Building Skills in Motivational Interviewing

Helping People Change

SC Coalition for the Homeless in partnership with ECHO
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Ken Kraybill
Center for Social Innovation/t3
www.thinkt3.com

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Training Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Describe the four elements of the mindset and heart-set of MI
- Explain the four processes that guide MI conversation*s*
- Provide examples of the core interviewing skills of MI
- Name three strategies to elicit change talk

9:00 Overview of MI Basics

What would you say next?
Relevancy of MI for your work
Embodying the mindset and heart-set of MI
Four processes that guide the flow of MI

10:30 BREAK

10:45 Responding with reflective statements and summaries

Forming reflective statements
Using reflective statements strategically
Offering three types of summaries

12:15 LUNCH

1:00 Using evocative questions and affirmations

Forming thoughtful, compelling open questions
Using open questions to deepen the conversation
Combining reflective statements with questions
Offering affirmations to highlight strengths

2:30 BREAK

2:45 Recognizing, eliciting, and responding to change talk

Recognizing change talk
Strategies to elicit change talk
Responding to change talk to strengthen it
Providing information and suggestions

4:00 ADJOURN

A Brief History of Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a way of talking with people about change related to things we often have mixed feelings about – exercise, diet, alcohol and other drug use, relationship issues, risky sexual behaviors, school and job related concerns, spiritual practices, certain attitudes, and other issues we face in our lives.

The MI approach grew out William R. Miller's work with problem drinkers. In the past, it was believed that people who drank too much were unable to see how their use was harming themselves and others. They were said to be in denial. Counselors and others who wanted to help would try to break through this denial by using "in-your-face" tactics such as confrontation and shame to try to convince people of their need to change. As you can imagine, this approach didn't work very well. None of us like it when other people think they know what's best for us or try to *get* us to change. We want to decide for ourselves how to live our lives.

In 1991, William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick wrote a book titled *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People to Change Addictive Behavior.* It explained how to talk with people about their alcohol and drug use in ways that respected their ability to decide for themselves whether they wanted to change. In the book, the authors described the spirit (core attitudes and beliefs) of this approach and the specific skills and strategies of MI.

A second edition, *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change*, was published in 2002. It further explained how MI works, the research behind it, and how to get better at using MI. It also described the spread of MI to other areas beyond substance use disorders including health care, mental health, corrections, and school settings.

A third edition, *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change,* 2013, expanded on the MI approach and included some new ideas such as the four processes of MI conversations: engaging, focusing, evoking, and planning.

MI is defined as **"a collaborative conversation style for strengthening a person's own motivation and commitment to change."** MI can also be described as "a way of helping people talk themselves into changing." This approach embodies "a mind-set and a heart-set" that includes partnership, acceptance, compassion, and evocation.

Motivational Interviewing is a guiding style that invites people to examine their own values and behaviors and come up with their own reasons to change. It doesn't try to convince people or argue with them. Instead, it draws out people's own hopes, experience, and wisdom about themselves including whether or not to change. As William R. Miller says, "You already have what you need, and together let's find it."

People who are used to confronting and giving advice will often feel like they're not "doing anything." But, as Miller and Rollnick point out, the proof is in the outcome. More aggressive strategies often push people away. MI, on the other hand, increases the odds that people will give change a chance.

The Mindset and Heart-set of MI: Partnership, Acceptance, Compassion, and Evocation

"MI is done *for* or *with* someone, not *on* or *to* them."
Motivational Interviewing, 3rd edition

Imagine taking a drink of a carbonated beverage that has gone flat. It still tastes vaguely like itself, but the fizz has gone out of it. It's no longer worth drinking, and you'll probably pour it down the drain. The spirit of MI is the fizz of a helping conversation. It's what shows you that a person truly cares about you and isn't just pretending to care.

In describing MI spirit, Miller and Rollnick note: "When we began teaching MI in the 1980s we tended to focus on technique, on *how* to do it. Over time we found, however, that something important was missing. As we watched trainees practicing MI, it was as though we had taught them the words but not the music… This is when we began writing about the underlying *spirit* of MI, its mind-set and heart-set." (*Motivational Interviewing, 3rd edition*)

The spirit of MI is communicated in our body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and attitudes. It comes from inside us and can't be faked. It has to be real. Spirit is about the way we are with people, not just what we say.

