

# Motivational Interviewing: Engaging People in Change

Presented by Mary Beth Abella, MSW



# Welcome...

Let's get to know each other!

## Introductions

- Share your name and current professional role with the group.
- Briefly share 1 unique skill or quality makes you effective in your work?  
(Your professional superpower)





# Objectives

- **Learn how to avoid unhelpful behaviors**
- **Practice active listening skills to help with engagement**
- **Identify questions to increase likelihood of change**
- **Implement strategies to connect with folks who are unengaged**

**In the chat, what's a common feeling you experience when someone you're trying to help seems resistant to a suggestion?**

# What Isn't Working?

## Common Challenges

- Clients miss appointments or follow-up
- Employment goals stall despite resources
- Language barriers create additional hurdles
- Clients seem resistant to helpful suggestions

## Traditional Approaches Fall Short

- Giving advice often creates resistance
- Information alone doesn't create change
- People may feel judged or misunderstood
- Cultural differences complicate communication



# The Fixer Exercise

## Instructions:

### Speaker Role

Identify a change you are **considering** in your life, but haven't definitely decided on yet. Share this with your helper.

### Helper Role

Try to **convince** and **persuade** the Speaker to make the change by:

- Explaining **why** they should change
- Giving at least three **benefits**
- Telling them **how** to change
- Emphasizing **importance**

If you meet resistance, repeat more emphatically.



# Debrief: The Fixer

## Experience

How did it feel to be the Fixer?

- Did you feel responsible for the outcome?
- Were you frustrated if they didn't agree?
- Did you find yourself working harder than them?

## How did it feel to be the person with the dilemma?

Did you feel understood?

- Did the advice feel relevant to your situation?
- Did you feel more or less motivated to change?

## What did observers notice?

Body language changes

- Shift in conversation energy
- Verbal/nonverbal signs of resistance



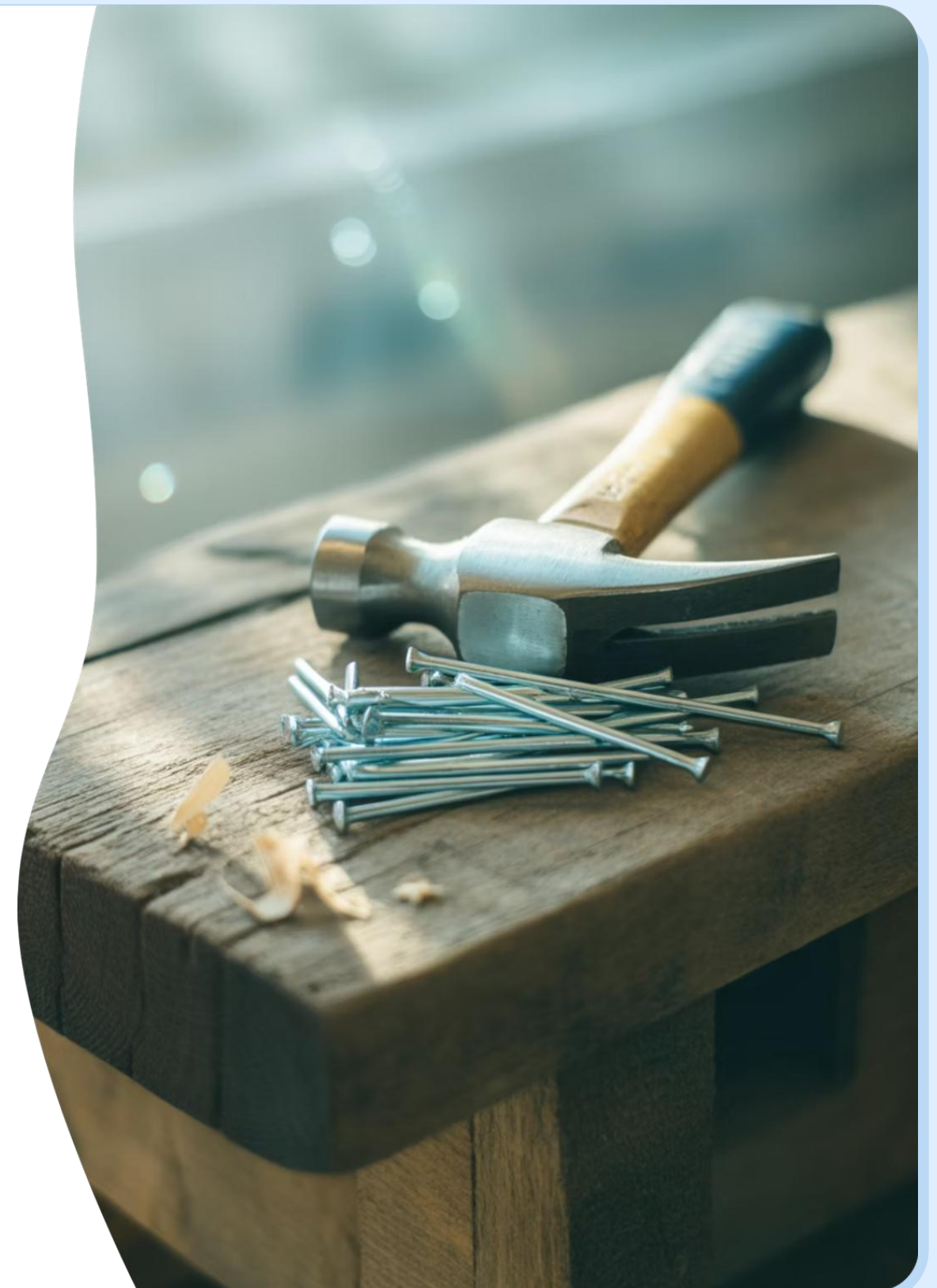
# The 'Fixing Reflex'

