

# Motivational Interviewing Skills for Frontline Settlement Staff

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## A Webinar for Frontline Staff



## Territorial Acknowledgment

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As a provincial umbrella association, AMSSA acknowledges that B.C. is on the unceded homelands of First Nations who have stewarded this land since time immemorial. We recognize the privilege that we have as settlers on this land, and acknowledge that AMSSA's operations is on the unceded traditional territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. As an organization, AMSSA is committed to creating a safe space for indigenous voices.

## Funder Acknowledgment

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## Speaker Acknowledgment

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We would like to thank Cristine Urquhart from ChangeTalk Associates for creating this handout and sharing her knowledge as content expert on the topic.

# About the Event

The “Motivational Interviewing Skills for Frontline Settlement Staff” Webinar held on July 6 2023, offered frontline settlement workers with an introduction to Motivational Interviewing (MI) and strategies that can support them in their journey to improve listening skills and recognize instances where individuals are advocating for change.

The webinar recording can be accessed on the [AMSSA website here](#).

## MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING (MI)

MI, an evidence-based communication style, is a respectful and compassionate way of engaging and supporting people in making changes. It has also been noted to be helpful when working cross-culturally (*Bahafzallah, 2019; Hohman, 2021*).

Combining relational and technical skills and strategies (*Miller & Rose, 2009*), an MI approach supports helping professionals to collaboratively initiate and guide change conversations in an engaging and effective manner – shifting from directing to guiding. Communication is purposeful and focused as helping professionals draw out reasons to consider changing from the person, versus telling them what they should do. MI honours the universal experience of ambivalence (wanting and not wanting something at the same time) (*Miller, 2021*) and shines light on the part of people that desires change.

## MI & CULTURAL HUMILITY

CULTURAL HUMILITY	MI SPIRIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interpersonal</li><li>• Openness</li><li>• Nonjudgmental</li><li>• Respect</li><li>• Curious/ Not knowing stance</li><li>• Clients’ perspectives are centered</li><li>• Honors client autonomy</li><li>• Partnership/Clients as capable</li><li>• Egoless</li><li>• Intersectionality</li><li>• Self-awareness</li><li>• Self-reflection and critique</li><li>• Institutional accountability</li><li>• Ongoing learning/lifelong practice</li></ul> <p>“A way of being...” (<i>Foronda, Reinholdt, &amp; Ousman, 2016</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interpersonal</li><li>• Acceptance</li><li>• Nonjudgmental</li><li>• Respect</li><li>• Curious/ Not knowing stance</li><li>• Clients’ perspectives are centered</li><li>• Honors client autonomy</li><li>• Partnership/Collaboration/Clients as capable</li><li>• Evocation</li><li>• Compassion</li><li>• Accurate empathy</li><li>• Autonomy support</li><li>• Ongoing learning/lifelong practice</li></ul> <p>“A way of being...” (<i>Miller &amp; Rollnick, 2013</i>)</p>

Shared with author permission. Hohman, M. (2021). Motivational Interviewing through the Lens of Critical Race Theory, in Motivational Interviewing in Social Work Practice. 2nd Edition. New York: Guilford Press. Pg 195.

## BEGINNING PRACTICE TIPS

Motivational interviewing offers a way of understanding the nuances of change conversations with others. Readiness is dynamic and directly impacted by the way in which helping professionals communicate. As you begin to listen to your conversations with an MI ear, there are several clues to pay attention to that provide immediate feedback on the communication style. Is the approach being used helpful or getting in the way of supporting engagement and change?