Miller and Rollnick identify four parts of the spirit of MI: partnership, acceptance, compassion, and evocation. Each of these is related but also unique.

PARTNERSHIP – showing real respect for the other person; assuming both of you have important input; dancing rather than wrestling

ACCEPTANCE – meeting people "where they're at" without judging them; believing in them; trying to understand where they're coming from; shining a light on the good stuff you see in them instead of pointing out what's wrong with them

COMPASSION – hanging in there with people when they're hurting or struggling with an issue; doing whatever is in the person's best interests

EVOCATION – "calling forth" or asking people about things such as what makes them tick, what they already know, what's important to them, how would they like their lives to be different

Adapted from Motivational Interviewing, *3rd edition by Miller & Rollnick, 2013*

Four Processes of MI:
Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, Planning

MI conversations have a purpose and direction. They seek to help people identify and explore their hopes, values, and change goals using an empathic, guiding approach. The guiding approach used in motivational conversations generally moves through four processes. These processes – engaging, focusing, evoking, and planning – tend to follow a logical order beginning with engaging and ending with planning. However, it doesn't mean that they always follow a straight line or that every conversation will include all four. Using MI is similar to improv theatre; you don't have a script, but there is a basic storyline that you're trying to follow.

Engaging – getting to know someone and building trust

- "It's really good to meet you."
- "What do you do for fun?"
- "Tell me a bit about yourself."

Focusing – figuring out together what to talk about

- "What would you like to talk about today?"
- "You mentioned some problems at school, some issues with your girlfriend, and wanting to find a way to make some money. Where do you want to start?"
- "Would it be all right if we took a closer look at your relationship with alcohol?"

Evoking – drawing out the person's own desire, reasons and ability to change

- "How would you describe the role of alcohol in your life?"
- "If you did decide to have a healthier lifestyle, where would you start?"
- "How confident are you that you could make this change if you wanted to?"

Planning – developing a specific change plan that the person is willing to put in action

- "What do you think you'll do next?"
- "What might get in the way of your plan?"
- "How can I and others support you in carrying out your plan?"

Adapted from Motivational Interviewing, *3rd edition by Miller & Rollnick, 2013*

OARS: Open Questions

Open questions invite people to say as much or as little as they want about a topic. They allow people to decide for themselves what ideas, thoughts or feelings they want to share. Answering open questions tends to help people understand themselves better and think in new ways about their situation. Here are some examples of open questions:

What's going well in your life? What's not going so well?
What would you like to talk about today?
How does alcohol fit in your life, if at all?
When you do drink, what does it do for you?
What do you value most in a friend?
If you could change anything in your life, what would it be?
What specific changes are you thinking about making?

Closed questions, in contrast, limit the conversation. They are most often used to gather specific information or ask yes or no questions. For example:

What is your date of birth?
How much do you drink?
When is the last time you got a physical exam?
Which day would you like to meet next week?

Open questions are used throughout the four processes of MI and help to engage with the person, increase understanding, strengthen collaboration, find a focus, draw out motivation, and develop a plan for change. As a general guideline, open questions should be used more than closed ones.

OARS: Affirmations

Affirmations are statements that shine a light on what is good about a person. They put emphasis on people's strengths rather than their weaknesses. Strengths can include a person's talents, qualities, knowledge, skills, efforts, and much more. Affirmations often help people see strengths they possess that they may have a hard time seeing for themselves. Affirmations can also build a person's confidence in being able to make changes.

An affirmation must be real and from the heart. People will know if it seems false and might be less likely to trust you. Affirming someone's strengths is different than cheerleading or praising. Praise statements put you in a "one-up" position and are usually based on judging someone's performance. Furthermore, praise can be both given and withdrawn. When forming affirmations, it's usually best to avoid starting with "I" and instead center the comment on "you." It's also helpful to be specific. Here are a few examples of affirmation.

You were very courageous to speak up for what you thought was right.
You know what's best for you and you aren't going to be easily swayed.
You showed a lot of patience in the way you waited until he finished speaking.
It was hard, yet your efforts to not drink on the weekend paid off.
Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

OARS: Reflective Listening

"What people really need is a good listening to." – *Mary Lou Casey*

"Good listening is fundamental to MI. The particular skill of reflective listening is one to learn first because it is so basic to all four processes of MI. It takes a fair amount of practice to become skillful in this way of listening so that reflections come more naturally and easily." [p. 48]

Reflective listening is the skill of "bending back" to people what we hear them saying in an effort to understand "where they're coming from." In other words, to see the world through the other person's eyes. This kind of listening means giving a person your full attention. We do this with our words, actions, and body language. Reflective listening is a special gift we can offer to others in both our work and personal lives.

