

# The ACORN Approach

## A Blend of Motivational Interviewing and Co-Active Coaching

### Theoretically Backed

The ACORN Approach blends the principles of Motivational Interviewing and Co-Active Life Coaching (MI-via-CALC), and includes the theoretical backing of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, and Azjen's Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior.

### Evidence Based

The ACORN Approach extends and refines the specific concepts and processes of MI-via-CALC that have been evidenced through theoretical and clinical research to be effective in the advancement of positive personal behavior change.

### Accessible

Informative, practical workshops and follow-up consultation provide educators the opportunity to discover and enrich their proficiencies in motivating adolescents to self-discovery and positive behavior change. The ACORN Approach enhances current ideas and practices in coaching adolescents.



### Challenges Faced By Adolescents

Bombardment of social pressures, physical and biological changes, rigors of secondary education, and family expectations can contribute to feelings of incompetence and inadequacy in adolescents. As a result, an increase in unhealthy activities such as unprotected sex, crime and violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and disconnection from school become possible. Further, adolescents who are involved in such negative behavior are more likely to leave school before graduating, and encounter the challenges of unemployment, incarceration, poverty, and single parenthood (Glass & Rose, 2008). The damaging results of risky behavior such as smoking, lack of social engagement, alcohol and drug use, and reckless driving are far reaching for the individual and society (Sullivan, Childs & O'Connell, 2009). Interventions that endeavor to reduce at-risk behavior in youth usually have a positive effect on self-efficacy beliefs (Schwarzer & Luszczynska, 2005.) Behavioral interventions such as the Motivational Interviewing-via-Co-Active Life



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### A Collaborative Motivational Intervention

Guidance counsellors are challenged to enhance their professional proficiencies with a collaborative motivational intervention to influence positive behavior change in adolescent who are suffused in:

- Stressors provoked by social media, bullying, external demands, self-doubt.
- Consequences of dangerous and spontaneous acts
- Avoidance of goal setting and a decline in self-efficacy beliefs
- Perception of self-inadequacy and self doubt
- Further detachment from personal growth and success

Coaching (MI-via-CALC) model augment the possibility that adolescents will discontinue at-risk behavior and come to enjoy a rewarding, vigorous life.

## Challenges Faced By Guidance Counselors<sup>1</sup>

Guidance counsellors are acutely aware of the adolescent need to be supported, respected, heard, and seen by adults. Additionally, guidance counsellors are challenged to discover a collaborative motivational intervention to influence positive behavior change in adolescents who are suffused in stressors provoked by social media, external demands, self-doubt.

Consequences of dangerous and spontaneous acts, avoidance of goal setting, a decline in self-efficacy beliefs and the perception of self-inadequacy and self doubt have given rise to adolescent depression and anxiety. This has lead to further detachment from personal growth and success.

<sup>1</sup> Research conducted with multiple North American Guidance Counsellors.



## The ACORN Approach: A Solution-based Motivational Intervention for Positive Behavior Change

Motivational interviewing and co-active coaching are fast growing theoretical approaches of positive psychology that enable people to increase control over, and to improve their lives. Nurses, primary care physicians, diabetes specialists, occupational and physiotherapists are moving toward motivational interventions in their practice. Specifically, coaching in educational contexts continues to grow and mature with today's educators and leaders exploring a range of conversational contexts in schools where coaching can make a positive difference.

It is an empowering process. It is a move toward optimal growth rather than a focus on how to undo what has already happened. The focus shifts to strength and potential rather than neuroses and pathologies.

A key component of The ACORN Approach is that we don't need to have a huge problem in order to want to improve. The mission is to live fully and completely into our goals and desires. It is about working to fulfill our biggest life.

The ACORN Approach extends and refines the concepts and practices of parenting, communication, counseling, teaching, caring for and advising adolescents. The collaborative way of communicating through the method of The ACORN Approach challenges the idea of advising and moralizing, and pushes past the barriers positioned by adolescents who do not sense external recognition for their natural creativity, resourcefulness, and entirety. Highlighting the precepts and processes of The ACORN Approach that facilitate adolescent transformation may extend and augment current ideas and practices in coaching adolescents.

**A recent study of the adolescent experience of this motivational intervention shows that "central to the phenomenon of adolescent engagement in the MI-via-CALC process is the adolescent need for robust, positive connection with a caring adult; that is, the need for honesty and integrity in the relationship, and preemptive, proactive and practical support" (Hall, 2016).**

### *Ontario School Counselors Association (OSCA) Convention Workshop on The ACORN Approach*

During a recent OSCA convention, guidance counselors were introduced to The ACORN Approach. This is what they had to say ...

#### **What Guidance Counselors Said About The ACORN Approach Workshop**

This is a wonderful approach that I would like to learn. It's humanistic, person centre and I believe it will help me as I coach the youth in my school.

Thank you for the presentation, knowledge and insight! I heard the words co-active coaching, alliance, interactive coaching, saboteur. I hope that you can do a workshop at my board so I can learn how to practice this approach!

Is it possible to do a workshop at my school? Teachers, administrators, and student support need this! It has great framework and modelling.

Inspiring discussion, hitting the nail on the head and providing us with strategies and practical tools to take back with us. I want more!

If we could "coach" our students using your approach we can help them with the stress and anxiety that they have over all of their responsibilities and it will help us with ours!

Excellent! Interesting! Very informative! I really like the "co" part - that we work together. I need more!!! Your workshops need to come to my school.

I enjoyed the approach to the presentation, and I hope that I have a chance to learn the application of these strategies so that I can apply them to counselling.

## Conclusion



The ACORN Approach includes the principles of MI and the theoretical backing of Social Cognitive Theory, the Theory of Reasoned Action, and the Theory of Planned Behavior.



The specific approach of MI-via-CALC to behavior change has been evidenced through theoretical and clinical research to be effective in the advancement of positive personal behavior change.



MI-via-CALC is a holist approach designed to address the client's whole life, at every level of consciousness.



The specific methodology of The ACORN Approach is accessible to guidance counsellors, teachers, administrators, and support personnel through interactive, practical, and supportive workshops that take place in your schools, board rooms, or other gathering places.



An opportunity exists to provide educators, parents, and adolescents with a behavior intervention that gives rise to adolescent motives for positive change that are channeled by the awareness of his or her unique and intrinsic values, beliefs, purpose, and social responsibility.



Dr. Elizabeth Hall completed an MEd (UNE), utilized in the education sector – planning and implementing programs for best practices in individual and group guidance counseling. Additionally, she completed a PhD in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Health Promotion (UWO), with a focus on motivational interventions accessible to guidance counsellors. Elizabeth established a private education service (PPL), and designed, planned and developed programs including “flipping the classroom” to focus on higher forms of cognition in a supportive, enriched environment for students with individual education needs, Second Language Learners, and gifted students. She encourages parental involvement to maximize adolescent motivation to mastery of skills. Dr. Hall administers specific tests for interpretation of aptitude, interest, and type for future education and employment possibilities. Her passion is in coaching and mentoring students and professionals to self-awareness, goal setting, and actualization through Motivational Interviewing to encourage and support achievement and learning. She additionally obtained Co-Active Coach Training (CTI), and is currently involved in various health and behavior studies.