

## Wellness Coaching Tools Used in Weight Management

Wellness coaching and psychotherapy are very different. Wellness coaching, carried out by lay people help clients achieve one or more personal objectives. In psychotherapy, a patient has a psychological or psychiatric problem which they want to be addressed by a professional therapist.

A professional psychologist, psychiatrist or behavior therapist treats a patient using their knowledge, skills and expertise to address the problems. They strive to have all the answers, to focus on the problem, and to offer advice.

On the other hand, a wellness coach works to encourage patients to help themselves, build motivation, as well as confidence and commitment. The coach relies on client awareness, and strives to help clients find their own answers, focusing on what is working well. Coaching is based on true feedback, open communication, and the belief that the client possesses everything he or she needs to achieve his or her objectives. Using an approach focused on strengths. Coaching promotes respect and confidence within individuals and groups. It allows individuals to identify their own strengths and provides them with tools to overcome difficulties and apply communication strategies. Furthermore, coaching inspires hope, offers solutions, increases competence, and strengthens positive changes.

Among the most discussed tools in wellness coaching is motivational interviewing. This is a time-limited interviewing method that is characterized by empathizing with the client. It is centered on the client, focuses on behavioral change, provides feedback on the consequences of a behavior relative to health such as overeating leading to obesity, and shows the discrepancies between the desired objective and the current behavior of the client.

In a motivational interview, the patient is categorized according to his or her level of motivation: precontemplation (I do not want to do it or I cannot do it); contemplation (I want and can do it, but I will leave it for later); preparation (I am going to do it); action (I am doing it, but not regularly); and maintenance (I continue doing it). Coaching can be a useful method in the treatment of overweight individuals and has a high level of applicability via in-person, telephone, or Internet sessions.

In formal health education, when ill patients seek medical treatment from a professional, they wish to improve and thus follow the provided prescription. In weight loss, this concept does not apply because there are discrepancies between what the patients desire and their behavior. In a professional and patient relationship it is often difficult to achieve the expected weight management results. Coaching tools appear to address these shortfalls by helping to align the objective with the necessary actions. Coaching has been shown to be efficient in allowing individuals to experience and achieve more motivation, more satisfaction, and a better sense of well-being during efforts at weight management using validated scales.

1. Mettler EA, Preston HR, Jenkins SM, et al. Motivational improvements for health behavior change from wellness coaching. *Am J Health Behav.* 2014;38(1):83–91.