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Since its inception motivational interviewing (MI) has been used with a variety of clients who abuse substances. It has also been used as a primary strategy in studies involving adolescents (Colby et al., 1998; Colby, Monti, & Tevyaw, 2006; Monti et al., 1999). Because of its success with adolescents, MI may have viability in motivating adolescents in other realms of their lives such as career and/or college major choice. Its brevity also makes it suitable for use by school counselors. Five basic principles of MI are examined and suggestions for tailoring these principles to school counseling are included.

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The concept of motivational interviewing (MI) was developed based on work with individuals with alcohol problems (Miller, 1983). Since that time MI has been used as a strategy with a multitude of clients who abuse substances. It has also been used or suggested as a primary strategy involving adolescents for smoking cessation (Colby et al., 1998; Colby, Monti, & Tevyaw, 2006), alcohol use reduction (Monti et al., 1999), weight reduction and control (Resnicow, Davis, & Rollnick, 2006), and diabetes mellitus control (Anderson, Svoren, & Laffel, 2007). The purpose of this article is to examine the viability of utilizing MI in motivating adolescents in relation to career and/or college major choice. School counselors may find the use of MI appealing since MI can be a brief intervention. MI consists of two to four outpatient sessions and its primary goal of evoking behavior change has been found in a single session (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999). This article pertains largely to counselors utilizing MI within school settings. For this reason, the terms clients and students will be used interchangeably throughout the article.

Rollnick and Miller (1995) describe MI as "…a directive, client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence" (p. 325). High school is a time of exploration and decision-making for many students. Some students will be allowed to make independent decisions and choices for the first time and, while beneficial, it may be unnerving for these novice decision-makers who at the same time will be making

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tentative choices or decisions that will aid in shaping the rest of their lives (Super, 1980). The ability of counselors to bring about behavior change and resolve ambivalence in high school students who struggle to determine who they want to be when they grow up lends support for the use of this technique with high school students.

Career and/or college major choice can be highly stressful for high school students (Dollarhide, 2003). Students may assume and receive messages from peers and parents that career and/or college major decisions are irreversible (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996) and if they choose poorly it will be costly in terms of personal well-being (Jarvis, 2003) and satisfaction (Krumboltz, 1981). They may believe that college major choice may limit their future career opportunities to expand into other areas (Minnesota State University Mankato Career Development Center, nd.). Because of the perceived gravity of this decision, they may avoid making even preliminary choices (Gati & Saka, 2001) or avoid entering the first task of career decision-making, orientation to career, as described by Germeijs & Verschueren (2006) during which adolescents gain awareness that career decisions need to be made and become motivated to begin in the decision-making process.

When making career and/or college major decisions, students may present to school counselors with a mixture of positive and negative feelings or thoughts (Saginak, 2003). Students may be excited when beginning to explore their options, but may be overwhelmed and anxious by the task. Anxiety pertaining to decision-making has been associated with career and/or college major indecisiveness (Germeijs, Verschueren, & Soenens, 2006) and decision-making confusion (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996). Furthermore, Gati, Osipow, Krausz, and Saka (2000) discovered that participants who found career decision-making difficult per the counselors' judgment also lacked motivation in the career decision-making process. Career and/or college major choice is an important decision and by motivating students to explore and begin to undertake this challenge, along with presenting the realities of various careers and colleges, school counselors may motivate students to make smart decisions in which they feel more confident (Van Matre & Cooper, 1984) and more committed (Germeijs & Verschueren, 2006).

Lack of motivation may affect students readiness to make tentative decisions about career and/or college major choice (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996) including, but not limited to, students exploring personal interests, values, and strengths (Ginzberg, Ginzberg, Axelrod, & Herma, 1951), interviewing someone who's career and/or college major is of interest to them, and/or researching the career and/or college major on the internet. This may be true even for students who excel in a number of areas. These students may be unable to select a manageable number of careers or majors to explore for fear that by simply selecting a few areas to examine or pursue in more detail they are closing the door to other possibilities (Kerr, 1990; Rysiew, Shore, & Leeb, 1999). Many students may need help in identifying alternatives available to them (Germeijs, Verschueren, & Soenens, 2006). School counselors can aid in this endeavor through the use of MI.

