



## Paul Burke Training Group

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*Beyond training: Looking at learning MI in a whole new light!*

### Thoughts on Improved Practice (TIP) #1720

*Here's a quick and simple learning exercise to try. It comes in 2 parts. Begin by reading the first three examples that highlight the "good-type MI" and the "oh dear, that was a bit off-type of MI". Then, go to example #4 and write out your own MI-consistent and MI-non-consistent response. It'll be worth your time to try it!*

**CLIENT STATEMENT - EXAMPLE 1: (TARGET = increased exercise)** I know I should do more exercise. I mean, I'm a nurse for heaven's sakes! Every day I work with people who are in hospital because they refuse to get the exercise they need. But I still don't do it. I wish I could just give myself a kick in the butt and do it, you know? But there's always something that gets in the way. I've got three kids. That means every night I'm "going, going, going". You know – hockey. Dance lessons. Cub Scouts. Soccer. And on top of that, there's church. I'm treasurer this year, and that takes at least 4-5 hours a week. And you can't just push that aside. It has to get done. I'm a single Mom. I only have so many hands – and there's only so much time in a day. I don't have any "me time". So, even though I know better, it just always seems that my needs come last. I'm just too tired to add in another thing in my day, so exercise is just not something I look forward to. It has to be that way. That's life for a single Mom these days.

#### **EXAMPLE 1 - OPTION 1**

You're a busy woman. You work full time and you're exhausted all the time. You're a single Mom – and it sounds like being a good Mom is really important to you. You have too much on your plate already. If it isn't one thing, it's another. Dance lessons, Sports. Scouts. Church. Geesh! No wonder you're exhausted all the time! And - it seems to you that you couldn't fit exercise into all of that now, without getting even more tired than you already are. Your needs come last, and that's the way it has to be when you're a single Mom.

#### **EXAMPLE 1 – OPTION 2**

You're finding that it's a challenge to find ways to give yourself the time you need for exercise, because you are a busy woman. You have a real desire to be sure that your kids get what they need and that's important to you. At the same time, you wish that you could organize things so that you could have some "me time" for yourself. You'd like to find a way to make some of that "me time" involve some exercise. You're a nurse, and you've seen how important that is in the patients you work with. And – you're hoping maybe I might be able to figure out a way to do that.

#### **COMMENTS FROM THE COACH EX.1**

*A good simple reflection to demonstrate empathy with the frustrations and problems of the client. The trouble is that it reinforces "sustain talk" with no attention to "change talk". The reflection, although accurate, almost reinforces the impossibility of the client's situation. It doesn't move the conversation forward. The focus of this chat remains on how hard it will be to achieve the needed change.*

#### **COMMENTS FROM THE COACH EX.1**

*A good simple reflection to demonstrate empathy with BOTH the frustrations that this Mom is experiencing, while also focusing the discussion on the desire for change. This reflection doesn't emphasize "sustain talk". It serves to kind of "side-step" the sustain talk, and draw attention to the "change talk" (desire/want for change).*



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**CLIENT STATEMENT - EXAMPLE 2 (target = pursuing forgiveness).** I know I should try to forgive my ex-wife. Everybody tells me that, and I know I'd feel better if I did, but it's hard to decide to let that go. I sort of feel like I have to decide to do it, or not, because I'm wasting a lot of my time and emotional energy on hanging on. Still, she really hurt me when she had those affairs. And – what was worse was when she said all those lies about me in court. I know that she knew those were lies, and yet she was able to say all that stuff as if my feelings were completely irrelevant to her. I feel almost like I'm addicted to my anger over her. It's crazy. But when I think about all that stuff and let myself fume about it, it's sort of a way for me to keep some sort of an emotional bond between us in some way. At least that's what I think. It's really a waste of energy though. I mean she isn't bonded to me in any way. She has moved on – years ago. My counsellor says that I should work on forgiving her – you know – letting her go. I can see that. I need to free up the energy I put into all of that. It's all in the past and I need to put it into the past. But, if I find a way to move on, I feel kind of like she gets away with her lies. Like – I get left in the dust with no chance to set the record straight.

### EXAMPLE 2 – OPTION 1

It's hard for you to be at this “fork in the road” your life. Your ex-wife has moved on down the path of her life, and you're still stuck. On the one hand, you're kind of wishing that she'd come back and meet you where you're at – and let you find a way to vent, so you could walk away with a sense of closure. On the other hand, you know that all the wishing in the world isn't going to change anything. At the same time, you also know that you need to forgive her so that you can free up some energy and move forward in your life. So, when all is said and done, it sounds like you know what you need to do, you're just struggling a little with getting started with that work.

### EXAMPLE 2 – OPTION 2

Your ex-wife has really left a deep wound in your heart. Not only did she have an affair, but she also told a lot of lies about you in court, and that is still bothering you because she basically got away with it. You're not sure if you're ready to move on yet. You are angry and it seems like you need to be able to fume about it – to vent – at least sometimes. In a way, holding on to those feelings keeps the relationship alive for you in some ways. People tell you that forgiveness is the answer, but it's hard. If you “forgive and move on” as they say, she gets away with it, and there is no real justice for you.

