

NCJTC- Fox Valley | Motivational Interviewing 101

Welcome, everyone, to the National Criminal Justice Training Center webinar Motivational Interviewing 101. Presenting today's webinar is Dr. Anjali Nandi. My name's Greg Brown, and I will be facilitating today. Also, Lea Geurts will be assisting me with the webinar today.

This project is supported by a grant awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this webinar are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice. With that, let's try our first poll question.

This is a simple question to find out who's joining us today. The question is, which of the following best describes your role? Your choices are victim services, victim advocate, probation, community corrections, law enforcement, child advocacy center, social worker, or mental health, or other. Thank you all for participating.

It looks like about 17% are victim services or victim advocates. 35% of the audience today is probation, community corrections. And I'll let you know that we have about 450 people on the call today, on this webinar. Law enforcement about 10%, and about 22% are certified addiction counselors, social workers, or mental health workers. And about 17% of you represent other disciplines.

My name is Greg Brown, and I'm a program manager with NCJTC. I've worked in probation and corrections for about 30 years. Lea Geurts is a program coordinator with NCJTC.

And Lea has significant experience in tribal probation, court administration, and technical assistance for corrections professionals. Lea will be assisting me in the question and answer section today. I would also like to thank our e-learning team for their amazing work and support with this webinar series.

I'm pleased to introduce our presenter today Dr. Anjali Nandi. Dr. Nandi is an associate with the National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College. She's also the chief probation officer for the 20th Judicial District in the state of Colorado. Additionally, Dr. Nandi is a published author, having co-authored nine books. Her vitae is also included as a handout for this webinar. With that, Anjali, I'll turn the time over to you.

Great. Thank you so much, Greg, for doing that, and I'm so excited to be on this webinar. Motivational

interviewing is definitely close to my heart, and I find it such an exceptionally helpful way of thinking about how people change, how to facilitate long-term behavior change, but also some really practical skills that helped me when working with really tough clients. So I hope our participants on the webinar find this interesting and helpful.

And, Greg, I appreciate that you're on this call as well because motivational interviewing is so skill based that it would be really fun if we could demonstrate some of the skills so that participants have some idea about what we're talking about. So I'll keep inviting you into the conversation, but feel free to jump in if you think some clarification is needed or if you're seeing any themes in the questions that are coming up. I would love that.

Absolutely, Anjali. Thanks.

Great. Thank you, Greg. So the place that I would love to start is just by placing the emphasis on why we're talking about motivational interviewing. Why is this conversation important, particularly as it relates to tribal communities? So I would love as we're talking about motivational interviewing for you to be listening from a really meta place, a place that you're kind of thinking about what we're talking about and how it relates to values and an alignment of what I think motivational interviewing values are and how and whether it aligns with the values that you hold.

Because as practitioners, when we can pick up skills that really align with our values, we're more likely to engage in those skills, utilize those skills with clients, and see results. I also think that motivational interviewing is so much more than just a bag of tricks or a skill set. It really is a way of being. And if we can hang out here for a minute-- by that I mean, it's a way of thinking about people that really privileges the person who is in front of me, the client, so to speak.

There's a deep belief in motivational interviewing. That the wisdom, the answers really lie in the person in front of me as opposed to in me the practitioner. So when somebody is coming to me no matter what the behavior is, whether it's an addiction issue, whether it's anti-social behavior of some kind, a thinking pattern, any kinds of behaviors that the person is coming in with, the answers about change lie in them. And so, therefore, they are the expert.

I am the facilitator of the process. I get to ask some questions. I get to hold up a mirror. I get to get curious with this other person. But the way of being deeply held in motivational interviewing is that this person has the wisdom and the knowledge about what is going to be best for them.

So I find that really, really important. And in a lot of ways, it lets me off the hook. I don't have to have

all the answers. I definitely don't need to tell anybody what to do because really I only have the answers for myself. They have the answers for them. And so there's a really deep respect for the wisdom of the other person.

And so sometimes in motivational interviewing, we talk about the skills which are the words that we use. But then there's the music behind the words. And it's this music that's the way of being. There's a lot of empathy. There's a real deep sense of respect and a collaboration that's happening.

And so if we're missing the music, we're really not doing motivational interviewing. Perhaps, we're doing some skills, but we're not doing motivational interviewing as a whole because we're missing that sort of music behind it. I also think it allows us to really attune to our clients. And because of this sort of respectful stance, it allows us to really culturally attune to the clients.

