



# Motivational Interviewing

## Resources for Trainers



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From the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers  
Updated: July 2020

*In science, when you begin to get somewhere, you find that the principle is quite simple but has enormous implications and is not easy to discover. I feel that we have made progress in client-centered therapy in approaching some of the truth of what happens in the process of change and how it can be facilitated. And to try to help people to grasp that and begin to try it out, experience it, and finally come to live it in more than just the therapeutic hour—that's what training is all about.*

- Carl Rogers

from C. R. Rogers & D. E. Russell (2002). *Carl Rogers: The Quiet Revolutionary*.  
Roseville, CA: Penmarin Books, p. 275.

*There is no such thing as teaching; only learning.*

- Monty Roberts

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Welcome to this training for trainers manual from the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT). The primary mission of MINT is to promote the quality of training and practice of motivational interviewing. Toward that goal, this manual provides a variety of training ideas, specific exercises, metaphors and activities all designed to help learners understand the spirit and practice of motivational interviewing. Most of these training ideas were originally designed for a workshop format, but many are also suitable for individual training and supervision as well.

This manual was compiled through the generosity of MINT trainers, who volunteered their ideas without restriction or compensation. In that same spirit, this manual is offered as a free gift for potential trainers or supervisors of motivational interviewing. Any sale or duplication of this manual is prohibited. We ask that you provide proper attribution when you quote or use this manual.

This manual organizes training methods by content areas with which they are often used. Most of the training exercises described in this manual, however, can also be used flexibly in learning other content and aspects of motivational interviewing.

Best wishes as you move forward in your training and supervision of motivational interviewing!

*The Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers*

For additional training resources see:

Rosengren, D. B. (2018). *Building motivational interviewing skills: A practitioner workbook* (2nd ed.).  
New York: Guilford Press.

## Helping Others Learn Motivational Interviewing (MI)

When Steve Rollnick and I began training MI trainers in 1993, our approach was simplistic and, in retrospect, embarrassingly prescriptive: “Here’s how to conduct a workshop on MI.” Soon afterward we began to write about the underlying spirit or attitude behind MI that should guide good practice: acceptance, partnership, evocation and compassion. It was a short but important step to realize that this same spirit should guide us when helping people who want to learn MI.

As we began to study how people learn MI, it quickly became apparent that a training workshop is just a beginning. In the first evaluation of my own 2-day MI workshop, we found from pre- and post-training recordings of actual practice that participants had changed very little in how they counselled. There was some indication that they had received training – a few more reflections than before – but by and large there was little difference in what they actually did in practice, certainly not enough to make any difference to their clients. Worse, we found that after the workshop, participants were significantly less interested in learning more about MI. Why? “Because we have already learned it!” We had persuaded them that they now “knew” MI and were practicing it. Yet on recordings of actual practice, there was very little evidence of it.

Obviously, something was wrong with our training model. Why had we ever expected that a one- or two-day class would change practice behavior? We were using a dispensing model: “I have what you need, and I’m going to give it to you.” Subsequent research supported the limited impact of classroom training, even with lots of practice included. Just reading about MI and watching videotapes had still less impact on practice. MI is a complex skill, like playing a musical instrument. Watching others play the piano or attending a two-day workshop is not likely in itself to turn one into a competent pianist.

Good research teaches us to ask better questions. Now we had a puzzle: What *does* it actually take to help someone develop skillfulness in MI? You can learn *about* a complex skill by reading about it, watching demonstrations, or taking a class, but mastery takes practice, practice, practice. Furthermore, practice without reliable feedback is unlikely to produce much improvement. Imagine playing a keyboard without sound, practicing archery in pitch black darkness, or taking on-line practice quizzes but never finding out whether your answers were correct. To help someone learn, a coach must be able to observe. The tennis coach has to watch you practice; the violin teacher must listen to you play. We soon found that even a modest amount of expert feedback and coaching after a workshop substantially improved proficiency in the practice of MI.

What you have here in this manual is a toolbox. It contains a set of training resources that have been developed and tested by MINT members over the years as tools for helping others develop skill in MI. Some of these will work well for you and others will not. Like MI, you must try them out, practice them, and make them your own so that you don’t feel like you are using someone else’s bag of tricks. The goal is to help people get better at this particular way of being with others that facilitates change.

Here are a few things I’ve learned along the way:

- As a trainer of MI, I should be manifesting the very same way of being that I hope to convey. Affirm all steps in the right direction. Listen carefully. Recognize that people are the experts on their own context of practice.
- People learn better from “real play” than from “role play.” There is something artificial about pretending to be someone you’re not, and I find that counselors and even professional actors don’t usually behave as real clients do. When the task is to talk about oneself while experiencing MI, both parties learn more.
- Be prepared to demonstrate good practice on the spot. It doesn’t have to be perfect. It’s more credible if

you have to struggle a bit. The goal is learning, not awe or accolades.

- The skills of good listening (accurate empathy) are fundamental in MI. Until empathic listening becomes comfortable and natural, it's difficult to go much further because everything else in MI builds on skillful listening. Without the person-centered way of being described by Carl Rogers, MI is hollow.
- Similarly, using MI *techniques* is empty without the underlying spirit. MI is not something to be done "to" or "on" people. Rather it is to be used with and for people. Happily, that spirit is not a prerequisite for the practice of MI. You increasingly understand and internalize it as you practice MI.
- People learn in different ways and at different rates. With any single learner, the question I ask myself is, "What does this person need *next*?" If you make fourteen suggestions, probably none will be implemented. Emphasizing what someone did *wrong* also doesn't help much. What is the next positive step in learning for this person?
- Be patient with your learners and with yourself. Learning a complex skill like MI is a process that necessarily happens over time. You can't push in skill.
- Workshops are only a beginning. If people go away from an initial workshop understanding more about MI and knowing whether they want to put in the time and effort required to get better at it, I figure I have done my job.
- MI is not for everyone. It is one tool that can be helpful when working with people who are considering change. I think it is best used by people who feel naturally drawn to it, who *recognize* it, in a way. It has to be OK for people to decide that it's not for them, or that they don't want to take the time to learn it.
- Finally, helping people learn MI is a privilege, and I appreciate those who allow me to guide them in learning it. So many professionals find MI interesting, engaging, even fun and liberating. It is learning together more about our human nature. Enjoy!

Bill Miller

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# **The Process of Training**

## Designing

**Abstract:** Different methods are called for in different learning situations. Trainees are actively involved in designing a particular type of group, training, individual intervention, etc.

**Overview:** This helps trainees draw flexibly on their own experience and a range of methods that have been presented, to design an MI intervention or training to accomplish particular goals, or to deal with specific challenges or populations.

**Guidelines:** Assign small groups to design a specific MI intervention or training that is tailor-made for a particular population, goal, or setting. Groups may be assembled arbitrarily, by self-selection, or by identification of different topics to be addressed. Set a specific length of time within which to design the application, and identify a reporter to describe the result to the larger group.

### **Designing Example 1: Design an MI Intervention: Group MI**

After discussing and practicing individual MI, and presenting the hypothesized way in which MI works, small groups are challenged to design a group-therapy format that will optimally elicit change talk and commitment from its members. You may want to specify certain attributes of groups, regarding which a decision needs to be made. For example:

- Entry criteria for members: Is there a target problem?
- Homogeneous or heterogeneous, and on what dimensions?
- Will the group be open (new members can join) or closed?
- Optimal size of the group
- Number and type of facilitator(s)
- Is cross-talk allowed? If so, what are the guidelines?
- Optimal length and number of sessions (or is it on-going?)

Degree of didactic, group process, etc.

### **Designing Example 2: Design a training**

Design a MI training experience or program with specific goals and objectives.. This can focus on a discrete event like a workshop, or a process that would extend over time (e.g., involving feedback and coaching).

#### Issues:

Learning goals - Discovery, Deepening, Renewal. If training to criteria of proficiency, what are the criteria?

Domain goals - Understanding, Skill development, Context adaptation

Depth of Training - Exposure, Experience, Expertise

Breadth - General MI, special populations/issues, special settings

Setting - Off-site workshop, on-site training or supervision

Audience size - Small group (2-10), medium group (10-20), large group (20-50), "crowd" (50+)

Length of training - 1-2 hours, 2-8 hours, 8-32 hours, 32+ hours

Heterogeneity - Job site, job setting, clinical focus, professional background, experience level, language/cultural/ethnic factors

Enrollment - Self-enrollment, voluntary facilitated participation, employer-assigned participation

Practical Matters - Time, location, A/V, Breaks, Food, Bathrooms, etc.

#### Methods:

Structured, semi-structured, open-ended

**Notes:** If several small groups are pursuing parallel design tasks, this exercise can be combined with a Contest. Groups can also be assigned different training tasks.

## Eliciting

**Abstract:** A good way to avoid the expert trap as a trainer, and to model MI during training, is to ask participants for their own wisdom, answers, experiences, problems and successes. Beware falling into the question-answer trap, even when you are the trainer. Eliciting helps to increase participants' active engagement and investment in the training process.

**Overview:** It is important for trainers to decline the expert trap in training, just as when using MI in a clinical setting. Trainees are the experts in how MI will be applied in their own settings. Take time to ask about what specific experiences they have had that are relevant to the issue being discussed. Allowing trainees to contribute their expertise and specific suggestions usually increases investment in learning. Offer trainees choices – what content to be used in an exercise, which of two possible uses of remaining time. When a participant asks a question or challenges you on a point, one option is to turn the question or issue over to the group for their own responses.

**Guidelines:** There is no need to describe this as a specific technique or exercise. Simply ask participants for their input on various questions and points throughout training. Reply with reflective listening and affirmation.

### **Example(s):**

#### When introducing a workshop:

*“What kinds of things have you already heard about motivational interviewing?”*

*“What would you like to learn in this workshop?”*

#### When discussing resistance:

*“What have you done in the past that has worked when your clients are ambivalent?”*

*“We’re going to talk about how to cope with resistance from an MI perspective, but first I’d like to hear what already works well in your setting.”*

*“In the time we have left today we can either talk about how to adapt MI to home visits or how to explain MI to your colleagues. How about a vote?”*

### **Notes:**

When discomfort is high, try eliciting rather than advocating. Have trainees offer examples of how they have coped successfully with challenges, applied MI in practice, etc.

For a variety of reasons, trainees are sometimes reluctant to volunteer information. If this happens, start by asking very benign or “easy” questions so that the trainees perceive that there is no right answer. Reply to initial offerings with encouragement and positive reinforcement. Using a warm-up or ice-breaker exercise in which trainees volunteer information (e.g. “Something you may not know about me is...”) is a good way of priming the volunteer response.

## Eight Tasks in Learning Motivational Interviewing

This is content from Miller and Moyers (2006) that can be useful in conceptualizing training. These are not really “stages” of learning, but inter-related tasks. Where is the trainee or audience currently in this developmental process? What tasks will be addressed in this training? These tasks can also provide a framework for developing a sequence of training.

1	Overall Spirit of MI	Openness to a way of thinking and working that is collaborative rather than prescriptive, honors the client’s autonomy and self-direction, and is more about evoking than installing. This involves at least a willingness to suspend an expert role, and to explore clients’ capacity rather than incapacity, with a genuine interest in the their own experience and perspectives.
2	OARS: Client-Centered Counseling Skills	Proficiency in client-centered counseling skills to provide a supportive and facilitative atmosphere in which clients can safely explore their experience. This involves the comfortable practice of open-ended questions, affirmation, summaries, and particularly the skill of accurate empathy as described by Carl Rogers.
3	Recognizing Change Talk and Sustain Talk	Ability to recognize client “change talk” that signals movement in the direction change, as well as client sustain talk. Preparatory change talk includes desire, ability, reasons, and need for change, which favor increased willingness, commitment, and taking steps.
4	Eliciting and Strengthening Change Talk	Ability to evoke and reinforce client change talk language. Here the client-centered OARS skills are applied strategically, to differentially strengthen change talk.
5	Softening Sustain Talk and Discord	Ability to respond to client sustain talk and resistance in a manner that reflects and respects without reinforcing it. The essence is to roll with rather than opposing it.
6	Developing a Change Plan	Ability to recognize client readiness, and to negotiate a specific change plan that is acceptable and appropriate to the client. This involves timing as well as collaborative negotiation skills.
7	Consolidating Commitment	Ability to elicit client mobilizing change talk, and to evoke specific implementation intentions.
8	Transition and Blending	Ability to blend an MI style with other intervention methods and to transition flexibly between MI and other tasks.

Miller, W. R., & Moyers, T. B. (2006). Eight stages in learning motivational interviewing. *Journal of Teaching in the Addictions, 5*, 3-17.

## Levels/Types of Training in Motivational Interviewing

*The following are guidelines from the MI Network of Trainers regarding what can reasonably be accomplished with various lengths of time in a workshop. It is important to remember that a workshop alone is seldom sufficient to help people develop competence in MI, and training plans should provide for continuing coaching, feedback, and supervision.*

	Type	Goals	Length
1	Introduction to MI	<p><b>To experience the basics of MI and decide level of interest in learning more</b></p> <p>To be familiar with the fundamental spirit and method of MI            To be acquainted with relevant evidence of efficacy            To directly experience the MI approach and contrast it with others</p>	2 hours to 1 day
2	Application of MI	<p><b>To learn one or more specific applications of MI</b></p> <p>To be acquainted with the fundamental spirit of MI            To learn practical guidelines for a specific application “in the spirit of MI”            To have direct practice in and experience of this particular application            To decide level of interest in learning more</p>	1 hour to 1 day
3	Clinical Training	<p><b>To learn the basic clinical style of MI, and how to continue learning it in practice</b></p> <p>To understand the fundamental spirit and method of MI            To strengthen empathic counseling skills (OARS)            To understand and practice the directive aspects of MI            To experience and practice an MI style for responding to discord and sustain talk            To learn the fundamental client language cues (change talk and resistance), that allow continued feedback and learning in practice</p>	2-3 days  Might be offered in several 4-8 hour parts
4	Advanced Clinical Training	<p><b>To move from basic competence to more advanced clinical skillfulness in MI</b></p> <p>To have intensive observed practice in advanced MI skills            To receive individual feedback regarding MI practice            To update knowledge of MI (recent research and developments)</p>	2-3 days
5	Supervisor Training	<p><b>To be prepared to guide an ongoing group in learning MI</b></p> <p>To understand the sequencing of skills for acquiring MI proficiency            To learn observational/analytic methods for evaluating MI            To learn methods for facilitating practice improvement over time            To be prepared to certify MI practitioners and maintain quality control</p>	2-3 days
6	Training for Trainers	<p><b>To learn a flexible range of skills and methods for helping others learn MI</b></p> <p>To learn and practice an array of MI training methods            To enhance confidence in training and demonstrating MI            To assess the specific needs and context of trainees, and to design and adapt training approaches accordingly            To update knowledge of MI and training (recent research/developments)            To participate in the international MI Network of Trainers</p>	3-4 days

## Pre-Training Screening

**Abstract:** It can be useful to know ahead of time about the current skill level of those you will be training. There are various ways to do this

**Overview:** People come to MI training with highly varied levels of counseling skills, motivation for learning, and current familiarity with and skills in MI. Pre-training screening can be done to inform you of the level and range of current skills, motivation, and familiarity with MI. It can also be used as a prerequisite to ensure a certain common starting level.

**Guidelines:** Well in advance of training, decide what (if anything) you want to know about your trainees. Consider requiring response to the screening instrument(s) by a specific date in order to be admitted to the workshop, because otherwise adherence can be low.

**Example(s):** Among the possibilities for pre-training screening are: (1) Self-ratings [0-10 Likert scale] of current familiarity with MI, interest in learning more, and general or specific MI skills. (2) An MI knowledge quiz. (3) A paragraph describing prior training and current interest in using MI (e.g., with what populations and problems). (4) A paper-and-pencil instrument posing specific client statements and how the person would respond [like the Helpful Responses Questionnaire]; (5) An audiotaped work sample of the person delivering MI with an actual client or role-play. (6) Formal skill coding of work samples.

**Notes:** Caution: Correlations between self-ratings and actual skillfulness in reflective listening or MI tend to be near zero. If you want to *know* about entry skillfulness, there is no real substitute for listening to work samples.

## Helpful Responses Questionnaire

Source: Miller, W. R., Hedrick, K. E., & Orlofsky, D. (1991). The Helpful Responses Questionnaire: A procedure for measuring therapeutic empathy. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 47*, 444-448.

The following six paragraphs are things that a person might say to you. With each paragraph, imagine that someone you know is talking to you and explaining a problem that he or she is having. You want to help by saying the right thing. Think about each paragraph. On a separate sheet of paper write, for each paragraph, the *next thing* you might say if you wanted to be helpful. Write only one or two sentences for each situation.

1. **A forty-one-year-old woman says:**

"Last night Joe really got high and he came home late and we had a big fight. He yelled at me and I yelled back and then he hit me hard! He broke a window and the TV set, too! It was like he was crazy. I just don't know what to do!"

2. **A thirty-six-year-old man says:**

"My neighbor really makes me mad. He's always over here bothering us or borrowing things that he never returns. Sometimes he calls us late at night after we've gone to bed and I really feel like telling him to get lost."

3. **A fifteen-year-old girl says:**

"I'm really mixed up. A lot of my friends, they stay out real late and do things their parents don't know about. They always want me to come along and I don't want them to think I'm weird or something, but I don't know what would happen if I went along either."

4. **A thirty-five-year-old parent says:**

"My Maria is a good girl. She's never been in trouble, but I worry about her. Lately she wants to stay out later and later and sometimes I don't know where she is. She just had her ears pierced without asking me! And some of the friends she brings home--well, I've told her again and again to stay away from that kind. They're no good for her, but she won't listen."

5. **A forty-three-year-old man says:**

"I really feel awful. Last night I got drunk and I don't even remember what I did. This morning I found out that the screen of the television is busted and I think I probably did it, but my wife isn't even talking to me. I don't think I'm an alcoholic, you know, 'cause I can go for weeks without drinking. But this has got to change."

6. **A fifty-nine-year-old unemployed teacher says:**

"My life just doesn't seem worth living any more. I'm a lousy father. I can't get a job. Nothing good ever happens to me. Everything I try to do turns rotten. Sometimes I wonder whether it's worth it."

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Note: The above instructions and items are examples only. Both the instructions and the stimulus items should be adapted for the particular group being trained. The original instrument was used in teaching reflective listening, so responses were scored as reflections or other. Within MI, the scoring could focus on MI-consistent versus MI-inconsistent responses.

## Workshops and Ongoing Learning

**Abstract:** From research on MI training, it is fairly clear that most people do not develop the ability to competently practice MI by reading about it, watching videotapes, or attending a workshop. MI is a complex set of skills, like learning a sport or a musical instrument. Development of proficiency involves coaching and feedback based on observed practice.

**Overview:** A training workshop is likely to provide knowledge about MI, and perhaps motivation to learn it, but is unlikely in itself to leave trainees skilled in its practice.

**Guidelines:** In negotiating and designing MI training, it is responsible to educate agencies about this. “Do you want your staff to learn *about* MI, or do you want them to actually be able to do it?” As with sports and music, there is no fixed dose of training that is sufficient to produce competence. People start from different points and learn at different rates. Think, therefore, in terms of training to criterion, to a standard of competence in performance. A workshop can be a good starting point, but follow-up is needed over time to develop real skill.

**Example(s):** Ongoing training is most easily provided by an on-site supervisor, and agencies might consider putting training resources into getting one or two people really up to speed with in-house expertise for training and supervision, rather than offering a small dose of initial training for everyone. After an initial training event, ongoing feedback and coaching can be offered by (1) in-person sessions with a trainer, (2) telephone or televideo consultation, (3) an on-site peer learning group, etc. In all of these methods, there is no substitute for listening to recordings of actual practice. Imagine asking a pianist to teach you to play the piano but not listen to you, or a golf pro to teach you how to play golf but not watch you.

**Notes:** There is often substantial resistance to making and sharing tapes of one’s own performance. Sometimes this takes the form of asserting that one’s clients would not allow or be comfortable with taping, but that is rarely the problem. Observed practice should be an expectation and norm in competent service settings.



# **Icebreakers / Opening Strategies**

There are many good ways to open a training experience. Here are various options that MINT members have used to begin MI training.

## Introductions

**Abstract:** Trainees introduce themselves before the training begins.

**Overview:** Whether and how this is done depends on the size of the group. With smaller groups, it's easy, and it begins the training on a collegial, engaging, and collaborative note.

**Guidelines:** Multiply the number of participants by one minute to guess how long this will take. Give trainees a short specific task in introducing themselves – what to include in their introductions, and a specific length of time. It can be helpful to put this on a visual: slide, board, flipchart. Keep the pace moving right along. As introductions proceed, later participants tend to talk longer.

**Example(s):** Depending on the length of time, choose what you ask participants to say. Some examples:

- Their name
- Where they are from (if geographically diverse)
- Where they work (if from various workplaces) and what they do
- Why they chose to attend this training
- What they most want to learn
- How they use (or might use) motivational interviewing
- What MI training they have already received

**Notes:** If in-person introductions would occupy too much time (for example, with 100 people in a workshop), you can ask participants to introduce themselves on-line in advance of the training. You could also compile a list of trainees and information they provided, to introduce them to their colleagues in training. Pieces of personal information can also be printed on nametags.

## Structuring

**Abstract:** Quite simply, this is the process of helping trainees to know what to expect, framing and organizing the material to be presented in all or part of a training event.

**Overview:** Trainees differ in their need for structure. Some would like a detailed outline of what will happen. Others are happy to go with the flow. Providing some structure is quite helpful to those who desire it, and may be ignored by the rest.

**Guidelines:** At the beginning of a training, or when making a transition from one component or section to another, offer a brief summary of your plan for how you will proceed. Many trainees find it helpful to have an outline of material to be covered, if not a schedule. This can be done without compromising flexibility. Don't spend a lot of time describing the structure for trainees. Let trainees know what to expect, ask for any feedback or questions, and then move on. Structuring often includes some rationale for the plan.

**Example(s):**

“This morning I plan to focus primarily on strengthening reflective listening skills. Good empathic listening skills are absolutely fundamental to motivational interviewing, and that's why we focus on them in this part of the training. I'll be giving you some guidelines, but mostly we'll spend the morning in demonstrations and experience, working through a series of practice exercises that we've found to be very effective in strengthening empathy. For some of you this is familiar material, and if you're particularly skillful in reflective listening you can be helpful to others along the way, perhaps participating in some demonstrations. In any event, the sequence of learning exercises that we use may be useful to you in helping clients or others sharpen up their listening skills. Then this afternoon, assuming all goes as planned, I'll move on to show you how reflective listening is used to strengthen movement toward change in motivational interviewing. Any concerns or questions before we begin?”

**Notes:** Trainers who themselves feel little need for structure may tend to overlook its importance for others. A lack of at least minimal structuring can be quite frustrating and an obstacle to learning for some trainees. It costs very little in time to offer such a framework, and doing so can avoid problems later. Structuring does require some forethought and organization, of course.

## Change Ruler Lineup

**Abstract:** The concept of a change ruler is used to help trainees to examine their own readiness to participate in learning activities.

**Overview:** Have participants line up along a “ruler” on the floor, with numbers from 0 to 10. Then interview people at various points along the ruler as to why they are where they are on the scale.

**Guidelines:** Various topics can be used for self-rating:

[Trainers] How ready do you feel to train others in MI?

How would you rate your own current level of clinical skill in practicing MI?

To what extent do you want to be here today? 0 = Required, don't want to be here

How important is it for you to learn MI?

Use numbers that correspond to the rulers that trainees will be using with their own clients (usually 0-10).

Use index cards or pieces of paper to write numbers corresponding to the ruler. Spread the numbers out on the floor or along a wall and ask trainees to stand next to the number that corresponds to their current level.

Then ask questions to elicit self-motivational statements and confidence. Go up and down the line and interview people at different numbers. Use a portable microphone if the room is large. Note that you are modeling the kinds of questions that are also used with clients.

- 1) “Why are you here at (number)?”
- 2) “Why here and not (zero or a lower number)?”
- 3) “What might it take to move you from a (chosen number) to (higher number)?”
- 4)

### Example(s):

This can be useful at the beginning of a workshop to assess participants' levels of interest or confidence in MI, the extent to which they chose or were required to attend, readiness to learn MI, self-perceived level of skill in practicing MI, etc. It can be a particularly good way of surfacing and reflecting initial resistances to training. When used midway in training, this exercise can point to areas on which the trainer needs to focus in the remainder of training. When used at the end of training, it serves as an assessment of where trainees are as a function of their experience, and what they need to do next to continue learning.

**Notes:** This exercise has the added advantage of demonstrating in a visual way how the ruler method works. Interviewing people about their “readiness” for training also draws out the range of factors that feed into readiness: perceived importance, confidence, reasons, need, reactance, etc. People wind up at the same point for different reasons.

Though called a “readiness ruler,” we seldom use it to ask people how “ready” they are because it combines so many different factors. Most common uses are to rate importance and confidence.

**Contributed by:** Carolina Yahne

## Three in a Row

**Abstract:** Trainees specify some of the client and setting characteristics that present counseling challenges for them, and the process elicits discussion of helpful techniques.

**Overview:** This method can be used to open a training event because it anchors subsequent discussion in the real-life experience of the trainee group, and facilitates their openness to hearing about MI.

**Guidelines:** The trainer asks the group to list the “typical characteristics” of their more challenging clients or patients, and records these on a large easel sheet.

The trainer then states that on this clinical day, the trainees are scheduled to see three of these clients in a row, and that they will be raising the subject of behavior change. The trainer next elicits from the group their cognitive and emotional reactions to this scenario, and records these. The trainer then asks the group to consider what actions they can take as counselors to improve either the responsiveness of the clients, or their own emotional reaction to seeing three of these clients/patients in a row. This usually elicits a number of MI-consistent strategies, which the trainer lists on a new sheet of paper.

Summarize the discussion by categorizing the helpful counseling techniques listed into MI categories, such as techniques to reduce resistance, promote collaboration, explore ambivalence, develop discrepancy, etc. Then state that you will be using the group’s ideas about their typical clients, and their list of helpful techniques, to learn MI, which can be described as a more systematic way for them to organize their counseling.

**Notes:**

**Contributed by:** Steve Rollnick

## Brainstorming

**Abstract:** A good way to find out what people are thinking, to stimulate creative suggestions, and to enhance active engagement in learning.

**Overview:** Pose a particular topic, task or question, and ask the group to generate possible ideas, suggestions, methods, perspectives, etc. Obviously, this is of particular value when the goal is to generate a range of possibilities.

**Guidelines:** The cardinal rule in brainstorming is to have no evaluation of suggestions that are made. The point is to generate a lot of ideas, not to critique them. Make it fun! Reinforce outlandish and humorous responses. The same brainstorming task can be assigned to parallel small groups, and it can be combined with a Contest, giving prizes for the group that comes up with the most (most creative, etc.) responses.

### **Example(s):**

At the start of a training session:

*“What is Motivational Interviewing?”*

When discussing resistance:

*“What kinds of resistance have you encountered?”*

When discussing a menu of options:

*“What kinds of treatments can you think of for this plan?”*

**Notes:** An alternative is to use Solitary Writing first, whereby each member is challenged to take time to write down as many ideas as he or she can generate alone. This tends to triple the total number of responses generated because each member takes active responsibility for coming up with ideas. Group brainstorming tends to inhibit individual generation, though it allows members to take off from or build upon each other’s ideas. After a Solitary Writing period, encourage members to contribute ideas that they generated, until all ideas have been expressed.

## Rooting

### **Overview:**

Listening, I get to know, what the group identifies with, their work, their challenges. I have plenty of possibilities to model by reflecting, reframing, giving double sided reflections, summarizing, acknowledging and affirming their competence. I let them define what they want to learn and I do not have to tell them, what they are supposed to learn.

This takes about 3 hours without a break.

### **PART I:**

Trainees elaborate the challenges of their context and daily work. Trainees work with the skills they have. (They **listen, summarize** issues important for them and **balance their ambivalence about their learning situation, their clients and themselves**).

#### Step I (30 Minutes)

Trainees split into pairs: One listener, one speaker. (**Listening exercise**) Role shifts after 10 - 15 Minutes.

My client (with real first name) is a challenge for me or

The work with client (real first name) is satisfying.

The speaker is asked to describe his client, give an idea of the challenge or satisfaction and his thoughts and feelings about it.

As little discussion as accepted by the participants, maintaining roles of listening and speaking.

#### Step II (30 Minutes)

Pairs come together in groups of 6:

The listeners summarize the former speakers "client-stories" one by one so that the group ends up with six client-stories. (**Summarizing exercise**) The group chooses (according to the size of all participants: goal 6 to 8 client-stories of all groups together) 1 to 3 stories and tries to point out important issues, unresolved bits, feelings not only of the original speaker but of all the group members (**balance ambivalence in a safe setting**)

#### Step III (30 Minutes)

6-8 client-stories: A speaker of each group presents their clients with name, context, challenge, feelings of the participants within 5 Minutes. (**Summarizing exercise**) The Trainer puts important words (sometimes reframing softly, avoiding judgmental elements and in perspective to the agenda that will come up later) on a pin-wand (or similar) checking repeatedly whether any participant wants to add something..

END of Part I

### THEORY (45 –60 Minutes)

Here I would give an overview what MI is about, share some experiences with the participants (as Alain Zuckoff has described in his e-mail on the list serve of 13 march 2002 "Re: One hour talk on Motivational Interviewing") talk about Resistance, Roadblocks, Ambivalence OARS, DARN C Change talk, Commitment talk, rolling with resistance etc and go to.

## **PART II**

Two options (timeframe):

- a) elaboration in the same groups of six (as in the First Part Step II) for 15 Minutes and then sharing with the whole group
- b) elaboration right from the start in the whole group (faster, but less intense)

I would ask something like: now, that you have an idea of what MI is about, where do you see, it could be useful for your work or what elements have you already used, that helped you to be satisfied with the way the client develops.

I would then go from client (on the pin board) to client and elicit from the participants their expectations for the workshop in relation to these clients. I would be very careful to elicit all participants' voices during this 20 to 40 Minutes block. My work is to reframe their expectations (while we work on the pin board or later during the workshop) into elements, MI is composed of.

At the end I inform participants, that we will use these, their clients for some of the different exercises during the rest of the workshop and would also inform participants about goals, we might not be able to achieve during the short period of training together. At the same time I take the opportunity to introduce the idea, that learning only starts with the workshop and that supervisions, post-workshop phone-calls or solutions they come up with might be options.

**Contributed by:** Michael Peltenburg



## Unfolding Didactic

**Abstract:** A method for presenting didactic material in a way that draws in the audience through progressive clues, much in the manner of a detective story.

**Overview:** When there is a body of didactic material to present as part of training, it can be challenging to hold attention. Keeping didactic segments shorter is one way to do this. When there is a sequence of material to be presented, and it is advantageous to present it as a whole, it can be engaging to let the information unfold like a series of clues in a detective novel.

**Guidelines:** First and foremost, don't give away the bottom line at the beginning. Murder mysteries don't usually begin with a revelation of who committed the crime and why. Instead pose a puzzle to be solved; a general question about which trainees are likely to be curious. Then present material in a planned sequence so that the puzzle pieces are assembled one by one. Stop along the way to ask people to put the pieces together (remember Ask-Provide-Ask?), and to consider what the most recent piece reveals in the context of the others already provided.

**Example(s):** Providing a rationale for evoking is an excellent place to apply this approach. One example of such a sequence of unfolding points is:

1. Ambivalence normally precedes change. Candidates for change tend to be ambivalent.
2. What happens if you "confront" an ambivalent person, taking up one side of the internal argument? It elicits from the person the other side of the argument.
3. We become gradually more committed to that which we voice. (Bem's self-perception theory) Therefore, eliciting counter-change arguments would be expected to decrease likelihood of change.
4. Level of client sustain talk (taking the non-change side of the argument) is strongly influenced by the interviewer; it can be increased or decreased.
5. Counselor confront responses particularly elicit sustain talk and discord, and it only takes a few confronts to do it.
6. Discord and predominance of sustain talk predict lack of behavior change.
7. Persuasion is not usually the best route to change, and certainly not the path of least resistance.
8. Confrontation can be thought of as a goal (to come face to face in a mirror) rather than a particular method to pursue that goal. The question then is what the best way is to help people consider and take in potentially threatening information, and to let it change them.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

## First Conversation

**Abstract:** Trainees talk about challenging client situations in pairs/triads in a structured manner with the goal of personalizing the application of MI concepts. Trainees also experience what is like to be listened to, to be affirmed and the challenge of not problem solving for the speaker.

**Overview:** This is a structured way to illustrate OARS while at the same time building trainee connections and helping them personalize MI.

**Guidelines:** According to group size, put people in pairs or triads. Do this first before providing any instructions. Time the various stages of the exercise and actively move people along. Everyone will get to do the exercise. If in a pair, one speaker/one conversation facilitator; if in a triad, add role of observer.

### **Instructions:**

**Step one:** Each person will speak for 3 minutes on a challenging client situation. The conversation facilitator will begin the conversation by saying “Tell me about a client situation you find challenging” and is encouraged to reflect back what is being said and ask open questions only to understand. No problem solving/no speaking about yourself. Stop them at the end of 3 minutes, noting that there is likely more to be said.

**Step two:** Have the conversation facilitator elicit from the speaker how this challenging situation is having an impact/how it is making them feel and how this might impact the work. Give 2 minutes for this and then stop.

**Step three:** Tell the facilitators they will have 1 minute to do a summary of what they have heard, emphasizing that they will not restate everything, only the essence, particularly the impact. Give them a about ½ minute to collect their thoughts before starting. Stop at the end of 1 minute.

**Step four:** Before the pairs/triads rotate in roles, instruct the speaker in this task: ‘tell the person helping you with this conversation something he/she did that you particularly appreciated. Say it this way: “I really appreciated that you.....”’; shake hands, do high five/fist bump, hug if you like and then switch roles’. Wait until I tell you to begin again.

**Step five:** repeat instructions and do timing each time you switch.

**Debrief:** Elicit from the group reactions to being the speaker; respond in MI style and summarize; elicit reactions for the being the facilitator; respond in MI style and summarize.

**Step six:** Have a slide with OARS on it or just discuss with the trainees that they have just used the basics of OARS and that throughout the workshop, they will expand on their knowledge of how to apply OARS when using MI.

**Notes:** It is really important to time this exercise and keep participants moving or it will just get out of control; trainees have told me that they like being guided through step by step. The idea for this exercise was inspired by the Three in a Row exercise from Steve Rollnick.

**Contributed by:** Cathy Cole

## Opening Warm Up

**Abstract:** Trainees do initial introductions speaking about something no one would know about them. This is a playful exercise, designed to be an icebreaker but with a teaching element.

**Overview:** This is a fun way to begin introductions and to teach one part of MI: remaining curious and making no assumptions

**Guidelines:** In a small group, have everyone do introductions to the whole group; for a group of more than 15, may need to have this done in pairs or smaller groups/perhaps 5 to a group.

Trainer introduces exercise this way: ‘Rather than begin with the usual who we are, what we do, why we are here....don’t worry, we’ll get to that in a bit.....our first round of introductions will be giving your first name and telling the group something about yourself that no one else would know. Of course, make sure this is something you want us to know!’

Trainer then demonstrates by relating something entertaining/funny about him/herself; keep it brief.

Debrief: Trainer then wonders to the group: ‘Why did I have you do that?’ and listens to various responses, in any. Of course relates to the fun, but then introduces the likelihood that all of us had started to make assumptions/guesses about those attending/perhaps even assuming they knew all about a friend or colleague attending. The point for MI practice is to remain curious and note when we are making assumptions.