Motivational Interviewing

The primary purpose of MI is to resolve ambivalence through a directive and goal-oriented approach. The resolution of ambivalence is paramount if behavioral change is to take place (Rollnick & Miller, 1995). Rollnick and Miller also suggest that in the case of substance

abuse, ambivalence may develop as indulgence versus restraint, such as feeling better about quitting smoking, but feeling unattractive due to possible weight gain associated with smoking cessation. In the case of career and/or college major choice, students may be excited about the possibility of making choices, but may be anxious about letting go of options that may be appealing to them or removing options from their selected areas that they are not ready to remove. The resolution of ambivalence may be a first step in career counseling with students who are overwhelmed by the enormity of making career and/or college decisions and are inactive in the career planning process.

The five basic principles of MI used to address ambivalence and facilitate the change process are presented (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999). For the purposes of this review, behavior change will include students actively beginning the career exploration process. Suggestions for tailoring the five principles for use by school counselors are also provided.

Empathy and Reflective Listening

Motivational interviewing is a non-confrontational approach that involves personalized feedback coupled with empathy. Traditionally, this feedback is in regard to the effects of client substance use (Miller & Rollnick, 1991). In using this approach with students struggling with career and/or college major decisions, the feedback would be in regard to the effects of failing to take tentative steps in the decision-making process.
In MI counselors seek to understand clients' frames of reference by using reflective listening. Reflective listening, also known as paraphrasing, provides counselors with the opportunity to interpret what clients have said in order to "…hazard a guess about what the client intended to convey" (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999, p. 50). It allows counselors to check their perceptions about students' behaviors, feelings, and thoughts and let students know they are being heard and understood (Miller & Rollnick, 1991; Sweetland, nd).

School counselors can express empathy through reflective listening by accepting, affirming, and trying to understand the struggles students are having in making tentative decisions regarding career and/or college major choice. Counselors allow students to discuss beliefs surrounding career decision-making rather than criticizing, judging, or blaming students for not making tentative decisions or by imposing their beliefs or values onto students (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Additionally, school counselors may occasionally rate their effectiveness by the volume of information they can disseminate to students. While providing students with the necessary information is important for students to make informed decisions, this may allow students to be very passive in the process. Motivational interviewing is in direct contrast to this approach in that it allows for the exchange of information between students and counselors rather than allowing counselors to be the sole providers of information (Rollnick & Miller, 1995).

Corey (2005) suggests the purpose for the use of empathy involves having clients identify and end the incongruity that may internally exist. In addition, he proposes that by exhibiting empathy counselors may uncover meanings outside of clients' consciousness regarding anxiety about career and/or college major choice. Gysbers (1999) describes joining in career counseling in which counselors go beyond empathy by exhibiting awareness of clients' struggles and willingness to work with clients regarding their struggles.

Resnicow, Davis, and Rollnick (2006) suggest that counselors conceptualize reflective listening as a method to test hypotheses they may have regarding clients. In the use with students who are struggling to make tentative career and/or college major choices, school counselors may use statements such as "It sounds like you are anxious about beginning career exploration" or "You seem to be having trouble choosing some areas which you would like to major in college." Counselors can then wait for students' affirmations or rejections of hypotheses. As counselors progress to more complex levels of reflective listening they can investigate the meaning or feeling students may attribute to their words and may reflect to reinforce successes or reframe failures to help build students efficacy in career exploration (Resnicow, Davis, and Rollnick).

Developing Discrepancy

A major principle in MI involves clients' realizations of discrepancies between their goals and values and that of their current behaviors (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999). The awareness of discrepancies may cause discomfort in students thus motivating them to act to remove this discomfort (Winarski, Silver, & Kraybill, 2003). If part of students' ambivalence to make decisions lies in their excitement and anxiety regarding making career and/or college major decisions, then helping students to focus on their primary goals and develop realistic plans for achieving these goals may ease anxiety for students and the process may seem manageable. In addition to easing anxiety, the concentration on attainable goals by students may help to motivate students to begin making tentative decisions regarding career and/or college majors (Blocher, Heppner, & Johnston, 2001).

The discrepancies between goals and values and current behaviors can be revealed by allowing students to examine consequences of not making tentative decisions regarding career and/or college majors such as loss of money (Wendleton, 1996) and dissatisfaction (Krumboltz, 1981). Acknowledging the harm that can occur from being stagnant in the career development process is important. If students become concerned about the effects of their lack of movement in the career development process, it may be helpful for school counselors to draw attention to concerns to heighten students' awareness and recognition of the discrepancy (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999).