And, of course, motivational interviewing is research supported. It is one of our evidence-based practices when it comes to facilitating long-term behavior change across numerous different behaviors. There are certain concepts in motivational interviewing that really help us understand how people change and what happens within us as practitioners.

So any time we are faced with any kind of behavior change, it is extremely normal to experience something called ambivalence. Ambivalence is sort of feeling several ways about something. I kind of want to. I kind of don't. We can pick any behavior, and we have I think almost 500 people on the call.

And I would imagine that all of us have struggled with changing some behavior or another, whether it's eating healthy, or exercising, or keeping an organized workspace, or whatever it is. We've all struggled with behavior. And if somebody says something to us, you know, you might want to think about tidying up your desk, our immediate reaction might be really? Who are you to tell me what to do?

Or it might be, gosh, maybe you're right. Do I? But then at least for me, and some of you might laugh at me about this, I believe that my mess actually makes a lot of sense to me. And I can find things when the desk is messy. But as soon as I organize the desk, I can't find anything.

So you hear the ambivalence as I talk. I kind of want to. I kind of don't. And I know I'm picking kind of goofy behaviors, but these are also true about some of these really tough behaviors that our clients are faced with. So ambivalence is really normal.

The trick is, though, or the tricky thing is that if we're talking with somebody and they start to express

ambivalence, our normal natural reflex is to jump in and argue one side of it. So an example might be if I say, well, I kind of like my messy desk and you're trying to facilitate change in me, you might automatically start to argue with me about why having a cleaner workspace is helpful. I know I've fallen into this trap numerous times with clients where the client will say-- in fact, recently, I had a client who is currently pregnant and said something like, well, my mom used when she was pregnant with me, and I turned out OK.

And I really had to bite my tongue about not arguing with that statement and saying, wait, actually, maybe not. That reflex within us to argue for change, to argue for what we think is right is called the righting reflex. And that righting reflex within us as practitioners gets really pulled out when we're faced with people who are ambivalent. And so the reason I start off here is because you will hear so much ambivalence as we're talking about behavior change with someone. And it is incumbent upon us as practitioners, whether we're victims advocates, or law enforcement, or probation officers, whatever we are, mental health workers, we really have to start with ourselves and manage our own righting reflex.

Because think about this. Let's say we're all talking about the same behavior. Let's say you all tell me that you are kind of ambivalent about eating healthier. Vegetables don't taste good unless you fry them, batter them and fry them. And then, of course, we're all on board, but that's not so healthy.

And maybe you're feeling kind of ambivalent. And I jump in saying, no, it's really important that you eat healthy. Notice the reaction in you, right? Notice that pushback. That's normal.

If I fall into the righting reflex, I leave you with no other option but to get defensive. And so it's really important that I start with me, that I start by not taking sides but getting curious. So when we fall into the righting reflex, we tend to do many different things. I tend to provide advice, or maybe I come up with some ideas for the person. And I tend to work quite a lot. And I'm curious about what you do.

So when you are struggling with the righting reflex, what do you tend to do? So I have a polling question here. And I'm going to ask Greg for some help launching the poll and then talking us through it and giving us some results. Greg.

Thanks, Anjali. So the second polling question is when struggling with the righting reflex, what do you tend to do-- one, give advice, two, provide solutions, three, provide next steps? Wow, interesting results. Giving advice, 36%. Providing solutions, 38%. And 26%, providing next steps.

I will just say from my experience I am really good at giving advice, and I've had all the answers for

people. And they just don't seem to ever want to follow them. I'm not quite sure what's happening, Anjali.

[LAUGHTER]

Yes, so I love this, right? I mean, we have about 75% if I add two of these together that either give advice or provide solutions. And I'm right there with you. I have such brilliant ideas. Unfortunately, no one thinks they're brilliant except me. And it's really, really tricky.

So there's some studies on providing advice and what happens in our brain and then receiving advice and what happens in our brain. Greg, I don't think you're alone in this. But the interesting thing is that when we provide advice, if we take a look at what centers of our brain are on fire when we provide advice, meaning what centers of our brain are lit up, pleasure centers in our brain light up when we provide people advice. It feels good. I feel smart.

I feel like I have some ideas. But I also feel like I'm helping. I feel like I'm offering something. I have some value to the other person. So when I'm giving advice, pleasure centers are activated.

