



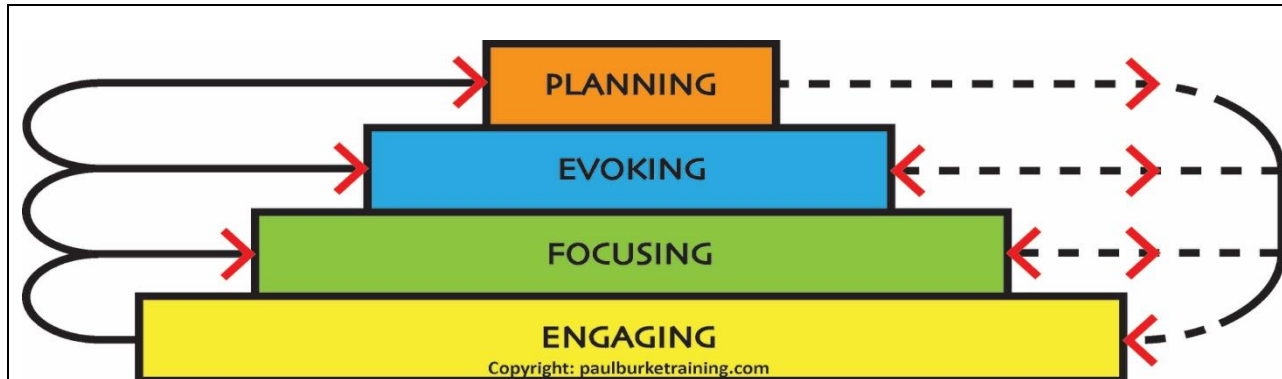
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Beyond training: Looking at learning MI in a whole new light!

Thoughts on Improved Practice (TIP) #1819

The Four Processes of MI Work (Part 1: Engaging)



Most MI work involves moving in and out of 4 processes. The very foundation of MI work begins with an engaging process. Engaging begins with the interviewer using a variety of questions, reflections and summaries so that s/he can learn to understand the client's point of view on the matter that is being discussed. As the interviewer develops deeper empathy through such work, you can expect the client to also gradually engage in the conversation itself. Clients feel more inclined to engage as an active participant in a conversation when they know that you understand them, and their perspective on the issue that brings them to talk with you.

In my training work, the most common problem that gets in the way of creating highly effective motivational enhancement is failure of engagement, or inadequate engagement. I suspect that is because we are often more attuned to our own way of seeing client issues, than we are to deeply and genuinely meeting the client where s/he is at. It is always possible to get better (and more efficient) with engaging work.

The Four Process of MI (Part 1: Engaging)

In the previous version of the primary MI text (2002), authors Miller and Rollnick described MI conversations as having two phases. They suggested that the first phase was about building and enhancing motivation for change. Phase II "kicked in" when the client had solid motivation (desire and internalized reasons for changing). In Phase II work, MI helpers shift the client's desire for change into a "commitment" to pursue change – and then work with the client to develop a plan. Another way of looking at these phases was to consider that Phase I was all about helping clients explore the "why" of change, and Phase II was all about the "how-to-go-about-doing-it". That makes good sense. People don't care about learning "how" to change unless they have a reason "why"; unless they are aware of the need to pursue it.

In the newer (2013) version MI text however, it is suggested that MI providers work to facilitate four different (but interactive) processes and to use OARS-I skills to accomplish such work. I'm sure you'll



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identify with all the Motivational Interviewers who find it difficult to conduct helpful conversations with clients who were not well engaged in the conversation, or with clients who have multiple concerns and problems. The same difficulties arise when there is no clarity on the client's perspective on the issue that is being addressed in the conversation. That's why Miller and Rollnick now encourage us to move away from the sequential and linear "two-phase" model – and toward a more "back-and-forth" concept of conversational flow. The four processes begin anew with each interview and with each new client – and also recur as clients work from the first "stair-step" up and down again, through various processes at various times in the conversation. (Think of a conversational process as similar to the gardening process. Gardening involves a number of processes including planting, watering, weeding, fertilizing, pruning, harvesting and so on. Just as there is a logical sequence to doing such tasks, gardeners cannot do the work of any one process and then say, "now I am finished with that job – forever!" Even while a gardener works away at his weeding or his pruning, he still needs to return to the watering process frequently. So too is the situation in MI work. While there is a logical sequence to "working the processes", returning to earlier processes is often necessary.

In MI work, the four processes are depicted as a "staircase". That model serves to demonstrate how conversations always begin by moving onto the first step - as two people (helper and client) work to find mutual engagement in the discussion and to engage with each other's point of view. Just as a car will not move forward until the driver gets it into gear, neither will a helping conversation develop forward momentum until helper and client have successfully engaged.

ENGAGING YOUR EMPATHIC SKILLS:



Miller and Rollnick state that "therapeutic engagement is a prerequisite for everything that follows" (p. 27). They also note that the quality of the working relationship with the helper, as perceived by the client, is actually predictive of outcome. In other words, not until the helper is well engaged with the client's logic [point of view], and not until the client trusts the accuracy of the interviewer's capacity for deep empathy will much of anything else evolve.

In the same way that when two people become engaged to be married – the idea is not to have the other person engage with you. Engagement is about two separate people finding a common space where each engages with the other. In MI, when we work to create engagement, we avoid the somewhat narcissistic perspective that we must find a way to help the other person engage with us, or with our agenda, or with our point of view. Instead, we see it as the first most important task to find a way to engage with the logic of the client. After all, it is the client's perspective that counts in client-centered practice!



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MI helpers have a great deal of control over shaping conversational processes in order to nurture the development of engagement. *Conversely, by ignoring or not giving enough attention to the work that must get accomplished through the engaging process, MI helpers can accidentally fuel “conversational regression”* (my term – but I like it, so I’m sticking with it!) (This is an especial problem when it is only the client’s motivation that makes an exit – but their bodies stay in the room! In such cases, you will get the feeling that you might as well be speaking to an empty chair!)



In future TIPs there’ll be lots more to say about the work of engaging and how to use various OARS-I skills to achieve its goal. Engaging with your client involves much more than just “small talk” and “chit chat”. It requires giving more attention to the starting gate than the finish line.

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Beginning

There is no such thing as a competent Motivational Interviewer who is not also a skillful engager! So – the invitation this week is to see if you can discipline yourself enough in every interview to prevent engaging with your own thoughts about the client’s situation until you have evidence that you and your client have connected and that you have accurate empathy with the starting position of your client! There is no substitute for knowing where your client is at. With the work of helping people pursue change, engaging skills are a necessary beginning!

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