

Motivational Interviewing: Foundations & Strategies

Lesson 5: Planning

Topic: Practice MI Conversation

For the final activity, you will have a full MI conversation utilizing as many of the skills and strategies we have covered in the past 5 lessons as you can. This conversation will be a real play, meaning that you will NOT be *role playing* someone else's life, your speaker will be talking about themselves! Each pair will have 2 conversations, one in which you are the Speaker and one in which you are the MI Listener. You will record and send us the conversation in which you are the MI Listener. You can use any conferencing software you have access to using the record function (Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts, etc). If these do not work for you, can also use your phone to record the audio from the conversation and send in that file. The conversation need only be 7-10 minutes. You can upload the file to the Send Me topic page.

Below are a few notes to think about as you prepare for your conversation:

Notes for Speaker:

- Consider what topic(s) you feel comfortable discussing. These should be areas of your Real Life (not role play) where you are considering making some change but have not yet made the change. (Some ideas: diet, exercise, self-care, sleeping, saving money, etc.)
 - See if there might be a topic where you are closer to deciding, but still have not yet made the change. As this may make it more likely that your Listener will get to use some of the skills of Planning.
- Respond in the conversation as you naturally would (i.e. don't try to "go easy," on your partner, nor should you try to be more challenging than the conversation makes you naturally feel).

MI Listener:

- Beginning with Engagement, move through the processes as far as your Speaker is willing to go with you. Pay attention to when you feel you have enough engagement to move on to focusing, enough focus to move to evocation and then, see if your speaker moves towards action language, where you can try out the Testing the Waters and maybe the 5 step planning process.
- Once you have good enough engagement and focus, you will spend the bulk of your conversation in Evoking. Some goals to keep in mind as you work on evoking:
 - Explore the speaker's ambivalence; what is their Sustain Talk (reasons to stay the same) and what is their Change Talk (reasons for change). Start with the Sustain Talk, but don't spend too much time there! You and your Speaker want to get to the point where you have a pretty good sense of what is the real reason they have not yet moved forward, and then move on to inviting Change Talk. You want to spend as much time building & strengthening the Change Talk as you can.
 - Try to use more Reflections than Questions (the goal is a 2 to 1 ratio).
 - Try to get in 1 or 2 Affirmations, probably towards the end of the conversation once you know more about where the need for confidence is for your Speaker.
 - Consider how you might use the following skills & strategies that we have learned thus far:
 - OARS
 - Importance & Confidence Rulers
 - Asking permission
 - Agenda Mapping
 - Decisional Balance

- Elicit-Provide-Elicit (or the MI Sandwich)
- Testing the Waters
- The 5 Steps of Planning
- Take your time. It is completely ok to slow the process down a bit; take the time to think about what you want to say.
- Have fun!

Reflecting on your MI Conversation:

Once you have completed your conversation, review the recording while considering the following questions:

1. Use of MI skills:
 - a. Did you use both simple and complex reflections?
 - b. Were you able to use a feelings reflection?
 - c. Did you follow up each question with at least 2 reflections before asking another question?
 - d. Did you use at least one affirmation? And was it a true affirmation (not a positive judgment)?
 - e. Did you ask the second question (“And why not a lower number?”) each time you used the scales (importance & confidence)?
2. Engaging Process:
 - a. Were you and your speaker ‘Engaged?’
 - b. Did your speaker feel understood?
 - c. How do you know? What clues did your speaker give you, verbally and nonverbally, that let you know they felt enough engagement and safety to move forward?
 - d. What behaviors did you do that contributed to them feeling engaged?
3. Focusing Process:
 - a. During this conversation, who was in the driver’s seat? The speaker or you?
 - b. Is there any part of the conversation where it sounds/feels like the speaker is ‘pushing back’ on you? What happened right before that? Was there something you said or did that may have made the speaker feel pushed? What did you do to recover?
 - c. Were you and the speaker able to agree on the target behavior to move forward with? How was the topic selected? Who selected it? If you suggested it, how do you know that the speaker is really in agreement and not just agreeing to please you?
4. Evocation Process:
 - a. What was your Speaker’s Ambivalence? Both sides?
 - b. Were you able to dig a little below the surface level of Sustain Talk (“I don’t have time/money to do it” etc.) to find the real reasons they are having trouble moving forward?
 - c. What level of Change Talk did they start with (DARN CAT)? And how strong (how far up and over the mountain) did their Change Talk become by the end of the conversation?
 - d. If you were to do this conversation over again, what might you do differently? Why?
5. Planning Process: If you were able to get far enough to practice this process:
 - a. How did you know it was time to move into Planning?

- i. What level of Change Talk were you hearing? Did you hear commitment language before proceeding into Planning?
 - ii. Did you use the Test the Waters strategy to ask for permission to move into Planning?
 - b. In the five steps of planning:
 - i. Did the goal remain the same throughout or were you able to refine and make it more specific and actionable at this stage?
 - ii. How many options for action were you and your speaker able to brainstorm? Was it a comprehensive list?
 - iii. In testing the Speaker's hunches, did they stick with the plans they began with or did they find a new path through your conversation?
 - iv. Is the plan the speaker came up with specific and clear? Are there clear guideposts where you can check in on progress along the way?
 - v. Were you and your speaker able to troubleshoot the plan without getting pulled back into Sustain Talk?
 - vi. If you were to do this conversation over again, what would you do differently? Why?
6. Moving Forward:
 - a. What will be your next steps as you go into your next MI conversation?
 - b. What specific skills and/or strategies will you focus on developing?
 - c. What is one concrete step you will take to continue your learning and practice?