TIP	WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?	WHAT MIGHT YOU DO?
Listen for ya, but...	This response (or a variation of it) is common when someone has mixed feelings about change (ambivalence) and the helping professional begins to share all the reasons they need to do it and how to go about it. As a result, the person literally starts to talk themselves out of change and defend their position.	Recognize what is happening in the moment. If you start to hear the other person telling you all the reasons they cannot change, take a breath, and slow down. You might say something like, "I got ahead of us. Please tell me what your thoughts are first." "It's not my intention to tell you what to do. What you have been noticing?"
Pay attention to the smile & nod	This can be a point of communication breakdown. It does not necessarily mean agreement. Is it safe enough for the person to disagree? How might power dynamics influence the interaction? What role might culture play in the response?	Grounded in the Spirit of MI, trauma-informed practice and cultural humility, gently find ways to create safety for the person to share their views. Find phrasing to convey partnership and honour autonomy, for example, "It is very important that any decisions work for you and your family. You know your children best." "Please let me know if something does not fit for you – it is very important that this makes sense in your situation." "Your feedback is essential throughout our work together, especially if something isn't helpful for you. Together we can find ways to adjust and adapt the plan as needed."
Talk less, listen more	People need to hear themselves. "I learn what I believe as I hear myself speak." (Bem – Self-Perception Theory) Working in an MI style creates the space and safety for people to talk themselves into their own changes. Helping professionals draw out and reflect back the experiences, thoughts, desires, hopes etc. in a way that people begin to understand themselves at a deeper level. This is not possible if the professional is doing all the talking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay attention to whose voice you are hearing the most.</li> <li>• Draw on the OARS skills to support engagement and deepen the conversation.</li> <li>• Practice using open questions to convey partnership and let the person tell their story.</li> <li>• Increase comfort and skill in using complex reflections to deepen understanding and connection.</li> </ul>

TIP	WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?	WHAT MIGHT YOU DO?
<p>Be aware of your own righting reflex</p>	<p>As a helping professional, there can be times when the desire to fix, prevent and be helpful can begin to take over – ‘I know what the problem is, and I know how you should fix it.’ The desire to be helpful is normal, and for many a driving factor in the chosen work. At the same time, self-reflection and awareness are critical to prevent powering over, and potentially even re-traumatizing.</p>	<p>As a helping professional, life-long learning, curiosity and the capacity for self-reflection are essential. Having practices to support you to stay grounded and present are critical for both maintaining connection with those you are supporting and for professional resilience. (See <i>Trauma-informed Practice resources developed by the Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health</i> <a href="https://cewh.ca/recent-work/trauma-informed-practice/">https://cewh.ca/recent-work/trauma-informed-practice/</a> )</p> <p><b>SOME IDEAS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pause and focus on your breath (you can’t fix if you aren’t talking).</li> <li>• Stay in a place of curiosity – perhaps there is something more to learn or understand (versus reacting strongly).</li> <li>• Summarize what you have heard so far – this will allow you a moment to re-group and ensure understanding.</li> <li>• In particularly challenging situations, seek the support of a colleague/supervisor.</li> </ul>
<p>Reflect more than question</p>	<p>In MI, reflections are one of the main skills used to convey empathy and understanding. Questions, especially closed-ended questions, have the potential to create a power imbalance – the helping professional asks the questions, the other person is expected to answer. Further, when multiple questions are asked in a row, an assumption is being made on the part of the helping professional that they fully understand the responses. This can lead to communication breakdown.</p> <p>Integrating more reflections also supports rapid engagement.</p>	<p>At a beginner level, aim for a 1:1 ratio of reflections to questions. At a more advanced level, try 2 or more reflections for every question.</p> <p><b>KEEP IN MIND THE RHYTHM OF:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask an open question</li> <li>• Listen to the response</li> <li>• Reflect back your understanding</li> <li>• Pause to leave space for any clarification</li> <li>• Reflect again or ask another question</li> </ul>