## "There's a problem— let's fix it!"

As helping professionals, we're trained to solve problems, especially when working with clients facing employment and housing challenges. This impulse comes from a good place—we want to help our clients succeed.

## Why it backfires:

- Fails to consider ambivalence in the change process
- Creates resistance/disengagement
- Ignores cultural differences in decision-making
- Undermines client autonomy and self-efficacy





# Behaviors to Avoid

## **Persuading**

"You should take this job because it has great benefits."

## **Arguing**

"But this housing option is perfect for your situation!"

## **Lecturing**

"Let me explain how the employment system works..."

## **Providing Solutions**

"Here's what you need to do to fix your situation."

## **Giving Advice**

"I recommend you take the ESL class on Tuesday."

## **Warning**

"If you don't attend this job fair, you'll miss opportunities."

# What Does Help?

## The MI Approach

Motivational Interviewing offers an alternative that honors client autonomy while still moving toward positive change.

Rather than pushing for change, MI helps draw out the client's own motivation.

## Evidence-Based Results

- Higher engagement rates
- Improved follow-through
- More sustainable changes
- Better working relationships
- Especially effective across cultural/language differences

# Reflecting on Effective Helpers

Think of someone who was truly helpful to you in making a change.  
What qualities did they possess?



# Four Processes of Motivational Interviewing

## Engaging

Building a working relationship based on trust and mutual respect

## Focusing

Finding a clear direction and goal for the conversation about change

## Evoking

Drawing out the client's own motivation for change by exploring their reasons

## Planning

Developing commitment to change and creating a specific plan of action

Today we'll focus on **Engaging** and **Evoking**, the foundation for helping people move toward goals.