Reflective listening takes the conversation to a deeper level. This is especially true of reflective statements that go beyond repeating what was said by making a reasonable guess about the person's meaning. Such statements "have the important function of deepening understanding by clarifying whether one's guess is accurate. Reflective statements also allow people to hear again the thoughts and feelings they are expressing, perhaps in different words, and ponder them. Good reflective listening tends to keep the person talking, exploring, and considering. It is also necessarily selective, in that one chooses which aspects to reflect from all that the person has said." [p. 34]

Forming reflections requires the ability to *think reflectively*. Since words can have multiple meanings, and people don't always say exactly what they mean, it is useful to regard people's statements as a "first draft." In other words, rather than assuming what someone means, check it out. Because reflections are statements, not questions, the inflection usually turns down at the end. For example, notice the difference between:

"You don't think your drinking is a problem?"
"You don't think your drinking is a problem."

Some reflective statements basically repeat or slightly rephrase what a person has said. These *simple reflections* can convey basic understanding and help the flow of the conversation. However, they add little or no meaning to what the person said, and can stop the conversation from going to a deeper level. For example:

Statement: *I'm feeling pretty depressed today.*
Response: *You're feeling depressed./You're feeling kind of down./Pretty depressed…*

Complex reflections add meaning or emphasis to what someone has said by making a guess about what is unspoken. Complex reflections tend to help people think more about their situation. When first learning to use complex reflections, it can feel a bit strange. However, when you get used to it, such reflections communicate real understanding. For example:

Statement: *I'm feeling pretty depressed today.*
Response: *You're not feeling like your usual self./You wish you had more energy and interest in doing things./It sounds like something has happened since we last talked.*

OARS: Summaries

A summary is a statement that draws together two or more things that someone has said previously. It is basically a paragraph of selected reflective statements. Deciding what to choose to include in a summary depends on the situation. However, usually you want to pick the things that move in the direction of change – kind of like picking the tastiest chocolates from a box of candy. Summaries can be offered at various times in a conversation to draw ideas together and guide the conversation.

Summaries, like the other OARS skills, are used throughout the four processes of MI. Particularly in the engaging and focusing processes, summaries show that you have been listening carefully and that you value what the person has said. They also provide an opportunity for asking the person to fill in what you have missed.

In the evoking process, summaries are often used to emphasize things that support a person's change goal. *S*ummaries can have different purposes. *Collecting* summaries pull together "in one basket" various statements the person has made. *Linking* summaries connect what the individual has said with something they said in a prior conversation. *Transitional* summaries are used as a wrap-up at the end of a conversation, or to create a bridge for shifting the conversation. In all three cases, emphasis is placed on shining a light on the persons *change talk* (see more on page 9).

During the planning process of MI, summaries are generally used to recap the person's reasons for wanting to change and what they intend to do. This can help strengthen commitment to make the change.

Below are some guidelines for developing and offering summaries. Remember to keep summaries brief and to the point.

1. Begin with a statement indicating you are making a summary. For example:
   Let me see if I understand so far…
   Here is what I've heard. Tell me if I've missed anything.

2. If the person is "feeling two ways" about changing, name both sides of the uncertainty in the summary. For example:
   On the one hand you . . . on the other hand . . ."

3. Highlight *change talk* you heard – statements indicating the person's *desire*, *ability*, *reasons*, *need*, and *commitment* to change. For example:
   You mentioned several reasons why you would want to make this change, including . . .

4. End with an invitation. For example:
   What would you add?

Adapted from Motivational Interviewing, *3rd edition by Miller & Rollnick, 2013 and handouts created by David B. Rosengren, Ph.D.*

Informing and Advising

While MI is an inherently person-centered approach, this does not mean that information and suggestions are never offered. In MI, both parties are viewed as having expertise; thus, there may be occasions when this kind of input is appropriate, such as when a person requests it. However, information and suggestions are provided sparingly and not as a first line of response.