**Notes:** Allow the participants to go in any order desired; this helps the shyer folks get a sense of the safety of the exercise and some ideas on what can be shared. Thus far I have not had this exercise bomb! Appropriate for any level of training.

**Contributed by:** Cathy Cole

## Ice Breaker Interview with a Twist

**Abstract:** (30 to 40 minutes. Groups of 12 to 24) A multilevel ice breaker that helps start interactivity as it gets participants working in pairs to think about their practice and determine what parts they would like to do better. It also focuses attention on what aspects of a conversation facilitated exchange.

**Overview:** This exercise may be particularly helpful with groups who are not accustomed to working in an interactive way, or may be reluctant to do so. The participants are asked to pair up and given a few minutes to interview each other in order to introduce each other to the group. The trainer also makes use of this exercise to begin discussion of what makes people more comfortable and disclosing during a conversation.

**Guidelines:** After initial introductions, introduce this exercise as a way to learn more about each other. Ask the group to pair off, and in case they already know some of the other participants, to pair with someone they know less or don't know at all. In case of odd numbers there can be one triad. If the total is a multiple of three the exercise also works with triads. In order to keep conversations relatively brief, provide the following rules: Each is to interview the other for three minutes asking the following questions:

1. What would you like the others to know about you and your practice?
2. What are some of the things you are really comfortable with or good at in your practice?
3. What tasks are you less comfortable with in your practice?
4. What would you hope to be doing better after this training?

Tell participants that they will each make a 30-60 second introduction of their partner, summarizing what seem the most relevant pieces of information, being factual without adding interpretations.

After three minutes, tell the partners to switch roles. When triads are used, a third round of 3 minutes is included. During the exercise keep an eye on the participants to see if anyone seems uncomfortable or may not be doing the exercise.

Announce when time is up, and tell the group: "Before starting the summaries I want to ask how you felt when you were the person being interviewed." Most responses will be positive, though some may have felt a bit uncomfortable. Ask what it was about the conversation, or what the partner did, that helped them feel comfortable in sharing information about themselves. Reflect aspects that will connect later to the spirit of MI. Make a list of these conditions that make it easier to talk.

Then proceed with introductions. If the group is too large to take time for all individual introductions, you can ask for examples of answers to each question.

Example(s): Some of the usual answers are: it felt safe, I trusted my partner, I came here freely, I know we share the same concerns, I know I won't be judged badly, I want to learn and get better, we are on the same level, there is nothing at stake.

**Notes:** Sometimes a trainee will say they have felt uncomfortable yet went on with the exercise. Ask what became of the discomfort once into the exercise. Usually they will say it diminished. Ask what helped bring it down.

Note that a lot can be said in three minutes and important essentials summarized in 30-60 seconds. It can also be interesting to ask how the introducers decided what to include and not include in their partner introductions.

**Contributed by:** Guy Azoulai

# General Training Tools

## Card Me

**Abstract:** To avoid having the same problem twice in trainings, have a set of index cards on which to write an item that you need to “fix” so that you remember it.

**Overview:** When you encounter an element in training that needs to be “fixed” before you train again, put it on an index card. You can write these yourself if time permits, but often these occur while you’re in the midst of training. In order not to interrupt your flow and attention, you can also ask a member of the group or a co-trainer to write down the item that needs to be fixed.

**Guidelines:** As soon as one of these occurs, either write a card yourself (if it doesn’t interrupt training) or ask a participant: “Would you mind making a note of this for me?” or “That’s a really good idea, and I want to remember it. Will you please write it on a card for me?”

Remember to collect the cards by the end of your training. Keep them in a consistent place as they come in. Then, before your next training, go through these cards and fix the problems.

### Example(s):

There is an error on one of your handouts.  
There is a study that you want to cite, and have forgotten in the past to look it up.  
A question you don’t know the answer to.  
Something that goes wrong in an exercise.

**Notes:** In general, it is wise to fix problems *soon* after the training event where it came up. If you wait until just before the next training you may be unable to find the cards, have forgotten the context, or not have sufficient time, and thus perpetuate the problem.

**Contributed by:** Terri Moyers

## Contest

**Abstract:** The trainer uses a competition among audience members to facilitate learning.

**Overview:** Trainees are asked to compete, either individually or in teams, in a specific task.

**Guidelines:** Use contests in a way that produces a sense of fun and lightheartedness, rather than encouraging serious competitive “one-up-manship”. Make the task clear and specific. Specify in advance who will judge the outcomes, and how decisions will be made.

**Example(s):**

Trainees are divided into groups and asked to generate a list of treatment options within their program to be used as a menu for a client coming for the first time. The team with the most (or the most creative) options wins prizes. This encourages flexible goal planning and creative thinking for client options.

**Notes:** Consider a prize that can be shared among all members of the group (e.g., candies, snacks), rather than given to just one person. Letting the winning group or person go first in the lunch line is another possibility for a prize, or having the next exercise outside.

## Debriefing

**Abstract:** The trainer uses post-exercise discussion to support risks taken by participants, reinforce learning, emphasize key points, and reinforce participants' sense of accomplishment

**Overview:** Trainees are asked to answer questions about the just-completed activity

**Guidelines:** When there have been multiple roles in an exercise, debrief one role at a time. As a rule of thumb, start by debriefing the most "vulnerable" role first. Key points may be written as they are elicited on a flip chart, overhead transparency, or new PowerPoint slide.

**Example(s):**

After a negative practice exercise, first ask the speaker who was talking about personal material: "How was this conversation for you?" or "What was this experience like for you?" Record brief descriptions on a list visible to the participants. After obtaining several responses from speakers, the trainer asks for responses from the counselors.

**Notes:** Trainee answers should come from their observations and experiences. This shouldn't be a knowledge-based test. Reframe answers that miss the point, and remember to roll with resistance.

Prepare your questions ahead of time and design them to elicit certain types of information. Then allow yourself to be flexible in their use and alteration. Surprise people with an earlier concept (e.g. "So where would you say this person was on the importance ruler, from 0 to 10? Why?")



## Observer Tracking

**Abstract:** During practice exercises or demonstration, participants are assigned a structured role as observers, using specific guidelines to encode the communication process.

**Overview:** It is very easy, in watching a demonstration or videotape, or even when engaged in a role play, to get caught up in the story, in the *content* of communication. Structured observation focuses the participants' attention on the *process* of what is happening. It also gives observers an active rather than passive role during demonstrations and exercises.

**Guidelines:** Provide very clear instruction in exactly what is to be observed, and how. Provide a printed coding sheet and guidelines for more complex tasks. There is a temptation for observers to stop tracking and get caught up in the content, so use procedures designed to keep observers on task, such as pausing to ask for ratings or counts, or circulating to watch the coding process.

**Observer Tracking Example 1: Wrestling-Dancing.** Define two extremes of interaction style. In **dancing** the two parties are working together, with a heightened sensitivity to each other, listening, responding, making progress, and, most importantly, cooperating. In **wrestling** the two parties are grappling in a struggle of power or adroitness, each endeavoring to throw the other by tripping or overbalancing. Use a rating scale from -5 (maximum wrestling) to +5 (maximum dancing). In between is a zero point, which is a kind of neutral zone characterized by neither strife nor harmony. Observers rate the state of interaction early in a demonstration or practice, and then give a new rating whenever they perceive a shift in the interaction in one direction or the other. Whenever a new rating is given, make notes as to what happened to make a difference. What was said, by whom, etc.

**Contributed by:** Jeff Allison

**Observer Tracking Example 2: Ruler Level.** Using a ruler scale (0 to 10), the observer judges the speaker/client's level on a pre-defined scale such as importance, confidence, engagement, experiencing, etc.. Based on the client's first few responses, an initial rating is given. Then whenever the observer perceives a change in the level during the interaction, a new rating is given and the observer notes what the counselor was doing just before the change.

**Contributed by:** Steve Rollnick

**Observer Tracking Example 3: Reflection.** The observer focuses on reflective listening statements. Each response from the interviewer is coded as a reflection (R), question (Q), or other (O). Interviewer responses are recorded sequentially. When a reflection is coded, it is further rated as a simple, complex, or summary reflection.

**Observer Tracking Example 4: Client Change Talk.** Here the observer attends to and records client change talk, perhaps also classifying it as preparatory (DARN) or mobilizing (CATs). Observers could also attend to and record sustain talk.

**Observer Tracking Example 5: OARS Coding.** Here the observer attends to and counts four counselor behaviors that comprise OARS.

**Notes:** Explain fully and carefully how the coding system works, and what categories mean. It is helpful to have a practice tape segment of a few minutes, and then give your own codes, or at least compare codes. Avoid detailed discussions of which is the "right" answer. Attaining high reliability of coders takes quite a while. The point is not perfection, but attending to process rather than content. When you assign an observer task, be sure to use the information during the exercise or debriefing. It's frustrating to keep observational notes and then have them unused. That communicates a low importance of observational tracking.

Still more detailed coding systems are used in research (MISC, MITI), but a code of this complexity is not recommended for use by untrained observers. They may be useful in advanced training.

**Observer Sheet 1: Wrestling or Dancing?**

As you follow the interview, determine where you think the interaction is on a continuum ranging from -5 (total Wrestling; struggling with each other for control) to +5 (total Dancing; moving together smoothly and cooperatively). When you perceive a change in the interaction, circle your new rating and note what happened at the point of change.

Wrestling	Dancing	What happened at the point of change?
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		• Circle the level of interaction at the beginning of the interview
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
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-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5		

**Observer Sheet 2: Client Importance Level**

As you follow the interview, determine where you think the client is in importance of changing the target behavior, from 0 (not at all important) to 6 (very ready for change) When you perceive a change in the client's level of readiness for change, note what the counselor did just before it happened.

Not at all			Very Ready				What did the counselor do before this change?
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	<input type="checkbox"/> Circle the level of client importance for change at the beginning of the interview
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	

### **Observer Sheet 3: Reflections**

Listen for counselor Reflections, and count them. Rate each Reflection as:

- A. **Simple Reflection** - essentially a repetition or rewording, adding little to what the client said
- B. **Complex Reflection** - the counselor moves beyond what the client said, by paraphrasing meaning, continuing the paragraph, or otherwise reflecting a level of content or feeling beyond that which the client voiced
- C. **Summary Reflection** - the counselor pulled together two or more client statements into a summary (bouquet) that includes material that was not voiced by the client immediately before

Make note of particularly good examples of each kind of reflection.

<b>Type</b>	<b>Count (hash marks)</b>	<b>Good example(s)</b>
<b>A. Simple</b>		
<b>B. Complex</b>		
<b>C. Summary</b>		

### **Observer Sheet 4: Client Change Talk**

Listen for examples of client change talk. As you hear them, place a hash mark (/) in the appropriate row. Make notes of examples of each type of change talk that you heard.

Type of Change Talk	Count (hash marks)	Example(s)
<b>Desire</b> to change		
<b>Ability</b> to change		
<b>Reasons</b> to change		
<b>Need</b> to change		
<b>Mobilizing</b> change talk Commitment or Activation or Taking Steps		

### **Observer Sheet 5: OARS**

Listen for examples of the counselor's use of each of the OARS responses. As you hear them, place a hash mark (/) in the appropriate row. Make notes of good examples of each type of OARS response that you heard.

<b>Counselor Response</b>	<b>Count (hash marks)</b>	<b>Good Example(s)</b>
<b>O</b> pen Question		
<b>A</b> ffirm		
<b>R</b> eflect		
<b>S</b> ummary		

## Personalizing

**Abstract:** The trainer helps participants relate MI processes to personal experience, as way of breathing life into the material to be learned.

**Overview:** Participants share personal experiences in dyads, small groups, or the large group. It can also be through “real-play” exercises in which the speaker is talking about her or his own experience.

**Guidelines:** Material to be shared shouldn't be so personal that they the participant feels uncomfortable revealing it within the group.

### Examples:

The “Persuasion Exercise” (under Negative Practice) is a good example of real-play personalizing, in that it asks the speaker to use personal ambivalence as the subject matter, and to experience responses to a particular counseling style.

A personalizing experience that is often quite effective is the “Favorite Teacher” exercise. Ask participants to think of their favorite teacher from school or college - the teacher in whose class they felt particularly alive, interested, motivated, engaged. Invite participants to name their favorite teacher aloud, and then ask the participant to describe [teacher's name]. What was it about that teacher that was different from the others? What was it about her or him that brought out the best in you? . [Contributed by Carolina Yahne]

On affirmation: Ask trainees to remember a compliment they've received sometime in their life that really meant something to them. Not the superficial stuff like "That's a cute shirt", but something deeper and lasting. Almost everyone can think of one example. Then discuss why it mattered to them. [Contributed by Carolina Yahne]

Another personalizing exercise can be used to enhance empathic understanding among clinicians. Ask the trainees to think of a change they have been considering, or one they've been struggling to make. Reassure them that they will not be asked to share this with the group. Ask them to raise their hands when they have their issue in mind. After receiving this signal, tell them to imagine that you (the trainer) have the power to force them to stay in the room until they resolve the following command: “You must make a decision about whether you will make this change before you can leave the room today, and this decision to change or not will be permanent.” Allow a moment to absorb this, state that there are often a variety of reactions, and ask them to share their reaction. In debriefing, focus on different responses to the “intervention,” including decisions to change, decisions to avoid change, and decisions to lie to the facilitator in order to be let out of the room! To debrief, point out that these reactions illustrate the effects of pressuring an ambivalent person to commit, as well as illustrating aspects of the stages of change (those who were further along in readiness may be more willing to decide “permanently”). You may also wish to discuss Brehm's concept of reactance and other social psychology principles. Cap off the exercise by stating that even with “normal” changes that may not involve stigmatized behaviors such as drug use, unsafe sex, excessive drinking, etc., people are not always fully ready to change, and when pressured, the majority resist the pressure and either retreat from the idea of change, or “lie” about their intentions, while a minority report that the persuasion was helpful. This can be particularly useful in increasing empathy for mandated client populations.

**Notes:** You can do more prefacing, if you like, about why you are using a personal example. This would reinforce that people get the clearest sense of how MI might work by experiencing it themselves with something that is meaningful to them. A little bit of levity (e.g., about “deepest, darkest secret”) keeps the tone about right and helps people feel like the request is not too intrusive.

**Contributed by:** Tore Børtveit

## Quiz

**Abstract:** A quiz allows trainees to assess their understanding of concepts that have been introduced. Usually this is in the form of a self-test, rather than one in which results are known to the trainer or group.

**Overview:** Prepare a set of carefully-devised questions designed to help participants recognize key concepts or to make an important distinction.

**Guidelines:** Distribute the quiz and give participants time to answer it on their own. You can provide the correct answers, or take votes, or ask participants to indicate which is the correct answer and why.

**Example(s):**

Distinguishing open and closed questions  
Recognizing preparatory and mobilizing change talk  
Differentiating sustain talk and discord

**Notes:** Small groups can work together to develop consensus on the right answer. A quiz can also be the basis for a **Contest**.



Here are some example quizzes

A 36-year-old man tells you: My neighbor really makes me mad. He's always over here bothering us or borrowing things that he never returns. Sometimes he calls us late at night after we've gone to bed, and I really feel like telling him to get lost.

Simple or complex reflection?

1. He makes you pretty mad.
2. He's not very considerate.
3. Sometimes he wakes you up.
4. You wish he would find himself.
5. He's really a pest.
6. You wish he weren't your neighbor.
7. He really bothers you.
8. You hold your temper in.
9. You want to tell him to get lost.
10. You're a fairly passive person.
11. You hate that he borrows things without returning them.
12. This guy really gets under your skin.
13. You wish he would just stay away.
14. But he's your neighbor.
15. He doesn't return your things.

Open or closed question?

16. Why don't you?
17. Are you going to?
18. How often does he come over?
19. Does he borrow expensive things?
20. Why do you suppose he does these things?
21. Do you feel like hurting him?
22. Have you ever offended him?
23. Can you think of a time when he did return something?
24. How late does he call?
25. What else might you do besides telling him off?
26. What do you think you would say if you did?
27. On a scale of one to ten, how mad does he make you?
28. Why are you telling me this?
29. Don't you think it's time you tried something different?
30. Does he remind you of anyone else?

A 41-year-old woman says: "Last night Joe really got drunk and he came home late and we had a big fight. He yelled at me and I yelled back and then he hit me hard! He broke a window and the TV set, too. It was like he was crazy. I just don't know what to do!"

For each of the following responses:

Is it a reflection? If so, simple or complex?

Is it a question? If so, open or closed?

Or is it something else?

1. You've got to get out of there for your own safety
  2. Sounds pretty scary.
  3. Did you call the police?
  4. I don't see a bruise. How badly did he hurt you?
  5. It seemed like he was out of his mind.
  6. You're feeling confused.
  7. How can you put up with a husband like that?
  8. I'm worried about you and your kids.
  9. That's the first time anything like this happened.
  10. This is just going to get worse if you don't take action.
  11. Sounds to me like he's an alcoholic.
  12. What is it that makes you stay in this relationship?
  13. You really got into it.
  14. So now your TV is broken.
  15. You're about at the end of your rope.
- 

You're listening to a smoker talk about quitting. Is it change talk? If so, which kind might it be: Preparatory, or Mobilizing?

1. I've got to quit smoking.
2. I wish I could.
3. I'll think it over.
4. I'm sure I'd feel a lot better if I did.
5. I don't know how I'd relax without a cigarette.
6. I swear I'm going to do it this time.
7. I want to be around to see my grandkids.
8. It really is bad for you, I know.
9. More and more of the people I know are trying to quit.
10. I'll try.
11. It's really important for me to quit.
12. I did quit for six weeks once.
13. Smoking is just so much a part of my life.
14. Maybe I'll get around to it this year.
15. It's important, but not the most important thing for me right now.

## Setting up a Successful Role-Play

**Abstract:** Real-plays are often preferable to role-plays in which participants pretend to be someone they are not. When role-play is used, it is good to give clear instructions about the roles.

**Overview:** The trainer establishes parameters of a role-play, tasks of participants and lays the groundwork for a successful practice activity. He or she may also set the foundation for the debriefing that follows.

**Guidelines:** Before people break up into practice groups, give instructions that are specific and clear. Make sure everyone knows (1) the overall goal of the exercise, (2) how many people should be in each group, (3) the specific tasks that each person has, (4) how long you anticipate the exercise taking, and (5) what to do if they feel like they have completed the task (e.g., debrief, switch roles, etc.). Check for questions, and make sure that everyone knows what to do before breaking up. If you are going to give signals (e.g., to switch roles, or to move on to the next task), make it clear what the signal is and what it means. Give everyone a task so that there are not passive observers.

### Example(s):

The trainer, having introduced concepts to the group and demonstrated their use, provides learners an opportunity to practice skills. The trainer then begins setting up the role-play.

*“I would like you to break into pairs again, but this time work with someone you have not worked with already. Don’t break up yet - let me tell you first what you are to do.*

*“First I’d like you to decide who will be the listener and who will be the speaker. If you are the listener, here is your job. I want you to practice using your OARS. Your job is not to solve the problem, just to understand it, as best you can. Try, as much as possible, to have all of your responses be one of the OARS.”*

*“Speakers, your job is to play a client who is coming into a welfare office for their second visit. You are already financially eligible for services. You want to get back to work, and also you don’t. Your job is to be ambivalent. Don’t be too difficult here. Mainly you are also thinking about going back to school, but you have some reluctance about it.”*

*“I’m going to give you about ten minutes to try out this conversation and use your OARS, and then I’ll call time. If you finish before I call time, feel free to switch roles, but please keep practicing. Don’t stop and discuss it.”*

*“Everybody understand their roles?”*

**Notes:** Typically, someone wasn’t listening or was out of the room when you gave instructions. Circulate early as an exercise begins to make sure that no one is stalled, and each group is on task.

With a larger group, it can be helpful to have a clearly audible sound to signal the end of an exercise. This saves you some shouting.

## Solitary Writing

**Abstract:** Trainees are given a structured writing assignment and a prescribed period of time during which to write on the topic, without discussing or consulting.

**Overview:** This can be particularly useful in generating ideas, which in this application is called *nominal group brainstorming*. One gets about three times as many ideas when people first take individual time to write down all the ideas they can think of, as compared with the usual group brainstorming process. The writing assignment should have a specific purpose and rationale. The amount of structure provided can vary.

**Guidelines:** Instruct people to work on their own, writing for a specified period of time without discussing or consulting with others. Explain clearly the topic or assignment for writing. Specify how long they will have for write. If it is a nominal group brainstorm exercise, the follow-up is to have people contribute ideas they have written down until all non-overlapping ideas have been recorded. If it's a creative writing process, individuals can choose to share what they have written with the group.

**Example:** A letter from the future. The task is to write a letter to yourself, from a point five years in the future, describing how you have been successful in making the change you wanted, how you did it, what has been good about the change, etc. Offer words of encouragement, wisdom, perspective, and hope to yourself from this future perspective. Begin with Dear . . . (your name), and write from the future in first person (I) to yourself (you) in the present. This can be done with clients seeking a behavior change, with trainees trying to learn a new method, etc. Some sample sentence stems for the letter:

I know that back then . . .

What I have particularly enjoyed . . .

I think what has been most helpful . . .

An important turning point for me was . . .

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

## Symbol Badges

**Abstract:** The trainer prepares stickers to be affixed to the back of trainees' name tags, that are used to break into smaller groups for practice, discussion, etc.

**Overview:** Breaking down into smaller groups is a common part of training, and this provides a structured way to do so. It also ensures that trainees interact with a variety of others, rather than always practicing and talking with the same partners.



**Guidelines:** Prepare stickers that can be affixed to the back of trainee nametags. Each sticker contains a different combination of symbols. One sticker could contain symbols that are used to break into groups of 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, etc. Each symbol should have the same number of variations as the number of different groups (not the number of participants in each group). For example, if you have a total of 40 participants:

Use card symbols (heart, diamond, spade, club) to divide into 4 groups of 10

Use ten numbers or letters to break into 10 groups of 4.

Use five shapes (circle, square, triangle, cross, star) to break into 5 groups of 8

Use six colors to break into 6 groups of 6 or 7.

**Example:** One sticker might read: **G**   **X**

This person would go with group G for groups of 4, with the heart group for groups of 10, with the triangle group for groups of 8, and with the red group for groups of 6. [The X above is colored red]

**Notes:** Get comfortable with using the symbols. Have a little sticker or note for yourself that says:

Ten groups of 4: Letters

Four groups of 10: Cards

Six groups of 6-7: Colors etc.

When making the stickers, the easiest way to do it is to start with the first person-sticker each time and rotate through each symbol. A word processing program is a handy way to make such stickers.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller.

## Tag Team

**Abstract:** In demonstration exercises where trainees are given the role of practicing a new skill, the Tag Team method can reduce the pressure on any one trainee to perform proficiently.

**Overview:** After setting up a role play task, three trainees sit side by side in the counselor role. One is assigned to begin the interaction, but at any time that person can tag the next person, who then takes over the interaction, even in mid-sentence.

**Guidelines:** Set up a role play in which one person portrays a client role, and several (often three) trainees are given the role of playing a single counselor. Give clear structure and instructions for what each person is to do. One counselor-trainee begins the interaction, seeking to practice the skills to be learned. At any time a counselor-trainee may tag the next person to take over. The counselor-trainee may remain in the seat, or alternatively may vacate and be replaced after tagging. Structure it so that tagging the next person is not tantamount to failure. Add a playful element, such as tagging at almost random times, in mid-sentence, etc. Tag-off can also be put on a fixed time interval. The trainer is an active director and may interrupt, stop action, rewind, fast forward, pass the role on to the next trainee without a tag-off, etc.

### Example(s): Probation Case

Roger is a construction worker now being followed in Probation after serving a 30-day term for a first offense felony of Burglary 1. He broke into a residence while its owners were away on vacation, and stole property worth about \$6,000. From jail he was transferred to the Community Corrections facility where he served most of his time, with work release. From there he was referred to Probation.

This is the third time that you have seen Roger as his probation officer. From your two prior sessions you know that he has had an off-and-on relationship with the same girlfriend, Alisa, for the past two years. They lived together for a few months while they were using most heavily, until they ran out of money and could not pay the rent. He has been living with his aging parents for the past nine months. After release, he again found work with the construction company who had employed him before. He works on an on-call basis, framing houses. Work was steady through the summer, but is slower now and less predictable. He has no car, and travels to and from work by getting rides from co-workers or, that failing, his parents drive him.

A urine drug screen at the time of arrest revealed methamphetamine and cannabis, and your further evaluation disclosed a long history of alcohol/drug use and related problems. He admitted that the burglary was committed in order to pay rent and drug-related debts, and to renew his supply of speed and pot. After two sessions, you referred him to a substance abuse treatment program. Roger attended once for an initial evaluation, but did not return for his first scheduled treatment session, and the program alerted you to his noncompliance. He also did not report for a scheduled probation check-in with you last month. You sent him a letter informing him that he was in noncompliance with the conditions of his probation, and ordering him to report to you, which he is now doing. The letter indicated that you could sanction him for noncompliance by sending him back to the Community Corrections facility for two weeks or more.

**Contributed by:** Steve Rollnick, Dave Rosengren

## Vital Signs

**Abstract:** It is a good idea for trainers to stop periodically and check on the success of training, the desires of participants, etc.

**Overview:** Successful training rarely follows a predetermined format. Good trainers will usually stop periodically to determine how the trainees are receiving information and learning exercises. This can be an important source of feedback about misunderstandings and gaps in learning.

**Guidelines:** Trainers can ask for numeric feedback, comments or written feedback to be read during a break.

**Example(s):**

“Ok, I’ve finished telling you about the four processes of MI and we are ready to move into an exercise. Let’s see how we’re doing. What questions do you have so far?”

“We’ve finished the first day of training, and I’d like to check in to see how you’re doing. What things have we covered thus far for which you’d like more clarity or additional practice? And what would you particularly like for me to address tomorrow?”

**Notes:** The *Sentence Stems* can be used for this purpose. A sample questionnaire that might be used after a first day of training is shown on the next page.

**Contributed by:** Tom Barth and Jeff Allison

## Day One Reflection

At the end of this first day of training:

What do you think about the . . .	Is it . . . .						
Amount of material that is being covered	Too little 1	2	3	Just right 4	5	Too much 6	7
Amount of time for questions and discussion	Too little 1	2	3	Just right 4	5	Too much 6	7
Amount of structure in the workshop	Too little 1	2	3	Just right 4	5	Too much 6	7
Amount of time spent on practicing skills	Too little 1	2	3	Just right 4	5	Too much 6	7
Amount of time allowed for breaks and lunch	Too little 1	2	3	Just right 4	5	Too much 6	7
Amount of time watching demonstrations	Too little 1	2	3	Just right 4	5	Too much 6	7
Amount of time the trainers are talking	Too little 1	2	3	Just right 4	5	Too much 6	7
Amount of explanation given for each method	Too little 1	2	3	Just right 4	5	Too much 6	7



## Day One Reflection

At the end of this first day of training:

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Amount of explanation given for each method	Too little 1	2	3	Just right 4	5	Too much 6	7

# **Wrap-up Strategies**

A few ideas for ending a training event.

## Generalizing Gains

**Abstract:** A single training workshop is seldom enough to produce stable changes in practice behavior. Specific follow-up training methods can be helpful in maintaining and generalizing skill learning.

**Overview:** From the very beginning of training, emphasize that initial training is really just a preparation for learning MI.

Trainees can be involved in the process during the course of initial training, to develop specific strategies for maintaining, extending, and generalizing changes in practice behavior.

**Guidelines:** Emphasize that changes in practice behavior are often small and ephemeral after a training event, unless specific steps are taken to continue the change process. Have a variety of possible strategies by which trainees can continue to acquire, maintain, and generalize skills in MI. Also elicit such ideas from the trainees themselves, and construct a menu. Then elicit from trainees (verbally, in writing, in small groups, etc.) specific plans for how they will continue to develop their skills in MI.

Particularly emphasize that the best teachers of MI are one's own clients. This requires knowing what cues to watch for in clients, that tell you whether you're "doing it right." For example, client change talk is a signal of good evoking. Persistent sustain talk or discord are cues to change strategies.

**Example(s):** Some possible strategies to use after training:

Further reading

Observing and discussing professional training videotapes

Recording (audio or video) their own practice

Have a practice session reviewed by an expert coder

Working with a coach knowledgeable about MI

Forming a peer learning community group to support mutual skill acquisition

During training, craft an exercise in which participants practice MI and attend particularly to client responses. Having Observer Tracking can facilitate this. The goal is for participants to learn what cues to watch for in clients that offer immediate feedback of MI performance.

## Sentence Stems

**Abstract:** The trainer provides sentence stems, and participants are invited to complete the sentences from their own perspectives.

**Overview:** One way to assess what trainees have found valuable in the training session is to have them complete sentences that give the information you want. For example, you might have them complete the sentence stem “One thing I learned was \_\_\_\_\_”. Of course, the stems can be tailored to the setting or even to the unique events in the training session.

**Guidelines:** Have trainees write down their own answers (see **Solitary Writing**), then ask for volunteers to share their answers aloud for each stem.  
Or just ask participants to call out their own responses to each stem.

### Example(s):

“I learned \_\_\_\_\_”

“I relearned \_\_\_\_\_”

“I gained \_\_\_\_\_”

“I appreciated \_\_\_\_\_”

“One thing that surprised me was \_\_\_\_\_”

“I could use motivational interviewing to \_\_\_\_\_”

“One thing I hope we cover before this training is over is \_\_\_\_\_”

“I am more confident now that I can \_\_\_\_\_”

“When I get back to work, I can’t wait to try \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Notes:** This is a good way to wrap up a training event. Make the sentence stems relatively positive. For example, you might query “Something I wanted more of was \_\_\_\_\_”, which provides a positive context for what might have been missing. Inviting trainees to verbalize negative stems (“Something I didn’t like about this training...”), can end an otherwise constructive session on a negative note. Better to obtain suggestions for change in written form, and use the sentence stems to elicit positive statements and change talk.

**Contributed by:** Tracy Wyman

# Teaching the Spirit of MI

## Common Content in Teaching Spirit

In each section of this manual there are some notes about content to consider when teaching a particular aspect of MI. The content is not explained in detail here, and should be thoroughly familiar to an MI trainer.

- Definition of MI: A collaborative conversation style for strengthening a person's own motivation and commitment to change.
- The spirit of MI is a way of being, not a set of techniques. MI is not done "to" or "on" people, but for and with them.
- Spirit is the mindset and heartset behind the practice of MI.
- The helper's understandable righting reflex, and its predictable effect, particularly when talking with an ambivalent person. Problems with persuasion and confrontation.
- A continuum of styles: Directing - - - Guiding - - - Following
- Four aspects of the underlying spirit of MI: **PACE**
  - **Partnership** Collaboration. Mutuality. Working together toward shared goals. Both interviewer and client have important expertise. A guiding style: not provider/recipient or expert role.
  - **Acceptance**. Not agreement or approval.
    - Absolute worth of each person. Nonjudgmental. All deserve respect.
    - Accurate empathy – Interest in understanding the client's own experience and perspective
    - Affirmation – Looking for strengths and positive aspects
    - Autonomy – Honoring each person's freedom to choose
  - **Compassion**. This is not feeling for or with the client (sympathy). That may happen, but is not required. In adding this, Bill and Steve meant what the Dalai Lama meant by compassion: an intention and commitment to the *client's* well-being as the prime directive.
  - **Empowerment**. [Also called *Evocation*.] The essence of this component of MI spirit is the knowledge that clients have within them their own experience, wisdom, strengths, and resources that the interviewer can call forth. Instead of implying, "I have what you lack, and I will give it to you," the unspoken message in MI is "You have what you need, and together we will find it."
- Trainees may be concerned that they don't already "have" this full spirit, but it is not a prerequisite for the practice of MI. If anything, the practice of MI teaches you the underlying spirit.
- Concerns sometimes arise, "What if I work in a place that has values or procedures inconsistent with MI spirit?" For example, within correctional settings, public and staff safety are high priorities. How might the practice of MI help to promote those goals? And what about autonomy? Even within conditions of extreme coercion (such as a concentration camp), individuals still have autonomy to choose how they will think and act. To recognize and honor autonomy is to tell the truth. There is also empirical reason to believe that even one person practicing MI can make a difference in a setting where these values are not honored.

## Evoking the Spirit

**Abstract:** Help trainees to understand and experience the spirit of MI by remembering and describing when they have experienced it from others in their own lives.

**Overview:** This can be done with a whole group or participants, or by breaking down into smaller groups for discussion. It can work after describing all four components of MI spirit (which overlaps with the Favorite Teacher exercise below), or could be done in exploring one aspect at a time.

**Guidelines:** The essence is “When have you experienced this from people in your own life? Who did this for you? Name the person; explain what they did to convey this to you, and describe what you appreciated.

- Who surprised you by treating you as an equal, a collaborator? Who served as a guide for you?
- Who communicated deep acceptance of you just as you were?
- Who was concerned for and committed to your well-being, maybe even putting it before their own?
- Who brought out the best in you? Who saw strengths or talents in you that you didn't know you had?
- 

**Notes:** This is a very engaging activity, and can quickly establish relationship. Naming and describing someone who was deeply meaningful recalls the experience of being on the receiving end of this underlying spirit. Manage time because people can enjoy this for quite a while. Breaking into smaller groups increases each person's airtime, and on returning to large group you can ask for an example from each small group.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

## Favorite Teacher

**Abstract:** The purpose is to introduce the spirit of MI in a personal way by evoking it from the trainees.

**Overview:** Very near the beginning of the first day, I want the trainees to remember what it felt like to be motivated themselves as school kids.

**Guidelines:** I say this..."I'd like you to remember a teacher from your elementary, mid, or high school days whose class you enjoyed. Think back about what he or she did that made you eager to attend that class and to participate". I wait one minute while trainees think. Then I say, "Let me tell you about my favorite teacher. Mrs. Dustin was my 10th grade biology teacher. She spoke to me as if I were an adult. Now I'll write your examples here on this flip chart. Who's willing to begin?" I write down their teacher's name and one quality or behavior that they mention. Essentially, I reflect the main point they make about their teacher. After 5 or 10 trainees have described their favorite teacher, I summarize the list, using the teachers' names. I then ask the group to tell me their hunch about the purpose of this favorite teacher exercise. I conclude by saying, "Yup, you got it! This list is a good start at describing the qualities and behaviors of a motivational interviewer".

**Examples:** Trainees remember the name of their favorite teacher with remarkable frequency. It seems to add to the richness of my summary that I use their teacher's name, too. Trainees usually say things like "She believed in me", "He made it interesting", "She knew I was capable of more", "He took the time to explain concepts creatively", "She helped me to speak up even though I was really shy", etc.

**Notes:** For a large group that may not be able to see the flip chart, type the examples right into your PowerPoint slide that is projected on the screen. It is visible and especially validating for those who contribute.

**Contributed by:** Carolina Yahne

## Negative Practice

**Abstract:** In preparation for teaching an interpersonal skill, trainees experience first-hand what happens when the opposite approach is taken.

**Overview:** This exercise is designed to raise trainees' awareness of common responses that are *not* reflective listening or motivational interviewing, and how they can obstruct motivation and change. It provides learning by contrast when a negative practice exercise precedes positive practice in the skill.

**Guidelines:** Provide a lot of structure for this exercise so that trainees don't wander off. Allow only about 5, no more than 10 minutes per exchange once practice begins. The usual format is to use dyads, with one person as a speaker and the other as a counselor. Give the speaker a specific topic or role appropriate to the exercise. This tends to work better when the speaker talks about personal material (Real Play) rather than portraying a prescribed role (Role Play). Give the counselor clear and specific instructions, so that he or she doesn't wander off into a natural style. The exercise can be (but doesn't have to be) repeated, with the two switching roles. When it is over, debrief, asking for reactions and observations from the speaker's perspective in particular, but also from the counselor's perspective. Common speaker reactions are fight or flight: feelings of frustration, anger, withdrawal, giving up, etc.