# Engaging in MI Spirit

## **(PACE)** Partnering

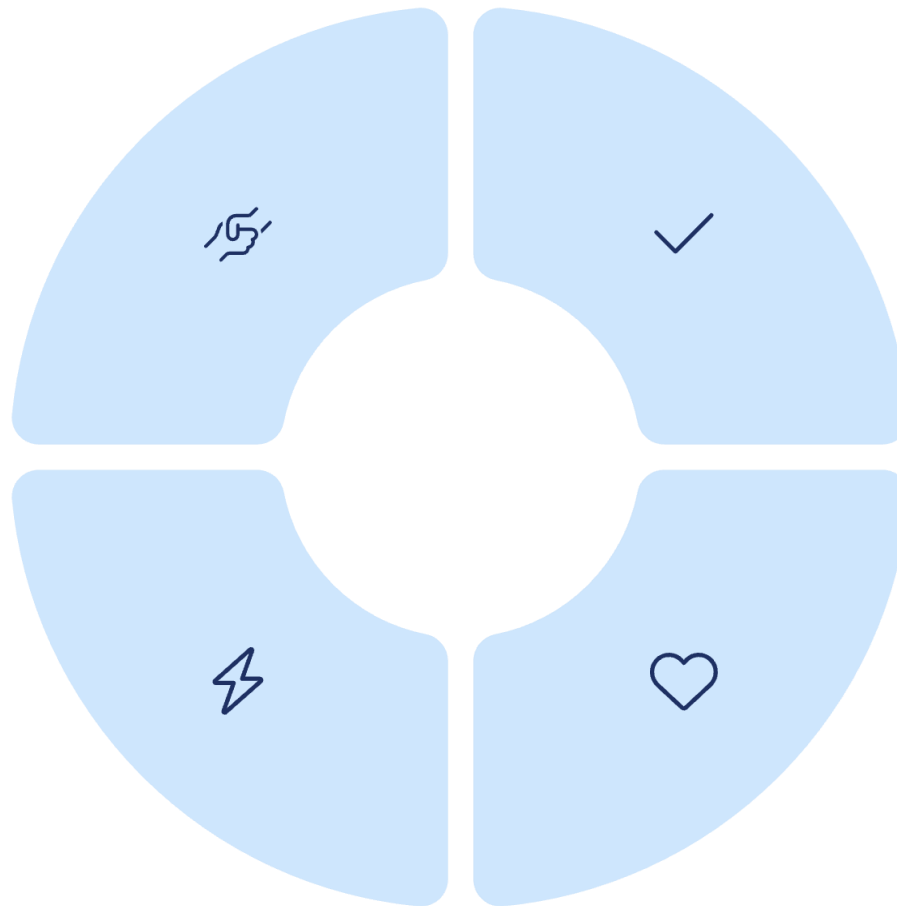
Working with clients as equals in the change process

"How can we work together to address your housing situation?"

## **Empowering**

Drawing out the client's own ideas and strengths

"What approaches have worked for you in past job searches?"



## **Accepting**

Honoring the client's autonomy and perspective

"I understand you have concerns about this job opportunity."

## **Compassion**

Prioritizing the client's needs and welfare

"This transition must be challenging—how are you managing?"

# Engaging with OARS



## Open-Ended Questions

Invite elaboration rather than yes/no answers



## Affirmations

Recognize strengths and efforts



## Reflections

Mirror back understanding of client's perspective



## Summaries

Collect and link important points

# Open-Ended

## Questions

- "Did you look for jobs this week?"
- "Have you called the housing office?"
- "Is the ESL class helping you?"
- "Do you want to apply for this position?"

These questions limit the conversation and client reflection.

## Open-Ended Questions

- "What steps have you taken in your job search?"
- "How has your housing situation been affecting you?"
- "In what ways is the ESL class contributing to your goals?"
- "What thoughts do you have about this job opportunity?"

These questions invite exploration and meaningful conversation.



# Affirmations

## Why Affirmations Matter

Many clients face multiple challenges: language barriers, cultural adjustments, employment obstacles, and housing insecurity.

Genuine affirmations acknowledge effort, strengthen self-efficacy, and build confidence that change is possible.



## Effective Affirmations

- "You've shown real commitment by attending every English class despite your busy schedule."
- "The way you navigated that complex application shows your determination."
- "I notice you're very resourceful in finding transportation solutions."
- "Your ability to maintain hope during this difficult transition is impressive."