There are two main differences as to how information and suggestions are offered in MI, as compared to being dispensed in an unsolicited, authoritative manner. The first is that it is offered only *with permission* from the person. Secondly, it is provided not as the "final word" but rather in the context of helping people come to their own conclusions about its relevance and value. It is often helpful to verbally acknowledge this with people.

Intent of providing information and suggestions in MI

- *Not* an attempt to convince people of the folly of their ways
- Provides an opportunity to express concerns and help the individual move further along in the process of change
- Can help a person come to a decision

A few considerations

- It's all right to express your concerns
- There are many pathways to change; your way may not be the way of another
- Focus on helping the person evaluate options
- Offer information and advice, don't impose it

Suggested method: Evoke-Provide-Elicit (E-P-E)

Elicit

- Ask what the individual already knows about the topic/issue
- Inquire what she or he would like to know
- Ask permission to provide input – e.g., "Would it be all right if I share some ideas/impressions/possible options with you?"

Provide

- Offer small dose of information or advice in a kind, nonjudgmental manner

Elicit

- Ask for the person's response – e.g., "I wonder what you think of that"
- Emphasize change talk, provide affirmations, and instill hope.
- Recognize and affirm it is the individual's decision to make – e.g., "Of course, you're the only one who can make this decision."

Adapted from Motivational Interviewing, *3rd edition by Miller & Rollnick, 2013 and handouts created by David B. Rosengren, Ph.D.*

Evoking Change Talk

Change talk refers to anything someone says that "favors movement toward a particular change goal." Evoking, or "calling forth," change talk helps people come up with their own reasons to change. This is far better than someone else trying to convince them to change, which often makes people defensive and argue against changing. As a worker you can use the OARS skills (Open questions, Affirmations, Reflective listening, and Summaries) to "ask for" and respond to change talk. Notice that change talk comes in different flavors that form the phrase DARN-CAT.

Preparatory Change Talk – "thinking about changing"

Desire – *I want to, I would like to, I wish, I hope*
Ability – *I can, I could, I am able to*
Reasons – *It would help me, I'd be better off if*
Need – *I need to, I have to, something has to change*

Mobilizing Change Talk – "taking action"

Commitment– *I will, I promise, I give you my word*
Activation – *I'm willing to, I am ready to, I am prepared to*
Taking steps – *I cut back on my weekend drinking*

Methods for Evoking Change Talk

Asking evocative questions

What worries you about your current situation?
Why would you want to make this change?
How might you go about it, in order to succeed?

Using the *importance* ruler (also use regarding person's *confidence* to change)

On a scale of 0 to 10, how important is it for you to make this change? Tell me about being at ___ compared to (several numbers lower)? What would it take to move from ___ to (next highest number)? And how I might I help you with that?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all important										Extremely important

Exploring extremes – *What concerns you absolutely most about ____? What are the very best results you could imagine if you made a change?*

Looking back – *What were things like before you began drinking more frequently?*

Looking forward – *How would you like things to be different in the future regarding ____?*

Exploring goals and values – *What's most important to you in life? What are the rules you'd say you live by? How does drinking fit with your personal goals?*

Responding to Discord

What do you do when someone "pushes back" at you in a way that feels like it's personal? Maybe the person says, "Who are you to tell me what to do!" or "You don't really care about me!" Or, the individual refuses to talk. Or, perhaps agrees to do something, but then doesn't do it. When these things happen, you can be pretty sure that something's gone wrong in the relationship. In MI, we call this discord.

This rift can occur for various reasons as noted below. Rather than placing blame on the individual, it is important for workers to look at their own behavior to consider what might be prompting the person to react. The presence of discord in the relationship is a signal to try a different approach.

Common causes of discord in the relationship

- The two of you have different goals
- You're trying to *get* the person to change
- When either of you brings anger and frustration into the situation
- You're not truly listening, or you're making assumptions or interrupting
- There's a lack of agreement about roles in the relationship

Practitioner behaviors that tend to *increase* discord

- Pushing too hard on the person to change
- Assuming you're the expert; not working collaboratively
- Criticizing, shaming, blaming; using negative emotions to get the person to change
- Labeling; "that's because you're an alcoholic/addict"
- Being hurried
- Giving the impression that you "know what's best for the individual"

Practitioner behaviors that tend to *decrease* discord

- Using simple and complex reflective statements
    - "You're wondering if I can help you"
    - "You're not sure you can trust me"
- Other responses
    - Apologizing – "Sorry, I didn't mean to lecture you."
    - Affirming – "You've been doing this for a long time and know how to keep yourself safe."
    - Shifting focus – "Maybe there's something else that would be more useful to talk about for now."
    - Emphasizing personal choice and control – "It is entirely up to you. This is your decision. No one else can make it for you."