**Negative Practice Example 1: Roadblock Exercise** (based on Thomas Gordon's twelve roadblock responses)

- \* Have people pair up in dyads and decide who will be the first speaker. Explain that both people will play both roles (if they will switch).
- \* Assign the speaker to talk about "Something I feel two ways about." Ask the speakers to choose a topic that they are comfortable sharing, but that has important meaning for them at present (not "I feel two ways about walnuts").
- \* Explain that the speaker's job is to explain this dilemma, and the counselor's job is to fit in, within a relatively short space, *as many of the twelve roadblocks as possible*. (It is helpful to have a handout or display of the roadblocks to which the counselor can refer.) Without further ado or discussion, say "Begin."
- \* After about 5-10 minutes, interrupt and have the two switch roles.
- \* After about 5-10 minutes more, interrupt again and debrief. What was it like for the speaker trying to talk about ambivalence? How did the speaker feel? How did the counselors do at fitting in the roadblocks? What are the underlying messages conveyed by roadblocks? [e.g., "Listen to me, I know the answer." "What you have to say doesn't matter."]



## Twelve Roadblocks to Listening

(Thomas Gordon, Ph.D.)

1. Ordering, directing, or commanding
2. Warning or threatening
3. Giving advice, making suggestions, or providing solutions
4. Persuading with logic, arguing, or lecturing
5. Moralizing, preaching, or telling clients what they "should" do
6. Disagreeing, judging, criticizing, or blaming
7. Agreeing, approving, or praising
8. Shaming, ridiculing, or labeling
9. Interpreting or analyzing
10. Reassuring, sympathizing, or consoling
11. Questioning or probing
12. Withdrawing, distracting, humoring, or changing the subject

### Negative Practice Example 2: Persuasion Exercise

This is an exercise for dyads, in which one person is the speaker and the other the counselor. The speaker talks about something he or she is thinking about changing, or “should” change, or might want to do. The counselor uses a variety of methods to try to directly persuade the speaker to make the change. It is important to warn the audience that this is *not* motivational interviewing, and that the counselors are not to be empathic listeners in this exercise.

**Speaker role:** Identify a change that you are *considering*, something you are *thinking about* changing in your life, but have not definitely decided. It will be something you feel two ways about. It might be a change that would be “good for you,” that you “should” make for some reason, but have been putting off. It doesn’t have to be a problem; it might be an opportunity. Tell the counselor about this change you are considering. [Trainer: “Speakers, this time I would like you to talk about something you have been thinking about changing in your own life. It could be a habit, attitude or behavior, but it should be something you haven’t changed yet. Maybe it’s something that would be *good* for you, or that you think you *should* change. It should be something you feel comfortable sharing -- not your deepest, darkest secret, okay? Any questions about that?”]

**Counselor role:** Your task is to try as hard as you can to *convince* and *persuade* the Speaker to make the change that he or she is considering. (This is *not* a motivational interviewing exercise.) Specifically, once you find out what the change is that the person is considering, do these five things:

1. Explain *why* the person should make this change.
2. Give at least three specific *benefits* that could result from making the change.
3. Tell the person *how* they could make the change.
4. Emphasize how *important* it is for them to make the change. This might include the negative consequences of not doing it.
5. Tell/persuade the person to do it.

And if you encounter resistance, repeat the above, perhaps more emphatically.

**Notes:**

Negative practice is usually a lot of fun, and the room can fill up with hilarity as trainees become more outrageous in their negative practice. Monitor the level of energy in the room, and end the exercise while it is still high. It's important not to let this one run on too long. The point of the exercise is experienced quickly.

Trainees who are experienced in or committed to the approach that is being used in a negative practice exercise may argue that the approach was very effective for them, that their practice session went well and would have elicited change, etc. Substantial time can be used and ill will generated if the trainer takes an oppositional approach here (which also fails to model the clinical style of motivational interviewing). One good approach is to briefly acknowledge that sometimes people do find this kind of advice helpful, and then move on. Perhaps one in twenty people do respond well when given uninvited advice. The vast majority of Speakers will experience this conversation as aversive.

A pretraining Skill Assessment can be useful before the roadblock exercise. To do this, distribute a Helpful Responses Questionnaire before you begin to discuss reflective listening or roadblocks. The questionnaire contains 6-10 statements that might be made by a client or friend who is talking about personal material. Trainees are asked to write *the next thing* they would say in response to these different statements, restricting themselves to one or two sentences. If this has been done earlier, trainees can examine their own questionnaires at this point to determine which of the roadblocks they are most likely to use.

Be careful not to communicate that this is how your participants are currently practicing, and that you are going to fix it. That's a quick recipe for evoking defensiveness.

**Debriefing**

Focus primarily on the experience of the Speakers in these conversations. What were they feeling and thinking? Write bullet-point reactions on the board or paper. Some common human responses to such advice are: angry, agitated, oppositional, discounting, defensive, justifying, not understood, not heard, passive, overwhelmed, ashamed, trapped, disengaged, uncomfortable, resistant.

**ALTERNATIVE:**

The exercise can be done as a role-play in which each is assigned a situational identity, as in the scenario below.

**NURSE'S ROLE**

The Situation. You are a busy occupational health nurse. Your company has encouraged you to conduct health screening among the employees. Having done this, you are feeding back the results of a health screen to an employee. You only have about 10 minutes for your first discussion with this person.

The Client. This person is clearly overweight, also smokes, and drinks about 6 beers a night. Both blood pressure and cholesterol are elevated, and you are very concerned about this person's diet and weight. The employee is married, has 3 children, and has been working with the firm for 15 years.

Your Task. Try as hard as you can to persuade this person to do something about his or her diet, smoking, or drinking. This is a serious matter, and you do not have a lot of time. It's not your job to be a "therapist"; rather, you are paid to be a competent, concerned, and forthright health practitioner.

1. Explain *why* the person should make this change.
2. Give at least three specific *benefits* that could result from making the change.
3. Tell the person *how* they could make the change.
4. Emphasize how *important* it is for them to make the change. This might include the negative

consequences of not doing it.

5. Tell/persuade the person to do it.

And if you encounter resistance, repeat the above, perhaps more emphatically.

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### *EMPLOYEE'S ROLE*

The Situation. You filled out a health questionnaire at work, and had a blood pressure reading and blood test as part of a company-wide effort to improve employee health. Now you have been called in to see the company nurse. You have been a hard-working and loyal employee for 15 years. You're not looking forward to this session, because you know you are overweight, besides which you will probably be told to quit smoking, but you don't think there is anything you can or want to do about it.

Your Home Situation. You lead a busy life, and have a spouse (who also works) and 3 children. You don't have much in the way of recreation, besides going out for a meal and some drinks with your spouse and friends on Saturday nights. You drink a 6-pack of beer most nights, but don't see this as a problem. You like your food, and though you are a bit overweight you're not really concerned about it.

The Session. Though you're not looking forward to the session, you don't plan to be rude to the nurse. You have only 10 minutes to talk, before you have to get back to work.

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## A Taste of Motivational Interviewing

**Abstract:** In a structured exercise, participants can experience the basic approach and “feel” of motivational interviewing, even without understanding the skills and principles involved.

**Overview:** This can be done early in training, even before explaining what MI is. This is particularly effective following the Persuasion Exercise described above, precisely because it provides an experiential contrast.

**Guidelines:** Have people work in pairs: One speaker, one listener. Time permitting, they can switch roles.

**Speaker role:** Identify a change that you are *considering*, something you are *thinking about* changing in your life, but have not definitely decided. It will be something you feel two ways about. It might be a change that would be “good for you,” that you “should” make for some reason, but have been putting off. Tell the counselor about this change you are considering.

**Listener role:** Don’t try to persuade or fix anything. Don’t offer advice. Instead ask these four questions one at a time, and listen carefully to what the person says:

Why would you want to make this change?

If you did decide to make this change, how might you go about it in order to succeed?

What are the three best reasons for you to do it?

How important would you say it is for you to make this change, on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important, and 10 is extremely important? [Follow-up question: And why are you at \_\_\_\_\_ rather than a lower number of 0?]

After you have listened carefully to the answers to these questions, give back a short summary of what you heard, of the person’s motivations for change. Then ask one more question:

So what do you think you’ll do? and listen with interest to the answer.

**Notes:** In debriefing, ask first about the Speakers’ experience in this conversation. What was happening? Write bullet-point responses on the board or paper. Some common responses across cultures are: understood, want to talk more, liking the listener, open, accepted, respected, engaged, able to change, safe, empowered, hopeful, comfortable, interested, want to come back, cooperative.

If the Persuasion Exercise was done first, you now have two lists of Speaker reactions. Put them side by side and ask, “Which clients would you rather work with?” The point, of course, is that they are the same people responding in different ways to these two counseling styles.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller.

## Monty Roberts

**Abstract:** Observing the nonviolent, collaborative style of Monty Roberts in working with horses provides a nonverbal parallel to the spirit of MI.

**Overview:** Monty Roberts teaches a gentle, collaborative alternative to “breaking” horses. Whereas “breaking” involves about two weeks of physical subjugation, Monty is normally able to have a first saddle and rider on a new horse within about half an hour, and without violence. His “Join-up” method illustrates a similar spirit and approach to MI.

**Guidelines:** The videotape/DVD that most trainers use is “Join-Up,” showing the segment where Monty begins with a horse that has never been ridden, and in less than 25 minutes the horse accepts a rider. [www.montyroberts.com](http://www.montyroberts.com). MINT members have blanket permission to use the training tapes produced by Monty Roberts.

**Notes:** Occasionally an audience member responds negatively to Mr. Roberts’ methods. Special caution may be warranted in using this metaphor with historically oppressed populations, although many indigenous audiences have understood and responded positively to his nonviolent and collaborative approach.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller.

## The Instructor-Coach-Observer Continuum

**Abstract:** Trainees specify some of the client and setting characteristics that present counseling challenges for them, and the process elicits discussion of helpful techniques.

**Overview:** The aim is to teach the spirit of MI, without immersing practitioners immediately in a foreign MI language. To use terms to convey the spirit that might have them think, “Oh yes, I see, there are different ways of talking to people about change....”.

**Guidelines:** Draw the continuum on the board or paper and ask participants how these three roles are different. What does an instructor do? (Teach, tell, direct, show expertise) What does an observer do? (watch, listen, not participate actively at the moment). What does a coach do? (encourages, is patient, supportive, guiding). How would they like for you to work with them .. as an Instructor, as a Coach, or as an Observer who listens to their own experience? The likely response is “Some of each,” and indeed that is what you are likely to do. You can also ask participants to tell you where they spend most of their time (on this scale) in their own daily work.

**Notes:** Obviously there is a parallel to the Direct-Guide-Follow continuum, along which MI lies in the middle and involves a flexible and skillful blend of directing and following.

**Contributed by:** Steve Rollnick

## Metaphor and Nonverbal Imagery

**Abstract:** Sometimes nonverbal images and metaphors can convey the spirit of motivational interviewing better than verbal explanations do.

**Overview:** Important concepts about motivational interviewing can come alive with the right metaphor or nonverbal image. Trainees often remember such examples far more vividly than the most compelling lecture.

**Guidelines:** The less said the better.

**Example(s):**

Wrestling versus dancing as a metaphor to express the spirit of motivational interviewing

Change talk as flowers that are gathered into a bouquet and offered back to the client.

Change talk as a glowing coal that, if breathed upon, begins to flame

Illustrative cartoons

Videotape demonstration of Monty Roberts' Join-Up method: [www.montyroberts.com](http://www.montyroberts.com)

## Expressing Compassion

**Abstract:** Sometimes nonverbal images and metaphors can convey the spirit of motivational interviewing better than verbal explanations do.

**Overview:** Show a brief video clip that illustrates compassion, in some way; facilitate a short, guided discussion with participants about what they saw or heard, how was compassion shown, what did the clip reveal about compassion, and so on.

### Guidelines:

#### Part One:

In small groups, 20 minutes, discuss the following and list some bullet points...

What is compassion?

- How is it effectively expressed?
- What are some reasons to express compassion?
- What makes it easy to express?
- What makes it difficult to express?
- What are some signs in the exchange, in yourself, in the client, that would show you that you are expressing compassion?

Debrief insights

#### Part Two:

5-7 minutes

A. Write a description of an actual client of yours for whom it is easy for you to be compassionate, also write down the kinds of things they say when talking with you

B. Write a description of an actual client of yours for whom it is difficult for you to be compassionate, also write down the kinds of things they say when talking with you

#### Part Three:

20-30 minutes

In dyads, discuss your two actual clients with each other and for each of the four clients you have described; working together:

\*identify at least 5 strengths for each client

\*form at least 5 affirmations for each client, including the expression of appreciation/understanding of any difficulties they face

\*form at least 5 simple reflections to express understanding of what the client says

\*form at least 5 complex reflections to express understanding of what the client means

Debrief insights and practice implications

#### Contributed by Ali Hall

**Note** from Bill Miller: Be aware of a potential confusion between common connotations of “compassion” (e.g., sympathy, empathy, pity) and how we have used it within the spirit of MI. In that (spirit) context, what Steve and I meant by compassion is what the Dalai Lama meant: an *intention* and *commitment* to the other’s well-being. The reason for an MI conversation is to alleviate suffering and promote the client’s welfare. Trainees may be distressed that they don’t *feel* enough “compassion,” but what we meant is an intention and commitment to the client’s best interests, not one’s own. In the words of William Mayo, M.D.: “The best interest of the patient is the only interest to be considered.”



## Experiencing MI Spirit

**Abstract:** The group of three members will experience three different levels of practitioner engagement and client response to demonstrate the spirit of MI. **20 minute exercise**

**Overview:** Each group experiences three different scenarios; demonstrating practitioner engagement and client experience. Firstly, the lack of non-verbal and verbal communication aims to demonstrate a non-MI approach. Secondly, the engaging non-verbal body language aims to demonstrate aspects of MI approach and spirit. Thirdly, the non-verbal body language and verbal MI communication aims to demonstrate MI approach and spirit.

**Guidelines:** Each group will have 3 participants to be split into client, practitioner and observer roles. Each sub group to be briefed separately.

**Client group** asked to select a topic they are passionate about and encouraged to talk passionately about this issue with practitioner – option for role playing is to choose from a list of pre-determined current hot topics.

**Practitioner** group to demonstrate three different levels of engagement. Firstly to represent a brick wall – disinterested (no verbal/non-verbal communication including no eye contact and non-engaging body language) for 1 minute. When the bell rings the practitioner will change their behavior to include non-verbal MI style/spirit for 1 minute (eye contact and engaging body language). When the bell rings again, the practitioner will change their behavior to include verbal MI style/spirit for 1 minute (eye contact, engaging body language and MI communication skills; asking open questions for beginners and more technical MI according to MI competence).

**Observer** group will take note and record the clients and practitioners behavior and provide feedback post three minute exercise.

**Safety Consideration:** Emphasize that client may be in real or role play and is not required to disclose which role they are sharing in the exercise.

**Demonstration:** Required for practitioner group, including use of bell. Client and Observer role could have written instructions if limited to one facilitator.

**Materials:** Paper and pen for observer

- Chairs positioned in two rows practitioner / client and observer to side
- Written sign that only the practitioner can see: brick wall / non-verbal / verbal and non verbal Bell

**Example:** The row of clients will sit facing the row of practitioners and the observers besides them in a triad. All roles briefed separately about their role in the activity. (client, practitioner and observer)

A bell sounds and the practitioner will see the sign showing brick wall and they will keep silent with no eye contact while the client is talking. This will continue for 1 minute and then the bell will sound again. This follows by a sign board showing non-verbal MI style/spirit and the practitioner will be silent but showing engaging body language including eye contact (MI style and spirit). This will continue for 1 minute and then the bell will sound. For the last minute the sign board will be shown to the practitioner to use verbal and non-verbal MI style/spirit (technical content according to level of practitioner).

At the end of the session, provide feedback from different exercise roles:

*Observers – What did you observe... client behavior/practitioner behavior?*

*Clients – How was the experience?*

*Practitioners – Thoughts on the exercise?*

*Overall reflection: How does this relate to your practice?*

**Notes:** This session will provide participants the experience of non-MI spirit and MI spirit. Opportunity to discuss experiences and how it applies to their current environment...

**Contributed by:** Kerry Michelle Clarke, Sharon Tan Chay Huang, James B. Anderson, Peter Gabelgaard Brolund, Rachel Baker, Steven Bradley-Bull, Kerstin Åberg, Ai Watanabe, & Marianne Bærenholdt.

## The Heart-set of MI

### Type of Activity

Small groups; 3-4 participants each

### Goals & Objectives

1. The purpose of the exercise is for participants to experience a true sense of MI Spirit with a seemingly “difficult client”. This exercise can assist participants with differentiating MI Spirit from client-centered practice, which can be a struggle.
2. Practice using micro skills to establish Spirit in a session

### Length

30-40 minutes

### Audience

Introductory+

### Demonstration

Ask participants to share a difficult or challenging client scenario that they see at their agency to role play with you acting as the practitioner. Instruct them to make notes during the role play of when they feel an element of Spirit has been established during the role play. During your role play try to demonstrate each element of MI Spirit at least once.

### Demonstration Debrief

Ask the participants when they noticed any elements of MI Spirit being demonstrated and explore how this seemed to impact the session/client. Explore how this may be the same or different than what they already do in practice.

### Instructions

3. Tell them that you are going to have them role play now. The following is an example of the statement I would share:
  - a. You are going to work with this client who has been mandated as a condition of his parole. You are already aware through authorized consultation with his parole officer that he is a 32 year old man who has recently been released from prison. He is a longstanding member of a criminal biker gang with a significant record. When he comes into your office, he says the following to you:

“Listen, you know and I know that the reason I am here is because of conditions on my parole. I’m not saying that I’m gonna fulfill some impression that you or anyone else has about someone like me, but I seriously doubt that someone in your shoes is ever going to be able to tell me how to come from the places I have, with the things I’ve done, and just slide into some perfect world where I follow all the rules, AND survive while doing it! You wouldn’t know the first thing about survival and being alone the way that I do. My life has been dictated enough to me and the last thing I need is another person who doesn’t have a clue telling me what to do!”

4. Tell the group you are going to take a moment with them to explore how they are feeling about this client (flipchart responses). The following are some areas to explore:
  - a. How are they feeling about heading into a session with this client?
  - b. Where do they perceive themselves with the client (i.e. alongside)?
  - c. What are their thoughts about him?
  - d. What level of belief do they have in his freedom and ability to choose?
  - e. What are their expectations for the session/outcome?
  - f. How do they feel about the client's motivation or ability to change?
  - g. How do they feel regarding his potential?
  - h. What motivations, strengths, or resources, do they think he has to draw upon?
  - i. What do they think the true meaning is behind his words?
5. Have participants break into triads or small groups. Assign each group one of the elements of Spirit.
6. Now, tell the groups that you are going to provide them with a glimpse into the client's heart by playing a song (letting them "cheat" a bit in terms of Spirit). For the client scenario provided I would use the song "*The Lost Boy*" by Greg Holden. Dim lights in the room, put the lyrics up on slides, and let them know that they can read the lyrics or close their eyes, whatever works best for them.
7. Play song
8. Recording responses on a separate flip chart, explore the same topics that you did in step 3. Make a point to explore whether they think the song could be the true meaning behind the client's words when he first came in.
9. Explore the differences between the two flipchart responses from the group. Discuss how their own personal perspective/feelings towards the client may have impacted the sense of Spirit in a session with him in the first and second scenarios. **Emphasize that the level of compassion, acceptance, partnership and evocation they felt for the client after the song was played, is ideally what would be offered to every client in the true Spirit of MI. Our heart-set is at that level without hearing all the details.**
10. Now, ask each group to develop one response for the client that would demonstrate the element of Spirit that they were assigned in step 5.

Materials Needed:

Song I would use for this client scenario: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNhToEXdDCQ>

**Contributed by:** Miranda Grattan

# Teaching the Engaging Process

## Common Content in Teaching Engaging

- Person-centered engaging skills are used throughout MI.
- **Carl Rogers** The foundations of the engaging process are in the work of Carl Rogers and his colleagues in developing a person-centered approach to counseling and education.
- **Accurate Empathy** Deep listening is foundational in MI. Empathic listening is vital in the Engaging process to develop a relationship of respect, trust, acceptance, and collaboration. Accurate empathy is itself an evidence-based practice in promoting positive change.
- **Thomas Gordon** His communication model (speaker's meaning – spoken words – heard words – interpreted meaning) is a simple and useful way to illustrate how reflective listening facilitates understanding.
- **Roadblocks** It can be useful to review (and sometimes experience) Thomas Gordon's roadblocks as obstacles to good listening.
- **OARS** as four core skills in engaging that are also used throughout MI.
  - Open vs. closed questions
  - Affirmation
  - Reflective listening: Simple vs. complex reflections
  - Summaries
- **Language** There are many subtleties of language in accurate empathy
  - Voice tone
  - Impact of question vs. statement (inflection up or down)
  - Overshooting/understating
  - Continuing the paragraph
  - No need for artificial stems (“What I hear you saying is that you . . .”)

## Structured Practice

**Abstract:** These are exercises for shaping Engaging skills, in which interviewer (listener) and interviewee (speaker) are given well-defined roles, usually with carefully specified communication rules.

**Overview:** There are substantial similarities to the preceding Negative Practice format, except that here the focus is on shaping skills that you *want* trainees to learn and practice.

**Guidelines:** Explain the purpose of the exercise (unless doing so spoils it). Divide people quickly into groups of 2 or 3 (or another number if needed), and describe the roles of each participant. The roles may be rotated during the exercise, so that each participant experiences each role. Give a very clear explanation of the communication rules, and reinforce this with notes on a board or a handout. Participants commonly forget or ignore important rules, or get stuck, so circulating among groups is important to keep the exercise on track. An observer role may be assigned (see Observer Tracking). Afterward, debrief by obtaining observations from the perspective of each role.

**Notes:** Following is a sequence of exercises developed by Bill Miller, that work well in shaping empathic listening. All of them are examples of Structured Practice. They were described in the first edition of *Motivational Interviewing*, but were not reproduced in subsequent editions.

### ***Structured Practice Example 1: Nonverbal Listening***

Before starting to shape reflective listening, it can be useful to increase awareness of the importance and value of nonverbal (“passive”) listening skills. The training exercise for this step is relatively simple.

\* Pair up trainees and have them decide who will speak and who will listen. Assign a specific topic for the speaker to talk about for five minutes, or offer a menu of options such as:

What it was like growing up in my home  
Ways in which I have changed as a person over the years  
The good things and not so good things about my high school years  
What I hope and plan to do over the next ten years.  
Describe one of your parents, or someone else close to you.  
How I came to do the kind of work I am doing.

\* Instruct the listener to say *nothing at all*, not even “mm hmm” or other vocal noises. Absolute silence. Instead the listener is to use nonverbal skills to communicate to the speaker that he or she is listening and understanding.

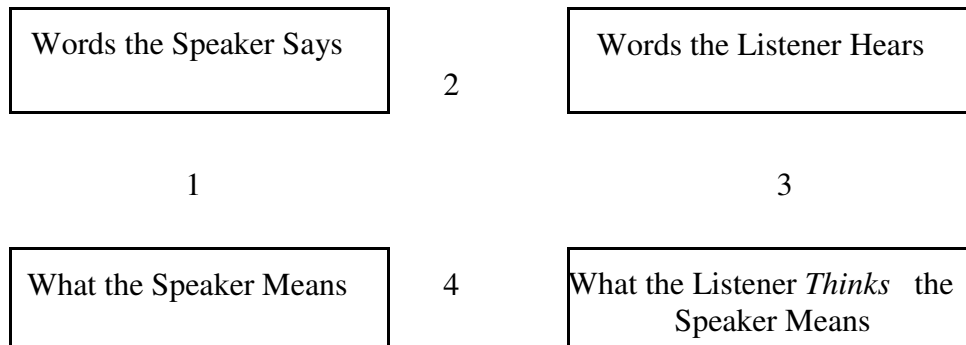
\* Allow the monologues to continue for 5 minutes, then ask the speakers to finish.

\* Debrief. What was this experience like for the speakers? For the listeners? Listeners often observe that they were aware of all the things they *would have said*. Ask listeners to indicate the kinds of things they might have said had it been permitted. The experience is often a mixture of pleasure and frustration for both, who would like more interaction. This sets the stage for introducing reflective methods for “active” listening.

## Structured Practice Example 2: Thinking Reflectively

- \* Explain that there is a way of *thinking* that accompanies good reflective listening. It includes, of course, interest in what the person has to say, and respect for the person's inner wisdom. The key element at this point, however, is a *hypothesis testing* approach to listening - the knowledge that what you *think* a person means may not be what he or she really means.
- \* A good reflective listening response tests a hypothesis. It asks, in a way, "Is this what you mean?"
- \* Draw Thomas Gordon's model of listening on the board and explain it briefly. The point is that there are at least three places where even a single communication can go wrong.

### Model from Thomas Gordon (Parent Effectiveness Training):



Communication can go wrong because:

- (1) The speaker does not say exactly what is meant
- (2) The listener does not hear the words correctly
- (3) The listener has a different interpretation of what the words mean

The process of reflective listening is meant to connect the bottom two boxes (4), to check on whether "what the listener thinks the speaker means" is the same as "what the speaker means."

### Preparation:

Have each participant be prepared to share at least three personal completions of the sentence "One thing you should know about me is that I am . . ." The speaker fills in an adjective that lends itself to ambiguity and discussion) rather than concrete attributes (e.g., "I am tall"). In this exercise each person will be using only one of their adjectives.

### Commentary:

This exercise teaches an approximation to reflective listening, and emphasizes how a listener can generate multiple hypotheses as to what a speaker may mean in any given statement.

### Briefing:

1. Participants in each triad are to take turns, in rotation, saying one of their sentences to their two partners.
2. When a speaker has offered a sentence, the other two serve as listeners and respond by *asking questions* of this form: "Do you mean that you \_\_\_\_\_?"

3. The speaker responds to each such question *only* with "Yes" or "No." No additional elaboration is permitted. [An alternative is to allow the speaker to say "Warmer" or "Colder".]
4. Demonstrate this by offering a personal example to the audience, and having trainees ask you "Do you mean that you . . . ?" questions. Respond only with "Yes" or "No." Example:
  - YOU: One thing I like about myself is that I'm organized.
  - TRAINEE: Do you mean that you keep your desk tidy?
  - Y: No!
  - T: Do you mean that you manage your time well?
  - Y: Yes.
  - T: Do you mean that you always know where to find things?
  - Y: No.
  - T: Do you mean that you manage to get a lot done?
  - Y: Yes.
  - T: Do you mean that you are a good planner?
  - Y: Yes.
  - T: Do you mean that you're difficult to live with?
  - Y: ... Yes.
5. Instruct the triads to begin this process, generating at least five different "Do you mean . . ." questions for each statement that is offered. When questioning for one statement seems to have reached an end, rotate on to the next person, who becomes the speaker while the other two generate questions. Ask groups to stay on task and not stop for discussion. When each person has had a turn as speaker, the triad is done with this exercise. Circulate among groups to reinforce, clarify, give examples, and make suggestions. Allow about 10 minutes for this exercise, adjusting time as needed depending on progress.

### ***Debriefing:***

In a large group, ask for comments on this experience. What did the participants learn? What surprises were there? What was it like to be the speaker? Usually there are comments here about the speaker's wanting strongly to elaborate and explain, which is a good illustration of how the reflective process - even at this simple level - pulls for more exploration. What problems were encountered? Highlight how many different meanings a seemingly simple statement can have (the number of different "Yes" answers), as well as the fact that many early guesses are wrong ("No" responses). Point out how each guess receives immediate feedback ("Yes" or "No") in this exercise, which also happens during good reflective listening. Common themes during debriefing are:

**Satisfaction.** The speaker felt good, understood.

**Frustration.** That it is frustrating to be able to say only "Yes" or "No" because the speaker wants to say more. This is a good example of how even this simple level of reflection pulls for self-disclosure.

**Fascination.** It's amazing how easy it is to miss, and how many different things can be meant. Speakers may have the experience that "it made me think of things I hadn't considered." Again, that is an effect of reflection, even at this simplistic level.

With the background of how to *think* reflectively and generate alternative hypotheses about meaning, the next step is to teach how to form good reflective-listening statements.



### Structured Practice Example 3: Forming Reflections

*Aim:* To help trainees learn how to form effective reflective-listening statements.

*Time:* 20 minutes plus discussion.

*Format:* Participants are arranged in groups of three.

#### *Trainee Preparation:*

- The same speaker items are used in this practice exercise: "One thing you should know about me is that I am . . ." The questions asked in the last exercise are close to reflective listening, but not quite. The process, however, is the same as in the prior exercise: The listener makes a guess about the speaker's meaning and offers this to the speaker for response.
- An important difference is that this time the speaker should say more than "Yes" or "No," elaborating briefly on what was meant. This gives the listeners *new* material to reflect each time the speaker speaks.
- Explain how good reflective-listening statements are very similar to, and yet different from, the "*Do you mean . . .*" questions. They *do* offer a hypothesis about what the speaker means, but this is done in the form of a *statement* rather than a *question* (difference in inflection at the end of the sentence). A good reflective listening response is given as a *statement*. Its inflection turns *down* at the end. (Illustrate by inflecting differently in examples such as:

"You're angry with your mother?" (up)  
vs. "You're angry with your mother." (down)

"You don't see anything wrong with what you did?" (up)  
Vs. "You don't see anything wrong with what you did." (down)

- It may feel strange to make a statement instead of asking a question; for example it may feel presumptuous, as if you are "telling the person what they feel." Yet statements usually work better. Why is that?
- Some people find it helpful to have some words to get them started in making a reflective listening statement. The common element is the word "you." The stereotypic counselor statement (which we recommend never be used) is: "What I hear you saying is that you . . ." Some simpler forms:  
You're feeling . . .  
It sounds like you . . .  
You're wondering whether . . .

However, *no stem words are really needed* to form a reflective listening statement. It may be as simple as beginning with the word "You . . ." When done well, reflective listening flows like a normal conversation.

- Demonstrate the skill by having someone from the audience volunteer a self-statement:  
"One thing you should know about me is that I am . . ."

and respond only with reflective listening statements, being careful to inflect them downward at the end. Generate several different hypothesis-testing responses for each self-statement, and point out how each corresponds to a "Do you mean that . . .?" question.

- Next you might offer a self-statement of your own to the audience, and have them generate reflective listening responses.
- Other speaker statements might be used as starting topics for practice of reflective listening:
  - Something I feel two ways about
  - Something I like about myself
  - Something about myself that I would like to change

**Commentary:**

It is a short step from the questions of “Thinking Reflectively” to reflection statements, but trainees often find this harder and need some coaching and encouragement. Circulate among groups, reinforce good reflection responses, make suggestions, and offer some reflections of your own if a group seems stuck. Attend to voice inflection at the end of reflection statements, and encourage a downturn in voice (statement) rather than upward inflection (question).

**Briefing:**

1. Participants in each triad are to take turns, in rotation, saying one of their sentences to their two partners.
2. When a speaker has offered a sentence, the other two serve as listeners and respond with reflective-listening statements.
3. The speaker responds to each statement with elaboration that may include but is not limited to "Yes" or "No." The next reflective-listening statement, then, takes this new information into account, adding a degree of complexity not present in Exercise 2.
4. Demonstrate this by having a trainee tell you one self-statement; You respond only with reflective-listening and continue this process several times. For example:

TRAINEE: One thing you should know about me is that I am moody.  
 YOU: You never know if you're going to be up or down.  
 T: No, it's not that. I can tell how I'm going to feel. It's just that I overreact to things.  
 Y: Even little things can upset you.  
 T: Sometimes, yes. Mainly I think I worry too much.  
 Y: You sit and fret about things a lot.  
 T: Uh-huh. Often there's nothing I can do about it, but still I go over and over it in my mind.  
 Y: And that affects how you feel.  
 T: Yes! I get myself all worked up, and I lose sleep.  
 Y: Even at night, you're worrying.  
 T: Yes. I wish I could change that.

5. Have the triads begin this process, designating one member as the first speaker. The two listeners offer *only* reflective-listening responses (no questions or other roadblocks), and the speaker elaborates. When a

statement seems-to have been understood, rotate on to the next person, who becomes the speaker while the other two respond with reflective listening. Ask groups to stay on task and not to stop for discussion. Circulate among groups to reinforce, clarify, and make suggestions. Allow about 20 minutes for this exercise; adjusting time as needed, depending on progress.

**Debriefing:**

Discuss the exercise from the viewpoint of speakers and listeners. How did the speakers feel in this exercise, as compared to Exercise 2? How easy was it to generate reflective-listening responses? What difficulties were there?

Generating single reflective statements is easier than sustaining empathic listening in the context of conversation, where the challenge is the continual reflection of new meaning that is offered as a topic is explored. Because this is difficult, trainees will readily fall back on familiar alternatives to listening (e.g., asking questions). Exercise 4 is designed to challenge trainees to rely more on empathic listening.

**Structured Practice Example 4: Sustained Reflective Listening**

*Aim:* To give each trainee an opportunity to practice reflective listening as a predominant style in one-to-one conversation.

*Time:* 20 minutes plus discussion.

*Format:* Trainees are arranged in pairs.

*Trainee Preparation:*

\* Some of the finer points of reflection can be discussed in preparation for this exercise. The concept of *levels* of reflection may be helpful:

1. Simple reflections simply repeat something the speaker said, or rephrase it slightly, but not going beyond what the speaker has already communicated.
2. Complex reflections do more than restating what the speaker said. They make a guess. The listener may infer *meaning* in what was said and reflect this back in new words. This adds to and extends what was actually said. In artful form, this is like *continuing the paragraph* that the speaker has been developing, saying the *next* sentence rather than repeating the last one. A complex reflection may also reflect perceived feeling behind what the speaker said, suggest a simile or metaphor.

Often, simpler reflections are used at first, when meaning is less clear, and deeper reflections are ventured as understanding increases. Jumping too far beyond what was said, however, can turn into interpretation (a roadblock). You may also discuss here some of the variations of reflection (e.g., double-sided reflection).

Another possible subtlety to discuss is the impact of overshooting versus understating a client's statement. There is a rich array of words that can be used to capture a particular feeling. For example:

	HAPPINESS	ANGER	SADNESS	FEAR
STRONG	delirious	enraged/outraged	despondent	petrified

	HAPPINESS	ANGER	SADNESS	FEAR
	overjoyed	incensed	hopeless	terrified
	delighted	furious	depressed	panicked
	cheery	irate	gloomy	alarmed
	chipper	angry/agitated	blue	frightened
	happy	mad	downhearted	scared/afraid
	glad	irked	low	nervous/anxious
	pleased	bothered	down	worried
	content	irritated	unhappy	startled
<b>WEAK</b>	okay	annoyed	a little down	uneasy

Choosing a word that overshoots the client's feeling tends to cause the person to pause or back away from the experience. Using a word that understates the intensity of feeling tends to invite the person to continue experiencing and discussing it.

**Trainer note:** This same principle is revisited later in the technique of amplified reflection, but for the opposite purpose.

\* It can also be useful here to illustrate how metaphors and similes may be used as reflective listening:

Kind of like . . .  
It's as though . . .

\* Explain the skill of double-sided reflection

**Commentary:**

Trainees who are relatively new to reflective listening find this exercise a difficult step and need encouragement. This is a place where individualized coaching is helpful if this is possible. Some trainees will do well at this stage and are ready to proceed onward; others will need additional practice and support. Ideally, trainees should become comfortable with reflective listening before working on more complex applications of OARS in MI. This is easier to accomplish in individual and small-group training than in larger workshops.