A suggestion for aiding students in identifying discrepancies includes the Columbo approach (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999). The Columbo approach uses Socratic questioning and reflection to help students gain awareness of their discrepancies. Counselors may use questions or statements such as "Describe how not beginning to make some tentative decisions regarding college major is helping you to reach your goals" or "You say you believe it is important to make some choices about a future career, but have you begun to explore any areas that interest you?" School counselors may also ask students to weigh the pros and cons (Tevyaw & Monti, 2004) of not beginning to make decisions regarding career and/or college major choice in order to aid them in gaining awareness of how their lack of decision-making may be helpful or harmful to them. An additional suggestion includes showing students a video of individuals in similar situations such as making decisions about career and/or college major choice and providing the students with opportunities to relate the video to their own struggles (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999).

Avoiding Argument and Direct Confrontation

Taking an argumentative, aggressive, or confrontational stance is ineffective in changing behavior and can result in resistance and poor treatment outcomes in oppositional adolescents (Cormier & Nurius, 2003). Miller and Rollnick (1991) have suggested that an approach involving support rather than direct confrontation increases effectiveness in working with resistant clients.

Many school counselors may understand the importance of taking tentative steps in choosing career and/or college majors. They may have had experiences with students who have been successful because they have planned or made decisions and also experiences with students who have failed because they have made no decisions regarding career and/or college majors. However, aggressively trying to change the minds or behaviors of students and trying to convince students that change is needed may only serve to drive students away from the overall process (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999).

The idea in MI is to walk with students and not drag them along in the process. School counselors may consider collaborative relationships in motivating students to take tentative steps in the career and/or college major decision-making process (Miller & Rollnick, 1991). School counselors may ask students what they can do together to begin the decision-making process. Additionally, Miller and Rollnick describe MI as a dance where the counselor and student are working in concert to overcome resistance or ambivalence rather than fighting against one another. It is a process that involves respect for students by allowing them time to recognize their ambivalent feelings and making an internal commitment for change (Miller & Rollnick; Winarski, Silver, & Kraybill, 2003).

Rather than arguing with and directly confronting students about their struggles with decision-making in regards to career and/or college major choice, school counselors can avoid argument with students by exhibiting empathy and peacefully challenging students as described. Instead of labeling a student as disinterested or unmotivated, school counselors can explore students' feelings regarding the decision-making process as well as what college and/or career means to them. To begin the dialogue, school counselors can use questions and statements such as "Tell me how you feel when you think about making decisions about your career and/or college major" or "What do you see as your biggest obstacles in making a decision about your career and/or college major?"

Adjusting to Resistance

Gysbers (1999) refutes the belief that resistance does not occur in career counseling. He acknowledges that in career counseling when counselors ask clients to make changes in their lives clients may experience resistance similar to resistance that occurs when clients are asked to make changes in other areas of their lives. He maintains that if counselors do not believe in the possibility of resistance in career counseling then clients' actions stemming from resistance may be misinterpreted. For students, resistance originating from requests to make changes and begin making tentative decisions regarding career and/or college major may be viewed as disinterest or defiance by school counselors who may not acknowledge the occurrence of resistance in the career development process.

Making attempts to avoid resistance is not enough. School counselors may benefit from being skilled in identifying and addressing resistance that occurs in the counseling relationship. The counselors' response to resistance may lead to its increase or decrease (Winarski, Silver, and Kraybill, 2003). Resistance gets in the way of change and prevents information that causes distress from entering students' awareness (Corey, 2005). Gysbers (1999) described common forms of resistance in career counseling including fear of counseling; fear of taking responsibility for decisions; excuse-making when demands of career counseling go unfulfilled; overt behaviors such as silence, passivity, and missing appointments; and terminating counseling. Counselors may find it advantageous to recognize patterns of resistance unique to students, analyze resistance objectively, and find methods to redirect the energy being used for resistance toward more productive endeavors (e.g. change) (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999; Gysbers).