Adapted from Motivational Interviewing, *3rd edition by Miller & Rollnick, 2013*

Motivational Interviewing: A Guided Conversation

Here is an outline of how a model MI conversation might flow. In this case, drinking is the focus. Of course, real life conversations rarely play out in such a straightforward manner. Note that the spirit and core skills of MI are applied throughout the four processes of MI. As a general guideline, it is useful to follow a basic rhythm of asking an open question followed by one or more reflections, before asking another question.

ENGAGING
Provide a warm welcome; offer a beverage; exchange small talk; make sure the person feels safe; show that you care; get to know the person as a person; be hopeful

- "Hi. It's really good to see you. Would you like some juice or tea?" "How have things been going lately?" *(Respond with reflective statements)*

FOCUSING
Agree on what to talk about

- "What's on your mind?" "You mentioned several things. Where shall we start?" "Would it be all right if we took a closer look at you and drinking?" *(Reflect)*

EVOKING
Explore ambivalence

- "What does drinking do for you? What concerns, if any, do you have about it?"*(Reflect)*

Elicit change talk

- *DESIRE (want, wish, like)*
  "How would you like things to be different than they are now?" *(Reflect)*

- *REASONS (specific reasons for change)*
  "If you *were* to cut back or stop drinking, what are some reasons you might do that?" *(Reflect)*

- *ABILITY (can, could, able)*
  "How might you go about it in order to succeed?" *(Reflect)*

- *NEED (have to or important to - without stating specific reason)*
  "How important is it to you to make this change?" (use 0-10 scaling question) *(Reflect)*

PLANNING

- *TESTING THE WATER (readiness and confidence)*
  "How ready are you to make this change?" "How confident are you to make this change?" (or use 0-10 scaling question) *(Reflect)*

- *COMMITMENT (will, plan to, intend to, going to, willing, ready, etc.)*
  "What do you think you will do next?" "What is your plan?" "How can I help you with that?" *(Reflect)*

MI Self-Appraisal

As the interviewer, I…	*0- not at all*					*5- extremely well*
1. Provided a **safe, welcoming** presence with my words and actions. *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. Engaged with and showed **genuine interest** in the person, e.g., what she or he enjoys, needs, values. *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. Found out and clarified what the person wanted to **focus** on currently. *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. Helped explore **both sides of the person's dilemma**, e.g., what's working and what's not; upsides and downsides. *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. Avoided trying to **"fix"** the problem or *get* the person to change by advising, confronting, warning, or teaching. *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. Elicited what might be some possible **reasons** to change, *if* the person were to decide to change. *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. Learned about **possible ways** that he or she might go about making this change. *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. Asked **how important** it is at this time for the person to make this change. *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. Asked **how confident** she or he feels to be *able* to make this change. *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. Inquired about **what steps**, if any, the person might take next. *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. Asked permission before providing **information or suggestions.** *Example:*	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. Used the **core skills** of MI (open questions, affirmations, reflective listening, summaries) throughout the conversation.	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. Consistently demonstrated the **spirit** of MI:						
> Partnership	0	1	2	3	4	5
> Acceptance	0	1	2	3	4	5
> Compassion	0	1	2	3	4	5
> Evocation	0	1	2	3	4	5

Developed by Ken Kraybill based on Miller, W.R. & Rollnick, S., Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change, 2013

MI Self Check for Practitioners

Individuals I meet with would say that I…

- ☐ Believe that *they* know what's best for themselves
- ☐ Help them to recognize their own strengths
- ☐ Am interested in helping them solve their problems in their own way
- ☐ Am curious about their thoughts and feelings
- ☐ Help guide them to make good decisions for themselves
- ☐ Help them look at both sides of a problem
- ☐ Help them feel empowered by my interactions with them

Adapted from Hohman. & Matulich. Motivational Interviewing Measure of Staff Interaction, 2008

Selected Resources

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