**Briefing:**

1. Participants in each pair decide who will be the first speaker. This person then talks to the listener about the chosen topic.
2. Suggest various topics from which the speaker can choose. Topics like those used in Exercise 1 give ample room for elaboration:

What it was like growing up in my home  
Ways in which I have changed as a person over the years  
The good things and not so good things about my high school years  
What I hope and plan to do over the next ten years.  
Describe one of your parents, or someone else close to you.  
How I came to do the kind of work I am doing.  
An experience I had that would be difficult for someone else to understand.

3. The listener's task is to respond *only* with reflective-listening statements. Although it would be natural to intermix reflection with other forms (e.g., questions), the listener is intentionally prohibited from using anything except reflection. This is done because without such prohibition, trainees tend to rely on old habits. The speaker responds to reflection by continuing to elaborate. Alternatively, allow the listener to ask only one or two questions, and no more.
4. Ask trainees to stay in role, not discussing or breaking role until you interrupt them. After about 10 minutes, instruct the participants in each pair to switch roles.
5. Model this process. Have a trainee present a topic to you, and show how to respond with 100% reflective listening. If appropriate, demonstrate a double-sided reflection.

### ***Debriefing:***

In a large group, ask participants to describe their experience as speakers and as listeners. How "natural" did it feel to the speakers and to the listeners? Perhaps compare the speakers' experience with that in Exercise 1, where the same task was used. How difficult a task was this for the listeners? When a listener voices difficulty with the task, ask his or her partner (speaker) about the experience. Often the speaking partner perceives the experience much more positively. Use the experiences of speakers to illustrate how clients respond to reflective listening.

Before making the transition onward to focusing and evoking, you may find it useful to give trainees an opportunity for a more extensive practice with empathic listening, which intermixes reflections with other helpful responses in OARS. If training time is short, this exercise may be a lower priority.

## Nondirectional Practice with OARS

**Abstract:** Trainees practice using OARS skills together in a “nondirectional” context, not trying to steer toward any particular goal except for understanding.

**Overview:** A good format for this exercise is triads, with one speaker, one interviewer, and an observer. Participants can rotate roles.

**Guidelines:** Choose a topic for speakers where the interviewer’s appropriate role is interested listening and neutrality. If “something you feel two ways about,” the interviewer seeks to understand both sides, asking about (O), affirming (A), reflecting (R), and summarizing in a balanced way. Speakers could also be given a choice among broad topics such as:

- What it was like growing up in my home
- Ways in which I have changed as a person over the years
- The good things and not so good things about my high school years
- What I hope and plan to do over the next ten years.
- Describe one of your parents, or someone else close to you.
- How I came to do the kind of work I am doing.

The interviewer’s role is to respond to the speaker with *only* OARS.

The observer’s task is to count occurrences of O, A, R, and S responses and to record particularly good examples of each.

Allow 5-7 minutes of conversation per speaker. Then instruct the interviewers to offer a short *summary* of what they have heard, and the observers to share the total OARS counts and a few good examples. Allow about 3 minutes for this. Then rotate roles if desired.

**Notes:** It is usually helpful to focus on developing reflective listening skills first, as the most challenging of the four OARS skills, before putting them together in this exercise. Obviously, there should be some discussion of open questions, affirmation, and summaries before undertaking this exercise.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

## Choosing Elements: Selectively Reflecting

David B. Rosengren, Ph.D.

Time:

15 – 20 minutes

Goals:

- Increase awareness of directive use of reflective listening
- Distinguish between roles of small reflections and more complex reflections in directing conversation
- Discuss use of reflectively listening and change talk (DARN-C)
- Continues to build listening skills in a graduated manner

Discussion Points:

- Differentiate between nondirective and directive listening
- Discuss the use of reflections to move towards or away from an area
- Highlight the use of MI to reinforce change talk

Exercise Structure:

- Triads: One person serves as the speaker and other two as listeners. Rotate roles.

Exercise - Triads:

- Ask participants to write down three common client statements they hear in their practice.  
**I want each of you to generate at least three things you've heard clients say about change in your practice setting. Don't select statements that are highly resistant in nature, but they could involve some resistance. Write those three things down. Do that now.**
- Allow time for writing, then say:  
**You're going to take turns on each of these parts so listen carefully. Choose someone to begin. Say your first statement, then listener one generates a listening response. Then listener two you generate another listening response, one that focuses on another aspect of the statement or takes a different guess at the speaker's meaning. Then listener one, try to generate a third response focusing on another element. Do that for all three of the speaker's statements. Then switch to the next person and go through his or her three statements. Make sure you alternate who goes first, since that person gets the easier job. Understand?**
- Debrief

## Reflective Responses to Sentence Stems – Three Levels

Douglass Fisher, M.A. & David Rosengren, Ph.D.

Read the sentence stem and write down a simple (Level 1), reframe (Level 2) and affective (Level 3) reflective listening response to each item.

*It's been fun, but something has got to give. I just can't go on like this anymore.*

Level 1:

Level 2:

Level 3:

*It's been over a year since I've had an HIV test.*

Level 1:

Level 2:

Level 3:

You know if she would just back off, then the situation would be a whole lot less tense and then these things wouldn't happen.

Level 1:

Level 2:

Level 3:

I've been depressed lately. I keep trying things to help me feel better but nothing seems to work.

Level 1:

Level 2:

Level 3:



## Levels of Reflection – Three in a Row

David Rosengren, Ph.D.

Time:

20 – 30 minutes

Goals:

- To help participants develop skill in generating different levels of response
- Use multiple contacts to hear multiple styles

Structure:

- Two groups of four facing each other. Rotate after one sequence of three.

Exercise:

- Ask participants to break into pairs or groups, if needed.  
**I want you to break into groups of 8 or 10. Then line up so that you are in two straight rows of equal numbers. Do that now.**
- Distribute one stem to each member of Group A. Then say:  
**Here is what I want you to do. You will read your stem. The person in front of you will do a simple reflection. You read your stem again. The person will do a paraphrase reflection. You read your stem a third time. The person will do a depth reflection. Do a quick debrief. Then I will ask the people reading the stems to move one person to the left. If you are at the end, go down to the beginning. You will have two to three minutes to read the sentence three times and then do your debrief, before I ask you to move.**

**Group A – in addition to reading the stems, I want you to pay attention to the different types of responses you hear. Be prepared to offer what reflections seem to work best and why.**

**Group B – you will hear the same prompt three times. I want you to practice varying your depth of reflection. Start with a simple. Then do a paraphrase. End with a depth.**

**Everyone understand?**

- After 2-3 minutes:  
**Okay. Everyone in Group A shift to your left one person. Everyone in place. Begin again.**
- Read the energy in the room. After three rotations. Stop the groups.  
**Okay. Now before you shift. Person A hand your sheet over to Person B. Now person B it is your turn to read the stems. You'll have two to three minutes to read the stems, get your responses and do a quick debrief. Person A you will now give a simple, a paraphrase and a depth reflection. Person A is still going to be the person who moves, which I want you to do right now. People A move over one person. People B begin.**

## Three in a Row – Sentence Stems

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**Stem 1:** I am just so sick and tired of people always telling me what to do. I mean really – where do people get off thinking they have the right to say that?

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**Stem 2:** It's like this – I've tried everything and nothing seems to be working. So I don't know what to do.

---

**Stem 3:** I don't know why I keep doing this. I mean I'm not an idiot – I know it can kill me. I just don't have any will power I guess.

---

**Stem 4:** My kids really are important to me and I don't want to do anything that might hurt them.

---

**Stem 5:** So, given the big picture, this thing we are talking about really feels like small potato

## In The Moment

**Purpose:** To support learners in developing and refining reflection listening skillfulness

**Overview:** “In the moment” is a flexible activity that provides a number of different ways for learners of all skill levels to practice reflection listening, and to receive feedback. The first step is to develop a document with several identified target behaviors and corresponding client dialogue moving through five pages. The sixth page is for “collecting summaries” and “key transitional questions” (see attached sample document). An important prop is a bell for signaling transitions.

**Guidelines and Example:** The basic version of “In the Moment” begins with a simple overview of reflection listening, followed by an introduction to the activity: *“In just a moment you’re going to have a chance to practice the skill of reflection listening with an activity called ‘In the Moment.’ The activity works like this: you’re going to spend the next several minutes working with Client A at the top of the page. The target behavior this client has agreed to speak with you about is alcohol. This is what Client A says, ‘I’m not sure I’m concerned about it, but I do wonder sometimes if I’m drinking too much.’ Your task in the next 30 seconds is to write down a reflective listening statement. What are you hearing the client say?”*

After 30 seconds ring the bell and invite several learners to share their reflections: *“Please stop your writing. The next step: I’m curious to hear several of your reflections. What did you come up with?”*

After individual learner’s share their reflection, trainer is in a position to make a comment and/or offer individual feedback. Prior to offering feedback the first time, ask learner if s/he is open to your feedback. Then continue the process: *“Please turn the page and go to A.2. Let’s continue working with Client A. This is what s/he says next... You have 30 seconds to craft a reflection.”*

Ring the bell. Invite reflective listening responses from new voices. Before doing so, ask entire groups’ permission to offer individual feedback: *“Before we hear reflective listening responses from several new voices, I have an important question: From this point on—if you share a reflection—are you open to me offering you individual feedback to support fine-tuning of your reflection? ... So, would love to hear several of your reflections. One last thing, if you’ve already shared a reflection, please hold silence and allow space for new voices. What did you come up with?”*

Ring bell. The stop-start process continues to the end of Client A statements. On final page, invite learners to write down a collecting summary, followed by a key transitional question: *“Please turn the page, A.6. In this last box your task is to craft a summary that pulls together the most important things you heard the client give voice to. No essays. You have thirty seconds. Go.”*

At completion of round 1 (Client A), proceed to round 2 (Client B). Round 2 proceeds similarly to round 1, except there’s no starting and stopping. Read B.1 client statement, learners have 30 seconds to respond, ring bell, invite the turning of page to B.2, read next client statement, continue in this fashion to the end.

One option after round 2 is to divide the room into small groups, assigning each group one of the Client B statements. Each group instructed to share their reflections with one another and then decide which of their reflections is the one, for example, they think will create the most forward movement in the conversation. Coming back to the large group, a representative from the B1 group shares their reflection, followed by the B2 group and so on.

**Tips:** Between bell rings provides the trainer multiple opportunities to layer-in reflection listening information, guidelines, and instructions. For example: *“If you’re struggling with this activity, no worries. You’re not the only one. Reflective listening is a radically different way of thinking and responding for many people. It’s one of those skills that requires on-going practice.”* Or *“Before I read the next client statement, can I offer a recommendation? Don’t think about it! If you get caught up in your head trying to come up with the right reflection, it often misses the mark. So, get out of your head and allow the reflection to find you rather than you trying to find it.”*

The general structure of “In the Moment” allows for multiple variations. For example, one round exclusively focused on simple reflections, another focused on complex reflections, and another focused on selectively reflecting change talk.

**Contributed by:** Steven Malcolm Berg-Smith

# In the moment...

**A. 1 Target Behavior: Drinking**

"I'm not sure I'm concerned about it, but I do wonder sometimes if I'm drinking too much."

**B. 1 Target Behavior: Weight Management**

"I've tried losing weight more times than I can remember."

**C. 1 Target Behavior: Parenting**

"I don't want my daughter to have the same kind of life I've had."

**D. 1 Target Behavior: Work**

"I'm in too much pain to even think about working."

A. 2

“It’s not like it’s really serious, but sometimes when I wake up in the morning I feel really awful, and I can’t think straight most of the morning.”

B. 2

“When I’m trying to lose weight I get terribly crabby.”

C. 2

“I’m a wreck as a mother.”

D. 2

“Without my disability check, I’d be living on the streets.”

A. 3

“Yeah—even when I’m not drinking, sometimes I mix things up, and I wonder about that.”

B. 3

“Thinking about losing weight is easy. Doing it is another story.”

C. 3

“I have no money. I’m on probation. We live in a cheap motel. I don’t know what to do.”

D. 3

“There’s a big part of me that would like to be working and contributing again, but it’s just not possible right now.”

A. 4

"I wonder, maybe, if alcohol's pickling my brain, or something."

B. 4

"I should do it for my kids."

C. 4

"I try taking care of my daughter better than I take care of myself."

D. 4

"You probably think I'm lazy and unmotivated, but that's the farthest thing from the truth"

• 5



"But I don't think I'm an alcoholic or anything."

- 5

"I'm thinking about trying out the Atkins diet. I have nothing to lose."

- 5

"I need to find a real job. Maybe go back to school."

- 5

"I'm not going to be on disability forever. With time, things are going to change."

A. 6 **Target Behavior: Drinking**

Transitional Summary

Key Transition Question:

B. 6 **Target Behavior: Weight Management**

Transitional Summary

Key Transition Question:

C. 6 **Target Behavior: Parenting**

Transitional Summary

Key Transition Question:

Key Transition Question:

### Building Affirmations

**Abstract:** Sometimes people have trouble offering affirmations, especially to their more “difficult” clients. This is an interesting way to shift perspective and practice.

**Overview:** You can do this exercise in a group or in smaller groups and debrief in a larger group. It is faster to do it in a big group, of course. In one group, it takes about 20 minutes to do both parts and debrief. You need a flipchart (and handout sheets if you are doing it in smaller groups) and pens.

**Guidelines:**

Part 1: Ask the participants to think of a specific client (not an amalgam of clients) that they particularly like. Then, ask for a couple or three volunteers to name one characteristic of that person. Put it on the flip chart. Once you have three or so, ask what the strengths underlying that characteristic are. Sometimes the characteristic *is* the strength, sometimes it isn't. Then, from that strength (and perhaps a little creativity in adding some context), make an affirmation that passes the authenticity test for the participant, i.e., one that s/he could say without gagging.

Part 2: repeat the exercise, but with the participants choosing one of their most difficult clients. Again, ask what the strengths underlying the behavior might be (this is a chance to talk about Competent World View\*). Ask them to form affirmations based on the strengths.

**Example(s):**

Part 1

Characteristic: cheerful, sense of humor

Strength: optimistic, doesn't take self too seriously

Affirmation : “You're a person who, even though you've encountered difficulties, you remain sunny.”

“Even though things aren't always easy, you manage to keep a sense of perspective.”

Part 2

Characteristic: dissatisfied, demanding

Strength: discriminating, resourceful

Affirmation: “You don't just accept what folks offer you, you really think about what you want and try to get it” or “You are very good at mobilizing the resources that you need.”

**Notes:** In the debrief of the second part, I ask which client they would rather work with, the one with the characteristic that gets on their nerves, or the one with the underlying strength. I ask them to think and talk

about what having that different perspective about the client might bring to the intervention(s), and how it might change how the client sees him/herself if the worker sees him/her differently (and more positively). I also offer the suggestion that the worker uses this exercise before s/he sees the client who is difficult as a preparation for welcoming him/her with compassion and empathy.

\*I describe Competent World View as having a belief (which can be shared with the client, of course) that the client has all the skills necessary to improve his/her life or can ask for help AND the idea that all behaviours are based on a value that is a universal good (ex., smoking weed to hang out with friends—the CWV is that having a community is universally accepted as a good thing, improving quality of life, health and length of life).

**Contributed by: Rachel Green**

### **Affirmation Exercise**

**Abstract:** Affirmations are closely tied to values. What feels affirming to one person may feel false or irrelevant to another. This exercise is a way to consider what a genuine affirmation feels like to each participant.

**Overview:** Affirmations are the A in OARS skills and are sometimes overlooked by trainees. Yet an accurate affirmation can support self-efficacy and enhance therapeutic rapport.

**Guidelines:** The trainer asks the trainees to remember a time when they received a deeply meaningful compliment from someone they trusted and respected. This can be done as a private exercise, or as solitary writing, or in dyads. Thus, trainees can simply remember the compliment, or they can write it down, or they can tell it to their partner in the dyad.

**Example:**

When Nancy’s husband died and she was, herself, hospitalized, I organized a phone tree of people to stay in touch with her. The compliment I received from my friend Mary about it was this: “I appreciate how you reach out to help others when they really need it. As a recipient of your care when I was hospitalized, I might be especially sensitive to your ability to see what’s needed and provide good help. I imagine Nancy is very grateful you’ve organized support now for her.”

**Notes:** The trainer may want to debrief the exercise by asking “What made that affirmation personally meaningful for you?” Sometimes debriefing is not needed, as the participants understand the point.

**Contributed by: Carolina Yahne**

## Mining for Affirmations

**Abstract:** Trainees identify client strengths, develop open questions to elicit this information and practice creating affirmations based on these strengths

**Overview:** This is done as a large group elicitation activity and then the group is broken down into smaller groups, before returning to the large group.

**Guidelines:** Leader asks the group to identify strengths that their clients bring to their practice. Record these on the board. Try to elicit at least 20. Make sure these are stated positively. Write these so these can be divided into four groups.

Once you've elicited 20 strengths, divide the audience into four groups. Assign a set of 5 strengths and ask them to identify an open question to elicit this strength and an affirmation you might offer in response to this strength. Have them write these down.

After one group finishes, wrap the exercise up. Then elicit examples of each from the group.

**Example:** All of our clients experience difficulties in their life; if they did not, they wouldn't be here seeing us. They also have considerable strengths as well. What sorts of strengths do your client's bring to the process?

What do they do to survive or thrive in difficult situations?

**Notes:** Some areas will be difficult to develop questions for. Acknowledge this is the case and ask the rest of the group for ideas.

**Contributed by:** David Rosengren

## Summarizing exercise

*“This exercise is done in pairs. Before describing it, I would like to say that it’s important that everybody starts at the same time, so please wait until I say “go”.”*

### Part 1

Get together 2 and 2: One person tells and one listens.

1. The person who tells talks for 90 seconds about a habit, behaviour, dilemma or situation that he/she is thinking about changing.
2. The listener’s task is to be an interested listener without saying anything or asking questions, and then give a summary of what you’ve been told. Do not try to solve the teller’s problem or give advice. Your task is to try to listen and remember as well as you can, and give an as exact summary as possible. When summarizing try to avoid changing or adding things to what you’ve been told.
3. Change roles and repeat.

How was it to be the listener, the summarizer? How was to receive a summary?

### Part 2

Change partners: Once again one person tells, and the other listens.

1. The person who tells repeats his/her story talks for 90 seconds without being interrupted.
2. The listener’s task is to be an interested listener without saying anything or asking questions, and then give a summary of what you’ve been told. Do not try to solve the teller’s problem or give advice. However, your summary may now include what you think is the underlying meaning, feeling or dilemma in the story you’ve heard.
3. Change roles and repeat.

- What are the differences between the two types of summaries?
- How was it for the person who received the summary?
- How was it for the person who gave the summary?
- Which summary was most difficult? Why?
- What is the effect of telling a story several times?
  - Becomes more of a script
  - Becomes more coherent
  - Becomes detailed and with more nuances
  - Becomes more “real”

The important point is to be able to do both types of summaries, when appropriate.

The exercise can be done as a demonstration if there are two trainers.

## **Group Practice: Using OARS to gain greater understanding of clients**

Dyads (option: plus observer or coach)

Client should focus on *“something I feel two ways about”*

Counselor should focus on gaining a better UNDERSTANDING of the client

At any time, counselor may pause the conversation and consult with observer

Counselors may also “rewind” back to an earlier point, and try again or try another “angle”

*Optional: Third member who keeps track of OARS on tracking sheet*

### **Open Questions and Reflections:**

Clarifying ambivalence

Clarifying feelings

Clarifying values

Clarifying reactions to others

Guessing at “what comes next”

Giving voice to what the client is not saying

### **Affirming:**

That you can see person’s point of view

The struggles or difficulties involved

The successes the client has had

The skills/strengths you perceive

WHEN ONE MINUTE WARNING IS CALLED, EACH COUNSELOR SHOULD OFFER A SUMMARY

### **Summary:**

Persons mixed feelings, thoughts, values

Person’s relationship to the issues, feelings about resolving

ROTATE MEMBERS AND REPEAT THE EXERCISE

FOLLOW WITH LARGE GROUP PROCESSING FOCUSING ON EXPERIENCES IN EACH ROLE

***OARS Tracking Sheet***

	<b>Counselor 1</b>	<b>Counselor 2</b>
<b>OPEN QUESTION</b>		
<b>AFFIRMATION</b>		
<b>REFLECTION</b>		
<b>SUMMARY</b>		
<b>OTHER</b>	Filler - Closed Question - Opinion/Advice - Provide info/teach - Other -	Filler - Closed Question - Opinion/Advice - Provide info/teach - Other -



## The Health and Safety Quiz

**Abstract:** The Health and Safety Quiz Exercise helps trainees identify their own ambivalence in adopting health and safety behaviors and builds empathy and acceptance for people's ambivalence around making change.

**Overview:** Using a quiz, brainstorming, and discussion the Health and Safety Quiz Exercise helps trainees identify that they sometimes choose not to take actions that would be beneficial to them. The brainstorming about why not generates a list of good reasons we all have not made changes and how someone lecturing us on benefits or risks in the past has not led to new behavior.

**Guidelines:** Ask everyone to take a quiz before we start working on learning more about MI. Tell them it is 10 yes-no questions and to keep track how many yes answers they have. Tell them they won't have to share any specific answer if they aren't comfortable.

Then ask (aloud or have a Powerpoint slide/handout with the questions):

### Health and Safety Quiz

1. Do you have a smoke detector in your home and change the batteries at least once a year?
2. Do you buckle up every time you are in a car, even in the back seat?
3. Do you exercise at least 30 minutes 3 times a week?
4. Do you wear a bicycle helmet every time you ride a bike? (I clarify that if they don't ride a bike they can count this as a yes—they only need to wear a helmet if they ride the bike)
5. Do you wear a personal flotation device every time you get in a boat? (I tend to talk about canoes, kayaks, jet-skis, etc and remind them that if they don't do any of those water things it would count as a yes)
6. Do you make sure every child who rides in your car up to 8 years old and 80 lbs is in an appropriate car seat or booster every time you drive?
7. Do you have a fire extinguisher in your kitchen?
8. Do you floss daily?
9. Have you practiced a fire safety plan at home and picked a meeting spot outside your home in case of fire?
10. Do you abstain from using your cell phone while driving?

(If you are talking to people in a particular field, you might want to substitute out one of the questions for something more relevant to them. For example, if you are talking to nutritionists, you might want to add a question about fruit/vegetable or whole grain consumption. If you are talking to female medical staff, you could ask about self breast exam).

Then ask anyone who had 10 yes answers to raise their hand. Typically few or no people do. Then ask anyone who heard a health or safety tip they had not known before to raise their hand. Typically few or no people do. If you don't do all 10 of the behaviors, sharing that can both build alliance and add levity to the training. Then ask people to share "why information about benefits and risks isn't enough to get us to change our behavior?" and "what else keeps you from changing these behaviors?" I often point out that we are a group of professionals trying to help others, yet we don't do things we feel we should. Write up these reasons and reflect back on them throughout the training.

Typical answers include: It isn't a priority, other people aren't supportive, we've tried before and not had success, that's not the way I grew up, I don't think the worst thing will happen to me, I'm too busy, I'd feel uncomfortable are some common ones. Ask them to relate this to the people they want to see make change.

Then talk about who has tried to convince us to change these things in the past and how that felt. Encourage people to remember if it was effective or ineffective or how it made them feel about the person they heard the message from.

**Notes:** It can be effective to follow this with Thomas Gordon's Persuading Exercise in dyads where someone tries to persuade a partner to change a health and safety issue from the quiz they feel two ways about for 3 minutes. Each person gets a turn to be the persuader. After, debrief that experience as a group (Who moved toward change? How did you feel? Would you want to have another conversation with this person on this topic?). Have the same pairs talk about the same health and safety issues as before using Bill Miller's Taste of MI for 3 minutes. Each person gets a turn. After Taste of MI, ask people to debrief as a group (Who moved toward change? How did you feel? Would you want to have another conversation with this person on this topic?). Then ask people to compare persuading—pointing out benefits and risks to the Taste of MI. Since they were in the same pairs and had the same amount of time and talked about the same topic, it gives people a chance to think about how the spirit of MI not only more often helps move people toward change, it creates more positive feelings and builds a relationship to explore more together in the future. Another possibility, have people work in triads and have an observer role. The observer watches to make sure the person is not straying from persuading/the Taste of MI and can give additional thoughts when debriefing about what they saw happening.

**Contributed by:** Rachel Galanter

# Teaching the Focusing Process

## Common Content in Teaching Focusing

- Focusing is a *negotiation* process of coming to shared collaborative goals. Focus often evolves and changes over the course of consultation. Whereas in the Engaging process the metaphoric question is “Can we walk together?”, in Focusing the question is “Where are we going?”
- A particular goal may be initiated by *the client* - the most usual source. Sometimes it is implicit in the setting (e.g., a smoking cessation clinic), and sometimes it is the *interviewer* who perceives a particular need.
- Often the focus is clear at the outset: the client presents with particular change goals, and you concur. Sometimes there are a variety of possible goals from which to choose and prioritize, and agenda mapping is appropriate. Sometimes the focus is unclear, and a formulation process is needed to arrive at shared goals.
- The outcome of focusing might be a single goal, a set of goals to be prioritized, a first step or approximation, or a set of changes toward a longer-term goal.

### 3-Month Priorities (Focusing)

**Abstract:** This exercise illustrates the focusing process using nondirective OARS skills.

**Overview:** Pairs of trainees work together with one as speaker and one as interviewer. They can then switch roles.

**Guidelines:** Instruct the interviewer to use OARS skills to help the speaker develop a list of priorities for the next 3 months in her or his life. Focus on clarifying *goals*, not evoking or planning. Discussion can also focus on the relative importance of these goals. Stop when you have a list of goals, perhaps in order of priority. Debriefing can focus on what speakers found particularly helpful in clarifying priorities, and what interviewer skills were used in focusing.

**Variations:** Add an observer to form a triad. The observer counts OARS responses using a simple coding sheet with rows for Open Questions, Affirmations, Responses and Summaries. The observer can also record particularly good examples of each.

**Notes:** You can demonstrate this exercise first. It usually proceeds fairly well without additional coaching or guidance, but circulate to make sure that trainees understand the exercise and are proceeding on task.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

## Focusing and Evoking Using Values

**Abstract:** Trainees will have the opportunity to practice engaging, establishing focus and evoking skills with the use of values as the deciding factor for establishing focus.

**Overview:** This exercise is designed to allow for full practice of MI skills toward the end of a full basic training, usually 2-3 days or the equivalent if done in multiple sessions of several hours. In addition, the use of values as a method of focusing is added to allow for specific practice in incorporating values into MI work. Participants are asked to do **Real**

**Play.** This exercise is based on the Focusing exercise first introduced by Bill Miller at the pre-forum workshop in Sheffield 2011.

**Guidelines:** I have used this in very small workshops as I generally do small workshops, limited to 15. It is best to have an even number but if not, then develop a plan to allow for everyone to practice. This is a about a 45 minute practice session for each practice time and there are suggested timing guidelines. Also, I often decide how to pair trainees for practice based on my observations to this point in the workshop which is now in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> day. Guide them through this step by step; it is too confusing to assign the whole exercise at once in my experience.

Instructions:

**Step one:** decide on pairings for the interview if desired and set this up. Discuss that you want the speaker to discuss a change that has a desired change goal/direction such as exercise, eating, etc., not one of a non directional nature such as whether to get married, change jobs, have a child, etc.....this will have been covered in the workshop already re: use of MI but always needs to be emphasized again.

**Step two:** Interviewer begins this way: Tell me about 2-3 areas in our life where you want to make some changes but have not yet done it. Emphasize skills to use here are engagement skills, focusing mostly on reflections, no moving toward evoking or problem solving. Give them 10 minutes for this.

**Step three:** Interviewer affirms the speaker in some way and then provides a summary. Interviewer now asks speaker to talk about how these identified areas connect to important values/things that matter in life...family, health, etc. This is still engagement. Allow about 5 minutes for this.

**Step four:** Interviewer now asks: if you had to select just one of these areas for us to focus on now based on values, which one would you select and why? Interviewer continues interview using evoking skills to guide the conversation, not being overly concerned about getting to a change plan/not forcing it. Stop the interview in 15 minutes.

**Step five:** Interviewer affirms the speaker, does a summary and asks, 'what do you think you will do next?' Allow 5 more minutes.

**Step six:** Before switching roles, have the speaker tell the listener at 2-3 things he/she appreciated and one thing he/she would have wanted different/more of. Allow about 5 minutes.

**Step seven:** Switch roles

**Debrief:** Begin eliciting when in the role of the speaker the experience of being guided in this way. Then elicit what learned when in the role of interviewer. This discussion is usually very lively so the trainer mostly guides, ties to MI and summarizes

**Notes:** This exercise takes lots of guidance; I have found that providing time limits makes it more meaningful along with giving step-by-step instructions. I circulate among the pairs but do no interference/ am just there to help if asked. This is the first chance for full practice and trainees generally appreciate the chance to try without too much pressure from me!

**Contributed by:** Cathy Cole

## Agenda Mapping

**Abstract:** Agenda mapping is a structured process for prioritizing among possible goals.

**Overview:** Trainees practice using (and possibly constructing) a bubble sheet.

**Guidelines:** Provide trainees with a prepared bubble sheet offering a variety of possible change goals or topics of conversation. This is more appropriate when trainees share a common context of practice (such as diabetes education). Alternatively, have trainees develop a bubble sheet of their own to use in practice. Leave at least one blank or ? bubble for clients to propose their own content.

In dyads, an interviewer presents a menu of options from which the client is invited to choose. Present or develop possible wording to use in agenda mapping. Primary care example: “We have a few more minutes today and I wonder if there is one of these health topics that you might like to discuss, or there is an empty bubble here because there might be something else that you would prefer to discuss. How might we spend this time today?”

After arriving at a topic, the interviewer could proceed with OARS, evoking, or planning as appropriate.

**Notes:** On the next page is a sample bubble sheet that could be used with diabetes patients.

**Contributed by:** Steve Rollnick and Bill Miller

# A Sample Bubble Sheet

## Agenda Mapping

### Diabetes Health Topics



## **EPE in your place**

**Abstract:** Participants try to provide information using EPE in “semi-real play” of their own setting.

**Overview:** The idea of EPE is easy to understand but it’s magnitude of effect is not always fully understood. Trainees experience both roles of a client and a practitioner in order to improve skills and increase their motivation to use it.

**Guidelines: Guidelines:** Have people work in pairs: One speaker, one listener.

1. Speaker: Identify one particular situation in your setting in which you need to provide your client with certain information. Tell the listener about it and ask him/her to play the role of the client in this situation.
2. Speaker: Provide information using EPE.
3. Listener: Respond naturally.
4. Switch roles.

**Examples:**

1. If you are a nurse of ER, you might think of the situation that a mother takes her daughter to ER because of her daughter’s asthma attack and she needs to be hospitalized. Then tell the listener this situation described above and ask him/her to play the role of the girl’s mother.

2. Use EPE;

Speaker: [E] “Shall I talk for a while about your daughter? Sorry to say, but she needs to be hospitalized right now. I am going to tell you what you need to know about this. But first, tell me what you want to know the most at this moment.

Listener: Respond naturally using imagination.

Speaker: [P] Provide information accordingly.

[E] Check the listener’s understanding and interpretation.

“So what does it mean to you?”, “Does it make sense?”

\*You can also use such situation that the listener is a new employee in your work place and you are the speaker who tells him/her what he/her needs to know.

**Note:**

If you still have something important which needs to be conveyed after the first EPE dialogue, you can convey it using EPE again.

**Contributed by:** Takeshi Isomura and Masato Kano.



## Conversation Exercise

**Abstract:** This exercise is for trainees who have had basic MI training. It can be used in pairs or a small group and may be appropriate for a classroom setting for a course on MI.

**Overview:** Goal is to provide a way of identifying MI concepts.

**Guidelines:**

Assign the exercise; debrief in the group if in a workshop setting by first eliciting reactions to the assignment re: challenges and then review the responses.

**Instructions:** You will work with others on this; it may help to have one person reading the client part and one reading the counselor part to make the conversation more alive. Discuss your observations together and decide on what observations you want to report in the large group.

Read the conversation in Column A and in Column B write your observations focusing on:

- Type of client speech: sustain or change talk or a mix of both
- Method (s) used by the counselor from OARS and any specific type of method from the skills list: there may be more than one, ie reflection, open question, affirmation
- What process is represented: Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, Planning

Identify the type of summary when instructed: gathering, linking and transitional and key question: comment on how change talk is acknowledged and invited.

**Notes:** It is important to set a time limit for completion if done in a workshop setting; 30 minutes is a reasonable time. The debriefing needs to be kept lively as it is easy for this exercise to be stagnant. This exercise is also valuable to assign if you are doing a workshop where you want to do observation of practice while others are occupied.

**Contributed by:** Cathy Cole

**Key:** CL is client; CO is counselor: hopefully you can tell them apart! We will assume the introductions have been made and the conversation is starting.

Conversation	Observation
CO: What are your main concerns today?	
CL: My doctor said I needed to focus on my stress, that the way I do or do not handle it is causing me health problems.	
CO: It was more of your doctor's idea for you to be here than yours.	
CL: Well, I would not be here otherwise, but I don't think it is a bad idea.	
CO: You have some concerns yourself.	
CL: I'm 55 years old, work at a high stress job where I see others my age or younger getting laid off. I work lots of hours to make sure they see me as productive. This keeps me pretty tense and I guess my doctor thinks my high blood pressure stays up because of this and how I do or do not handle the stress.	
CO: You mentioned that earlier. Tell me what goes on with you and stress.	
CL: I guess I am like a lot of people, maybe men. I don't take time for lunch, just eat something fast, like a slice of pizza; I drink coffee or some kind of caffeine all day. Once I leave work and get home, I have a few drinks at night and just sit on the sofa and watch tv until bedtime and then I don't sleep well. Then I get up and do it all again. I often work on at least one day on the weekend and the other day, I just sit around, drink some beer and watch sports on tv.	
CO: A very tiring vicious cycle of your life where you are never quite off duty, relaxed. You do things during the day to keep going and then just collapse at home. And your doctor has concerns about your blood pressure as well.	Type of summary:
CL: You got it right! At this rate I may not even make it to retirement! I might have a heart attack or stroke before they can even lay me off!	
CO: This is serious. What concerns you the most?	
CL: Well, my own father died when he was 59 from a heart attack; he had high blood pressure, never took any time to relax, worked himself into the grave.	
CO: You can see yourself on the same path.	