Here's the really sad part. When we're receiving advice, meaning we're the recipients of these brilliant ideas from other people, pain sensors in our brain are activated. Isn't that fascinating? So when we're the recipients of advice, it actually hurts, right? And maybe some of you can relate.

I mean, there are times-- I'll use a very silly and personal example-- when I'll take a problem to my mom who's a really brilliant woman. Except when I take a problem to her, I'm really hoping that she'll just listen and allow me to kind of talk through it, and, instead, she provides me advice. And I immediately want to hang up on her. I know that's terribly rude, but that's immediately what I want to do.

Because even though she might be right, the fact that it came from somebody else that wasn't me is really tough. So it's something for us to keep in mind that when we are faced with the righting reflex and we want to either give advice, or provide solutions, provide a next step, it's actually to the detriment of the other person. And so I've had to work really, really hard on managing my own righting reflex no matter how brilliant I think my ideas are and instead kind of hang back, literally sit on my hands, and instead get curious.

So curiosity is something that really will help us through this righting reflex. And part of being curious is asking questions. But here's the thing. When we ask questions, we need to be able to listen to the

information that's coming in a way that we suspend our own judgment.

What I'm just talking about right now is really a definition of empathy. Empathy is the ability to listen while just for a minute suspending my own judgment about the information that I'm receiving, so really trying to understand the other person's perspective. It is quite literally suspending my perspective and listening to the other person's perspective.

Now I'm not saying that that means the other person is right, or that I have to agree with them, or any of that, right? I can still hold my perspective, but that when I'm listening, I really try and understand where they're coming from. Whether I agree or not is not the point. And listening to really understand is in service of moving forward.

So it's not in service of letting them off the hook. I want to be really, really clear about this. Just because I understand does not make your behavior, client, your behavior OK. Just because I understand that you are very stressed out doesn't make it OK that you used, right, for an example.

However, my understanding allows for us to move forward and figure out what do we do next. How do we help support you? How do we continue to facilitate long-term change so that I'm listening to you as opposed to coming up with my own ideas? So, Greg, I'm curious from you, what has your experience been kind of seeing empathy working. And then what are some cautions that you have when we're talking about empathy?

Great question. I would say, and we talked about this in one of the previous webinars, when someone's placed on probation, they've completed the adversarial system. It's you're guilty, not guilty. You're going to plead guilty. People are fighting for your rights, and victims need what they need.

But once they pass through and the courts made a decision that they're going to stay in the community and work on the issues that brought them in, it's really important to do that. And one of the things that we started doing, and I had to practice this a lot, is to ask the first question instead of reading them their terms and conditions asking them the question, so what brings you here today? Help me understand your journey here today. And that really has helped me kind of put myself in their shoes and not necessarily just read the pre-sentence report, or the arrest report, and the things that they had done, but to really understand what brought them in the door and what resonates for them. Why are they here?

And it gives you a place to kind of begin that relationship. I think some of the cautions are, and one

of the things we've talked about in some of our compassion fatigue and secondary trauma, is when you give empathy and you give a piece of yourself to each of these clients that come in that it takes a toll on us as professionals. So cautioning that balance with empathizing with them but also taking care of ourselves and not going down the road of that secondary trauma compassion fatigue.

Yeah, those are such important points. I'm going to start with the last one you brought up around compassion fatigue and secondary trauma. Because you're right. Sort of that level of empathy, it really exposes us if we're not careful. And so I think the piece that you're bringing up, Greg, is the importance of boundaries with empathy.

That empathy is not sort of just agreeing with the client or understanding and, therefore, letting go of my boundaries. That empathy is only empathy if it also comes with a really clear what's OK and what's not OK, right? So managing those two pieces, and then like you said, really making sure that we're taking care of ourselves, which is empathy for ourselves as well, right? There are some folks who we're going to struggle with, who we're going to struggle with even finding empathy for, so just sort of being careful with ourselves as well, I think, is one piece.

The other thing that you mentioned was the importance of how empathy really supports the building of a relationship. And I just want to emphasize that, that relationship is key when facilitating long-term behavior change. In fact, it's one of the strongest predictors of facilitating behavior change.

And by relationship, I mean empathy with really clear boundaries and structure. So we're clear about the goal. We're clear about the direction we're moving. But there's a lot of flexibility, a lot of empathy around how we get to the goal.

