

Motivational Interview Scenario

Used with permission from Eileen Meyers, MPH, RD, LDN, FADA

RD: Hi MJ. My name is Eileen Myers. Very nice to meet you. Have a seat.

So tell me what you would like to get out of our meeting today.

MJ: I am so tired of this weight. One of my friends sees you and she has done very well so that motivated me to make this appointment. I guess I'd like help to be able to lose this weight and keep it off. I have never been successful keeping weight off.

RD: You say you're tired of this weight. What does that mean?

MJ: Well, literally I know I have less energy because of the weight I am moving around. I also have lost my desire to play tennis which I used to love and I'd love to get back to tennis. I was once a competitive tennis player and now I can't make it past one set. I am too young to be this tired.

RD: So this literal lack of energy and inability to play tennis are strong reasons for your desire to lose weight now.

MJ: Yes, and I think when I have more energy, I'll also have more confidence. Moving around on the court always made me feel good about myself whether I won or lost.

RD: So losing weight will give you energy and confidence.

MJ: Yes.

RD: Now I also heard you say that you have lost weight in the past. Tell me more about past attempts to lose weight.

MJ: Well, I am a big fast food eater. Truthfully all I need to do is give up fast foods and I lose weight. I do that for a while and then I truly miss that flavor and once I go back once, that's it. I'm not only eating there almost every meal, I'm supersizing everything.

RD: So giving up fast food helps but the truth is that you really like fast food so giving them up entirely doesn't last.

MJ: Yes, fast food is my weakness. Also, I just hate to cook and I have such a busy life that fast food is easy. I know I need to give up fast food in order to lose weight and this time I think I am ready to do that. I just need your help with an alternate meal plan that will work for me. I'm a really picky eater.

RD: In reviewing your food frequency questionnaire you completed before this session I see that you don't eat many fruits or vegetables. Do you like fruits and vegetables?

MJ: Not really. There are some I like. I like green beans and I like grapes but that's about it.

RD: OK. Tell me a little bit more about your weekdays and your weekend. Let's start with yesterday. Take me through the day with both your schedule and your food intake.

MJ: Well, I get up as late as I can which is about 6:30 a.m. I am a school teacher and have to be at school at 7:30 a.m. Yesterday I was out the door at 7:00 a.m. and stopped at the fast food restaurant for a sausage biscuit, home fries and sweet tea. Then I taught until 11:00 a.m. I really try to be good at lunch and have a salad from the salad bar. I bring a cola from home and have that with my salad. That is probably the healthiest meal of the day. I finish school at 3:00 pm but then I have graduate school classes so I am off to school. I don't get out of school until 8:00 pm. Yesterday I stopped by Mrs. Chicken and got chicken fingers, fries and a cola. And then after class I had a milkshake on the way home and that was it. Sometimes I snack when I get home on chips but not last night.

RD: OK. And now tell me about your weekends.

MJ: On the weekends I either collapse or I have to study. Often I go see my parents in the upstate on Saturday. Mom is great and has donuts ready for me and usually we go to a steakhouse for lunch and then have something simple like pasta for supper. Sunday is study day and nap day. I usually don't leave the house all day. On that day I'll order in pizza or Chinese.

RD: Wow, you have a very busy life.

MJ: Yes, but that is just how it is now. But I need to do something now and not wait until I finish my graduate degree or I'll be up another 50 pounds.

RD: I can tell that you are determined. From what I am gathering from your life and your past tennis career, when you want something you really stay focused and go after it.

MJ: Yes, I am a very determined person.

RD: Okay, before we go any further I want to make sure I am on track with what you have told me so far. Right now you are tired and want energy back. You want to start playing tennis again. You are not happy with how you are feeling or your confidence. You do have a very busy schedule and fast food is not only convenient, you love it and although you are willing to give it up, you will miss it.

MJ: Yes, you have it right. I think right now I will just have to miss the fast food and deny myself if I am going to achieve my weight loss success.

RD: That is one option but I wonder if we can explore other options. First, let's talk about that whole concept of weight loss. How does one lose weight?

MJ: Well, they stop eating fatty and sugary foods—you know bad foods.

RD: Well, that is one way because cutting down on fatty and sugary foods cuts down on calories. Losing weight is about cutting down on total calories. Just cutting 500 calories a day results in about a one pound weight loss per week. And if you begin adding tennis into the equation, the weight loss may be closer to 2 pounds a week.

MJ: One to two pounds a week. I was hoping to lose 5 pounds a week.

RD: There are diets that allow for faster weight loss but when modifying your diet one to two pounds is what we suggest. Cutting back too much can make you feel deprived and then give up.

MJ: That would be me. Ok. I can live with 1-2 pounds a week because I really want this to be a lifestyle change.

RD: OK, as we talked I wrote out your typical day. Looking at this day, what are your thoughts on ways to reduce calories?

MJ: Well, I can have another salad for supper instead of fried chicken.

RD: Thinking about your day and thinking about your hunger level before your graduate class, on a scale of one to 10 how confident are you that when you get to that fast food restaurant you will order salad?

MJ: Oh that would be a "one." I'm too hungry at that point.

RD: Yes, I noticed you mentioned salad for lunch. A plain salad isn't very filling and although a diet food can backfire because your hunger is so high later on.

MJ: That is exactly what happens. What about the frozen dinners? I like them and I can keep them in the teacher's lounge. I can even have that with the grapes I like.

RD: Great choice. Now when you get out of class you might not be so over-hungry.

MJ: OK. Well I have a thought. I truthfully don't love cola. What if I don't get the full meal and order water instead of cola.

RD: Great suggestion. That will cut out about 300 calories.

MJ: Do I have to give up my fries?

RD: On a scale of 1-10, how much do you love fries?

MJ: I know you are going to think I am crazy, but really I'd say a 5. What I really love is the fried meat. I only get the fried hash browns at breakfast because it comes with the meal.

RD: What size fries do you usually get with your meals?

MJ: Oh, the supersized size. Now that I am not getting the meal, can I make the fries small? Gosh, but I know the fries aren't good for me.

RD: But less fries is less fat and calories so you are eating healthier. And you'll save another 400 calories from the lunch fries and 200 calories from the breakfast fries. With the fries and the cola change, you reduced 900 calories. We added some calories for lunch so all together we cut out about 500 calories.

So when you look at this new meal plan on paper with the changes we made, tell me how confident you are to make these changes with one no confidence and 10 very confident.

MJ: I'd say an 8 or 9. I'm excited to try this. This is not what I expected. I'm even thinking of other changes I can make on the weekend. Great.....