<p>CL: Right! I don't want that to happen to me but I don't have a clue what to do. Like you said, I am in a cycle here and just keep doing the same thing. I'm gaining weight, feel tired all the time.</p>	
<p>CO: It's not just what is going on with you; it is also what you saw happen to your father that is getting your attention. You want to avoid the same outcome but are not sure where to start.</p>	<p>Type of summary:</p>
<p>CL: When Dr. Jones said it is time to get serious, to come talk to you, I guess I was a little relieved, that he was saying I didn't have to just let this happen.</p>	
<p>CO: You recognize it is time to do something. You are taking responsibility.</p> <p>Let me see if I understand thus far, you want to be healthier but the way you handle the stress from your job is not helping. You mentioned not eating well, sitting around, getting no exercise and drinking.</p> <p>Where do you think we should start?</p>	<p>What is the process thus far? MI Method:</p> <p>Type of summary:</p> <p>What process is next with this question?</p> <p>Why does the counselor ask the client rather than decide?</p> <p>What way of responding could have created discord?</p>
<p>CL: My doctor thinks I should make a change in how much I drink, kind of a shock.</p>	
<p>CO: You were surprised. What is your understanding about why he is focusing on alcohol?</p>	
<p>CL: This is what he told me: alcohol can raise blood pressure, disrupt sleep, and cause weight gain. He said if I did better with how much I drink, that might help. Now he didn't say I am an alcoholic and I don't think I am!</p>	
<p>CO: You don't want to be labeled and at the same time, you are paying attention to what your doctor said.</p>	<p>What specific kind of reflection is this?</p> <p>How could discord have been created?</p>
<p>CL: I like drinking but I don't want to make it worse for myself.</p>	
<p>CO: You feel two ways about this, not wanting to give up a pleasure and also not wanting to risk your health.</p>	<p>What process is starting now?</p>
<p>CL: Drinking helps me relax, unwind so if I don't do that as much, what will I do?</p>	

CO: You don't want to be left with no way to unwind. If you were considering changing how you use alcohol and looking at some others ways to relax, what are some ideas you have?	
CL: In the past I exercised and that helped in lots of ways: weight, stress, sleep. I just stopped when this job became so stressful. I got so worried about being laid off at my age that I just let myself go.	
CO: Not losing your job is an important priority and you are a serious worker. You have used exercise in the past; tell me what you did and how that worked for you.	
CL: After work, I had several things I could do: play tennis, take a vigorous walk, ride my bike, do yoga.	
CO: Quite a variety! If you were considering anything now, what might you want to do?	
CL: I guess getting back to all of those but it seems very hard to think about.	
CO: What gets in the way, outside on the worry about the job security?	
CL: I think just starting back; it has become so easy to go home, open a beer, make a drink and turn on the television.	
CO: Easy to slide into habits that are not so good and at the same time you are recognizing this now. Let me see if I have it right, the conversation with your doctor got your attention, you are concerned about your health/how the way you handle stress is not helping you, that you don't want to end up like your father and have to look at the habit you have developed with drinking and just being a couch potato. I want to hear from you where you are in being ready to plan on some changes.	<p>Methods in first sentence</p> <p>Type of summary</p> <p>Moving into what process?</p> <p>How could discord have been created?</p>

# The Language of Change

## Common Content in Recognizing Change Talk and Sustain Talk

- Change talk is any client speech that favors movement toward change
  - Sustain talk is any client speech that favors the status quo, not changing
  - Change or sustain talk is necessarily defined in relation to a particular change goal or focus.
  - Recognizing, evoking, and responding to change talk are distinctive skills within MI.
  - Types of *Preparatory* change talk: Desire, Ability, Reasons, Need (DARN)
  - Types of *Mobilizing* change talk: Commitment, Activation, Taking steps (CATs)
  - There can be other examples of change that do not fit these specific categories
  - Sustain talk is a normal part of ambivalence; it need not be thought of as “resistance”
  - The same types of speech (DARN CATs) occur in sustain talk.
  - Change talk and sustain talk vary in strength
  - The interviewer can influence the amount of change talk and sustain talk
  - The *ratio* of change talk to sustain talk predicts whether change will occur
  - The ratio of change talk to sustain talk normally increases over the course of an MI session
-

## Drumming for Change Talk

**Abstract:** The trainer reads a list of client statements, and participants try to identify which are change talk.

**Overview:** Prepare a list of client statements, intermixing change talk, sustain talk, and other kinds of statements. Identify a clear target behavior or change goal, because change talk cannot be defined except in relation to a goal. Ideally the “right” answers in this exercise would be clearly correct – ones on which experienced coders would agree that it is change talk.

**Guidelines:** Clearly describe what constitutes change talk and what does not. Draw on the coding manuals for MISC or MITI for clarity. Tell participants that you are going to read a list of client statements in relation to a behavior change goal of \_\_\_\_\_.

1. They should *drum* on the desk (lap) when they hear one that they believe is *preparatory* change talk.
2. They should *applaud* when they hear one that they believe is *mobilizing* change talk. This sounds challenging, but most trainees have an intuitive sense for it once the difference is explained. People attend to this language in everyday life.

Encourage everyone to guess on every item, with no penalty for “missing.” Give the “right” answer after each group guess, and as needed, explain why. There are good reasons why people miss, and these can be instructive to discuss along the way in order to clarify what change talk is. For example, describing *past* behavior (I *used* to exercise) is not change talk. Often therapists imagine change talk that *might* underlie a statement even though it was not expressed, and that could be one good question or reflection away from being spoken by the client. Having a “nose” for potential change talk is good!

### Example:

Change Target: Improved Glycemic Control

Component behaviors: Diet, Exercise, Medication, Monitoring, Stress management

1. I think I’m doing about as well as I can at this point.
2. I certainly don’t want to go blind. (Reason)
3. I’ve just always disliked exercise.
4. I really hate pricking my finger!
5. Well, I wouldn’t mind cutting down on stress in my life. (Desire)
6. I probably could exercise more. (Ability)
7. I’m going to take my medication every day. (Commitment)
8. It’s really hard to stay on a strict diet.
9. But I *love* chocolate!
10. I used to exercise regularly.
11. I’ve *got* to get my blood sugar under control! (Need)
12. I *will* get my blood sugar under control. (Commitment)
13. There’s no way I want to take insulin.
14. I don’t want to take insulin shots, but I’m willing to take oral medication. (Activation)
15. I would like to lose some weight. (Desire)

16. I don't think I really have diabetes.
17. I'd be willing to check my blood sugar once or twice a day. (Activation)
18. I don't like watching what I eat. I mean I guess I have to, but I don't like feeling restricted. (Need)
19. I wish I could have less stress in my life. (Desire)
19. I might be able to cut down on sweets. (Ability)
20. I'm not much on eating vegetables. I guess I'll eat more of them, but I don't enjoy them. (Activation)
21. It's pretty scary thinking about losing my feet. (Reason)
22. I'll think about eating more fruit. (Activation)
23. I heard that taking chromium can help with blood sugar levels.
24. I hope to take off about twenty pounds. (Activation)
25. I certainly don't want to wind up on dialysis. (REason)
26. I started keeping track of what I ate this week. (Taking Steps)
27. I bought a glucose monitor and read the manual. (Taking Steps)
28. What kinds of things do I have to eat?
29. There's no way I'm joining a gym.
30. I enjoy walking, but I'm not going to a gym. (Desire)
31. I want to be a better parent.

**Notes:** This can be fun and generate fruitful discussion about what constitutes change talk. There certainly are grey areas where coders do not agree.

**Contributed by:** Steven Berg-Smith and Bill Miller

## Identifying Change Talk

**Abstract:** In some contexts, such as when training remotely, it can be useful to have a short transcript and ask trainees to identify client change talk in it.

**Overview:** Start with a transcript that contains examples of various types of client change talk. You can use a prepared transcript like the one below, or develop your own that is appropriate to your trainees' context.

**Guidelines:** The transcript for trainees should not have change talk already identified. (On the example below, change talk is underlined.) The task is for trainees to recognize change talk and underline or highlight it on the transcript. A further task, as appropriate, is to guess the *type* of change talk, identifying it as Preparatory or Mobilizing, or even in example categories of desire, ability, reasons, need, commitment, activation, and taking steps. Give trainees time to review the transcript and identify change talk, or this can be assigned in advance. Then discuss what trainees identified as change talk. Having sequentially numbered client statements (as below) can help

**Example Transcript:** S=Speaker L=Listener

L: So tell me, Sam, what brings you here today?

S1: Well, I recently got a DWI, and the judge told me I could either get counseling or go to jail for 30 days. I don't really think I need counseling, but I don't want to go to jail either.

L: So, counseling is not something that you would look forward to, but jail is definitely not on your wish list.

S2: Right.

L: It sounds like you are not at all worried about your drinking.

S3: Well, it's not that I have no concerns, but I don't think it's really a problem. I know I could quit if I wanted to.

L: You've had some reservations about your drinking, but you don't see it as "a problem" because you don't *have* to have it.

S4: Exactly, it's not like I'm addicted or something. The DWI was my first. It's not something that happens all the time. I think the bartender may have poured too much that time. I always have a limit when I am out at a restaurant and it works fine.

L: It really matters to you to be careful about limits and stick to them.

S5: Yes, I 'm not one of those people who drinks all day long and has ten DWI's.

L: That's not who you are.

S6: Exactly. I have so many important things in my life that a drinking problem could screw up. I just got promoted at my job, and I enjoy the work I do.

L: Your work means a lot to you, and getting in trouble with drinking could really get in the way with that.

S7: Yeah, that would just be stupid.

L: So, you have been setting some drinking limits for yourself and taking care of your responsibilities. You also mentioned that you do have some concerns about your drinking. What are those?

S8: Honestly, I usually have a drink or two after work to relax, but a part of me wishes that I could find other ways to relax. It's just that my job can be stressful, and I've had to work longer hours lately. I don't have a lot of time, and as they say, liquor is quicker.

L: Alcohol allows you to wind down quickly after a long day, and a part of you also wonders if it might be better to find a different way to relax.

S9: Yes, I used to run, and I felt good about myself after running. One problem with using alcohol to relax is that I don't physically feel so great the next day, not like I did after having had a good run the day before.



L: What was your drinking like back when you were running more?  
S10: I hardly drank at all. That's how I know alcohol isn't a problem for me. I don't need it. I was fine not drinking before.  
L: Right, it is not something central to your life. You were managing before just fine.  
S11: Yes, it's just a problem with time right now and I get home so late that it is dark, and I can't go for a run.  
L: You mentioned not feeling physically as good after drinking. What have you noticed?  
S12: I guess it's harder to get up in the morning and sometimes I have a headache. Nothing all that bad, but I do wish I felt like I used to.  
L: There's a bit of a downside to drinking.  
S13: Yeah, and maybe it would make sense to cut back some, just so I don't feel foggy at work. I mean I am doing great with my job. Nobody is complaining, and I just got a promotion.  
L: That's great! You're managing pretty well, and at the same time you notice the fogginess and wonder if you cut back you would feel better in the mornings. How might you do that, if you decided to?  
S14: Well, every now and then, instead of one or two drinks, I have 3 or 4; only when I'm home, mind you. I never drive after that many. That's when I notice I don't feel quite as good the next day. I think if I could just keep it to no more than two, I would feel much better the next day.  
L: It makes a lot of sense to keep it to one or two drinks to feel better overall. You have also mentioned your stress and trying something different to manage it. What ideas do you have about that?  
S15: Well, I can't always fit in a run, and that's always been my go-to. I really need something physical. Meditation or drinking tea just doesn't work for me.  
L: It's not your cup of team.  
S16: Right. Something that I have been considering is maybe getting a treadmill because I could really use that any time, even at night. You can get treadmills, even used ones, pretty cheap.  
L: It sounds like you've already been looking into a treadmill.  
S17: I have actually been researching it, and have found some pretty good reviews online for one brand in particular.  
L: You look kind of excited about this possibility for managing your stress with exercise.  
S18: Yeah, my lack of exercise has been on my mind. There would be some other benefits to exercising, and I really don't want to rely on drinking to deal with my stress.  
L: When you look at how you see your life going, exercise seems like a better way to manage stress than drinking does.  
S19: Well, I don't need to quit or anything, but I don't want it to be the only thing I use when I'm stressed. Plus, I really miss running, and I think it will be a better way to deal with my stress.  
L: You're thinking seriously about changing your routine.  
S20: I do think I want to try a treadmill and see how that works for me.  
L: In looking at your life right now, you enjoy your work and are proud of your promotion. You think it's better to manage your stress by exercising rather than drinking. Though you don't see alcohol as a major problem, you have noticed that when you go beyond 2 drinks you don't feel so great the next day. You're thinking that fitting in exercise makes better sense, and you want to get a treadmill and try that out at home after work. Did I miss anything so far?  
S21: Yes, I am actually looking forward to trying this out, I didn't realize how much I was missing my exercise routine. I think I will do this.  
L: I look forward to hearing about it!

**Contributed by:** Alicia Shiver and Lindsay Worth

## Red Light Green Light

**Abstract:** Trainees often need help identifying change talk and sustain talk “on the fly” during real plays. This exercise helps trainees “train their ear” to client language by providing scaffolding from the trainer.

**Overview:** An Interviewer and Speaker are needed. Speaker will discuss a needed change that hasn't happened. The interviewer speaks naturally to facilitate the conversation in an MI-consistent manner. The trainer stands *behind the speaker* and hold up a green card when change talk occurs and a red card when sustain talk occurs. This offers the trainee a cue to respond differentially to change talk.

**Guidelines:** Best used when change and sustain talk have already been introduced. Make sure the speaker is properly briefed to be ambivalent so both change and sustain language will occur.

**Example:** Speaker is willing to discuss something that they want or need to change. Make sure there is a clear target behavior, so that you (the trainer) can clearly designate change talk as it occurs. Make sure your interviewer has been taught at least one strategy for responding to change talk (for example, to Reflect). Trainer stands behind the speaker (the speaker will never see the cards) and does not speak. When change talk occurs the trainer holds up a green card. A red card comes up when sustain talk happens.

**Notes:** This can be done as a group exercise where everyone in the group has both a red and green card and they hold them up while listening to the interview. This leads to interesting discussions about how change and sustain talk are often contextual and often intertwined.



## Find the Change Talk

**Abstract:** Participants try to identify change talk within ongoing dialogue.

**Overview:** Provide a sample of dialogue. It can be from a motivational interview, or even from a film, song, TV show, etc. On first try it is helpful to work from a written transcript, to slow down the process.

**Guidelines:** Explain clearly what constitutes change talk. You can draw on coding guidelines from the MISC of MITI for clarity. (e.g., talking about past-tense motivation is not change talk). Then provide an opportunity for participants to identify change talk within dialogue.

**Examples:** Distribute a transcript for participants to read, and have them underline what they regard as change talk.

Play a recorded segment and have participants signal when they hear change talk. (See Drumming for Change Talk). It can be helpful to stop the tape frequently to discuss.

**Notes:** In general, except in research, it is not crucial to identify what subtype of change talk it is. Even experienced coders find it difficult to reliably discriminate D, A, R, and N, although they can reliably code DARN as a single category.

**Contributed by:** Terri Moyers

## Grand Prix Client Change Talk Game

**Overview:** This interactive, fast-paced exercise is directed to identifying categories of client talk, as well as forming effective clinician responses.

**Guidelines:** For this exercise, you will need each participant to have four cards: one each marked red, yellow, green and “checkered.” You can enlist participant support in making their own cards, using index cards and markers.

The goals are for participants to (1) recognize different kinds of client talk in an interaction, (2) identify what the interviewer did that prompted the particular talk, and (3) suggest ideas for the interviewer to incorporate.

Trainer and a participant (who has been briefed in advance) conduct a brief conversation about a behavior change. The trainer acts as the “interviewer,” the participant is the “client.” The interviewer and the client make sure that they include a variety of skills and responses.

Once the conversation begins, participants hold up a red card if the client expresses discord within the interaction, a yellow card if the client expresses sustain talk about the behavior change, a green card if the client expresses desire, ability, reason or need (DARN) and a checkered card if the client expresses commitment language, activation talk or identifies steps to take (CATs).

**Pit Stops and Pit Crews:** When the trainer periodically pauses (Pit Stop), participants are prompted to huddle into small group “Pit Crews.” The trainer asks the small groups to identify what the “interviewer” did to evoke the particular client talk or to suggest some kind of reinforcement or response (elaboration, affirmation, reflection or summary—EARS) for the client talk.

**Contributed by:** Ali Hall

## Client Language

**Abstract:** Trainees have a written example of Client Language and possible responses.

**Overview:** This document illustrates client language with Sustain Talk as it might sound in DARN CATS; additionally, there are possible counselor responses and possible replies from the client. The goal is to provide a written example for trainees to have for future reference and for reinforcing practice. According to the setting and length of training, it could be used as a stand-alone handout or for discussion.

**Goals:** Acknowledge Change Talk: Reflect and/or Affirm then.....

Invite Change Talk: Reflect, Open Questions      CR: Complex Reflection    OQ: Open Question

Client Speech: Sustain Talk	Example	Responses	Possible Client Change Talk
Desire:	<p>I just love smoking and how it makes me feel. <u>Low on importance.</u></p> <p>I'd like to be able to eat whatever I want whenever I want. <u>Low on importance.</u></p>	<p>CR: You can't imagine life without smoking. CR: It's your best friend. OQ: What <u>would</u> life be like without cigarettes? (envisioning)</p> <p>CR: You don't want anything to have to change in your life. CR: You want freedom in your eating habits. OQ: Why are you being asked to do something different? (elicit)</p>	<p>Well, it would be miserable but my family would stop pushing me about this. CR: So there would be at least one advantage. OQ: Of course only you will decide, but what are some other possible advantages?</p> <p>I guess because I am diabetic now and it would help me. CR: You have some understanding of the issue. OQ: What other information would help you?</p>
Ability	<p>I've tried and I don't think I can stop smoking. <u>Low on confidence.</u></p> <p>I can't keep up with all the kinds of foods, the amounts; it's too much! <u>Low on confidence.</u></p>	<p>CR: If you did try, you would need help to boost your confidence. OQ: What are some other challenges in your life that you met successfully?</p> <p>CR: You are overwhelmed. OQ: What would help you the most?</p>	<p>I certainly couldn't do it alone. CR: It would be a challenge that you would need to share. OQ: What are some other challenges in your life that you met successfully?</p> <p>It's not that I don't want to be doing better. CR: You are concerned about your health. OQ: What would help you the most right now?</p>

Reasons	<p>Smoking helps me relax. <u>This shows why it is low on importance.</u></p> <p>I'm going to have diabetes whether I follow the diet or not. <u>This shows why it is low on importance.</u></p>	<p>CR: Smoking makes life more tolerable. OQ: If you <u>did</u> think there were reasons to change your smoking habits, what would some of them be?</p> <p>CR: You don't think anything will make a difference. OQ: What do you know about the advantages of managing diabetes?</p>	<p>I know it is bad for my health, sure costs me a lot and then the family is on my back! CR: Some real major things. OQ: What would help you decide you wanted to make some changes?</p> <p>I would <u>like</u> to think something could. CR: You don't want to think this is out of your control entirely. OQ: What do you feel capable of doing with the diet?</p>
Need	<p>I have to smoke; I can't get through the day without it. <u>This shows why it is low on confidence.</u></p> <p>This is just how it is now; I am diabetic. <u>This shows why it is low on confidence.</u></p>	<p>CR: There is <u>no</u> option for you. OQ: What would need to happen for you to even consider changing?</p> <p>CR: Your fate is sealed. OQ: What would help you feel more optimistic about managing your diabetes?</p>	<p>Well, I don't want to say that! CR: You are not hopeless! OQ: If you did decide to make some changes and it has to be your decision, what do you think you would do to cope?</p> <p>I am a diabetic, that is true, but I'm not dead yet! I want to still enjoy life! CR: All is not lost! OQ: What would help you feel more optimistic about managing your diabetes?</p>
Commitment	<p>I'll just keep smoking</p> <p>I will just live with the diabetes.</p>	<p>CR: There is no reason to do anything else. OQ: Where does this leave us now?</p> <p>CR: You want to live your life as you want, not taking this into account. OQ: Where does this leave us now?</p>	<p>Not really, not right now. CR: You have some idea of the risks and possible benefits and for now, this is your choice; it is true only you can decide. If you want to talk again, please feel free to contact me.</p> <p>Maybe I'll change my mind later if I start to have problems, like with my feet or something. CR: More physical problems would need to happen. OQ: Of course only you will decide, but</p>

			what do you know about the risks of waiting until problems like with your feet occur?
Activation	<p>I'll take the risks of smoking.</p> <p>Change is just too hard.</p>	<p>CR: Right now the benefits outweigh the risks. OQ: Where does this leave us now?</p> <p>CR: This would require more effort than you feel capable of making. OQ: Where does this leave us now?</p>	<p>For now they do. CR: You have some idea of the risks and possible benefits and for now, this is your choice; it is true only you can decide. If you want to talk again, please feel free to contact me.</p> <p>That sounds like I am giving up. CR: That makes you uncomfortable. OQ: What would not giving up look like, if you decided to do something?</p>
Taking Steps	<p>I don't plan to do anything.</p> <p>I'll just keep eating like I do now.</p>	<p>CR: You have made your decision. OQ: Where does this leave us now?</p> <p>CR: You are willing to take your chances. OQ: Where does this leave us now?</p>	<p>I'm not saying never, I am saying, not right now. CR: Of course, only you can decide when the time might be right. OQ: Just out of curiosity, how will you know? I have to die of something. CR: It may as well be this, just let nature take its course. OQ: Certainly I am not trying to convince you otherwise, but what would that be like?</p>

**Notes:** Trainees seem to like this handout as a way to further understand application of concepts; it is only used after the material has been taught.

**Contributed by:** Cathy Cole



# Evoking and Responding to Change Talk

## Common Content in Teaching Evoking

- Evoking is the process that is most unique to MI.
- It is intentionally arranging the conversation to invite and encourage particular content or experience.
  - In psychotherapy more generally, therapists focus on specific content based on their theoretical orientation, and invite clients to talk about it. In client-centered counseling, for example, therapists aim to evoke *experiencing* by offering accurate empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard.
- In MI, an important application of evoking is to explore the *why* of change, inviting client change talk rather than sustain talk or discord. Evoking is done in relation to a particular change goal or focus
- In Evoking, the OARS skills take on strategic direction by
  - asking *particular* open questions
  - differentially reflecting and affirming to emphasize *particular* client speech
  - and intentionally including *particular* content in summaries.
- Evoking, then, is *directional*, consciously and strategically using OARS to steer in a particular direction.
- This is a defining aspect of MI that differentiates it from general client-centered counseling.
- After helping trainees *recognize* change talk, Content normally covered here includes specific methods for evoking change talk, and appropriate ways to respond to change talk when it occurs, so as to strengthen it.
- Evoking continues to be used in the planning process, inviting the client's own ideas and preferences for *how* to accomplish change.

- Ten Strategies for Evoking Change Talk

1. Ask Evocative Questions

Ask open questions, the answer to which is change talk. The questions used in the “Taste of MI” exercise are good examples:

Why would you want to make this change? (Desire)

How might you go about it, in order to succeed? (Ability)

What are the three best reasons for you to do it? (Reasons)

How important is it for you to make this change? (Need)

So what do you think you’ll do? (Commitment)

2. Ask for Elaboration

When a change talk theme emerges, ask for more detail. In what ways?

3. Ask for Examples

When a change talk theme emerges, ask for specific examples. When was the last time that happened? Give me an example. What else?

4. Look Back

Ask about a time before the current concern emerged. How were things better, different?

5. Look Forward

Ask what may happen if things continue as they are (status quo). If you were 100% successful in making the changes you want, what would be different? How would you like your life to be five years from now?

6. Query Extremes

What are the worst things that might happen if you don’t make this change? What are the best things that might happen if you do make this change?

7. Use Change Rulers

Ask, “On a scale from zero to ten, how important is it to you to [target change] - where zero is not at all important, and ten is extremely important? Follow up: And why are you at \_\_\_ and not zero? What might happen that could move you from \_\_\_ to [higher score]? Instead of “how important” (need), you could also ask how much you want (desire), or how confident you are that you could (ability), or how committed are you to \_\_\_ (commitment). Asking “how ready are you?” tends to be a bit confusing because it combines competing components of desire, ability, reasons and need.

8. Explore Goals and Values

Ask what the person’s guiding values are. What do they want in life? Using a values card sort can be helpful here. If there is a “problem” behavior, ask how that behavior fits in with the person’s goals or values. Does it help realize a goal or value, interfere with it, or is it irrelevant?

9. Come Alongside

Explicitly side with the negative (status quo) side of ambivalence. Perhaps \_\_\_\_\_ is so important to you that you won’t give it up, no matter what the cost.

## Easy as 1-2-3: Responding to Change Talk

**Abstract:** This exercise teaches how to respond to change talk in order to strengthen it and invite more change talk.

**Overview:** When you hear change talk, don't just sit there. It matters what you say next. Four ways to respond within an MI style are EARS. (The O in OARS is changed to E for Explore, asking particular open questions to evoke Elaboration or Examples)

*Explore.* Ask for elaboration: how, in what ways, why? Ask for examples: when was the last time this happened (e.g., for an adverse consequence). Note that these are included in the original list above of ten ways to elicit change talk. They are actually follow-up questions when change talk occurs.

*Affirm.* Express agreement, appreciation, encouragement, etc.

*Reflect.* This is the most common response to change talk – to offer a simple or complex reflection.

*Summary.* Change talk is also collected in “bouquet” summaries.

### Guidelines:

1. In preparation, have participants write down at least four change talk statements about a change they are considering making in the next six months. To suggest change talk, offer DARN CATs - seven categories of possible change talk statements :

- **D: Why do you *want* to make this change?**
- **A: How might you be *able* to do it?**
- **R: What is one good *reason* for making the change?**
- **N: How *important* is it, and why? (0-10)**
- **C: What do you *intend* to do?**
- **A: What are you *ready* or *willing* to do?**
- **T: What have you *already done*?**

2. Break participants into groups of 5-6, one of whom may be an observer. They sit in a circle.

3. One person starts as speaker by stating their change topic and reading one change talk statement.

4. The person to the speaker's right offers one EAR response, E A or R, to the change talk statement:

- **E: ask for Elaboration or an Example (in what ways? how? etc.)**
- **A: offer an Affirmation (agree, encourage, praise, support)**
- **R: Reflect what the person has said (preferably complex reflection)**

5. The speaker responds naturally to the EAR response. (One statement is fine)

6. The next person (who offered an EAR response) now becomes the next speaker, and the person to his or her right offers an EAR response. Continue the pattern.

7. Take turns until everyone has offered and responded to at least two change talk statements.

If you are using an observer, have him or her track each 1-2-3- sequence. Was the speaker's first statement (1) change talk? [If you want an additional challenge, what kind of change talk might it be: DARN-CAT.]

Then how did the listener respond (2): with E, A, R, or something else? Finally, was how the speaker replied (3) change talk or not [and what kind]?

### More Advanced ERA Version: Easy as 1-2-3-4

This can be done after the first round, when everyone has been the speaker once. Now you change the listeners' task:

1. As above, everyone needs to have written down change talk statements about a change they are considering. Offer the DARN CATs to suggest types of change talk that they might offer.

2. Work in groups of 5-6 sitting in a circle.

3. One person starts as speaker by giving their change topic and reading one change talk statement.

4. The person to the speaker's right responds with an E (elaboration/example open question)
5. The speaker responds naturally to the E response. (One statement is fine)
6. The *next* person to the speaker's right offers a Reflection.
7. The speaker responds naturally to the R response.
8. The *next* person to the speaker's right offers an Affirmation
9. The speaker responds naturally to the A response.
10. The *next* person to the speaker's right offers a Summary of the speaker's change talk.
11. The speaker responds naturally to the Summary
12. The person who offered the E response now becomes the next speaker and the process continues.
13. Take turns until everyone has offered and responded to at least two change talk statements.

**Notes:** This is a complex exercise that is best demonstrated first. Participants often need some coaching in this exercise, particularly the more advanced version. If more than one circle is practicing, circulate and coach. You can assign an observer to record E, R, A and S responses and to decide whether what the speaker says each time is change talk.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller and Terri Moyers

## Evoking Discussion

**Abstract:** Within a basic didactic structure, trainees are actively involved in the teaching-learning process as the trainer elicits to-be-learned material from them, rather than imparting it in lecture format. In this variation on Eliciting, participants break out into small groups to discuss a target question or problem.

**Overview:** Teaching in an MI style need not, and often does not involve the trainer conveying information while trainees listen passively. MI is fundamentally rooted in a Socratic style of learning. Often material that the trainer wants to get across can also be elicited from the group.

**Guidelines:** Use this approach when the material to be covered can be elicited from the group. A Socratic approach is less suitable (or at least less efficient) for conveying material that is truly new to the group. Instruct participants to form small groups of a specific size (about 6 works well), and pose a clear task or question. Have each group select a recorder to report back to the larger group.

**Example(s):** Discussion groups can be formed on the spur of the moment, when a particular problem or challenge arises in training. Each group might also be given a particular clinical challenge, to discuss MI-consistent ways of responding.

**Notes:** A variation on this exercise is to combine it with Round Robin. Discussion proceeds in the small group by each participant contributing in turn, in order, going around the group. A “talking stick” may be passed from hand to hand for this purpose, denoting the person whose turn it is to talk. Passing is permitted.

## Evoking Change Talk

**Abstract:** Trainees try out using OARS skills strategically to elicit change talk.

**Overview:** A triad of interviewer, speaker, and observer work together in this exercise to integrate evoking skills.

**Guidelines:** The speaker's real-play topic is "A change that you *want* to make." Here the desire for change is already present, so this instruction differs from a speaker topic designed to represent ambivalence. Of course, some ambivalence is usually still present, but desire is a headstart.

Instruct the interviewer to ask what change the person wants to make and then use OARS responses to evoke change talk. At the end of the exercise the interviewer should provide a summary of the change talk that she or he heard, providing additional practice in forming a strategic MI summary.

Instruct the observer to listen for change talk making hash marks on a coding sheet containing these rows: Desire Ability Reasons Need Commitment Activation Taking Steps. Tell the observer not to worry too much about getting the category exactly right. The observer can also record particular examples of each.

I usually debrief by asking the speakers to describe their experience first, then ask the observers to say what they saw that seemed particularly effective in evoking confidence.

This is an exercise that it is best to *demonstrate* first with a volunteer speaker. An observer can also participate in your demonstration.

This exercise, which can be used with small or large groups, is a big step forward from the nondirective use of OARS, and it is good to provide support and coaching to the triads if group size permits.

**Variations:** A second observer can be added to track the interviewer's OARS responses. The exercise can be repeated by rotating roles so that each participant has the experience of each role.

**Notes:** When you use observers, always provide time for the observer(s) to talk in their group about what they observed.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

## Evoking Confidence

**Abstract:** This exercise parallels “Evoking Change Talk” but is more structured and focuses specifically on evoking confidence (ability) language.

**Overview:** A triad of interviewer, speaker, and observer work together to experience how the same MI skills can be used to strengthen confidence for change. The methodology is a variation of “A Taste of Motivational Interviewing” which might have been used with trainees earlier.

**Guidelines:** This usually follows an explanation of importance and confidence as two different components of motivation for change.

The speaker’s real-play topic is “Something that you hope to do, would like to do, have reason to do, and/or is important for you to do, but you are also not sure whether you *can* do it (have the ability to do it, have the time, energy and resources needed, etc.).” This sets the stage with a topic where desire, reasons and/or need are present, but confidence (ability) is less clear.

Instruct the interviewer to listen carefully with a goal of understanding the person’s dilemma, offering no advice. Instead the interviewer asks these four open questions in any order, following the person’s responses with reflective listening.

1. On a scale from 0 to 10, how confident are you that you could make this change if you decide to do it?  
Follow-up question: And why are you at \_\_ and not zero?
2. What is there about you (strengths, abilities, talents) that would help you do this?
3. How might you go about it, in order to succeed?
4. What have you done successfully in the past that was like this in some way?

Then at the end of the practice, the interviewer offers a summary of all the ability change talk that he or she heard.

Instruct the observer to listen for and record confidence (ability language).

This is an exercise that it is best to *demonstrate* first with a volunteer speaker. An observer can also participate in the demonstration.

The tight structure of this exercise makes it somewhat easier than the open-ended use of OARS in “Evoking Change Talk.”

I usually debrief this exercising by asking speakers first to describe their experiences during the interview. Observers can offer examples of change talk that they heard. Interviewers can reflect on the experience of using an MI style to evoke confidence, and the righting-reflex responses that they had to suppress.

**Variations:** The exercise can be repeated by rotating roles so that each participant has the experience of each role.

**Notes:** Individual coaching seems less essential in this exercise. Circulate to ensure that participants understand the exercise and are following the basic instructions. Notice what the observers are recording.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

## Rowing with OARS (with Observer)

**Abstract:** The counselor practices how to use OARS strategically, to move toward a particular change goal.

**Overview:** Once one is comfortable using OARS in a nondirective manner, the next task is to learn how to use selective questions, affirmations, reflections and summaries to evoke change talk, with particular emphasis on exploring the importance of change.

**Guidelines:** Work in groups of four: One speaker, one counselor, and two observers at a time. The speaker's topic is "One thing in my life (or about myself) that I would like to change." This instruction is to start with a topic about which the person already has some desire to change, and therefore soliciting change talk should be both easier and natural.

The counselor's task is to use OARS to evoke change talk. You may assign particular methods to use (e.g., the Taste of MI questions, change rulers, etc.) or just allow the person to choose from the menu. The counselor should refrain from advice-giving, and stick to the OARS, being careful to offer more reflections than questions.

One observer uses an OARS sheet and records occurrences of each of these responses. The usual procedure is to make hash marks next to O, A, R, and S as these occur, and also to write down what the observer regarded to be particularly good examples of each.

The second observer listens for change talk from the speaker. You can assign this coder to work in various ways, such as (1) simple counting of change talk statements, (2) placing hash marks in D A R N and CATs categories, (3) writing down particularly good examples of change talk, (4) rating the strength of change talk, (5) also tracking sustain talk, or (6) also noting what the counselor did right before each change talk statement.

The counselor may pause at any point in the conversation to consult with the observers.

Allow the conversation to proceed for about 10 minutes, and then give a 5-minute warning. At this point the counselor should (1) offer a bouquet summary of the speaker's change talk, (2) ask for the speaker's reactions to the conversation, and then (3) ask the observers to tell what they observed. The observers should use their coding sheets to summarize their observations, and mention particularly good examples that they noted.

**Notes:** This is quite a complex exercise, and it benefits from the trainer(s) circulating, observing, and coaching. The exercise can be repeated if desired, so that each participant gets to play each role. As a variation, one or two rounds could be done as Rowing for Confidence (below).

**Contributed by:** David Rosengren and Bill Miller



## Rowing for Confidence

**Abstract:** The counselor practices how to use OARS directly, to enhance confidence for change..

**Overview:** This is a variation on the prior (Rowing with OARS) exercise, with particular attention on building confidence for change. It addresses the client for whom confidence may be lower than importance.

**Guidelines:** Work in groups of four (if two observers are to be used): One speaker, one counselor, and two observers at a time. The speaker's topic is "One thing in my life (or about myself) that I would like to change, (or have good reasons to change, or is important for me to change) *but am not sure if I can (or have the ability to do it, or have the time/energy to do it.)*" This instruction solicits a change topic for which importance may be higher than confidence.

The counselor's task is to use OARS to evoke confidence talk. The counselor should refrain from advice-giving, and stick to the OARS, being careful to offer more reflections than questions. Possible strategies include (1) asking open questions the answer to which is confidence talk, (2) using the confidence ruler, and (3) reviewing past successes (4) discussing personal strengths and resources. For a more highly structured task, you can assign these specific questions, in the style of the Taste of MI exercise:

- On a scale from 0 to 10, how confident are you that you could make this change if you decided to?
  - Follow-up: And why are you at \_\_ and not zero?
- What is there about you (strengths, abilities, talents) that would help you do this?
- How might you go about it, in order to succeed?
- What have you done successfully in the past that was like this in some way?

One observer uses an OARS sheet and records occurrences of each of these responses. The usual procedure is to make hash marks next to O, A, R, and S as these occur, and also to write down what the observer regarded to be particularly good examples of each.

The second observer listens for change talk from the speaker, with particular attention to Ability statements. You can assign this coder to work in various ways, such as (1) simple counting of Ability statements, (2) placing hash marks in DARN and CATs categories, (3) writing down particularly good examples of confidence talk, (4) rating the strength of confidence talk, or (5) also noting what the counselor did right before each confidence talk statement, to elicit it..

The counselor may pause at any point in the conversation to consult with the observers.