And interestingly enough, empathy helps the other person feel safe. So when we express empathy to someone, it's the quickest way to help them feel like you understand and, therefore, they're OK. It drops anxiety the fastest, faster than a lot of the other skills that we're going to be talking about. So empathy really helps with safety. But it also does a really good job with modeling empathy for the other person.

So when I'm expressing empathy to a client, I'm paving the way for them to be able to have empathy for others, for themselves sure but also others, so their victims. Or if I'm having a conversation with a victim, me expressing empathy allows them to settle in to really seeing all of the perspectives rather than just kind of reacting. So empathy is this really, really important ability. And yet sometimes we struggle with it because every so often we think empathy sounds like, oh, I feel so sorry for you, which it's not. So let's move into what are some skills that will help us kind of use some motivational

interviewing and express some of this empathy?

So we're going to start with some of our fundamental motivational interviewing skills. And these sound really basic, and I'm hoping the participants are not going to hang up on this call right now thinking, oh my gosh, these are so, so basic. They are. They're fundamental, and yet they take years to get sophisticated at.

So let's start with open-ended questions. And the place I want to start with is just defining them but then also giving you some complexity around them. So, of course, open-ended questions are these broad questions that seek a lot of information. They're not going for the yes, no's. They're going for allowing the client to really explore and expand on what the client wants to talk about.

Open-ended questions usually begin with things like what, or how, or tell me about, describe, paint me a picture, those kinds of things. They are these beautiful kind of openers. Now we can use open-ended questions in many, many different ways. We can use them broadly, or we can kind of narrow in on certain things. We can get really strategic with them.

So how we use these open questions really matters as well. It's not just pulling out an open question. It's being able to strategically use the open question to kind of send the conversation in a particular direction.

And so the direction that we're trying to steer the conversation in the beginning is in an exploration. So that's sort of that first kind of step that we're doing is we're really exploring. We're gathering as much information. And we then start to move these open questions into exploring both the benefits and the downsides, sort of exploring the ambivalence, really looking at all sides, which sometimes as practitioners, we need to tolerate a little bit because the conversation might be about the positives of using even though I'm pregnant, right, going back to the client example that I used a minute ago, which is not a conversation I want to have. And yet having that conversation allows the client to explore all sides of it rather than starting to feel some kind of resistance or reactants.

Open-ended questions are really helpful not just to build relationship, but it demonstrates to the client that we're willing to have all of these conversations. They can also be used while doing assessments, to gather information in different sections, or they can be used sort of along this behavior change path, which as we were talking about starts with just gathering information, and then moves into exploring ambivalence, and then starts to target one side. We start to kind of listen for and pull the side of change. I'll talk about that a little bit later as well.

But in motivational interviewing, one of the things that we're doing is strategically looking for any language that the client is using to favor change, sort of leaning in that direction. And so my questions start to move in that direction, open questions that sort of pull out any internal or intrinsic motivation. So I start to target my open questions in that way.

So I'm going to call on Greg here to help me out with this. Sometimes we get stuck in closed questions. And I'm not saying closed questions are bad necessarily. It's just that they kind of limit the conversation. Sometimes I have to use closed questions, and that's totally fine. It's just we get stuck in that trap. We get stuck in closed questions.

So what I'm going to ask Greg to do is come up with a closed question, and then I will provide an open question for that. And, Greg, you can sort of think about the assessments or the LSI and kind of ask some closed questions. And then I'll kind of open them up and explain why I did that.

Got it. How about tell me about the drug problem that you have?

Great. So Greg actually phrased that in a tell me about way, right? So he gave me an open question. Tell me about the drug problem you have. The tricky part of that question that Greg snuck in there is the labeling and the assumption of the drug problem you have, right?

So a more open question, a way of kind of getting at that is tell me about your relationship with, or tell me about your drug use, or tell me what you think about your past drug use. Any of those kind of questions take away a couple of the barbs that a client might perceive from those questions. Let's do another one, Greg.

I'll try not to use all your training this time and actually follow the directions.

[LAUGHTER]

So try a do you or have you. Any of those are closed.

Do you beat your wife often?

[LAUGHTER]

Thank you. So any questions that begin with do you, have you, are you are all closed. And they immediately and inherently have sort of a bias to them, right? So a very open question if I wanted to get at this question that Greg's asking is tell me about your relationship with your wife, right? It starts really broadly.

And I don't know if you noticed the music. So Greg said do you beat your wife often versus tell me a little bit about your relationship with your wife. So the music really, really matters. There's a gentleness to it. There's a genuine curiosity.

