


Adapting MI for Different Peer Support Settings

 *A practical guide for using Motivational Interviewing (MI) in various peer support environments*


Overview: Tailoring MI to the Setting

Motivational Interviewing (MI) can be adapted for different peer support settings, including **one-on-one sessions, group support environments, and crisis situations**. Each setting requires a slightly different approach while maintaining the **core principles of MI: collaboration, autonomy, acceptance, and empathy**.

 **Key Insight:** Effective MI conversations are flexible—**adjust your approach based on the setting and the peer’s needs**.

Using MI in One-on-One Peer Support

- ✓ **Focus on Engagement First** – Build trust and connection before exploring change.
- ✓ **Use Open-Ended Questions** – Encourage deeper exploration: “What’s on your mind today?”
- ✓ **Reflect and Summarize Often** – Reinforce the peer’s thoughts and motivations.
- ✓ **Encourage Self-Directed Change** – “What’s one small step that feels right for you?”

 **Best Practice:** Avoid setting goals for the peer—**help them explore and define their own path forward**.

Using MI in Group Support Settings

- ✓ **Facilitate, Don’t Direct** – Encourage group members to share and support each other.

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✓ **Reflect & Validate Shared Experiences** – “It sounds like many of you have faced similar challenges—what has helped?”

✓ **Use Affirmations to Build Group Trust** – “I appreciate how open everyone is being.”

✓ **Encourage Peer-Led Problem-Solving** – “What ideas do others have for handling this situation?”

💡 **Best Practice:** In group settings, peers often **learn best from each other**—MI techniques help guide the discussion without imposing solutions.

Using MI in Crisis or High-Emotion Situations

✓ **Engage First, Problem-Solve Later** – Prioritize emotional support before discussing change.

✓ **Validate Feelings & Reduce Immediate Stress** – “It sounds like this is really overwhelming for you right now.”

✓ **Keep the Conversation Grounded** – Help peers focus on what they **can** control in the moment.

✓ **Avoid Forcing Change Discussions** – In a crisis, **stability and support come first**—MI can be used later to explore long-term goals.

💡 **Best Practice:** In high-stress situations, MI should focus on **building trust and stabilizing emotions** before moving toward change.

Quick MI Adaptation Reference Chart

Setting	MI Approach	Key MI Techniques
One-on-One Peer Support	Build trust and explore personal motivations	Open-ended questions, reflections, affirmations
Group Support Settings	Encourage peer-led discussions	Summaries, group reflections, validation
Crisis Situations	Provide emotional support and stability	Active listening, grounding techniques, empathy

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💡 **Final Thought:** No matter the setting, MI works best when **conversations feel supportive, open, and self-directed.**

Next Steps

- ✓ Keep this guide handy when adapting MI in different peer support settings.
- ✓ Reflect on which techniques feel most natural and where you can improve.
- ✓ Practice adjusting your MI approach based on the **peer's needs and the environment.**

🎯 **Apply MI flexibly and let the peer lead the conversation!**