

OBSERVATION AND COACHING FOR MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Being observed by a coach in Motivational Interviewing practice and given feedback is incredibly helpful for improvement. Having someone we trust provide gentle and supportive feedback is how most of us have improved in sports, writing and our respective disciplines. Observation and feedback are invaluable tools in continuing growth and development in our practice.

Many of us have been observed and given feedback in the past in a way that was unhelpful, seemed pointed, critical, or even hurtful. Because MI is an empathy-based communication approach, it is important that observations and feedback are also conducted in a way that is consistent with those principals – empathic and supportive.

The following process can help:

1. Ask permission to observe the employee. If someone has given permission, we can then let them choose where, when, and under what circumstances they will be observed.

Note: It is important to ask patient's permission to observe as well. We typically only ask patients who we have an existing relationship with the provider, not new patients. We also want to make sure the patients feel like they can say no. The provider shares the reason for the observation, and that the observer is watching the provider, not the patient. Lastly, we should also share that the observer will be taking notes.

2. Before the observation begins, ask the employee how they are feeling about it. Most people feel nervous – this is normal! We can just listen and affirm that being observed is a bit nerve-wracking for all of us.
3. Ask the employee if they have any particular goals or areas of focus.

4. After the session has concluded, before sharing feedback, always ask the employee how they felt about the session first. After they have shared, ask them permission to share your feedback with them.
5. Start with what went well and the strengths of the session. Try and be as descriptive as possible (as opposed to evaluative).
6. After sharing what could be better, ask the employee what their thoughts are on the feedback- this will give them a chance to agree, disagree, or ask questions.
7. Thank the employee for being willing to be observed and coached. Highlight their willingness to engage in continual growth.
8. Offer for the employee to observe you, if it is appropriate in your setting. Watching others is often a valuable way to learn. Moreover, offering this can also establish shoulder-to-shoulder support of your employees, as well as demonstrate that you too are a lifelong learner.