### COMMENTS OF THE COACH - EX.2

*Great accurate reflection, which indicates good empathy with what the client is saying. You complexified it by using the “fork in the road” metaphor. The client would agree with that image, given that he says he is at a decision point. Your naming it in that way causes the conversation to focus on the fact that it is now “decision time”. Your use of double-sided reflection is well done - because you ended on the “pro-change” side of the argument. Your emphasis on highlighting the change talk (e.g. needing to change) shows that you understand the importance of side-stepping change talk. Your reflection here will likely shift the next part of the conversation to “getting started”.*

### COMMENTS OF THE COACH EX.2

*This is an accurate reflection which indicates empathy - but only empathy with one side of what the client is saying and feeling. In MI, we try to encourage helpers to “side-step the sustain talk”. Here, you have not really side-stepped it. Instead, you have kind of made the sustain talk the focus. This can serve to accidentally strengthen client thoughts such as “I don't want to forgive her”. “I'm not ready to forgive her”. “I can't forgive her” (too painful), and “I don't need to forgive her. She's the one at fault here - not me”. It might be better too if you could help him hear himself talk of wasting his energy.*



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**CLIENT STATEMENT -EXAMPLE 3 (Target = Writing a last will document).** My financial planner is really pushing me to write a will. That's kind of tough for me. It's kind of weird. I have this thing about "death". I don't know why really. It's not that I'm afraid of dying or anything. It just feels kind of "dark" somehow. I guess it's just that death isn't really all that nice a thing to think about. I sort of think that a will is something you should worry about when you get old, but not at my age! I'm only 50 for crying out loud. Still, my own parents died without a will, and settling their estate ended up being a real nightmare. It really isn't fair to the kids at all. I said that time that I would never put my own kids through that.

### EXAMPLE 3 – Option 1

Well, what I would suggest you do is call a lawyer and make an appointment to talk about getting it started. Writing a will can be a difficult process because it forces you to come to terms with your own mortality. It makes you face up to the question of "how long will I live". I think that if you can kind of just grit your teeth and make the appointment, you can then let the lawyer handle everything and there will be less pressure on you to follow through. The lawyer will ensure that there is follow-through. I was just reading the other day about how people who die without wills end up with a lot of their money going to the government, which is not fair to a person's kids.

### EXAMPLE 3 – Option 2

Well, first let me just say that I commend you on having the guts to get this issue on your agenda. It would be so easy to just kind of ignore it, or sweep it under the carpet. You obviously know better than that, and your interest in protecting your children from the nightmare of finalizing your estate without a will to work with is a genuinely considerate thing to do. I think that's admirable. So, for you, it's not really a matter of whether you should have a will or not. Instead, it sounds like what's going to be helpful for you is to respect the fact that this is a sensitive issue for you that has some feelings associated with it. And, more importantly, you're wanting to make plans around what you know you should do here.

### COMMENTS OF YOUR COACH EX.3

*This response, while well-intended, is not consistent with the practices that make up an MI interview. It involves giving advice that has not been asked for by the client. It has a bit of an "expert": feel to it, or an ethic of "here's what I say you ought to do here". Rather than helping to surface the client's internal motivation to write a will, it is designed to persuade. Persuasion is not the same thing as motivation. In a circumstance like this, your client is probably not suffering from lack of advice. More likely, they are a bit stuck in terms of coming to terms with the "cons" of writing a will (facing their discomfort about death). You might be able to help them a lot by attending to the "advantages of having a will" side of the argument.*

### COMMENTS OF YOUR COACH EX.3

*This response is likely to be quite well received by the client. It is very consistent with the practices that make up an MI interview - because it involves providing an affirmation ("I commend you on..." and "...that's admirable"). It spotlights a positive trait in the client (e.g. having guts, and also having a desire to protect the best interests of the children). In this way, this part of the conversation is somewhat "strength focused". This is likely going to help in a big way to achieve mutual engagement. Your decision to end off with a reflection of change talk suggests a solid understanding of the need to "cultivate change talk". You avoided the sustain talk completely (well done!) so the focus is on "fixing this" not on "the problem here is..."*



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### Now it's your turn ...

Read the client statement below. You're invited to compose two responses in accordance with the instructions under the headings of "Option 1" and "Option 2". Please write out your responses long-hand. (This seems to help you think through a variety of ways to compose your response rather than just taking what comes quickly to mind).

### NOW YOU TRY IT!

**EXAMPLE #4 (Target = taking a computer skills course).** I had hoped to get through to the end of my career without having to worry about computers, but I'm afraid that ain't in the cards here now! I manage the housekeeping department of a small motel. They're putting in this new computer system that is going to track the check ins and check outs and what days various rooms need linen changes and all that. It seems to me anyways, that it's worked just fine to do all that with a paper and pen – 'til now. But - not anymore! The whole world is becoming one big computer. The problem is, I have no idea how to run one. They say I will need to know how to do e-mail, and how to enter stuff on a spread sheet – whatever that is. Anyway, I've gotta get on with it. There's this course at the community centre called "computer basics". I hate the thought of it. I haven't been a student in 40 years. I'm not the greatest speller, so that kind of freaks me out. My sister said she'd come with me – you know – just for moral support kind of thing. That's nice of her. But, I'm thinking, maybe I won't be able to pull it off.

#### **Your Response Option #4.1**

Write out a reflection that includes a lot of the sustain talk as stated, or as implied. Finish off with at least one piece if useful advice. (Typically, this will result in an unhelpful response – and in a non-MI response).

#### **Your Response Option 4.2**

1. Write out a response that begins with an affirmation of at least one positive client trait as stated or implied. Then,
2. Add on a complex reflection that outlines at least one piece of the change talk that was stated or implied (any of the DARN-CATS).
3. Finally, end your response with a question that will cultivate more change talk, or strengthen any of the change talk that has been made.

**Write down your response on back**

**Write down your response on back**

**Next, ask a colleague (or an MI coach) to review your responses.** Ask for feedback as if your coach were guiding you toward more MI-consistent practice about each of your responses. Specifically, your coach should point out what was "MI-consistent" and 'Not so much so' about your responses. NOTE – this last task will do as much for helping your colleague to learn MI as it will for you!

Until next week ...