# Reflections



## Simple Reflection

Repeating or slightly rephrasing what the client said

Client: "I missed the job fair because my child was sick."

You: "Your child's illness prevented you from attending."



## Complex Reflection

Adding meaning or feeling to what was said

Client: "I missed the job fair because my child was sick."

You: "You're feeling torn between your family responsibilities and your employment goals."

Reflections communicate understanding and help clients feel heard, particularly important when working across language differences.

# Summaries

## When to Use

### Summaries

- To gather information throughout a session
- To transition from one topic to another
- To highlight change talk and reinforce motivation
- To conclude a session and clarify next steps



## Example Summary

"So let me make sure I understand. You're interested in the warehouse position because it offers steady hours and doesn't require advanced English. You're concerned about the commute, especially in winter. You've had experience in similar work back home and feel confident about the physical demands. You're wondering if this job could eventually lead to better opportunities. Did I miss anything important?"

# Stephen Rollnick on

## Engaging

**"Engagement isn't just the first step—it's the foundation everything else is built upon."**



YouTube

**Motivational Interviewing: Role-playing focusing on engag...**

MI Gina Rollnick 4 7



05:29

# Debrief

What did you notice about:

- 1 The MI Spirit**
- 2 The Active Listening Skills**
- 3 Empowerment Strategies**







# Evoking: Pulling Out

## 1 Motivation

After establishing engagement, evoking helps clients discover their own reasons for change.

## 2 Evoking Questions

- "What would be better if you found stable housing?"
- "How would completing the ESL program benefit you personally?"
- "What's the most important reason for you to find employment?"
- "How does this goal fit with what matters most to you?"



# Change Talk: Motivation Spoken

## Aloud What Is Change Talk?

Change talk is any client statement that favors movement toward a specific behavior change.

When clients hear themselves express reasons for change, their commitment grows stronger.

| "The more I talk about something, the stronger I feel about it."

## Examples in Context

- "I really need to improve my English to get a better job." (Need)
- "I want my children to have stable housing." (Desire)
- "I think I could succeed in that training program." (Ability)
- "This certificate would definitely help my career." (Reason)

# Types of Change Talk

## Desire (DARN)

"I want to find a job that uses my skills."

"I wish I could improve my English faster."

## Taking Steps (CAT)

"I already called about the housing application."

"I practiced my interview skills yesterday."

## Commitment (CAT)

"I will attend every class this month."

"I'm going to submit five applications this week."



## Ability (DARN)

"I could attend night classes if childcare was available."

"I know I can learn these computer skills."

## Reasons (DARN)

"Better housing would mean my kids could stay in one school."

"This job would allow me to save money."

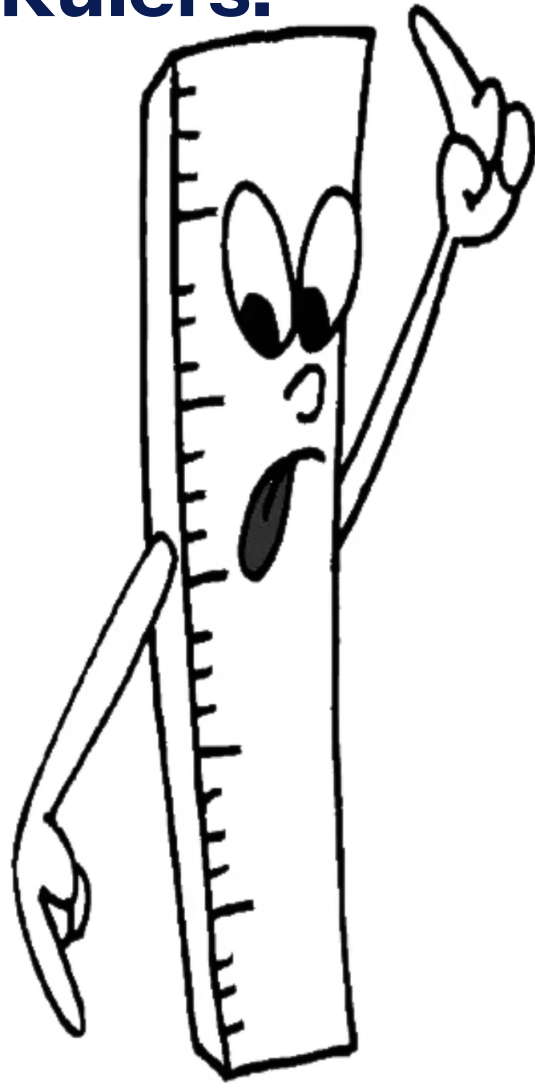
## Need (DARN)