Allow the conversation to proceed for about 10 minutes, and then give a 5-minute warning. At this point the counselor should (1) offer a bouquet summary of the speaker's importance and confidence talk, (2) ask for the speaker's reactions to the conversation, and then (3) ask the observers to tell what they observed. The observers should use their coding sheets to summarize their observations, and mention particularly good examples that they noted.

**Notes:** This is quite a complex exercise, and benefits from the trainer(s) circulating, observing, and coaching. The exercise can be repeated if desired, so that each participant gets to play each role.

**Contributed by:** David Rosengren and Bill Miller

## In The Moment Practice

**Purpose of the exercise:** to teach forming reflections that pick up on change talk/have direction, transitional summaries, and key question

**Time needed:** 30 to 45 minutes depending on size of group

### Guidelines:

Step 1. Using an example such as the one below, the instructor first talks through the exercise discussing the two reflection examples: one that is reinforcing the status quo and the other that picks up on change talk.

Step 2. Participants get into groups of 3-5 depending on group size. Using the remaining example, participants take turns reading the client statement and then the other participants form reflections to pick up on change talk; then participant reads next statement, reflections formed, etc until the formation of the transitional summary and key question. Group then decides on what reflections, summary and key question will be presented to the group at large.

Step 3. Each group reads the conversation and instructor provides feedback/coaching moments as needed.

### Example:

Target behavior: taking medications

Agenda setting: 'Hello Jim, it's good to see you again. Last time we agreed to talk about how it is going with you taking your medication. Is it okay to start there or has something more pressing come up?'

Jim: 'It was harder than I thought it would be; I mean I want to do this.'

Reflection that goes nowhere: 'It was hard'

Reflection picking up on change talk: 'It is a *challenge* to make a change and you are *still committed to it.*'

Jim: 'It's hard to remember them and then I am embarrassed when I have to take a break at work to take them.'

Reflection to nowhere: 'There are things that get in the way.'

Reflection with direction: 'You have some important things for us to work on.'

Jim: 'Yeh, just tell me what to do like all the other people in my life do.'

Reflection to nowhere: 'You feel pushed around.'

Reflection with direction: 'You don't like that way of doing things; you need to find ways that will work for you.'

Jim: 'But I hope you have some ideas!'

Reflection to nowhere: 'You need something from me.'

Reflection with direction/change/partnering: 'You *really want to tackle this and hope I have some ideas*; I do have some ideas to share and then I'll want to hear what you think about them.'

Jim: 'Okay!'

**Transitional summary:** 'Let's see if I have it; taking the meds was harder than you thought, had some challenges but you still want to take them. You need some ideas that will work for you and are interested in getting some ideas from me.'

**Key Question:** 'Where should we start?'

### Possible conversation for you to use; all statements are a part of one conversation

Target behavior: weight loss

Client: 'I don't know why everyone is harping on my weight; I know I need to lose some but I hate getting asked about it all the time.'

Reflection:

Client: 'Of course I would like to be smaller; I could get around easier, not be so out of breath, maybe now have to take so much medication. It is just so hard to lose.'

Reflection:

Client: 'I just need to decide on one plan and stick to it, maybe get a buddy to support me, do it with me.'

Reflection:

Client: 'Right! I know it is important, good for my health. I just need to build up my confidence.'

Transitional summary:

Key Question:

**Tips:** You can tailor this exercise to many client scenarios/settings. More advanced groups could be asked to create the whole conversation for reporting. As you circulate around the groups as they work, you will likely have to remind them to avoid questions. The exercise is about reflections that go somewhere.

I usually have the conversations on my slides and handout so participants work on their part from the handout.

**Contributed by** Cathy Cole, adapted from the work of Steve Malcolm Berg-Smith

## Change Talk Jeopardy

**Abstract:** Trainees practice asking open questions that elicit change talk, and learn about the linkage between the two.

**Overview:** In an exercise that involves movement, trainees reflect on and practice open questions that will elicit change talk. The exercise parallels the TV game show *Jeopardy* in which the trainee is given an answer, and has to come up with the appropriate question that would elicit the answer.

**Guidelines:** First have all trainees write down several change talk statements that are typical from their own work settings.

Then explain the exercise. One person will offer a change talk statement, and the counselor's job is to offer an open question that they might have asked just *before* this change talk statement. That is, what might the counselor have asked, that would have elicited this change talk statement?

Demonstrate it. Have trainees give you five or so change talk statements, one at a time, and offer the open question that might have led to the change talk statement. Then the trainee answers your question with the same change talk statement.

Trainee: I really want my probation officer to get off my back

You: What do you hope will happen by your coming here for counseling?

Trainee: I really want my probation officer to get off my back.

Trainee: I think my blood pressure would go down if I quit smoking.

You: What might be some of the good things about quitting smoking?

Trainee: I think my blood pressure would go down if I quit smoking.

Have trainees form two single file lines of equal length, facing each other, so that the person at the front of each line faces the person at the front of the other line. One line will offer change talk statements, and the other is to ask corresponding open questions. Have the person at the front of one line offer a change talk statement, and ask the person at the front of the other line to answer with an open question that might have elicited it. (It may be necessary to indicate what the change topic is, if it's not apparent in the change talk statement.) Then the original speaker repeats the change talk statement. If the "counselor" gets stuck, or offers an incorrect response (a common one is to say what the counselor what might say *next*), step in and offer an appropriate open question. Then have those two participants go to the end of each line, and the two new front people do take the next turn.

When everyone in both lines has been at the front, you may switch tasks and have the former speakers become counselors and vice versa.

**Notes:** This is difficult for trainees to do the first time, and the trainer needs to be present and coaching where the two lines meet. Make sure that the people at the end of each line can hear clearly what is being said by the people at the front. That may require a roving microphone, and certainly requires that everyone remains silent except the speakers at the front.

**Variations:** Start with open questions, but you could practice other types of eliciting responses as well. What reflection might have preceded this?

It would be possible, of course, also to have the counselor line practice what they might say *next*, in order to reinforce a change talk statement. The advantage of the jeopardy format is that it focuses effortful processing on the linkage between eliciting questions and change talk.

**Contributed by:** Terri Moyers

## Client Language Exercise

**Abstract:** Trainees practice skills of complex reflections and open questions independently

**Overview:** Exercise is assigned after all MI concepts have been taught and demonstrated. Exercise can be assigned as a solo activity that might be handed in for response, as an exercise in pairs or small groups.

<b>Sustain Talk</b>	Response	Possible Client Response and Your Response
Write two examples of sustain talk based on problems with importance	Write 2 complex reflections and one open question	Write how the client might respond and what you would say next
Write two examples of sustain talk based on problems with confidence	Write 2 complex reflections and one open question	Write how the client might respond and what you would say next
<b>Change Talk</b>	Response	Possible Client Response and Your Response
Write two examples of change talk based on problems with importance	Write 2 complex reflections and one open question	Write how the client might respond and what you would say next

<b>Change Talk</b>	Response	Possible Client Response and Your Response
Write two examples of change talk based on problems with confidence	Write 2 complex reflections and one open question	Write how the client might respond and what you would say next
<b>Working with Discord</b>	Create Discord	Respond to the discord
<p>Example: I just love smoking and how it makes me feel.</p> <p>Take two of your change statements and write them here:</p>	<p>You say: But smoking is really harmful to your health. Client says: I know all of that but I still love to smoke.</p> <p>Write what you could say to create discord and how the client might respond</p>	<p>You respond: It is not okay for me to lecture you and I apologize. If there were any reasons for you to make a change, what might they be?</p> <p>Write how you would respond to the discord you have created.</p>

**Notes:** It is important to be available for coaching with this assignment/answering questions. It is also important to set a time limit; up to 45 minutes has been my experience.

**Contributed by:** Cathy Cole

## Change Talk Bingo

**Abstract:** Participants or teams try to be first to elicit five forms of change talk.

**Overview:** This exercise stimulates trainees to think about the various forms of change talk, and how they might specifically elicit each one.

**Guidelines:** Identify one or more speakers to talk about a change they are thinking about making. It's best to have the speaker(s) leave the room when instructions are given, so they are unaware of what the trainees are trying to do. Form groups of 6-7 (including the speaker, an observer, and five "contestants"). The contestants work with the speaker, with a goal of eliciting an example of five different types of change talk (Desire, Ability, Reasons, Need, Commitment, Activation, Taking Steps).

### Variations:

**Rounds.** Each "contestant" tries to evoke at least one example each of five different kinds of change talk, from a menu of seven: Desire, Ability, Reasons, Need, Commitment, Activation, and Taking Steps. The speaker first specifies what the contemplated change is. Contestants take turns (in order) asking evocative questions chosen to elicit particular types of change talk. An observer (working behind and unseen by the speaker) uses a flip chart to rate any speaker change talk as D A R N C A Ts. The trainer may choose to be the observer.

**Billiards.** If a contestant's question elicits a new type of change talk, the contestant gets another turn, and may continue until a question fails to elicit a new type of change talk. Then questioning moves on to the next contestant

**Blinders:** The observer (or trainer) keeps a tally of types of change talk on a sheet that is not observable by the contestants or speaker.

In a competition, the first team to generate five types of change talk wins and the observer calls "bingo."

**Contributed by:** This was the winning entry in a contest among teams to generate a creative exercise for teaching how to elicit change talk, in the 2005 TNT at Solvang, California

**Change Talk Bingo: Observer's Sheet**

The Counselor is attempting to elicit from the Speaker at least one example of each of the following types of Change Talk. Listen carefully to each Speaker statement to determine if it fits into one of these categories. When you hear an example of a type of change talk, write the statement down in that box. When you have heard and recorded one example of all five types of Change Talk, stand up, leave your group, and come to the front of the room, bringing this sheet.

Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Desire:** Want, wish, like, etc.

**Ability:** Can could, able, etc.

**Reasons:** Specific reason for change

**Need:** Need, have to, important, etc. (without stating specific reason)

**Commitment:** Will, plan to, intend to, going to, willing, ready, etc.



## Let There Be Light

**Abstract:** This exercise can be done if the training room has a dimmer switch that allows continuous adjustment of the brightness of lighting in the room. In an MI interaction, when change talk is elicited, the room lights brighten. When sustain talk or discord talk is elicited, the room lights dim.

**Overview:** A trainee or team is assigned to elicit change talk from a speaker who is talking about an ambivalent change topic. The trainer controls the level of lighting in the room, increasing brightness when change talk is elicited, and dimming the lights when counter-change talk is elicited.

**Guidelines:** Prepare a speaker to talk about a potential change about which he or she is ambivalent. This can be a role-play or real-life example. Dim the lights in the room to a low level. Ask a trainee or team of trainees to use MI-consistent responses in talking with this speaker, seeking to elicit change talk. If a team, they consult with each other before deciding what to say to the speaker. Then the trainee offers a response intended to elicit change talk, to which the speaker responds. If the speaker's reply is change talk, slightly increase the brightness of lights in the room. If the speaker's reply is sustain talk or discord, dim the lights slightly. Continue until the lights in the room are at full brightness.

### Variations:

If lights cannot be brightened, try another way to keep track of cumulative change talk and sustain talk. For example, stack blocks, adding one when change talk occurs, and removing one when counter-change talk occurs.

**Contributed by:** The 2005 TNT class (Solvang, California)

## Out of a Hat

**Abstract:** Trainees draw from a hat the kind of response they are to demonstrate

**Overview:** A hat contains slips of paper that name particular MI-consistent responses. Within a structured exercise, trainees draw a slip of paper from a hat and perform the type of response named on the paper.

**Guidelines:** Set up an appropriate client stimulus to which trainees will respond. Prepare a set of slips of paper naming particular MI-consistent responses and place them in a hat. Trainees then draw slips and perform the response specified.

### Examples:

The training task is to strengthen trainees' ability to evoke change talk. Ten slips of paper are prepared describing ten different ways in which change talk can be elicited. A speaker describes a change that he or she may want to make, but has not yet made. For example: "I think I should get more exercise." In front of the group is a list of ten ways for evoking change talk. There are also ten (or more) slips of paper in a hat each containing one of these responses (e.g., Ask an evocative question. Use change ruler. Ask for examples.) Each trainee draws one slip from the hat and attempts to use that response to elicit change talk. The speaker responds. Then the audience is asked (1) which eliciting strategy they believe the trainee was using, and (2) whether the speaker's response was change talk.

The training task is to strengthen trainees' ability to respond to client change talk in a manner that reinforces it. Trainees write down examples of the kinds of change talk that they hear from clients in their own settings. Slips of paper are prepared describing different ways in which a counselor can respond to change talk in order to reinforce it (e.g., Simple reflection, complex reflection, ask for example, affirmation). This list of possible responses is also posted in front of the group. Then trainees are divided into two groups and form two lines whereby the people at the front of each line are facing each other. One of these lines are the "clients" and the other the "counselors." The first client offers a change talk statement. The first counselor (facing the first client) draws a slip of paper from the hat and attempts to use that response to reinforce the client's change talk. The client then responds. Finally the audience is asked (1) to identify which reinforcing response they believe the trainee was using, and (2) whether the client's response was more change talk.

A few MI-inconsistent responses can also be put into the hat.

**Contributed by:** The 2005 TNT class (Solvang, California)

## Snatching Change Talk from the Jaws of Ambivalence

**Abstract:** Participants practice selectively reflecting the change talk content within ambivalence.

**Overview:** When ambivalence is present, it is normal for change talk to occur within the context of sustain talk. Participants are presented with client statements containing both change talk and sustain talk, and form reflections focused on the change talk.

**Guidelines:** Prepare some client statements, appropriate to your training audience and topic, in which change talk is embedded within at least two bits of sustain talk. Then have participants choose what to reflect.

Example: *I really don't want to stop smoking, but I know that I should. I've tried before and it's really hard.*

An alternative to openly soliciting appropriate change talk reflections is to offer multiple choice options from which to select. Each trainee chooses one option and is prepared to explain why it is the best option. Example options related to above client statement:

- A. You really don't want to quit.
- B. It's pretty clear to you that you ought to quit.
- C. You're not sure if you can quit.

Of these, the option that focuses on the change talk is B.

**Examples:** I don't drink any more than most people I know. I mean, I can drink most of them under the table. I don't see why everybody is making such a fuss about this. I can handle it.

I was worried there at first, but I don't think I really have diabetes. The doctor said it was "borderline" or something like that, and I feel fine.

Well sure, I'd like to be as healthy as I can, but I'm 68, for heaven's sake. I figure I can get away with some bad habits now. They won't have time to catch up with me.

I wasn't doing anything wrong! I just went along for the ride, and I didn't know they were going to grab that lady's purse. Now they're saying that I violated my probation. I guess it's not smart to be cruising around at 2 in the morning but it happened so fast, there was nothing I could do about it. I didn't break any laws, and I'm not going back to jail for this.

It's just such a hassle to take all those pills. I'm supposed to remember to take them four times a day, and half the time I don't even have them with me. And I hate how they make me feel. I guess there's a good reason for it, but it's just not possible for me.

**Notes:** The point in this exercise is not to do a double-sided reflection, but rather to select out the change talk and focus on that in the reflection.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller and Terri Moyers

## The Impact of Summaries

Using a video, audio or transcript session, offer four different possible summaries and engage trainees in discussing how the client might respond to each of them. What is the client feeling after this summary?

**Example** (from MI-3.) Following a routine physical examination, Dr. Clark referred Sylvia to a behavioral health counselor to discuss her drinking. The referral indicates that the physician smelled alcohol on her breath during the examination, and added an alcohol screen to the panel of lab tests ordered. The lab report indicated a blood alcohol level of 90 mg%, and also a slightly elevated GGT level. After introductions, the consultation begins.

Counselor: There's not much information on this referral, Sylvia. Perhaps you could tell me how you understand why Dr. Clark wanted you to talk with me.

Sylvia: I was surprised to hear from her. She called me on the phone after my physical, and said she wanted me to see you because she was concerned about me.

C: Dr. Clark called you personally.

S: Uh huh. Actually it kind of scared me. I thought maybe it was bad news from my tests.

C: So what did she tell you?

S: Well that morning, when I went in for my physical, while she was examining me she mentioned that she smelled alcohol. I thought it was probably the mouthwash that I use, and that's what I told her. She didn't say anything more about it.

C: But then she called you back.

S: I guess she had them test for alcohol. I didn't know she was going to do that. Anyhow she told me that I was over the legal limit for driving. But I swear I didn't have anything to drink.

C: That took you by surprise.

S: Yes. I never drink in the morning. She also told me that one of the other tests was abnormal - for liver, I think - and that's why she wanted me to talk to you.

C: I'm sure this has been on your mind in the meantime. What are you thinking at this point about what she told you?

S: Well, frankly, I don't like being here. I didn't like her checking up on me like that, and I feel like this is none of her business, or yours either for that matter. I didn't really want to come.

C: And yet you did.

S: It did scare me a little. She didn't really explain the lab test to me, except that it might mean I was drinking too much. Did she explain it to you?

C: She did send me the result, and the one she mentioned is called GGT. It's a liver function test - you're right about that - and it is one that goes up when a person drinks a fair amount. It's like a warning light. What do you make of that?

S: I don't like it. I guess that's what she was worried about. I know she means well.

C: She cares about you. And she must have been concerned about the alcohol in your system, too. What time did you go in for your physical?

S: It was first thing in the morning, on my way to work. I just got up, showered, got ready, and went in. I didn't even have breakfast because of the blood tests.

C: So that's a puzzle for you, how the alcohol got there in the morning.

S: I guess it must have been left over. Can that happen? I don't really drink all that much.

C: Sure. It takes some time for the liver to break down alcohol, so it can stay in the body for a while.

S: But she said I was legally drunk! I live way over on the west side, and I work downtown, so I drive in that awful traffic every morning. I felt perfectly fine.

C: Nothing out of the ordinary.

S: No. But she said if I had been pulled over, I could have been arrested.

C: That kind of shocked you.

S: I work for the city, for the mayor's office, and if that happened – well, I could lose my job.

C: All right. Well, I can see why you came in, and I'm glad that you did. All of this is new to you, and you're not happy to be here, but Dr. Clark got your attention. So shall we talk about this a bit?

S: OK, but I don't want to be lectured about drinking.

C: I won't lecture you, I promise. Now if it's all right with you, perhaps you could tell me some about how alcohol fits into your life, into an ordinary day.

S: An ordinary day. I work a long day, and by the time I get home I'm exhausted and ready to relax. I'll usually have some wine while I'm making dinner. If I don't have the kids, I just fix something quick, and then kick back.

C: It makes a difference if the kids are there or not.

S: Well, I'll usually have wine with dinner anyhow, and while I'm cooking, but I mean I make something a little nicer when they are there. I'm divorced. Most of the time he has the kids. That's not how it's supposed to be, but he's always been a control freak.

C: And then after dinner you kick back and relax.

S: Right. I usually just watch television. I don't have energy for much more than that.

C: And how does alcohol fit in there?

S: It helps me relax and just kind of turn off. I'll have some more wine, maybe a martini while I'm watching programs. Then I get tired, go to bed, get up, and do it all over again. That's when the kids aren't with me.

C: And when they are . . .

S: We'll watch TV together, unless they have some homework and then I help them with that. I guess I don't drink as much when they're there. Then in the morning I have to get them to school before work, and it gets pretty hectic. I like it when they're with me, though.

C: You have an arrangement with your ex.

S: We have joint custody, and I'm supposed to have them Monday through Wednesday and every other weekend. But it doesn't happen. Like I said, he's a control freak. He always dominates me - has to have it his way. If he says they don't come over, they don't. So a lot of the time I don't get them.

C: It's not happening the way the court ordered it.

S: Right. But I can't take him to court. I can't afford a good lawyer, and he says if I complain he'll say I'm a drunk and file for sole custody. I can't afford to fight him. [Pause, some tearfulness] I love my kids, and I feel so much better when they're with me. They belong with me.

C: In what ways do you feel better when they're there?

S: I just feel more cheerful. I have something to do. Usually when I wake up in the morning I feel terrible, nervous, exhausted, like I don't want to get out of bed, but I still do. When the kids are there, it's like I have a reason to get up.

C: And those are also days on which you drink somewhat less, when they are with you.

S: Oh, I see what you're getting at. You think one reason I feel worse on other mornings is that I'm drinking too much.

C: Just a possibility.

S: Well, there's probably something to that, but I also miss my kids.

C: It hurts you, too, when they're not with you. And at the same time, you wonder if maybe you feel worse some mornings because of drinking the night before.

S: I don't think I'm really hung over or anything, but I do feel pretty bad. Headache and so forth. Maybe so. But I'm not an alcoholic or anything like that.

### ***Dr. Clark's Referral: Four Possible Summaries***

Below are four possible summaries of the above dialogue, all intended to be helpful to Sylvia. What is being emphasized in each one? In each summary, what seems to have guided the counselor in choosing what to include or not include? How consistent is each summary with the spirit and style of motivational interviewing? Why?

#### **Summary 1**

Well, it sounds like your life is pretty stressful. When you wake up in the morning you often feel bad. You have a stressful commute in traffic in the morning, and you put in a lot of time at work. By the time you get home, you're exhausted. You're a single Mom now, and there's a constant battle with your ex about getting time with your kids. You really miss them when they're not with you, but you also feel kind of helpless to do anything about it. Mostly what you do in the evening is watch TV, and alcohol helps you to relax. Have I got it right?

#### **Summary 2**

Let me tell you what I hear so far. Because of some lab tests, Dr. Clark is concerned that you are drinking too much, and asked you to talk to me. You're wondering what the lab test means, and you don't understand how you could still have been legally drunk that morning. Some mornings you do feel pretty bad, though. On the other hand, alcohol helps you to relax, and you don't think you really drink all that much. You don't drink in the morning, and you certainly don't think you're an alcoholic. You weren't too happy to come here, and you don't want to be lectured about drinking. Is that about right?

#### **Summary 3**

So here's what you've told me so far. Dr. Clark noticed a blood test elevated that often is a warning about drinking too much, and she was concerned enough to call you personally. That scared you a little. You were also surprised that there was still enough alcohol in your bloodstream for you to be arrested for drunk driving if you had been stopped, even though you had not had anything to drink in the morning. If that happened, you could lose your job. When you wake up in the morning you often feel pretty bad - headache, tired, nervous. That seems to happen more when the kids aren't with you, and you drink more at night. What else have you noticed?

#### **Summary 4**

Well, I'd say you have a serious problem with alcohol. You say you don't drink that much, but you're drinking enough at night that you're still legally intoxicated in the morning when you're driving to work or taking your kids to school. The way you're feeling bad in the morning sounds a lot like alcohol withdrawal to me. You're using alcohol like a drug to relax you and help you forget about the stresses in your life. Your ex-husband thinks you have a problem and doesn't want the children to be with you. So you watch television and drink, and deny that you have a problem. Sure sounds like alcoholism to me! How about you?

These examples illustrate four different ways of constructing a summary.

Summary 1 is a classic client-centered summary. It emphasizes the person's (predominantly negative) feelings, perhaps with a goal of helping the person to become more aware and accepting of her current experience. This kind of summary also has a function of joining with the client, communicating understanding and acceptance. For these reasons, this summary is compatible with an MI style, but it lacks the important goal-oriented component of MI and is not likely to create movement in the direction of change.

Summary 2 is a decisional balance summary. The counselor seeks to summarize both the pros and the cons of change that Sylvia has expressed, giving them approximately equal emphasis. The underlying mental model is that people need to see clearly and explore both sides of their dilemma. This is an appropriate type of summary when the counselor is *not* seeking to move the client in a particular direction; for example, when the client is trying to make a choice and the counselor is at "equipoise" – not advocating for one side or the other. Like Summary 1, it lacks the directional movement of MI, and by putting the sustain talk last, emphasis is placed on reasons not to change.

Summary 3 is a quintessential MI summary. It offers a bouquet of change talk that Sylvia has offered. There is something powerful about hearing all of one's change talk collected, and such a summary is strategic, consciously directed toward change. This collecting summary ends with an open question intended to elicit further change talk.

Summary 4 is a confrontational summary, and is inconsistent with MI. It resembles a prosecuting attorney's summary. The apparent assumption is a deficit model, that the client is not perceiving reality and needs to be strongly persuaded.

Create your own session appropriate to the trainees, and four summaries likely to have different impact on the client. All should be fair summaries based on the content of the interview. Have a particular strategy in mind for constructing each summary (e.g., reflection of expressed feelings, decisional balance, change talk bouquet, persuasive confrontation).

**Variation:** After presenting a sample video, audio, or transcribed interview, have trainees write no more than seven sentences that they would choose to summarize what the client has said thus far. End the summary with a question. Then consider what mental model was used in choosing what to include in the summary.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

## Virginia Reel

**Abstract:** Counselors have the opportunity to talk sequentially to different clients, in order to practice specific counseling skills.

**Overview:** The Virginia Reel is an American folk dance that involves two facing lines in which partners change regularly. This exercise is an opportunity for counselors to practice specific skills in sequential interaction with different clients.

**Guidelines:** Form two facing lines of four (or more) trainees each. Each person faces a partner in the other line. One line is designated as speakers or clients, and the other as helpers.

Helpers are given a specific task, to practice particular skills. Each helper can be given a card with instructions for how they are to respond. Clients stay in place, whereas counselors shift one place to the left, with the left-most counselor moving to the right end of the line. (This mimics the American line dance from which the exercise takes its name.) The specific role given to each helper can be different, and can be kept secret, enhancing the element of surprise.

In the **Conversation** version, speakers may be asked to talk about something personally relevant (something I am thinking about changing), or to role-play a client they have seen. Allow a total of 4-5 minutes per pair. Give a one-minute warning (bell) before ending each dyad, then signal the helpers to shift partners. Coach the speaker/clients to allow opportunities for the helper to practice skills, rather than doing all of the talking. Speaker/clients stay in role, and rather than starting over with each helper, they continue the same exploration, giving the new counselor a brief summary of what has happened thus far.

In the **Volley** version, the speaker/client offers only one response (for example, a change talk statement, as in Easy as 1-2-3). Each helper is assigned to respond in a particular way. This version gives each counselor an opportunity to practice a certain type of response over and over, with different “clients.”

### Example(s):

This exercise can be used for helpers to practice the four engaging strategies (OARS) of an initial interview.

Ask OPEN questions to elicit client change talk

AFFIRM the client appropriately; agree, support, emphasize personal control

REFLECT - try for level 3 reflections

SUMMARIZE ambivalence, offer double-sided reflection

One counselor can also be given a non-MI role, such as Advise, Give Information, Argue for the change side of the ambivalence.

**Notes:** This exercise can leave the “clients” feeling fragmented or frustrated if they have been talking about personally relevant material. Under this circumstance it can be helpful to follow this exercise with dyadic extended reflective listening. This is a good exercise for after lunch, or during a lull time in training.



All counselors may be given the same skill to practice, or different counselors can be instructed to use different skills. *Protagonists* is an extreme variation in which four counselors are assigned to use dramatically different styles.

The roles of the two lines can be changed, so that former clients become counselors and vice versa.

If the lines are longer than four or five, it is not necessary for every counselor to talk to every client.

Another variation on Virginia Reel is to make it a *Bicycle Chain* whereby, when a participant reaches the right end of one line, he or she switches over to the other line. Thus, a helper, when reaching the right-hand end of the helper line, steps across and becomes a client. This can be more confusing than the Virginia Reel, but is fun.

# Responding to Sustain Talk and Discord

## Common Content

The following content points would normally be covered in presenting this module.

- Sustain talk and change talk as opposite sides of the same coin (ambivalence)
- Sustain talk is a normal part of ambivalence
  - Examples of sustain talk: DARN-CATs Desire for status quo, inability to change, reasons to sustain status quo, need to sustain status quo, commitment to status quo, activation toward status quo, steps taken to sustain status quo
- Deconstructing Resistance
  - What gets labeled as “resistance” is interpersonal behavior that is highly responsive to counselor style.
  - The label “resistance” is unhelpful and suggests blaming of the client for what is interpersonal.
  - Much of “resistance” is just *sustain talk*, a normal part of ambivalence.
  - A different type of “resistance” is *discord*, a signal of dissonance in the working relationship (e.g., discounting, interrupting, arguing)
  - Both discord and persistent sustain talk predict lack of change
- Methods for responding to sustain talk and discord
  - Reflections: *Simple reflection Amplified reflection Double-sided reflection*
  - Other responses: *Shifting focus, reframing, emphasizing personal control, apology, coming alongside, agreement with a twist* (agreement or reflection followed by reframe)
  - Sometimes a “*running head start*” can be helpful when change talk is hard to find. In this particular strategy, asking about the pros of status quo serves as a springboard for then asking about the “less good things” about status quo. This should not be confused with “decisional balance” in which the counselor seeks to equally evoke and explore the pros and cons of change. Asking about a few pros is just a head start. Doing a full decisional balance with someone who is ambivalent tends to *decrease* commitment to change.

## Both Sides of the Fence

**Abstract:** This exercise is one way to introduce the concept of resistance, denial, difficult patients, etc. It focuses on the possible reasons why people may be responding in ways that are interpreted as resistant, denying, or difficult, and also on providers' reactions to these behaviors.

The exercise begins a problem-solving approach for dealing with these experiences in practice.

The solutions that emerge are usually similar to MI and provide opportunities for emphasizing MI-consistent ways of responding. It reminds health care providers that they already have most of the needed knowledge and insights, and leads to the idea that patients also have the ability to find solutions within them if properly guided.

**Overview:** This exercise takes about 45 minutes, and is used when the topic is responding to "resistance." Difficult health care interactions sometimes emerge with patients who don't recognize a need for change, are dishonest about their situation, refuse treatment, resist provider efforts to help, etc. The group is divided into two subgroups who have different discussion topics. They explore the assigned topic and brainstorm solutions.

The groups usually come up with what's needed for helping patients overcome fears and distrust, and also with how to deal with their own stress and emotional reactions in the face of adversity. This emphasizes that they already have the knowledge necessary to build what can be compared to motivational interviewing spirit and techniques.

**Guidelines:** Ask participants to think about such patients and situations that they encounter in practice, and construct on a board or flipchart a list of the types of challenges they raise.

With 12-24 participants, divide the group into two subgroups A and B. Co-trainers may serve as facilitators for these discussion groups, or they can be left to facilitate their own discussion, with observation from the trainer(s). If the group is larger, divide them into groups of 10 or so participants each, and each group is assigned task A or B. Tell each group to identify a reporter to summarize their discussion for the group.

Group A is asked to discuss, "Why do we suppose patients behave in these ways? What might be driving these responses?" Try to see things from the patients' point of view.

Group B is asked to discuss, "How do we respond to these patient behaviors? What do we do? Why are these patient responses uncomfortable for us?" Try to clarify our own concerns, fears that may cause discomfort, or even resentment when faced with these attitudes.

Allow 10-15 minutes for this initial discussion and then introduce the next task:

Group A: "What can we do, specifically, to help patients overcome whatever has caused them to show these attitudes" Try to find ways that could help patients change their attitudes and behavior by helping them to overcome the identified causes.

Group B: “How can we help ourselves to deal with our own reactions when patients do these things? How can we be more comfortable when encountering these attitudes?” What training, attitudes, thoughts, insights, etc. might be helpful?

Allow another 10-15 minutes for this part of the discussion, keeping an eye on the energy level in the discussion groups. Then have a reporter from each group summarize what they concluded. Start with Group(s) A, and list first the result of the first part of discussion – why patients may behave in this way. Then summarize possible solutions that were generated. If there are more than two groups, a different approach is to ask reporters to voice one point at a time, rotating among groups, without repeating what has been said before, until all different points have been mentioned. Affirm responses, and summarize them on the board or flip chart, particularly reflecting and exploring those that are MI-consistent.

**Example(s):** Some of the usual answers are

Group A: Patients are not used to talking freely about themselves, they fear our judgment, they fear we will want to change their lifestyles, they feel ashamed of their behavior, they feel anxious about their behavior and prefer to avoid talking about it, they have other priorities, they are concerned about immediate needs, they are afraid they will lose the pleasure linked to their behavior, or psychoactive effects linked to substances, etc.

Group B: Health care specialists are often concerned that they will fail in their attempt to help their patients, which may be linked to fears of incompetency, guilt feelings, etc. They may feel they have an obligation for results, they may be confronted by fatigue and stress, feel impatient or resentful, be concerned for their patients’ welfare, etc.

Group A solutions: showing patients as early as possible they will not be judged, they will not be forced, they are respected in their choices even when the health specialist would suggest a different option, showing understanding for the needs, priorities, showing empathy for the losses a change implies, etc..

Group B solutions: take care of our own health, accept the idea that we cannot realistically force people to change and maintain a change of behavior, accept that we will not see all our patients undertaking appropriate behavior changes, what counts is doing our best, for that we need training, to know what works best, to be able to rely on others, work in networks, be able to talk about our own emotions, overcome our fears, see successes and know what we are doing works, etc.

**Notes:** This is a relatively easy way to get health workers to think in a positive and problem-solving way about the obstacles they encounter. It helps develop group dynamics, confidence and self-efficacy, and a better understanding of the patient that will contribute to their own empathy. It also shows they usually have the solutions once they can identify the roots of the problem behavior, and helps them be more confident that patients also given the possibility can find solutions.

**Contributed by:** Guy Azouläi

## Batting Practice

**Abstract:** Trainees can learn to make reflections, or respond to sustain talk and discord. Doing so is easier than it looks, and this can be a confidence builder.

**Overview:** Trainees learn to make reflections “on their feet” in “batting practice,” drawing on an image from baseball or cricket. The concept of the game is that the trainee does not have to “hit a home run,” but merely has to “get some wood on it” as if it were batting practice rather than a major league game.

**Guidelines:** Provide a demonstration before the exercise begins by having members of the audience “pitch” (or bowl, for cricketers) statements to you and model reflective listening or other ways of responding to sustain talk and discord. Any group member makes a “pitch” and the batter (you) takes a swing at it, and that is the end of the turn. (The pitcher does not respond to the batter’s reply.) Then form trainees into small-group batting cages of 6-8 in which one person at a time takes a turn as batter. The other members of the group throw out specific client statements to which the batter responds with a short, simple reflection or other MI-consistent response (such as emphasizing personal control). Each batter responds to a specified number of different “pitches” (3 or 4 work well) volunteered by other members of the group, before the turn moves on to the next batter.

**Example(s):**

Two good applications of the exercise are in helping trainees to make reflective listening statements, or in coping with client sustain talk and discord statements.

**Notes:** This exercise is usually a lot of fun. It’s a good, energizing on-your-feet exercise after people have been sitting or listening for a while, after lunch, or toward the end of a training day. It can be done while seated, but is usually better on your feet.

**Contributed by:** Dave Rosengren

## Dodge Ball

**Abstract:** Trainees work in teams to reply to client statements with MI-consistent responses such as reflections or open questions.

**Overview:** Trainees can learn to differentiate between reflections and questions and learn to respond non-defensively to defensive statements by using this team approach to “dodge” what clients throw at them. Dodge Ball differs from Batting Practice in that any member of a team may provide a stimulus or response.

**Guidelines:** Arrange participants into 2 teams, facing each other standing in a line on either side of the room. With large groups, several pairs of teams can be arranged. Assign one team to be the “stimulus” team who will throw out sustain talk or discord statements that might be made by clients. Ask the other “response” team to respond to each statement in turn. Provide coaching as needed to the team “dodging” the client statements. The response team may huddle to come up with an optimal response.

**Example:** This exercise works well in practicing responses to sustain talk and discord statements. Explain that in MI, we can learn to “dodge” challenging statements and turn them into opportunities for exploration by using responses such as reflection, reframe, and emphasizing control. The sustain talk or discord statement is the ball thrown by the stimulus team at the other. The members of the response team are to “dodge” the ball and toss it back to the other team with an MI-consistent response. Ask the stimulus team to sequentially throw out “difficult statements” that they hear in their work setting. Encourage cheering. When the response team has had adequate time to practice, have the teams switch roles.

