help strengthen an individual's motivation and commitment to change a specific behaviour.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

MI utilizes four central overlapping processes: **engaging, focusing, evoking, and planning**.<sup>1</sup> To support these processes, practitioners also utilize core interviewing skills that include open questions, affirming, reflecting, and summarizing, otherwise known as the acronym OARS.<sup>1</sup> MI has been applied to substances and risky behaviours as a stand-alone intervention or as a part of an intervention or treatment with several components.<sup>4</sup>

MI is guided by four key elements, known as the "spirit" of MI<sup>1</sup>

## P.A.C.E

- **Partnership** involves active collaboration between the counsellor and the youth
- **Acceptance** involves showing positive regard and understanding the youth's perspective
- **Compassion** prioritizes youths' needs and promotes their well-being
- **Evocation** focuses on drawing out the youth's reasons and motivation for change

## Summary of Evidence

- There is a range of findings around the effectiveness of using MI for substance use concerns in youth
- Studies suggest that MI may perform similarly to other active interventions, such as CBT, and leads to reduced substance use compared to no treatment<sup>5,6</sup>
- Need for further research and high-quality, youth specific studies to inform more concrete considerations, recommendations and clinical practice guidelines
- MI is particularly well-suited for youth given that it is developmentally appropriate, emphasizes autonomy and decision making, and allows young people to set their own goals

## Practice-based MI considerations when working with youth

Learn about more practice-based considerations with examples by reading the full practice brief using the QR code

- Consider **utilizing a readiness ruler** to help youth discover their own interests, desire for change, and to elicit and strengthen change-talk<sup>7</sup>
- **Maintain a non-judgmental attitude** and **respect youth privacy and confidentiality** when assessing substance use.<sup>8,9,10</sup>
- Ensure that you are **not giving too much advice** or asking too many questions without reflection to ensure you are adhering to MI principles<sup>11</sup>
- **Foster a youth's confidence** in pursuing goals and maintaining changes that are realistic for that person<sup>12</sup>
- Provide **personalized feedback to youth** about their substance use, as this has been shown to be more effective in reducing substance misuse and other risky behaviours<sup>13</sup>
- If a youth is expressing discord or demonstrating resistance, by arguing, interrupting or ignoring, **try something different** without arguing or being confrontational<sup>12</sup>
- Consider and **address practical barriers** for youth engaging in MI sessions, such as scheduling, language barriers and transportation needs<sup>14,15</sup>



To learn more about Substance Use and Motivational interviewing read the Substance Use Practice Brief on Motivational Interviewing with Youth through Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario.



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