When addressing resistance with students it may be helpful to normalize the anxiety and distress they are feeling as well as assess students' readiness to make changes (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005; Super, 1990). Resistance may develop if students are not ready to make behavior changes. Their lack of readiness could be the result of a lack of career information or career exploration up to this point in their development. School counselors should be aware that a continuum exists (ranging from none to many) regarding the career exploration interventions that were implemented at earlier grades (Herr & Cramer, 1996). To assess the amount of exposure students have had to career development activities, it may be helpful for school counselors to have discussions with students about their past career exploration activities. To adjust to students' resistance regarding career and/or college major choice, school counselors may reduce resistance by shifting the focus from obstacles and barriers preventing students from making tentative decisions to affirmation of students' abilities to make choices in various situations (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999). Additionally, school counselors may invite rather than impose new ideas or perspectives on students by introducing new information with questions such as "Would you consider exploring the art program at the local college" or "Do you believe it would be beneficial to interview an engineer to find out more about that job?"

Self-efficacy and Optimism

Self-efficacy is "the attitude that one can act on one's own behalf and that it will make a difference...."(Goodman, 2006, p. 78). This idea is at the core of MI. Rollnick and Miller (1995) believe that motivation is intrinsic and cannot be externally imposed. They also believe that it is only through drawing out and reinforcing students' desires to change and strengths related to change that change can take place. Counselors serve as guides to students in this process for it is students who should be in control of their decisions. Eliciting and selective reinforcing of students' personal motivational statements, problem recognitions, intentions, and abilities are both keys to improving self-efficacy and motivating students to develop an optimistic view of this process (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1999; Rollnick & Miller). Tevyaw & Monti (2004) suggest that counselors use affirmative statements to support self-efficacy. Such statements related to career and/or college decision-making may include: "I can appreciate how much work you have put into making these decisions" or "It appears that you have made some big decisions in the past and that you have skills that will aid you in making decisions about your future."

Self-efficacy may be increased if students feel that they can accomplish tasks and if the motivation for accomplishing these tasks is internal (Winarski, Silver, & Kraybill, 2003). To increase self-efficacy school counselors may establish small objectives for students associated with career and/or college major exploration such as performing internet searches of two or three possibilities or reflecting on results of interest or value inventories. These tasks may be accomplished with ease thus strengthening students' beliefs regarding their abilities to be successful in making tentative choices.

According to the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2004), school counselors should respect students as unique individuals and provide them with information and support needed to move toward self-direction. These standards are supported by MI tenets which involve providing clients with affirmation regarding their freedom of choice and self-direction. School counselors can also act within the framework of the ASCA ethical standards and MI by providing students with education regarding models of career decision-making and information regarding career theories. This background may empower students by helping them to find their inner strengths that aid in making the process more concrete and manageable for them.

Moving Beyond Ambivalence

Once ambivalence to change (to move forward in choosing a career and/or college major) is resolved, Rollnick and Miller (1995) suggest that clients may require skill training. It would seem in the case of career development that this may be necessary if students have not had the necessary training that would allow them to successfully gather information or explore different aspects of themselves in order to make enlightened and informed decisions. Wakefield, Sage, Coy, and Palmer (2004) provide a multitude of suggestions in helping to motivate students in career development including developing a plan for success, using narratives or timelines, including parents, using service learning, and joining career with academic education.

Suggestions for Research

In my experiences as a school counselor, lack of motivation in terms of student career development and college major choice has been a major challenge. MI has components that may be helpful in addressing the ambivalence that students face regarding this exciting and anxiety-producing process. The principles of empathy, acceptance, and working with rather than against resistance are beneficial for use with adolescents. The brevity of this approach may hold some promise for school counselors. The next step would be to see how these concepts translate in the process of career counseling with adolescents in a school setting. Research may involve the willingness and abilities of school counselors to use MI in relation to helping students make tentative choices regarding career and/or college majors. Once used by school counselors, interviews can be conducted with students and school counselors to gather information regarding their experiences with and the perceived effectiveness of MI.

Conclusion

Herr and Cramer (1996) suggest that interventions used in career development address the internal and external pressures common to the career decision–making process. MI may aid school counselors in addressing this suggestion. The excitement and anxiety produced by career and/or college major decision-making can be both motivating and paralyzing for some students. While it may be helpful for school counselors to use MI with students who are having difficulty taking tentative steps to making decisions regarding career and/or college major, it is important to remember that students are ultimately responsible for making the changes. The ability of school counselors to form collaborative relationships that are free of advice-giving may aid them in motivating students in resolving ambivalence related to career development (Rollnick & Miller, 1995).

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