**Notes:** Because the groups are asked to form teams, the pressure on any one participant is lessened. This can be a helpful variation on Batting Practice for those trainees who seem shy about participation, because in general, more extroverted trainees will respond first. However, be sure to encourage or coach participation from all.

The stimulus team may be limited to single client responses (as in Batting Practice), or as a variation, may be permitted to reply to the other team’s response, following up on the earlier stimulus statement.

**Contributed by:** Karen Ingersoll

## Out of the Woods

**Abstract:** This is an exercise specifically about recovering from mistakes. You can describe and model a variety of ways of recovering from a misstep, and then have trainees practice.

**Overview:** Everyone makes mistakes, and when you do it is often quickly apparent in the client's response. When you see your client becoming more defensive, evasive, etc., how do you recover? There are, of course, a variety of ways to do it successfully after a gaff. This exercise intentionally begins with a gaff, and then explores ways to recover.

### **Guidelines:**

You can begin by generating (evoking from trainees) several different ways to respond when you've obviously missed the mark. Some possibilities include: (1) reflecting the client's immediate reaction; (2) apologizing or taking personal responsibility; (3) changing focus - redirecting to less volatile terrain; or (4) do-over: redoing your prior response that elicited an adverse reaction - What I should have said . . .

The basic structure is to start by making an MI-inconsistent response, to which the speaker (in a role-play or real-play) responds defensively, and then coming back with an MI-consistent response. A good way to begin these volleys is for the speaker to offer a statement involving sustain talk or discord. Thus, the basic structure is:

**SPEAKER:** Sustain or Discord

**PRACTITIONER:** Give an MI-inconsistent response (such as giving information or advice without permission, disagreeing, confronting)

**SPEAKER:** (Respond naturally – most likely more Sustain or Discord)

**PRACTITIONER:** Give an MI-consistent response

**SPEAKER** (Respond naturally)

If desired, this exchange can be continued, giving the practitioner the opportunity to offer several MI-consistent responses in a row in the process of recovery.

This is a good exercise to model first. Except with more advanced trainees, this exercise is likely to require closer supervision and assistance, so use this exercise where a trainer can observe, providing feedback and coaching.

**Example(s):**

**Speaker:** I don't think I drink all that much really.

**Practitioner:** Well, actually you do drink a lot more than most people. (Confront)

**Speaker:** Are you saying that I'm an alcoholic? Because I'm not!

**Practitioner:** That's really clear to you, that you are not alcoholic. (Reflect)

**Speaker:** Damn right.

**Practitioner:** Sorry, that's not what I meant to say at all, and I didn't mean to offend you.

(Apology)

**Speaker:** Well it just sounded that way.

**Practitioner:** That's a very sensitive topic for you. (Reflect)

**Speaker:** My wife thinks that I'm an alcoholic.

**Practitioner:** What I meant is that you do seem to be able to drink quite a bit more than most people.

(Reframe)

**Speaker:** Well, that's true. I do hold it pretty well.

**Practitioner:** And like you, I'm not interested in labels like "alcoholic." What I care about is what's happening in your life, and what, if anything, you want to do about it. (Shifting focus)

**Notes:** This is a good exercise to pull out when a question arises about how to respond to or recover from a blunder. If a golf metaphor works for you, these ways of responding to a gaff can be likened to various ways of recovering from a bad tee shot, depending on where it lands: in the rough (carefully hitting it back onto the fairway), in a sand trap (blasting out), in the water (starting over), etc.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller



## Protagonists

**Abstract:** Trainees explore various strategies for resolving ambivalence

**Overview:** This exercise is especially helpful in clarifying the role of the counselor in influencing the person's level of readiness for change.

**Guidelines:** In groups of six, discuss for about 20 minutes. The client role is to discuss an issue on which he or she is ambivalent or undecided; e.g., whether to stay in a present job. Four protagonists are assigned particular roles, and each takes 3-5 minutes to be a counselor with the client. Once one has counseled for the prescribed length of time, the next counselor takes over. The client and audience may or may not be told what the counselor roles are. The surprise factor can be engaging if the counselor roles are not revealed.

Counselor #1 argues for one side of the ambivalence

Counselor #2 argues for the other side of the ambivalence

Counselor #3 communicates indifference: "I really don't care what you do."

Counselor #4 shows interest and curiosity for how the person is going to work this out: "I want to understand how *you* see it. This is your choice, and I'd like to understand your reasoning."

**Notes:** It can be particularly useful to assign observers to track various aspects of the four interactions.

Contributed by Jeff Allison and Tom Barth

## Rolling Out the Rug of Resistance

**Abstract:** To increase awareness of the concept and presence of resistance in client-counselor exchanges

**Overview:** An interactive discussion in which participants consider the nature of “resistance,” and what counselor responses are likely to increase or decrease it. It particularly highlights the counselor’s very active role in responding to and managing resistance.

**Materials:** Whiteboard or flip chart, handout with the chart below can be helpful for the participants. On the flipchart, list three columns, Increase, Expressions of Resistance, Decrease

**Structure:** Allow about 30 minutes, including taking inventory of participants' suggestions of resistance utterances.

**Guidelines:**

1. Depending on the mix of background within the participants in the group, it may be helpful to begin the exercise with a short presentation of the concept of resistance in MI and how this in some ways differs from how resistance is viewed in other fields such as psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, physics, economics or whatever area you feel comfortable in comparing.
2. Once the scene is set you can begin by requesting from the participants how "resistance" tends to be expressed. Most likely things like anger, defensiveness, disappointment, fear, shame and the likes will come up in the discussion. These aspects are noted in the center field of the chart. Summarize, elicit more examples, until the list seems to be complete.
3. The next step is to ask the participants what in the client/counselor exchange could lead to *increasing* the level of resistance. These aspects are noted in the left field. Elicit, summarize, complete.
4. The next step is to ask the participants what in the client/counselor exchange could lead to *decreasing* the level of resistance. These aspects are noted in the right field. Elicit, summarize, complete.
5. The final step is asking the participants to recall and write down maybe two or three examples of utterances from their clients that may be seen as expressing resistance. Depending on the size of the group, these utterances may perhaps be written on a flip chart. These sheet(s) of resistance utterances may be used in a number of ways in further exercises.

**Contributed by:** Stefan Sanner and Timothy Van Loo

## Three Chairs Exercise

**Abstract:** To help trainees increase awareness of signs of defensiveness and/or cooperation and motivation from an interviewee. Purpose: So trainees can begin to see how to learn MI from their clients.

**Overview:** To increase awareness of interviewee's feelings of defensiveness or motivation. The trainee is able to directly observe how his/her utterances affect the interviewee by getting overt (gross body) feedback depending on the interviewer's use of MI skills or roadblocks or traps.

**Guidelines:** Three chairs are arranged to face five other chairs (about 6-8 feet between the facing rows). Five trainees occupy the chairs in the one row. The trainer takes the middle chair in the three-chair row, facing the trainees. The trainer real-plays or role-plays the client rolechoosing a behavior about which s/he is ambivalent or has not mastered change. The remaining participants observe in a fish-bowl arrangement.

The trainee at one end of the row begins with 3-5 interactions in an MI interview and then passes to the next person who uses 3-5 interactions, and so on. The stated goal is to explore and possibly resolve ambivalence.

The trainer takes the middle chair which is designated "neutral" and remains in that chair until feeling particular empathy or affirmation, on the one hand, OR feeling some defensiveness or discord on the other. The chair to his left is designated "motivated or cooperative," the chair to the right "defensive or discordant." Immediately after an utterance from a participant which evokes feelings in one direction or the other, the trainer moves to that chair while also verbally responding.

Any trainee, whether participant or observer, can call "time out" to inquire about why the trainer moved OR about any other process matter. (Variation: while moving to a chair, the trainer can mutter to him/herself what is happening internally as to why s/he is moving).

The trainer demonstrates how the exercise works before beginning.

**Example(s):**

Trainer: I have some ambivalence about always using MI-adherent behaviors in the classroom.

Trainee: (*judgmental tone*) *Hmmm. After 10 years of training this, I would think you would have resolved this by now. (Trainer moves to the "defensive" chair).*

Trainer: Well, I haven't.

Trainee: (*empathic tone*) *So, you have been struggling with this for a long time. (Trainer moves to the "cooperative" chair).*

**Notes:** Trainees need to have some experience practicing MI before using this exercise—otherwise they find it hard to understand why the trainer is moving and can become defensive. Most trainers use it later in MI training.

A participant who is quite familiar with MI could also be the real-play client in this exercise, rather than the trainer serving this role.

**Contributed by:** Mike Clark

# **Planning**

## **Negotiating a Change Plan**

### **Common Content**

The following content points might be covered when training this skill.

- Recognizing client signals of readiness to begin discussing a plan
- Testing the water: Recapitulation and key question
- Negotiating a change plan as a form of evoking and guiding
- Elicit – provide - elicit
- Generating alternatives
- Giving information and advice (with permission: 3 kinds of permission)
- Honing down to a specific change plan or first step
- Beware pressing for a change plan if the client is not ready
- Strengthening confidence

## On the Threshold of Planning

**Abstract:** An exercise on using an MI-consistent style in the planning process.

**Overview:** There is a great temptation to switch into an expert advice role when it comes time for the planning process. This exercise encourages the interviewer to continue using the same OARS skills to facilitate planning. As stated here, the exercise is relatively unstructured as to how the interviewer should proceed or what the specific outcome should be.

**Guidelines:** This can be done in dyads with one interviewer and one speaker, who can then switch roles. The speaker's real-play topic is: "A change topic that you very much want to do something about." This instruction is intended to elicit a change goal that is well-along with preparatory change talk, and on the verge of planning. If a prioritizing exercise has been used earlier, the speaker can choose a topic from his or her change priorities list.

Instruct the interviewer to use MI skills to facilitate the planning process.

**Variations:** An observer can be added to make a triad, with the observer tracking mobilizing change talk (CATs) statements from the client. The interviewer could be given more structure in how to proceed.

**Notes:** I usually use this after basic evoking skills are fairly well in place. Note that evoking continues during the planning process, now focused more on the *how* than the *why* of change.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

## Round Robin

**Abstract:** Trainees practice skills in group format by taking turns responding to a client.

**Overview:** Trainees practice skills in a group format with low performance demands and observational opportunities. Trainees are split into groups of about 8-9 people. One participant is asked to play a client. The remainder of the participants become a single Counselor. The client begins by making a statement and the first “Counselor” responds. No “Counselor” gets to give two responses in a row. The client replies, and then the next Counselor (going around the circle) responds. This format continues around the group the issue is resolved or out of steam. If allotted time remains, another person may take the role of a client.

**Guidelines:** Give clear instructions before people break up into circles. Establish a client role in advance. Explain that each “Counselor” is to maintain continuity with the process in a “yes, and” style, rather taking on the role of a new counselor. Point out that participants cannot plan ahead what they will say, because it should be determined by the prior counselor’s response and the client’s immediate reply to it. Clarify that no counselor may respond twice in a row. When the client speaks, it’s on to the next counselor.

**Example:**

Start with a client who seems to be ready to transition into planning. The first counselor provides a recapitulation and asks an open question, to which the client responds. Then the counselor to that person’s left offers the next response, and so on.

**Notes:** A learning advantage of this exercise is that it slows down the process, and helps participants focus on its continuity. Participants cannot plan ahead what they will say, because it depends on what happens in the turn immediately preceding.

This can work well when there is a particular sequence of tasks to be accomplished, as in the transition into and through planning.

This exercise needs to be monitored closely as it can run out of steam quickly. If things don’t move well, whisper a suggestion into the next counselor’s ear just before their turn. You can also switch clients. Remind trainees this is not the full package, just a chance to practice and observe specific skills.

**Contributed by:** Paul Delaney for the original idea that led to this exercise.

### Variation #1 on Round Robin: **Forethought**

Before each counselor speaks to the client, the counselor explains to the trainer the plan - the strategy behind what he or she is about to say, the intent, the direction in which he or she is going, etc. In other words, before you say the words, explain your rationale for saying them.

Client: Well, for one thing, I hope I would feel better about myself if I quit smoking.  
Counselor 1 (to trainer): I guess I would want to know how, in what way, she might feel better.  
Trainer (to counselor): OK, and why would you do that?  
Counselor 2 (to trainer): I heard change talk there – “I would feel better about myself,” – and I would like to hear some elaboration, to get more change talk on this theme.  
Trainer (to counselor): OK, try it.  
Counselor 1 (to client): In what way might you feel better about yourself?  
Client: I guess I’d feel like I accomplished something.  
Counselor 2 (to trainer): I think I’d just simply reflect.  
Trainer (to counselor): What are you thinking - why reflect?  
Counselor 2 (to trainer): To reinforce the change talk, and also understand it better.  
Trainer: OK.  
Counselor 2 (to client): Quitting smoking would be a real accomplishment for you.  
Client: Yes. I would feel more in control of myself.  
Counselor 3 (to client): Do you like feeling in control?  
Trainer (to Counselor 3) Remember, before you talk to the client, tell me what you’re thinking. What’s behind the question?  
Counselor 3 (to trainer): Oh, sorry. I’m just curious if she’s a control freak.  
Trainer (to Counselor 3): And where are you going with this in terms of MI? How is this related to MI?  
Counselor 3 (to trainer): Maybe it’s not. I was just thinking she might be too worried about control.  
Trainer (to Counselor 3): How could you turn your question into a reflection?  
Counselor 3 (to trainer): Do you like feeling in control? Oh, I see. “You like feeling in control.”  
Trainer (to Counselor 3): Great. Do it.  
Counselor 3 (to client): You like feeling in control.

### Variation #2 on Round Robin: **Recovery**

Have one “counselor” (it could be you, the trainer) who, whenever his or her turn comes, provides an MI-inconsistent “blooper.” The client responds, and then the next counselor’s task is to recover from the blooper. This provides practice in recovering from little mistakes, and adds some fun to the exercise.

# Consolidating Commitment

## Common Content

The following content points might be covered when introducing this skill.

- Differentiating mobilizing change talk from preparatory change talk
- Eliciting mobilizing change talk
- Strength of commitment – recognizing and honoring lower-strength commitment language
- It is *not* necessary to hear commitment language in order for change to happen



## Do You Swear?

**Abstract:** Trainees learn the difference between DARN and commitment language

**Overview:** This is generally done as a demonstration, working with five people in front of an audience.

**Guidelines:** Select five people who are seated close to each other (usually in a row). Tell them that you are going to ask them some questions, and that you want them to give you a particular answer, regardless of the question:

Person 1: "I want to"

Person 2: "I could"

Person 3: "I have good reasons to"

Person 4: "I need to"

Person 5 "I will"

Then you ask a question to which the expected answer is commitment language (I will), and have each person give the prepared answer. If the audience is large, you need a microphone for this.

**Example:**

Will you take this person to be your lawfully wedded spouse, and be wholly faithful, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, so long as you both shall live?

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

**Notes:** Discuss with the audience what the difference is in these answers, and what is lacking in the first four (DARN). To say "I *want* to" is not to say, "I will." To say that you *could* is not to say that you are going to. Having really good *reasons* is not the same as deciding to do it. And saying that you *need* to is not to say that you will do it.

**Contributed by:** Terri Moyers

## Calling the CATs

**Abstract:** An exercise to practice evoking mobilizing change talk for a developed plan

**Overview:** Content can vary, but the interviewer focuses on trying to evoke mobilizing change talk (CATs). This is easiest, of course, with a change goal that the speaker is well motivated to pursue, and for which a tentative plan is in place.

**Guidelines:** Trainees work in triads with one interviewer, one speaker, one observer at a time. They rotate roles so that each participant has an opportunity to experience each role.

I often use this exercise at the end of a training workshop, inviting the speaker to talk about “What I have learned in this workshop that I can put into practice.”

The interviewer uses MI skills to evoke mobilizing change talk.

The observer tracks mobilizing change talk using a coding sheet with these rows: Commitment, Activation, and Taking Steps, counting and recording examples of each.

**Variations:** This exercise can be used after a planning process has been practiced for a particular change goal, to consolidate commitment to the plan.

**Notes:** This can be linked to “implementation intention” research showing that people are more likely to carry through on action when they have a specific plan and have expressed to another person their intent to carry it out. When used as above at the end of a workshop, the exercise is evoking change talk about the use of MI in practice.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

# Feedback and Coaching

## Common Content

When training feedback and coaching, these introductory points might be covered:

- Few people develop competence in MI simply from reading, watching videos, and/or attending a workshop
- Introductory training can easily foster false confidence that one is doing MI well
- Metaphor: Consider trying to learn to play a sport or musical instrument by reading, watching videos, or attending a workshop.
- Feedback and coaching based on *observed* practice helps to develop MI skills
- Ideally use a structured observational system rather than just offering subjective impressions
- Trainees can record and then observe their own practice using structured criteria
- Feedback and coaching should be rich in positive reinforcement of what is being done well
- Rather than making multiple suggestions, consider what *one* recommendation to make that would be a useful next step for this person in developing proficiency in MI.

## Giving Feedback to Trainees

**Abstract:** Trainers move among trainees during exercises and offer suggestions and observations.

**Overview:** The trainer initiates a practice exercise and then circulates among trainees. The trainer's tasks are to listen, help groups stay on-task, and reinforce MI consistent skills. The trainer may also problem-solve, offer suggestions and guide participants back on task.

**Guidelines:** The trainer focus primarily on positive reinforcement of good practice, rather than pointing out errors. Look for things to reinforce. Suggest alternative ways of responding that would be more consistent with MI.

**Example(s):**

The trainer observes a participant is supposed to be practicing reflective listening but instead is peppering the speaker with questions.

“Can I hop in here for just a minute? John, I notice you are working hard to understand Lisa. That's exactly what I want you to do. In addition, I'd like you to focus on a asking fewer questions and offering a little more listening. Can I show you what I mean? Lisa, let's back up just a minute. You said, “I'm tired of all this nonsense”. Can we start there? Okay, go ahead and say that again.”

Proceed with the exercise and then ease the listener back into the listening role. Then reinforce them for the new behavior and leave.

**Notes:** Participants feel vulnerable when you intervene. Make sure you reinforce their strengths and ease them back into their role. Do not stay with them unless they continue to struggle and want you to stay. Remember they are trying a new skill and this is hard to do, even for skilled practitioners. It can be helpful to sit or stoop down at or below eye level so that you are not towering over the participants.

## Structured Interviewer Feedback

**Abstract:** Trainees practice MI, and their performance is coded in a structured way by observers, either live or via tape. The trainees then receive feedback from the coding of their work

**Overview:** Accurate feedback of performance is one of the fundamental conditions necessary for learning a new skill. During the acquisition process of a complex skill, misperception of one's own performance is common unless there is immediate feedback (as there is in driving a golf ball). Both practitioners and observers get caught up in the story content and miss underlying processes. A structured observational system can allow for reliable coding of MI skillfulness, and more importantly can provide specific information about where further change is needed in practice behavior.

**Guidelines:** Choose an observational system of appropriate focus and complexity (see *Observer Tracking*). Some systems can be used during training, with trainees themselves doing the process coding. Others (like MITI or MISC) are more complex, and require the establishment and maintenance of inter-rated reliability. Clearly define the coding system to be used. Coding may be done live (as during a training session), or later via an audiotape or videotape. Use a structured feedback form that provides specific information for trainees about their practice. Provide sufficient information so that trainees can interpret the feedback without substantial oral explanation.

**Example(s):**

Counting reflections and questions

Counting simple and complex reflections

See *Observer Tracking* for example coding forms.

## Train the Coach

**Abstract:** This is a structured dyadic practice exercise, with the addition that there is third trainee in the role of a coach observing and participating in the process.

**Overview:** Trainees form groups of three. Two of them become speaker and listener (real-play), or client and counselor (role-play). The trainer provides clear instructions, and then the dyadic exchange begins. The coach interrupts the action at appropriate points to affirm or suggest changes.

**Guidelines:** Assign trainees to work in threes, with one assigned the role of coach. Give clear instructions *to the coach* to be relayed to the other two participants. Instruct the other two participants to work as if they had not heard your own instructions, and to do only and exactly what the coach instructs them to do. (Alternatively, take the coaches aside into another room and give them the instructions out of hearing of the other participants.) Each participant in the dyad should have a clear role assigned by the coach. Participants may also be instructed to make some mistakes, or wander off the task at times. When the action begins, the coach allows the conversation to run for a while on-task, and interrupts to affirm, provide suggestions, “rewind” the action to redo a particular interaction, “fast forward” to a later point in the interview, etc. The coach may also jump in and model the responses to be learned.

**Example(s):** Choose enough coaches so that there will be one per dyad and instruct them in how to give instructions for the exercise. A structured practice like INTEGRATING REFLECTIVE LISTENING is a good example. In this case, the coach would give instructions to the listener and speaker, with the listener’s task to be responding solely with reflective listening. The coach then ensures that the listener is indeed offering reflective listening, and coaches for fine points like voice inflection, question vs. reflection, level of reflection, etc.

**Notes:** The coach may learn the most from this exercise, because it involves tracking process, providing guidance, and fixing errors. The trainer may “coach the coach” in a variety of ways by stopping the action to (1) affirm what the coach is doing well, (2) interview the coach about what is happening, what is needed; (3) suggest a particular coaching strategy; (4) interview listener/counselor about the coach’s helpfulness.

## Team Consult

**Abstract:** The use of an advisory team can make role-playing motivational interviewing less intimidating

**Overview:** This technique has the advantage of engaging observers as well as those involved in the role-play. The Team Consult technique makes minor changes to the general fishbowl exercise (like *Tag Team*) to reduce anxiety about role-play and build coherence among observers.

### Guidelines:

- 1) Introduce the concept of Team Consult, in which all observers will be called upon to provide options for the interviewer during the role-play. The observers, then, are the ones who must work to provide solutions for the interviewer. Observers can take handouts with them as they sit in a group behind the interviewer, to encourage creativity.
- 2) A “client” and interviewer sit facing each other, with the remainder of the Team sitting behind the interviewer. The interviewer’s role is simply to serve as a mouthpiece for the Team, trying out strategies developed by the Team. The Team decides on how to proceed, the interviewer tries out the suggestion, and may turn back to the Team at any time for further instructions. Have the interviewer turn to the team with the expectation that there will be at least two or three choices about how to proceed. The Team calls out ideas like “how about asking an open question?” and encourage the team to give various MI-consistent ideas. Encourage a dialogue between the interviewer and the team. If the interviewer turns to you, listen and reflect, then suggest a team consult before offering suggestions (modeling trust in the creativity of the team). When multiple suggestions are offered by the Team, the interviewer choose which to try.
- 3) Consider asking the “client” what should happen next, or what would help.
- 4) End with having the interviewer tell the team how the consults were helpful and explore their thoughts about how they used them. This should provoke a lively discussion about using motivational interviewing.

### Example(s):

This can be a particularly good exercise for slow-motion practicing of how to respond to more challenging clients.

**Notes:** The interviewer can be allowed varying amounts of discretion and responsibility. In general, have the interviewer stay close to the strategy suggested by the Team, and not need to improvise beyond it before getting further Team consultation. The Team may be instructed to develop a consensus about how to proceed before the interviewer carries it out, or the Team may offer several suggestions from which the interviewer selects one to try.

**Contributed by:** Terri Moyers

## Team Consult Warm-Up

**Abstract:** This is a warm-up to the “Team Consult” exercise, designed to allow trainees to psychologically prepare themselves for the role-play by “exercising their empathy muscles” and then brainstorming ways to use MI with a difficult or challenging client.

**Overview:** The Team Consult Warm-Up blends the process of a classical psychodrama with the group facilitation techniques of a Balint supervisory group. The process should be open and flexible within the following suggested structure.

### Guidelines:

- 1) Introduce the Team Consult exercise.
- 2) Identify a participant who would like to volunteer to enact a difficult or challenging client. Once the Volunteer is identified, instruct the Volunteer to provide some basic information about the client, keeping in mind the importance of confidentiality and not relaying any identifying information.
- 3) Have the Volunteer identify the motivational challenge that the interviewer faces in working with this client. Examples of motivational challenges include: ways to lower the client’s defensiveness, identifying a focus for treatment, trying to engage a nonverbal client, etc.
- 4) Once the Volunteer has satisfactorily described the client, the group leader initiates a group discussion of the client. The suggested format for the discussion is as follows:
  - a) **ASK FOR FACTS:** The group leader instructs members that each one of them is allowed to ask one question of fact about the client, in order to gather further information and facilitate understanding. The leader’s job is to limit members to one question of fact and not allow the group to fall into a fact-finding mission. Once each member has had one turn asking a question, the group leader asks the Volunteer to step back from the group (literally moving his or her chair away) and to become temporarily an observer of the group process whose job is simply to listen to the upcoming discussion.
  - b) **EXERCISE EMPATHY:** The group members are instructed to figuratively become the client and, one by one, to speak what the client is thinking and feeling. The goal is to have group members identify with the client’s experience in order to facilitate empathic understanding. The group leader’s job is to model the use of empathic understanding and reflective listening in a group process, in order to facilitate group cohesiveness and a mutual understanding among group members of the client’s internal process. The group leader may offer reflective statements and summarizations of individual members’ statements, or of the communications of the group as a whole. Once the leader senses that the group has offered a sufficient number of empathic statements, the leader can offer a grand summary to shift this part of the group process.
  - c) **IDENTIFY MI TOOLS:** The group now shifts to a brainstorming and problem solving approach. The leader instructs group members to identify the motivational challenge the client presents, and to discuss how MI could be used to address this client’s needs. The job of the leader is to facilitate the group process by maintaining a flexible MI focus and encouraging not only ideas but also specific MI strategies that could be used to help the client. The group leader should model OARS in addition to eliciting specific MI strategies identified by group members. The leader can then end the discussion with a grand summary of the member’s perceptions of the client and the MI strategies identified as potentially helpful.



- d) **BRING BACK THE VOLUNTEER:** The leader then invites the Volunteer to return to the group and offer his/her thoughts and reactions to what s/he heard in the group process. The Volunteer will be asked to give his/her impressions of what s/he believes would be helpful to the client after having heard the group discussion. The leader should model the use of OARS and incorporate the Volunteer's reactions into the reactions from the group as a whole.
- e) **SHIFT TO TEAM CONSULT:** At this time the leader shifts to the team consult exercise. It is suggested that the Volunteer play the role of the client and that other group members volunteer for the role of the therapist.

**Notes:** Notes: The Warm-Up can help participants deepen their capacity for empathy with difficult clients in general as well as preparing the therapist for the team consult to follow. It has also increased the sense of group cohesion among trainees and can be reenergizing toward the end of a long workshop.

**Contributed by:** Tad Gorski and Allan Zuckoff

## Masters Class

**Abstract:** This is a collaborative method for developing MI proficiency with a small group (up to about 12-15 participants). It could be used at any level of training.

Note that the title is “Masters Class” (developing mastery together), and *not* “Master Class” (learn from a Master). It has also been called a “Learning Community.”

### Overview:

A group of trainees work together with a trainer to design a practice case scenario, develop MI strategies to be used in this situation, and try them out. The case practice segment is limited to ten minutes, and feedback from the group is constrained to provide positive reinforcement for skills demonstrated. Preparing, developing, practicing and debriefing one case scenario takes 40-50 minutes. Working together over time the Masters Class can develop a variety of case scenarios and creatively consider how MI can be practiced. The atmosphere is designed to be one of safety, high interest, and mutual learning. Seating is typically in a circle of chairs or tables.

### Outline:

There are six parts to a Masters Class exercise.

- (1) **Preparation** provides the group with instructions and guidelines for what will happen. This happens primarily at the beginning of the Masters Class and does not need to be repeated with every new case.
- (2) **Case Development** entails the construction of a detailed client case scenario including the context within which consultation is occurring.
- (3) **Strategic Planning** involves evoking from the group how an interviewer might apply MI in this particular case situation.
- (4) **Selection** is the process of participants volunteering to be the participants in the Practice.
- (5) **Practice** is enactment of a consultation by participants role-playing the client(s) and interviewer.
- (6) **Debriefing** is a carefully structured discussion of the Practice session.

### Guidelines for Preparation

It is vital for participants to understand the *whole* process before beginning the first case. In particular, everyone should understand in advance the rules for giving feedback about the Practice segment. Here is an example of what a trainer might say during Preparation.

*This process is called the Masters Class because together we are going to consider how motivational interviewing might be applied in a variety of situations. The purpose is to develop proficiency in MI, and we will be working together collaboratively. Here is how one round works. Together we develop a case scenario in which you would like to experience how MI can be practiced; perhaps one where you find it challenging to do MI. Once we have a case constructed, we'll brainstorm some strategies for practicing MI in this particular situation. You will have the opportunity to take a client role or an interviewer role trying out the case and strategies we have discussed. It's always tempting in this situation to construct "the client from hell," an intractable case who does not respond no matter what the interviewer does, but that's not what we want here. There are no clients as difficult as those role-played by clinicians! What we want for the client here is a human being who responds normally to*

*different kinds of interactions. Each Practice segment will be limited to ten minutes, after which we'll stop no matter where the interview process is.*

*So what happens then? We discuss the Practice experience in a particular way. You will be invited to comment only on what you saw as particularly good examples of MI; what you thought was particularly effective. There will be no suggestions like, "Well, I would have done it this way," because often those are just stylistic differences, and there are many different ways to do MI well. The person who played the client will also have the opportunity to describe his or her experience during the interview and to say what seemed particularly helpful, supportive, or effective. This means that the rest of you, while watching the 10-minute practice, need to be noticing and jotting down what you saw that looked like good MI, and why. Is that clear?*

*When you have commented, I will also say what I saw that I appreciated as examples of good MI practice. And I reserve for myself the privilege of making one suggestion, and only one, for what might be a good next step in practicing MI. It's not helpful to get twelve suggestions. What you can expect, then, when you try out being an interviewer is positive feedback about what you are doing well, and one suggestion from me.*

*Any questions?*

### **Guidelines for Case Development**

The case scenarios come from the participants based on their own experience. Most often it is an actual or composite client from their own work setting, using a fictitious name and changing any identifying details. Ask for several suggestions of possible cases, and then choose one to develop. Your choice might be guided by interest expressed by participants, your sense of what kind of case would be good for skill development, your sense of the suggester's clarity about such cases, etc. But you decide the case.

Having done so, develop the case in sufficient detail. For example:

- Who is this person? How old?
- Where are we talking to him or her? Why has he or she come in?
- Is this a first visit? What background information do we have? What has already happened?
- What are the person's life circumstances: family, work, difficulties, interests?
- What are this person's strengths?
- What are the presenting problem(s)? How does the person perceive them?
- What is the focus for the consultation?
- What motivations does this person have for change?
- What expectations, reluctance or concerns does the person have about being here?
- Are there external pressures for change (from court, family etc.)? What are they?

Discuss explicitly the "difficulty level" of the case. What importance and confidence ratings might this person give early in the session (assuming that there is a clear focus)? Be sure you have discussed positive (strengths, motivations for change) as well as challenging aspects of the case.

It is also possible to use a "real-play" in Masters Class format. Here the "client" is discussing an actual life situation (such as a change he or she wishes to make). This usually works best after the group has some experience and trust together.

## **Guidelines for Strategic Planning**

With a clear case scenario, you now evoke from participants ideas for how one might practice MI in this situation. If this is a first meeting, what would be helpful for the *Engaging* process? How would a *Focus* emerge? How could the interviewer begin? What would guide the interviewer in deciding what to do next? What open questions might be asked, and why those? What would the interviewer listen for? How might he or she respond to sustain talk or discord? You need not develop one consensus strategy (although that would be all right); you can develop a menu of strategic options from which the interviewer can choose.

You can also contribute suggestions, but avoid being the expert with the answers. Primarily you should evoke possible strategies from participants, and ask how and why they are consistent (or inconsistent) with an MI style. The amount of coaching that you do during the Strategic Planning segment will depend on the level of training and experience of participants. If MI-inconsistent responses are suggested, ask participants whether that would be consistent with an MI style and why (or why not). If participants are unclear, do explain how and why a suggested strategy is not something one would be likely to do within MI, and then go on with eliciting possibilities.

Continue discussion until there have been enough MI-consistent suggestions to give the interviewer an excellent headstart. Offer a summary of the MI strategies that have been suggested.

You can also focus Strategic Development on a particular process (Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, Planning) or skill set such as OARS. Before beginning you can “fast forward” a case to a point where one or more processes have been reasonably accomplished, and the starting point of the Practice is to try a particular process or skill.

## **Guidelines for Selection**

Now ask for participants who would like to try out some of the strategies suggested, and also someone who could portray the client. It has been my experience that with advanced groups, the person who volunteers to be the interviewer is often the person who suggested the case, but that is not required. Thank and affirm those who will participate in the Practice. I usually put two chairs in the middle of the circle or at the opening of a horseshoe configuration. Make sure that everyone can hear. Ask if the interviewer or client have any questions before starting. Remind them that the conversation will end at ten minutes, wherever they happen to be at that point. Remind observers to note good examples of MI practice.

Getting initial volunteers to be the interviewer can be more difficult with less experienced trainees. (Volunteers to play the client are usually easy to find.) Even under the safe constraints of the Masters Class, volunteering can feel quite threatening. If no one agrees, you have two options:

1. Select someone who seems up to the task.
2. Go first. Show how the process unfolds with you as the interviewer.

## **Guidelines for Practice**

Simply allow the conversation to unfold for ten minutes. Keep time and stop right at ten minutes. No comments or interruptions during the Practice.

I have never had to interrupt a Practice segment, but of course it is conceivable that an interviewer could freeze up or flounder. If this happens, halt the action briefly and *you* suggest a strategy that the interviewer can

implement. Do not solicit suggestions from other participants in this circumstance, and get the conversation restarted as soon as possible – no lengthy discussion. You might also choose to adjust the difficulty level of the case if the client has been particularly challenging. Another option is to fast forward past the current obstacle. Your prime objective is for the interviewer to have a success experience in practicing elements of MI.

### **Guidelines for Debriefing**

I usually leave the interviewer and client in their chairs in the middle for the debriefing. Begin by asking participant-observers to comment on what MI skills they saw in action; what seemed effective and why. Were there particularly good examples of \_\_\_\_\_? (Ask for skills that you saw demonstrated.) Why was that MI? Why do you think it was helpful? Reflect the participants' comments. Reserve your own comments, except to affirm what participants say (e.g., "Yes, I saw that, too" "Yes, that was really good.") Your own comments will come last.

At some point midway in this process, ask the client to comment on his or her experience in the interview, and on what the interviewer did that felt particularly helpful, supportive, engaging, etc. (Choose adjectives that you think fit the interview you saw.) I don't usually *start* with the client's feedback because it can be mixed. Get positive feedback from participant-observers first, then ask the client to comment, reflecting and focusing on positive feedback.

Be strict about the positive-only rule. This is your responsibility. If a participant strays into a suggestion ("I thought that you could have . . .") or critical comment, interrupt politely and restate the guidelines for discussion. Then evoke other positive feedback.

When you seem to have exhausted positive comments from the participants, invite the interviewer to comment on his or her own experience in doing the interview. Here the interviewer may mention things he or she could have done better, but focus on the subjective *experience* of doing MI. What was happening? (Often people talk about holding back their righting reflex, for example.) Was there self-talk chatter happening? What felt easy or natural?

Finally, you take your turn. Start with your own observations of MI skills that you saw in the interview, what the person was doing well. Often this will simply repeat what others have already said. Then make *one* helpful suggestion, and only one. Choose the one idea that seems like a good next step for this particular person. Be specific ("Try taking a little more of a risk with complex reflections, rather than staying so close to what the person said.") rather than global ("Be more empathic.") Then finish with more positive feedback.