## WEBSITES/LINKS OF INTEREST

Motivational Interviewing	Main website for the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT). Numerous resources and links to demonstrations, research, presentations etc. <a href="https://motivationalinterviewing.org/">https://motivationalinterviewing.org/</a>
Dr. William R. Miller	<a href="https://williamrmiller.net">https://williamrmiller.net</a>
Dr. Stephen Rollnick	<a href="https://www.stephenrollnick.com">https://www.stephenrollnick.com</a>
Change Talk Associates	<a href="https://changetalk.ca">https://changetalk.ca</a>
Dr. Stan Steindl	MI & Compassion <a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCujCvGkc_TFF7KmA0Sk4E7A/videos">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCujCvGkc_TFF7KmA0Sk4E7A/videos</a>
Guilford Press	Motivational Interviewing books on many specific topics (see listed below), as well as handouts and resources related to the books. <a href="https://www.guilford.com/browse/psychology-psychiatry-social-work/applications-motivational-interviewing-series">https://www.guilford.com/browse/psychology-psychiatry-social-work/applications-motivational-interviewing-series</a>
Mindful Self-Compassion	Main website for the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion, founded by Dr. Kristin Neff & Dr. Chris Germer. Find information such as training opportunities & guided practices and self-compassion exercises. <a href="https://self-compassion.org/the-program/">https://self-compassion.org/the-program/</a>
Podcast series	<i>Talking to Change: A Motivational Interviewing Podcast</i> , hosted by Glenn Hinds and Sebastian Kaplan, is a series of conversations exploring Motivational Interviewing (MI) and its influence on supporting individuals and groups as they make positive health and lifestyle changes. <a href="https://attcnetwork.org/centers/northwest-attc/talking-change-mi-podcast">https://attcnetwork.org/centers/northwest-attc/talking-change-mi-podcast</a>
Presentation by Dr. Miller	<i>What Makes Helpers Helpful?</i> 2021 MINT Virtual Forum Plenary <a href="https://vimeo.com/506809278">https://vimeo.com/506809278</a>
MI Skills in Interpreting	Overview of MI and suggestions for working with an interpreter <a href="https://linguisthub.empire-groupuk.com/motivational-interviewing-skills-in-interpreting/#1560936117856-6cf3cb68-f70d">https://linguisthub.empire-groupuk.com/motivational-interviewing-skills-in-interpreting/#1560936117856-6cf3cb68-f70d</a>

## MI MANUALS/GUIDES

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# About AMSSA

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AMSSA is a unique province-wide association that strengthens over 80 member agencies as well as hundreds of community stakeholder agencies who serve immigrants and newcomers, and build culturally inclusive communities, with the knowledge, resources and support they need to fulfill their mandates.

## OUR VISION

A just and equitable society in which everyone benefits from social and economic inclusion.

## OUR MISSION

AMSSA facilitates collaborative leadership, knowledge exchange, and stakeholder engagement to support member agencies that serve immigrants and build culturally inclusive communities.

## OUR PURPOSE

AMSSA's purpose is to co-create the conditions of success for our members to build better lives for immigrants and newcomers to BC.

AMSSA's 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan is an impact-driven strategy focusing on four pillars:

- 1 SUPPORT OUR MEMBERS**
- 2 STRENGTHEN THE SECTOR**
- 3 DISRUPT SYSTEMS**
- 4 EXCEL AS AN ORGANIZATION**

## WE VALUE

**EQUITY** and strive to be the catalyst for change which disrupts systems promoting racial and social injustice.

**INCLUSIVENESS** and work with our members and stakeholders to place voices that have been marginalized in positions of influence, creating space for all perspectives.

**INTEGRITY**, striving to always work to the highest standards, encouraging innovation, risk taking and leadership; we are always open to new thoughts and maintain accountability in our work.

**DIVERSITY**, recognizing our own individual biases and engaging members and stakeholders in meaningful ways that promotes inclusion of all voices and perspectives.

**MUTUAL RESPECT** by respecting what everyone has to offer within their own context of life experiences, opening our hearts and minds to always listening and learning.

**COLLABORATION**, engaging in equitable partnerships, mindfully exploring old and new ideas to advance the work of AMSSA and our members.

**SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION**, engaging in continuous individual and organizational reflection and collaboration.

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