



# ACCESS FOR ALL SMILES

Your guide to supporting adults with disabilities and their oral health.

**DELTA DENTAL**  
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Designed and Developed by McMillen Health

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# ACCESS FOR ALL SMILES

We recognize the effort you put into caregiving every day, and this program is designed with your busy life in mind. Each learning topic gives you the information you need to improve the oral health of the person or people you support. We also provide how-to videos to see our suggestions in practice.

Oral health is an important part of overall health. Teeth are connected to the mouth and body, and they impact many areas of health. For people with disabilities and who may be medically vulnerable, oral health is a vital part of a healthy life. Most people will feel better, eat better and sleep better with a healthy, pain-free mouth.

This program is self-guided. This means you can go at your own pace. You should review all content and videos to get the most out of this educational program. However, if you feel like you are getting too much information at once, take a break. You can pause, let the information sink in and then come back for more when you are ready.



# Motivational Interviewing

Inside Access for All Smiles, you will find motivational interviewing (MI) strategies to use during oral health conversations with the person you support.



## The MI strategies you will be using are:



### Open-ended questions

Questions that encourage a person to share thoughts or ideas instead of answering yes or no.



### Reflective listening

Repeating or rephrasing what a person says in a summary statement.



### Affirmations

Statements that recognize a person's experience and strengths.



### Summaries

A collection of reflective statements.



The purpose of MI is to identify goals and start making positive changes. **MI works best when you have a trusting, respectful relationship with the person you support.** When the person you support feels like you genuinely care, they will feel safe to talk about their thoughts and feelings.

**MI is a tool to help the person you support realize when their choices are keeping them from their goals.** Once they realize this, they will be more motivated to change. This is the best time to create an action plan.

You can also use MI to build a person's confidence in their abilities. It is human nature to have mixed feelings about change. **MI helps you be empathetic and understanding when the person you support has setbacks.** Together, you can refocus on their oral health goals.

## Using MI Strategies with People with Intellectual Disabilities

Here are tips for adapting MI strategies to make them appropriate for the person you support.

### Open-ended questions

- Ask only one question at a time.
- Start with query words except “why.”
- Stick to short, simple sentences.
- Use topic-focused questions.
- Allow extra time for the individual to respond yes or no.

### Reflective listening

- Use to structure their thoughts.
- Use to identify emotions.

### Affirmations

- Use specific, clear language.
- Don't exaggerate.

### Summaries

- Stick to short, simple sentences.
- Summarize at end of topic.
- Summarize when transitioning topics.
- Use summaries to confirm agreements.
- Ask the individual to summarize to confirm understanding.

### If the person you support is non-verbal, you may need to:

- Give extra time to make sure they understand your question.
- Pay close attention to their non-verbal cues.
- Follow up with yes/no questions so they can respond with simpler answers/signs.



In some cases, you will be talking with a person's family member or guardian about oral health goals. You will see the blue symbol above for MI strategies for conversations with family members/guardians.

If the person you support is resistant to the techniques or suggestions throughout this guide, remember that their answer may not always be the same. Try again later to see if they are willing to try new things.



### For more on motivational interviewing:

- <https://www.mhddcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Motivational-Interviewing-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- [https://docksci.com/modification-of-motivational-interviewing-for-use-with-people-with-mild-intellect\\_5ce4eebfd64ab28c59728ea3.html](https://docksci.com/modification-of-motivational-interviewing-for-use-with-people-with-mild-intellect_5ce4eebfd64ab28c59728ea3.html)