The Spirit (Philosophy) of Motivational Interviewing

1. Motivation for change is elicited from the client, not imposed by the counselor.

2. It is the client’s job, not the counselor’s, to articulate and resolve his or her ambivalence. It is the client’s job to decide whether to change.

3. Direct persuasion (rational argument, or telling the client what to do) is not an effective method for resolving ambivalence.

4. The Motivational Interviewing (MI) counseling style is a quiet, eliciting one.

5. The counselor is not passive; he or she strategically steers the interview by helping the client stay focused on his/her ambivalence and the topic of change.

6. Readiness to change and motivation are not fixed client traits (“He’s just not motivated!”). Rather, readiness and motivation fluctuate as a function of interpersonal dynamics. When the counselor insists on change, this leaves the client with the “anti-change” side of the conflict.

7. The therapy relationship is a partnership, not an expert and a passive recipient of expert information or wisdom. The MI counselor seeks the client’s own wisdom.

8. Everyone is doing the best they can with what they’ve got.

*Resistance is a signal to the counselor to try something different.*