



Alma Institute

Train. Implement. Support.

Motivational Interviewing: Day 2



“In reality, Aikido has no forms, no set patterns. It is like an invisible wave of energy. However, such a phenomenon is too difficult for human beings to grasp, so we use provisional forms to explain it and put it into practice. Any movement, in fact, can become an Aikido technique, so in ultimate terms, there are no mistakes. My advice to you: *Learn and forget! Learn and forget! Make the techniques part of your being!*”

Morihei Ueshiba,

Recommendations for an MI Peer Learning Group¹

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.motivationalinterview.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 tapes (see #3).
3. A key learning tool to be included in regular meetings is to listen together and discuss tapes of participants' MI sessions. 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. We recommend listening to and discussing one tape per session. A 20-minute segment of tape is probably about right. We recommend using a recording device with external microphones(s) to improve the quality of sound and to facilitate listening.
4. Written permission should be obtained from clients for this use of recording, explaining how the tapes will be used, who will hear them, and how and when the tape will be destroyed.
5. Be sure to thank and support those who bring in a tape 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 listen to a tape, 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 noting what preceded it
 - Tracking client readiness for change during the session, and key moments of shift
7. 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.
8. In discussing a participant's tape, it is appropriate for the person who did the interview to comment first on its strengths and areas for improvement.

Recommendations for an MI Peer Support Group (continued)

9. In discussing any tape, focus discussion on the 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.
10. 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.
11. The group may focus on practicing and strengthening specific component skills of MI. One such sequence 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.
12. Some groups begin with a “check-in” period in which anyone can bring up an issue for discussion.
13. Bringing coffee and refreshments can add to the relaxed atmosphere of a group.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. *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.*
17. 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.

MI Spirit Check-In

Spirit Element	Simple Definition	Behavioral Expression Example
Partnership	Collaboration of Experts	Elicit-Provide-Elicit
Acceptance	Nonjudgmental	Tone, Demeanor, Smiling☺
Acceptance: Absolute Worth	Unconditional Positive Regard	Tone, Demeanor, Smiling☺
Acceptance: Autonomy	Person Chooses	"It's up to you how you want to handle ..."
Acceptance: Affirmation	Acknowledging persons strengths and efforts	"You worked hard at ..."
Acceptance: Accurate Empathy	Nonjudgmental Understanding	Complex Reflection
Compassion	Person is prioritized	"How may I serve?" attitude
Evocation	Drawing forth the person's reasons for change	Open Questions: "What reasons ...?"

Consider an interaction you had in the last week or so. In the space below, please share a little about the context of your interaction and how you expressed some of the elements of the Spirit of MI in your interaction.

Context (what happened):
How I expressed MI Spirit elements:

What is a Spirit element that I'd like to focus on expressing between now and our next PLG?

How might I do that?



Ten Strategies for Evoking Change Talk

1. Ask Evocative Questions

- What makes 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

- In what ways would you make this change?

3. Ask for Examples

- When was the last time that happened? Give me an example.

4. Look Back

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

5. Look Forward

- 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? (Developing discrepancy)

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.

10. (Your Strategy Insert Here😊)