**Contributed by** Bill Miller

## Just the Facts, Ma'am: Giving Feedback to Clients

**Purpose:** To practice giving feedback methodically in an MI style, without succumbing to the temptations to give advice, interpret, offer your own opinion, or defend the data. The combination of MI with personal assessment feedback has been called “motivational enhancement therapy”

**Demonstration:** There are various video demonstrations of giving assessment feedback in an MI style, that could be used for illustration. Section D of the 1998 *Motivational Interviewing Professional Training* DVDs includes Bill’s description of feedback as part of FRAMES discussion at the beginning of the tape, a demo of giving a young man some drug and alcohol feedback while avoiding argument by mostly reflecting, and Steve’s discussion with Terri of Elicit-Provide-Elicit that and the *how* of giving information. The 2013 *Motivational Interviewing* DVDs include Bill’s very first (1989) demonstration of assessment feedback in motivational enhancement therapy (Interview 12). No need to show whole interviews – just enough to illustrate how assessment feedback is given in a nonjudgmental and nonargumentative way.

### Guidelines

Provide three facts from client assessment that are appropriate to the context of your trainees. An example from alcohol assessment might be: (1) an AUDIT score of 19; (2) regular alcohol consumption that is in the top 10%, and (3) a GGT score of 77, slightly above the normal range. Consider what objective facts about clients your trainees might have access to in their work, that could be compared with normative ranges. A second clinical example could be (1) You have had three episodes of major depression in adulthood; (2) There is a family history of major depression in 4 of your relatives; (3) You responded well in the past to an SSRI; and (4) Your chance of a positive response to treatment are good based on your history.

Get into groups of three with a provider giving feedback, a patient receiving feedback, and an observer. Imagine that you are somewhere in the middle of a brief consultation. The counselor has already engaged with the patient and listened to some of the patient’s views on the current situation. The Counselor’s task is:

1. ask permission to give feedback
2. give some context for the feedback you are about to give, such as where the information comes from, what it means, that the patient is free to agree or disagree, etc.
3. Give only one fact at a time and then **ONLY REFLECT** the patient’s responses. Do not argue, defend, interpret, or advise.

The Patient’s task is: respond naturally.

The Observer’s task is: Use the following debriefing guidelines to take notes and when the role play is over, tell your counselor what you noticed:

1. Did the Counselor first gain permission to give the feedback?
2. Did the Counselor explain the meaning of the feedback clearly enough to pique the patient’s curiosity and ensure that the patient would understand the data that was to immediately follow?
3. Did the Counselor stick to the facts and only reflect?
4. Did the Counselor present only one fact at a time?
5. Did the Counselor attend to the patient’s verbal AND nonverbal reactions?
6. What did the Counselor do best?

You could allow three rounds so that everybody gets to experience each role.

### Whole Group Debriefing:

- What was the best reflection you Observers heard? Why?
- What was the hardest thing about being the Counselor?
- What did you notice as the Patient?

**Notes:** This works best with only 2-3 feedback facts. If you use the same facts in three rounds with different counselors giving the feedback, there is usually noticeable improvement in the counselor by the third round.

**Contributed by** Chris Dunn

## Learning Community

**Abstract:** Trainees can continue their skill development by forming and participating in a learning community. This exercise is designed to provide a success experience in a learning community, thereby encouraging and empowering participants to continue such learning in their home environment.

**Overview:** In small groups of 6-12, participants review a work sample and provide positive feedback that is structured to encourage continued learning.

**Materials:** Enough dice (or other means of randomization) so that each group has one or two as needed. If using the *simulated* format: A 10-minute audio or video interview demonstrating reasonably good MI skills. Don't use a "perfect" demonstration, but one in which there is room for improvement.

**Guidelines:** First explain the concept of a peer learning community to support continued development of MI skills. Assemble small groups (we recommend 6 participants per group but it could be up to 12) who will together listen to a practice sample and then provide feedback.

***Simulated Format:*** In this format no one is receiving feedback on their own practice. You provide a prepared audio work sample that participants imagine comes from a member of their group. It should contain a variety of MI-consistent practices and also have some room for improvement. We recommend that the Interviewer in the example work sample(s) should not be the trainer or another easily-recognized expert voice. One group member takes the role of the person whose work sample it is. When training more than one group at a time (as in a workshop), all groups can listen to the same example work sample together. After listening to the work sample the participants break into their small learning community groups to discuss it. The group should stay in role as if they were discussing an actual work sample from a group member.

***Live Format:*** In this format, one member of the group will practice MI skills in a real-play or role-play for 10 minutes.

1. The group members count off and *remember their number*.
2. Instruct participants to keep notes while they listen to the work sample regarding: (a) What good MI skills did you hear – what was MI-consistent in this interview? Write down examples. and (b) If you were to make ONE suggestion for what this interviewer might try next in refining their MI skills, what would it be?
3. The group listens to the simulated or live work sample. In a Live interview, assign someone to keep time and stop the interview at 10 minutes. Then:
4. In the opening (affirmation) round, members of the group take turns (in rotation) describing *one* thing they heard that represented good MI skills. What was MI-consistent in the interview? Observations may include a specific example. Speak to the interviewer and use second person (you) language in making observations about the interview. Each person tries to offer a new observation, something different from what has been said previously, though it is also permissible to echo aspects of what has been said before (in addition to offering something new). When everyone has had a turn to speak, members may continue to offer new observations about MI-consistent aspects of the interview until everyone's observed themes have been expressed.

5. In the suggestion round, a die is rolled to reveal a number from 1 to 6 (or two dice for up to 12 people). The person whose number comes up is the Recommender, who may make ONE and only one suggestion for something that the Interviewer might try next in refining his or her MI skills. (If the Interviewer's own number comes up, the Interviewer says in first-person I language one and only one thing "I" might try next.)
6. The Interviewer can then decide to say (or not) that: "I would like one more suggestion" and roll the die again. If the same number (of the previous Recommender) comes up, roll again. The person whose number comes up then offers ONE different suggestion. (It is also completely OK *not* to ask for one more suggestion.) No other group member may make a suggestion, no matter how good it seems.

A "no cross talk" rule can be useful. Group members in this exercise should not discuss or disagree with another member's observation or suggestion (except, as noted above, to concur with it).

**Notes:** This is a complex, advanced exercise and at least for the first practice or two it is wise to have an experienced coach working with each small group to help them follow the steps and observe the interaction rules. It can also be useful in a larger group to demonstrate the exercise once with a group of six. This would best be done with a different example work sample.

**Variations:** Participants could bring audio-recorded work samples with them, or (given electronic technology) could record a 10-minute work sample during the training that is then listened to by the learning community group.

Sometimes the Interviewer tunes out the positive suggestions that are being made, waiting for and anticipating the suggestion. To ensure that the positive feedback is heard, have the Interviewer reflect back in "I" language each piece of feedback after it is given:

Observer: You offered several good complex reflections in a row that really brought out change talk.

Interviewer: I encouraged her change talk with some good reflections.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller and Terri Moyers



## Sandwich Cookies

**Abstract:** Participants receive real-time visual feedback during triad conversations to assist them to achieve a 2:1 ratio of reflections to questions.

**Overview:** This activity is done in triads – a speaker, an interviewer, and a coder – with the interviewer using MI and the coder providing visual feedback to the interviewer.

**Material:** *A supply of black discs and white discs, such as poker chips (available cheaply and in bulk online) will be needed.*

**Guidelines:** Ask the group to divide into triads and establish the three roles. Provide each group with a supply of white discs, and about twice as many black discs. The discs are held by the coder. The speaker discusses an issue of their choice about which they have ambivalence, while the interviewer practices MI. Whenever the interviewer employs a reflection, the coder places a black disc on the table in view of the helper. When the helper uses a question, a white disc is placed. Whenever there are two black discs and one white disc, the coder stacks them with the white disc in the middle, creating the impression of a certain popular sandwich cookie. Conversational length is flexible, and rotation may be used to allow each participant to serve in each role.

**Notes:** This exercise is generally used at a basic level when presenting engaging/listening skills, before more formal coding is introduced. While it has the advantage of supplying the helper with immediate and ongoing feedback during the conversation, it does not allow for differentiation of open vs. closed questions or simple vs. complex reflections, and does not acknowledge other MI-consistent responses.

The disks add a fun element, but lacking these, the coder could simply place hash marks next to Reflection and Question on a flip chart that is visible to the interviewer. That could also allow for separate tracking of open vs. closed questions, and simple vs. complex reflections. This also keeps the coders on their toes because they have to classify interviewer responses on the fly as they emerge.

**Contributed by:** Bob Jope; developed entirely by training participant Renee LaPlume.

## 5 Minute Coaching

**Abstract:** This exercise allows an interviewer to put coaching feedback into immediate practice.

**Overview:** In triads (interviewer, client/speaker and observer) role-play a therapeutic encounter for 5 minutes. Observer provides feedback, specifically what to increase and decrease. Repeat role-play.

**Guidelines:**

Allocate participants to triad groups: One therapist, one client, and one observer. Role-play a typical therapy session with a relatively ambivalent client for 5 minutes.

**Instructions for observer:**

Listen to the therapist. Pay attention to MI consistent and inconsistent processes. At the end of the session, request 2 things from your therapist: Something you might like to hear more of, and something you might like to hear less of, if this conversation continued.

Repeat the session (again for 5 minutes) with the same therapist, client and observer roles (exactly the same role play situation), with the only difference being that the therapist will attempt to increase something and decrease something.

Debrief.

**Notes:**

Observers are specifically requested to provide only these two requests. This is not to be a critique of how good the MI content was. It is not meant to be either positive or negative feedback.

The outcome tends to be quite substantive from the point of view of all three roles and the result is often observed in terms of improvement in the actual therapeutic experience. Participants note how the client responses and the direction of the session were changed by instantly role-playing the same situation again attempting the recommended adjustments. Regardless of the level of MI in each role-play the results appeared to be the same: Significant change to client articulation of change talk.

**Contributed by:** Colin O'Driscoll

## A taste of scoring –and development of a basis for peer support strategies

**Abstract:** In a structured exercise, participants can experience the basic approach and learn how to recognize and classify spoken sentences as open questions, closed questions, reflections or affirmations. The exercise-format may also later on be used as a strategy in peer support groups.

**Overview:** This exercise is appropriate when the participants have learned about OARS. The exercise may be part of an early introduction to MITI.

**Guidelines I:** Have the group work in triads: One speaker, one listener, one observer. After 20 minutes, they switch roles; hence the exercise takes an hour as a whole.

**Speaker role:** Identify a change that you are considering, something you are thinking about changing in your life, but have not definitely decided. It might be something you feel two ways about. Tell the listener about the change you are considering.

**Listener role:** Use the strategies and principles you have learned during the course (OARS), and carry out a motivational interview. The session takes 10 minutes.

**Observer:** Concentrate on the listener. Write down the first 3-4 words of every sentence (paragraph) the listener says. A new line for each utterance.

Furthermore, keep track of the time, and stop the interview after 10 minutes. Wrap up with a summary.

**Guideline, continued:** After the interview, the participants spend the following 10 minutes walking through the observer's notes and sentence by sentence decide whether it is an open question, closed question, reflection or an affirmation. When having done that, the participants may go through the interview again and discuss how to change, for example, a closed question into an open or how to change a question into a reflection – and what impact such a change may have on the interview, i.e. the speaker.

The above is repeated three times and thereby allowing each participant to be listener, speaker and observer.

### Notes:

In plenum, when setting up the exercise, you may write examples on how a dialogue may look when it is written down as such a list of 'the first 3-4 words of listeners' utterances.

You may thereafter illicit from the group how to recognize reflections, open and closed questions and affirmations from the list of words. You may even discuss with the group how to change closed questions into open, or into reflections, before you divide the group into triads and set up the exercise.

When debriefing, you may even introduce how to count reflections, open questions, and closed questions and how to calculate ratios (Ratios between open and closed questions, and ratios between reflections and questions).

**Contributed by:** Christina Näsholm

## Recommendations for an MI Peer Support Group

Developing proficiency in motivational interviewing (MI) is rather like learning to play a sport or a musical instrument. Some initial instruction is helpful, but real skill develops over time with practice, ideally with feedback and consultation from knowledgeable others. One way to do this is to form a local group to support and encourage each other in continuing to develop proficiency in MI. When a group like this is well-done, participants enjoy coming and sometimes say that it is one of the most interesting and rewarding aspects of their job. Here are some ideas for such a group.

1. Schedule regular meetings for the sole purpose of working together to strengthen MI skills. Don't let administrative details or other agenda fill the time. An hour meeting twice a month would be one possibility.
2. In early meetings, it may be helpful to discuss specific readings. There is a rapidly growing list of books and articles at [www.motivationalinterviewing.org](http://www.motivationalinterviewing.org). Periodically the group may also wish to watch "expert" tapes, coding and discussing the skills being demonstrated in them.. For those particularly interested in new research on MI, a "journal club" of 20 minutes or so might be added. Take it easy with any reading assignments, though. People learn a lot, and fast, just from bringing in and discussing recordings (see #3).
3. A key learning tool to be included in regular meetings is to listen together to and discuss recordings of participants' MI practice. Some groups have experienced that the energy and engagement level of the group picked up when they began to listen to each other's tapes. A rotation schedule can be arranged whereby participants take turns bringing in new recordings. We recommend listening to and discussing one recording per session. A 10-20 minute segment of tape is probably about right. We recommend using a recording device with external microphone(s) to improve the quality of sound and facilitate listening.
4. Written permission should be obtained from clients for this use of recording, explaining how the recording will be used, who will hear it, and how and when the recording will be destroyed.
5. Be sure to thank and support those who bring in a recording to share. They are taking a risk and being vulnerable, which can be difficult, particularly early in the life of a group. Beware of having high "expert" expectations when someone is just beginning.
6. Rather than simply listening to a recording, make use of some structured coding tools. Some examples are:
  - Counting questions and reflections
  - More generally coding OARS
  - Coding depth of reflections (simple vs. complex)
  - Counting client change talk and sustain talk, and noting what preceded it
  - Tracking apparent client readiness for change during the session, and key moments of shiftCoding forms can be found on [www.motivationalinterview.org](http://www.motivationalinterview.org). Participants may use the same coding form and compare their findings, or participants may use different coding forms to attend to different aspects of the session.
6. In introducing a session to be heard by the group, it is appropriate to indicate what target(s) for behavior change were being pursued. Without this, it is not possible to identify change talk, which is goal-specific.
7. In discussing a participant's tape, the person who did the interview might comment first on its strengths and areas for improvement.
8. In discussing any tape, focus discussion on ways in which the session is and is not consistent with the spirit and method of MI. Again, it is useful for the person who did the interview to lead off this discussion. Participants can ask each other, "In what ways was this session MI consistent?" and "What might one do to make this session even more MI consistent?" When providing feedback to each other, adhere to the

supportive spirit of MI. *Always* emphasize what you heard or saw that seemed particularly effective and consistent with the style of MI. One approach is a “feedback sandwich” in which any suggestion for further strengthening practice is sandwiched between ample slices of positive feedback. The group atmosphere should be fun and supportive, not pressured or competitive. Group participants report that they often learn more from helping others than from receiving feedback on their own tapes.

9. Focus on what is important within MI. There is always temptation to wander off into more general clinical discussion of cases. Focus learning on the spirit, principles, and practices of MI.

10. The group may focus on practicing and strengthening specific component skills of MI. One such set of skills to be learned is described in: Miller, W. R., & Moyers, T. B. (2006). Eight stages in learning motivational interviewing. *Journal of Teaching in the Addictions*, 5, 3-17.

11. Some groups begin with a “check-in” period in which anyone can bring up an issue for discussion.

12. Bringing coffee/tea and refreshments can add to the relaxed atmosphere of a group.

13. Consider whether there is a prerequisite for participating in the group. Some groups have required, for example, that participants complete an initial training in MI before beginning to attend. Others have left the group open for any who wish to learn MI skills.

14. Consider whether you want to contract for a specific length of time or number of meetings together. If so, at the end of this time each member can consider whether to continue for another period.

15. An “MI expert” in the group might resist taking on an expert role, because doing so can stifle participation and learning. Don’t withhold your expertise, particularly if invited, but avoid a pattern of interaction in which the group always looks to the expert for the “right” answers.

16. Most of all, enjoy this privileged learning time together. As with other complex skills like chess, golf, or piano, gaining proficiency in MI is a lifelong process. A real source of fun and learning in these groups is admiration for the many artful ways that people find to apply MI within their own clinical style and population.

# **Demonstrations**

## Preparing a Client Role-Play

**Abstract:** Proper preparation for a client role-play can often prevent problems (like the “client from hell”), and help the exercise to more fully achieve intended goals.

**Overview:** Role-play is a useful method for demonstrating and practicing motivational interviewing, and trainees often like to see it happen in front of them. Trainers often set up demonstration role-plays which involve having a trainee play the part of a typical client in their setting, with the trainer (or another learner) playing the part of the interviewer. There is a temptation in this circumstance for the person role-playing the client to present the most difficult, impossible, resistant or hostile case, thereby presenting an impasse in the demonstration.

### Guidelines:

- 1) Start with a clear statement of the learning objectives of the exercise. Then construct a client scenario that serves those learning objectives. For example, when participants are first learning to evoke change talk, it is not helpful to have a highly resistant client. Use a “readiness ruler” (from zero to 10) to establish an appropriate difficulty target level for the case. For first practice of evoking change talk, for example, an appropriate readiness level might be 7 or 8 (fairly ready for change). When practicing how to cope with sustain talk and discord, a level of 3 or 4 may be more appropriate.
- 2) Tailor the role-play to the setting. Use suggestions from the trainees to make a case scenario. Be sure to go over, in advance of the role-play, the reasons this client would want to change and the strengths that he or she brings to the interview, thereby insuring some discrepancy. A scanty client scenario invites poor results.
- 3) Use caution when selecting a volunteer for role-plays. The person who is the most eager to participate may be exactly the one who is determined to show you how impossible his or her clients are. Better to select a trainee who has demonstrated good listening skills in previous exercises or shows other evidence of a cooperative and flexible nature.

### Example(s):

“Ok, let’s see what we’ve got for the role-play. A 24 year old man living with schizophrenia who is smoking marijuana daily to help him with his symptoms. He is seeing you for an evaluation of his pension benefits, and you are trying to motivate him to consider a change in his smoking. Tell me a little more about his guy. What about his family? What is important to him? Why would he want to stop smoking marijuana?”

**Notes:** If a role-play really bogs down, consider adjusting the difficulty level of the client, or trying a different scenario with another “client” actor.

If there seems to be an agenda to watch you work with an impossible client, offer to try that later in training, with light-heartedness about it: “If you think it would be useful, later on you can set up the really difficult client that you have in mind, and we’ll see how I might respond. Of course, there are some clients who just aren’t going to change no matter who sees them, but I’ll do my best.”

**An alternative:** Trainers may want to consider starting with a non-client scenario for the first few role-plays in the training session. Have the volunteers play themselves and discuss a change they need to make in their own lives within the next six months, but about which they feel ambivalent. This approach has the advantage of engaging the “client” in a genuine discussion of their ambivalence, allowing the interviewer to demonstrate motivational interviewing. See also Personalizing.





## Video Demonstration and Review

**Abstract:** The trainer uses expert videotapes to demonstrate skills and increase understanding.

**Overview:** A videotape demonstration typically follows a didactic presentation and is used to illustrate a particular method or concept. Videotape review may help pull together several techniques to demonstrate a general strategy, or to emphasize the sequential use of techniques or strategies.

**Guidelines:** Participants may be given specific oral or written instructions to guide observation of a taped segment, or the trainer may use a play-pause-discuss sequence to guide participants to a greater appreciation of the interplay of specific techniques and client responses.

### Example 1:

Join Up - To demonstrate the spirit of MI. Participants are asked to watch for elements of this horse training video (timed segment in the round pen) that correspond to elements of MI. Video is started at beginning of training demonstration, stopped when clock is stopped on tape. A series of questions for participants follows: What is similar? What lessons can you use to help your practice? Does the horse ever do anything she doesn't want to do? Does she do things that she didn't plan to do? etc. Followed by a summary statement from the presenter along the lines of: "In this video, the trainer demonstrates that he can read and follow the moment-by-moment cues of the horse at the same time that he leads the horse to want to engage in activities that the horse had no "intention" of engaging in. The trainer never pushes the horse to do anything she doesn't want to, and yet the horse goes through one of the most profounding changing events of her lifetime. What does this mean for us?"

### Example 2: Bill Miller with "John" (Silent Man) on 1998 and 2013 training videos

Pass 1 - To focus on empathy. Participants are asked to focus attention on the client, not the therapist. Participants may be given a written set of questions to consider while they watch the segment, then discuss afterward, such as the following:

- 1) What thoughts, feelings and experiences do you think the client has during the interview?
- 2) How might the client feel about being asked to come to the center? About the events that have taken place? About his relationship with his wife?
- 3) How does the client react to and perceive the therapist?
- 4) What is important to the client?

Pass 2 - To demonstrate advanced reflective listening (can be confusing if used for this purpose early in training). Participants are given an OARS **Observer Tracking** coding form (or other observer sheet) and asked to tally therapist behaviors. This serves to both emphasize the value of deep reflective responses in conducting an interview that "pulls" for the question/answer trap, and challenges participants to consider the role of advanced reflective statements in the context of hypothesis testing.

Discussion may include differentiating between empathy and agreement (e.g., when the therapist labels wife's behavior as "nagging"), the skill of matching pacing to client pacing and honoring client latencies, the potential trap of questions in reinforcing passivity, and how reflective listening can harvest considerable information in a short time from a relatively non-verbal client.

CASAA98 - ill. Miller and EAP John - To demonstrate interweaving of multiple MI processes and strategies, and focus on developing discrepancy, participants watch this video, with regular pauses for review and discussion, and accompanied by a partial therapist transcript, labeling techniques/strategies, e.g.:

**Develop discrepancy – “stepped over a line, then another line....where am I headed here?”**

Support self-efficacy, “confidence that if you were to decide, that you could make the change”

Reflect cons of change, “in some ways don’t want see the need, it’s a letting go of something dear to you”

Emphasize personal choice, develop discrepancy – “someone would make you make that change...it is up to you, no one can make that choice for you. It really is your own choice, how you live your life, what do you do about drugs, where you’re headed

**Other video segments:** CASAA 98 - Terri Moyers and Rounder – amplified reflection, entry interview, responding to sustain talk and discord

Allyn/Bacon 2000 - Bill Miller and “Soccer Mike – Responding to sustain talk and discord

APA 2002 - Bill Miller and Debbie - end segment includes discussion/clips of Miller answering FAQs about various treatment issues

**Notes:** CASAA 98 - MI/ Not-MI demonstration - S. Rollnick, Heart patient

Other demonstration tapes at <http://motivationalinterview.org/training/videos.html>

## Home Video

**Abstract:** Professional training tapes can be useful, but often they may not demonstrate the precise points that you want to emphasize. Making your own video can be quite useful, and can allow you to adapt your tape to particular settings, racial-ethnic groups, and languages not represented on available training video.

**Overview:** Sometimes trainees are reluctant to participate actively in role-play or other experiential exercises. Providing a demonstration shows trainees you are willing to expose yourself and possible imperfections, and can be a humorous way to ease them into participation.

**Guidelines:** One strategy that works well is to show “poor practice” which can be contrasted with “better practice.” Prior to the training, create a videotape of yourself interviewing a client. Don’t worry about it being broadcast quality. The main factor that makes a demonstration useful for training is good sound quality, so focus on using a good microphone and recorder, and minimize ambient noise when making the demonstration.

**Example:** In the poor practice sample, you as the therapist should strive to model non-MI techniques or show yourself using MI techniques without the spirit (the words without the music). For example, on the tape you might start with open questions and reflections, but summarize with labels, using the expert trap, show sarcasm or disrespect, etc., as in: “I’d like to give you some feedback about what you’ve said so far. I hear that you don’t think you have a problem, but based on my 20 years of experience with addicts, I can see that you are in denial. This is a problem that won’t just go away and in fact, will usually get much worse.”

Because you are deliberately using non-MI techniques, it’s advisable to use a colleague or student to play the role of the client or patient (rather than a real client!). Provide them with general instructions about their role, including the main areas of problem behavior, types of ambivalence and motivations, and instructions for responding naturally to your interventions. Avoid using scripts - they almost always feel artificial.

Prior to showing this demonstration, prime the group to watch for any MI techniques, and also to note what the therapist (you!) are doing that is less than therapeutic. This “poor practice” segment optimally lasts 10 minutes, providing the group with a flavor for the session and the patient’s/client’s likely response. After showing the tape, which may provoke some laughter, facilitate the group to list the MI-consistent and MI-inconsistent behaviors you demonstrated. This leads into a discussion of what types of counselor behaviors tend to be more helpful, and you can then launch into experiential practice of specific skills.

Alternately, you might follow up the “poor practice” sample with a “better practice” demonstration, Using the same colleague to play the same patient/client, model instead the use of OARS, engaging, focusing, and evoking. After showing the demo, facilitate the group to list the helpful and non-helpful behaviors you demonstrated. Ask them to guess in which tape the client or patient would be most likely to make a successful change. Then launch into experiential practice of specific skills.

**Notes:** An alternative is to try switching back and forth between MI-consistent and MI-inconsistent styles, and ask participants to watch for each. One fun way is to give each participant a red card and a green card. Ask them to hold up a green card when they see you doing something that is MI-consistent, and a red card when they see something that is MI-inconsistent. Bill Miller provides a demonstration of switching styles in the 2013 training video series.

**Contributed by:** Karen Ingersoll

## On the Use of Technology

**Abstract:** Various forms of technology can be used to enhance the your understanding of the perspectives of trainees and improve the learning of subject material, depending on the availability of computer and internet access to participants.

**SurveyMonkey** ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)): This website allows trainers to create pre- and post-surveys that can be sent out to participants to assess trainees' responses to various probes, collect information regarding topics/subjects of interest to trainees, and solicit feedback following a training. A paid account is available, but a free account allows for a great deal of usage, including creation of surveys with multiple choice, ranking, and open comment responses.

- Example: Email the Helpful Responses Questionnaire (or other assessment) to participants before and after a workshop.
- Example: Create a questionnaire to solicit feedback after a workshop.

**PollEverywhere** ([www.polleverywhere.com](http://www.polleverywhere.com)): This website allows for live polling with the use of participants' smartphones and/or laptops with internet access. Polls can be created and displayed on an overhead, with multiple-choice and open-comment responses; responses appear in real-time, and can be set up to display in a variety of ways. Up to 40 responses per poll can currently be collected and displayed with a free account.

- Example: Ask participants can be asked to share their biggest "take-away" at the end of a session. Responses can be displayed one-by-one, or can be set to form a word cloud. (It's mesmerizing!) Just beware that this program may be best used just before a session ends, as it can be distracting for people to use their smartphones.

**PowerPoint:** This software program is ubiquitous and can be used in various ways. Keep in mind that reading large amounts of text while listening to someone speak is difficult for most individuals. Consider the use of images in slides; the best slides sometimes have no text at all. There are so many beautiful metaphors in MI – consider making use of them in your slides! For information on effective and engaging slide design, refer to any books by Garr Reynolds and Nancy Duarte.

**Contributed by:** Carrie Bader, [carriebader@gmail.com](mailto:carriebader@gmail.com)

## What Was She [or He] Thinking?

**Abstract:** This is a particular way of using a demonstration video or audiotape to illustrate how a motivational interviewer thinks one step ahead when evoking.

**Overview:** A skillful motivational interviewer doesn't ask just any question or reflect whatever a person says. The interviewer is thinking ahead: "If I say this, what is the person likely to say next?" responding strategically with the intention of evoking change talk. This exercise uses a transcript of a skillful MI session to consider why the interviewer offered the particular responses she or he did, and how the client responded.

**Guidelines:** I usually show a video of the interview first as a demonstration of skillful evoking. My current favorite is Terri Moyers' interview with "The Committed Smoker" on the 2013 DVDs. Then I work response by response through part of the interview where change talk starts to emerge. I use slides showing interviewer and client responses one by one, and I highlight client change talk in a different color. With each new interviewer response (before showing how the client responded) we consider "What was the interviewer thinking? Why did she ask that particular question rather than another, or of all the things she could have reflected, why did she reflect that?" Doing this illustrates the linkage of MI-consistent interviewer responses to subsequent change talk. I prefer using slides so that the audience is not reading ahead in the transcript, but focuses on each response.

**Notes:** If you are working with a group from a particular specialty, it's generally best to use an example from their own context. Micro-analysis like this can go on for too long, so watch the engagement level of your trainees.

**Contributed by:** Bill Miller

## Stop the Clock

**Abstract:** This exercise helps interviewers reflect on their own inner thoughts and feelings in the process of MI, and to clarify what is it that pulls them away from listening and evoking well.

**Overview:** While participants practice a real-play or role-play MI exercise, the trainer periodically “stops the clock.” In these brief breaks, the interviewers write down what they are thinking and feeling at that juncture in the interview.

**Guidelines:** Set up a clear exercise in which the interviewer’s task is to practice MI with an interviewee, either in real-play or role-play format. Tell them in advance that at certain points you will stop the clock, and the interviewers then break out of the conversation to write down briefly what they are thinking and feeling. The first break might be as early as one minute into the interview. Allow about one minute for writing and then instruct the pairs to resume.

**Notes:** Variations: Both interviewer and interviewee may be instructed to write down what they are thinking and feeling. The interviewers might call a break to write when they notice thoughts and feelings that they are experiencing.

Debrief first in small groups of about six to discuss what they noticed during the exercise. Then in a larger group solicit some “nuggets” that emerged in small groups.

**Contributed by:** Kathy Goumas and Steve Rollnick

# Motivational Groups

## Facilitating Motivational Groups

Participants are divided into groups of five "clients" and one or two facilitators. All groups are run at the same time, so the size of the training determines how many groups are needed. Five "clients" per group seems to be a manageable number for the role play.

The trainer(s) meet with the participants selected to play counselors to review the purpose of the group and what is expected in the role play.

**Option:** You may have other trainees rate leaders' use of OARS or note other MI strategies or particularly useful reflections. Other trainees may also take notes on similarities and differences they notice compared to conducting individual MI sessions.

Instructions for facilitators may include one of the following:

### Round 1:

Ask group participants to report on personal issues in the form of a real-play, perhaps asking some to reflect on changes they should make but haven't, others on changes they are currently making, and others on changes they previously made but are currently having difficulty maintaining.

Leader assignment: Use OARS to facilitate rapport, assess stages of change, get a feel for what would be motivating for each person. Attempt to build group cohesion.

Debrief: How are MI groups different from groups used in your agency? How are they different from doing MI in individual format?

### Round 2:

Have the entire group generate their own client profiles for the type of group they want to practice (*you can use structured role plays on the following page as an alternative*)

Trainer performs approximately twenty-minute demo using MI directive strategies.

Split trainees into multiple groups and ask leaders to use one of the following strategies.

**Strategy #1: Use facilitated discussion to explore looking forward.**

*Possible evoking questions:*

- 1) *What are some of your hopes for the future?*
- 2) *What are you doing now to help you make these hopes come true?*
- 3) *What other things could you do (or do more of) to help increase your chances of success?*
- 4) *What strengths and supports can you draw upon?*

**Strategy #2: Use facilitated discussion to explore previous successes.**

*Possible evoking questions:*

- 1) *List some positive changes you have made in your life.*
- 2) *Choosing one of these changes,*
  - a. *What made you decide to make this change?*
  - b. *How did you go about achieving the change?*
  - c. *What challenges or setbacks did you face?*
  - d. *How could you draw upon this experience to consider making a change now?*

**Strategy #1: Use scaling questions to focus on importance of making changes, confidence in making changes, desire to make changes.**

*Have clients respond to scaling questions:*

1. *Where are you on a scale of 0 -10 regarding how (important it is to make some changes) (confident you feel about succeeding) (much you want to make changes vs. how much you dread it)*
2. *What makes your score x instead of (lower score, such as 0 or x-2)*
3. *What would help boost your score to x + 2*
4. *How could we help you increase your sense of (confidence, desire)*
5. *End with summary statement for each client, eliciting commitment to take some action if appropriate*
6. *Tie together similarities in responses.*



## **Example substance-related client roles:**

#1 – Pre-contemplation (mixed) – You’ve been referred for services after testing positive for cocaine on a random screen at work. However, cocaine is something you can take or leave, and you always kind of thought it was a waste of money anyway. You do smoke pot regularly, but no one mentioned anything about that when they told you you’d tested positive for cocaine, so you assume they don’t test for that and you can’t think of any way to ask about it without making them suspicious. You don’t plan to quit smoking. This is a good job, and they told you that if you test positive again, you’ll be fired.

#2 – Contemplation – You’ve been busted for possession of ecstasy. Although you were selling it, the cops didn’t know and when you were busted you only had a little left and weren’t charged with distribution. You have to submit urine once or twice a week for drug screens, but you’ve heard that none of the drugs you use – ecstasy, acid and mushrooms – are detected in drug screens. You spent 30 days in jail and it was the worst experience you’ve ever had. You never want to go back, but if they don’t even test for the stuff you use, you wonder if you could get by just by not selling anymore and being extremely careful about not carrying anything on you.

#3 – Preparation - Your doctor is encouraging you to get into treatment. Since a car accident, you’ve been taking oxycontin due to extreme pain in your legs, but you never feel satisfied with the doctor’s prescription and almost always want the dosage to be increased. You can’t take the pain, but are also nervous about being addicted. Your doctor has encouraged you to find other ways of relieving pain, and has suggested that whirlpools, swimming and stretching may help.

#4 – Action. You are seeking help on your own. You long-time cocaine and alcohol habits have cost you the business you built from scratch. You’ve been back living with your mother while you are trying to get back on your feet. You’ve not used or drunk any alcohol for 6 weeks now, and are looking for some help that doesn’t involve all of the 12-step ideas and rituals, which just annoy you.

#5 – Maintenance – You have been referred by DSS (social services) for treatment after being clean for a year, following being deemed unfit as a parent for using drugs in the presence of your children. You have been actively involved in 12-step groups and are currently living in a half-way house. You have been working steadily for the past six months. Given how well things are going, you are not sure what treatment has to offer you that you haven’t already achieved on your own.

# **TRAINING RESOURCES**

## Proposed Behavioral Targets for MI Training

Based on coding of a taped MI session (MISC or MITI), these levels might be expected as ideal (expert) and threshold (satisfactory for practitioner certification)

	Expert	Threshold
Global Therapist Ratings	> 4.0	> 3.5
% Therapist Talk Time	< 50%	< 60%
Reflection:Question Ratio	> 2.0	> 1.0
% Complex Reflections	> 50%	> 40%
Percent Open Questions	> 70%	> 50%
% MI Consistent	> 90%	> 80%

or said more plainly:

- Talk less than your client does
- On average, reflect twice for each question you ask
- When you reflect, use complex reflections more than half the time
- When you do ask questions, ask mostly open questions
- Avoid getting ahead of your client=s level of readiness (warning, confronting, giving uninvited advice or direction, taking the “good” side of the argument)

## MI Preparation Prayer

Guide me to be a patient companion  
To listen with a heart as open as the sky  
Grant me vision to see through her eyes  
And eager ears to hear her story  
Create a safe and open mesa on which we may walk together  
Make me a clear pool in which she may reflect  
Guide me to find in her your beauty and wisdom  
Knowing your desire for her to be in harmony – healthy, loving, strong  
Let me honor and respect her choosing of her own path  
And bless her to walk it freely  
May I know once again that although she and I are different  
Yet there is a peaceful place where we are one

*Bill Miller*