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Identifying healthy interventions to improve overall health and wellbeing

The saying “Don’t just screen, intervene” has been used widely in recent years. It is a good reminder that the task of undertaking a screening process is only one step which tells the person more about their underlying health. The most important and crucial question is **what next?** When you know something, what will then help to deliver a good long-term health outcome? What action or activity will help support someone make an improvement to their health and wellbeing?

Finding the right intervention can be hard to do – it takes time, resources and energy to identify what will work for someone. In making positive changes to our health all of us find it difficult to change our habits to improve our health. So, what is important in helping someone to make a change in the right direction? Here are a couple of ideas.

- 1. Aim to use a range of intervention skills to support some to improve their health and wellbeing** – learn about what community services are available that you can connect the person to. The opportunity for social prescribing should also be considered. Social prescribing is an approach where health professionals have access to, and can refer people to, a range of community resources to help improve health e.g. stop smoking services, weight management support, exercise groups, arts and creative activities or social support.
- 2. Learn about motivational interviewing techniques** – simple techniques to help people make positive and healthy changes to their life.

What is motivational interviewing?

Motivational Interviewing is a person-centred, goal-orientated method of communication for eliciting and strengthening intrinsic motivation for positive change.

At the heart of motivational approaches is a compassionate and collaborative approach respecting the person’s autonomy and nurturing their own ‘best ideas’ and motivation to change.



In helping people to change, here are some top tips:

- People are more likely to embrace a change in their health if they have the right information, some knowledge, choice, and personal control.
- Practice a guiding rather than directing style. Avoid telling people what to do... try to work in a collaborative way using guiding discussions with people.
- Adopt a compassionate and non-judgemental approach - evidence suggests this can work better to help people feel ok about the health challenges they face.
- Refine your listening skills and respond by encouraging more talk about improving health and wellbeing. Core skills to develop include; open questions, affirmations, reflective listening and summarising.
- Empathising with the difficulties and challenges facing the person can in itself tap into a person's motivation to change.
- Take time to celebrate and affirm small steps the person is making.
- Wherever possible facilitate peer support - having someone experiencing similar challenges can help the person to make a change to improve their health and wellbeing.
- Try to write a goal-orientated plan that helps remind the person what they are working towards.

References

Markland D, Ryan R, Tobin VJ and Rollnick S (2005) Motivational Interviewing and Self-Determination Theory, *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 24(6), pp. 811-831.

Miller W and Rollnick S (2012) *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change* (Third Edition), The Guildford Press.

RCN information

www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/supporting-behaviour-change

Five key skills: www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/supporting-behaviour-change/five-key-skills