"I need stable work to qualify for an apartment."

"I have to improve my English to advance."

# Importance/Confidence

## Rulers:



### Useful for evoking change

**talk:** How important is it to you to \_\_\_\_ (make this change) on a scale from 1-10, with 10 being the highest? What makes it higher than a 0?

### Can also ask:

How confident are you to \_\_\_\_ (make this change) on a scale from 1-10, with 10 being the highest? What would it take for you to feel more confident about that?



# Engaging someone who is disengaged



## Reflection

**"I really don't have time to prepare."**

"Preparing is not a priority right now."

[Reflection]

**"You're not listening to me!"** "You really want me to hear you." [Reflection]



## Apology

**"You're not listening to me!"** "I'm sorry.

Let me try again. Tell me what you want me to understand."

**"Who are you to tell me what to do?"**

"You're right; you get to decide what you're going to do. I apologize if I sounded bossy."



## Emphasize Autonomy

"It really is your choice about what you do in this situation."

"No one can make you do this. The decision is yours."




## Coming Alongside

"It sounds like the cons of changing still outweigh the pros. So it may be that you decide that you're not ready to change just yet."

# Motivational Interviewing and



 YouTube



## **Motivational Interviewing and Employment - with OARS lab...**

Motivational Interviewing for Change presents a demonstration of the use of Motivational Interviewing with someone who is seeking work. The client had...

# Engager Role Play

## Exercise

This activity involves working in pairs with one person as the Speaker and one as the Helper.



### Speaker Role

Identify a real behavior change that you are **considering** making in your life, but haven't definitely decided on yet. Share this potential change with your Helper.



### Helper Role

Listen carefully to the Speaker as they discuss the change they're contemplating. Use the motivational interviewing techniques we've covered to help explore their thoughts.



# Helper Role

## Instructions:

1

Listen carefully  
The goal is to understand the dilemma

### Ask these four questions:

- Why would you want to make this change?
- What are three best reasons to do it?
- On a scale from 1-10, how important would you say it is? And why are you a \_\_\_ and not a zero?
- How might you go about it, in order to succeed?

Do not respond and do not deviate from the questions

3

### Summarize and Ask a Key Question:

Summarize all the motivation you heard, including any desire, ability, reason, or need to change.

Then ask: "What do you think you'll do?"



# Questions?

- **About Motivational Interviewing techniques**

Clarification on any aspect of the OARS skills or MI spirit

- **About applying MI with specific clients**

Strategies for particular challenges or populations

- **About implementation in your agency**

How to integrate MI with existing protocols and procedures





# Your Key Takeaways

"What are your gems? What will you remember or practice?"



## A Technique

One specific MI skill you'll practice with clients this week



## An Insight

Something that shifted your perspective on client engagement



## A Question

The one question you'll try that might increase change likelihood

# Resources

Here's how to continue your motivational interviewing journey:



## Contact Information

Mary Beth Abella, MSW

Email: [abellajacks@gmail.com](mailto:abellajacks@gmail.com)

Phone: (310) 729-1560

Available for follow-up questions and consultation



## Recommended

**Resources** by Miller & Rollnick: **Motivational Interviewing, 4th Edition**

- MINT (Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers):  
[motivationalinterviewing.org](http://motivationalinterviewing.org)
- Motivational Interviewing for Change Website:  
[www.miforchange.com](http://www.miforchange.com)