And it's those pieces that we have to be able to convey because two things are happening when we're talking about empathy. One is cognitive empathy, meaning what are the words saying, right? Do I understand sort of cognitively what the words are saying? And then there's affective empathy, which is the music.

So we pick up on both. And if I'm having a really bad day, I can do cognitive empathy just fine. But my affective empathy is not happening. And the client can pick it up. They can tell that I'm not really connecting with them.

I don't really understand. I'm just pretending to understand. In fact, my daughter has called me out on that. She said to me, Mom, you're just pretending to understand, or a different time she said, Mom, you're using the right words, but I don't think you really get it. So, luckily, she has the ability to call me-- well, luckily, I don't know.

But she has the ability to call me on it. And our clients don't always call us on it. So it's something to really be paying attention to is do we have both the cognitive piece and the affective piece really locked in?

Anjali, when we do that, how can we tell-- as we're going through a conversation, are there some things that we can look for in the conversation to see if we've gone the wrong direction or we've moved too fast on a topic?

Oh, yes, great question. Yes. The client tells us. The client teaches constantly.

So motivational interviewing was put together by William Miller and Stephen Rollnick. And I remember Dr. Miller saying the client is your teacher, which I thought was just so important to remember. That they will have some kind of a reaction. They will shift. Their demeanor will shift. Something will change.

Some of my clients will outright say something to me like, well-- they'll kind of get agitated. That's easy to tell. But then some of them will kind of disappear a little bit in the conversation. So that's a really nice way of knowing. When a client gets defensive, it's not because the client is problematic.

That may be only part of the equation. A client gets defensive in an interaction because I contributed to it as well. So we both have ownership. And for those of you who are feeling like I'm putting us all on the spot here, yes, our clients do come in prickly, and grumpy, and victims come in sort of really upset and angry with us because we're not doing enough or whatever they're coming in with.

Yes, absolutely. And then starts our responsibility. Do we make it better, or do we make it worse?

So when Greg asks, are there ways that we can tell that we're making it worse? Yes, absolutely. The client teaches. So watch and notice. Pick up on the feedback that your client is giving you.

And the second piece is if you're doing all the talking as the practitioner, we're in trouble. So that's another way. If I feel really good, if I feel like, oh my gosh, I'm really running this particular conversation, I have so much to say, I have all the answers, I'm in trouble. So that's another bummer way, but it's another way of knowing that we're kind of stepping in the wrong direction.

So we've talked a little bit about open questions and sort of how to use these open questions. Let's talk about the next skill, which is affirmations. Affirmations are these beautiful skill that shows support and appreciation for the other person. Maybe it affirms them at doing a particular thing. Maybe it recognizes a struggle or emphasizes a strength that they have. Affirmations really train us as practitioners to catch them doing something right.

Unfortunately, as human beings, we have a tendency to notice things that are wrong before we notice things that are right. It's just a survival mechanism to kind of pick up on everything that's going wrong versus everything that's going right. So using affirmations really, really forces us to be thinking about what is the client doing that they're doing well? What is it? What's different? What are they trying at?

So a few things about affirmations. Ideally, affirmations need to be genuine, meaning I need to mean it when I'm affirming the client. They need to be linked to behavior. Not good job, client, and leaving it at that, but really making sure that I'm making the link to whatever the behavior is that I am appreciating or affirming because we're using affirmations strategically. We're using affirmations in order to further support that particular behavior.

So when we affirm a particular behavior, the neural connections around that behavior increases, so we have to make sure that we're linking it to the behavior. So rather than good job, client, we can make it more specific. You did a really good job with completing this form, or I really appreciate how you consistently come on time to our appointments.

It really helps us get started on time and get through what we need. Client, I'm just really

appreciating how hard you're working on your sobriety and in particular how hard you're working on using your relapse prevention skills, for example, right? So getting really specific in the affirmation.

It could also emphasize a strength. I'm really impressed client with your ability to stand up for yourself or advocate for yourself, right? So that might be an example of emphasizing a strength. So affirmations need to be genuine. Affirmations need to connect to a behavior.

And, ideally, the affirmation needs to be about something that the client struggles with. So if you're struggling with affirming the client, really save it for the things that matter. Save it for the things that the client is struggling to do. So if a client always comes on time but they have a hard time remembering to bring in, I don't know, their pay stub, for example, for verification, then really affirm when they do bring in the pay stub, for example. So really be thinking about affirmations in a strategic way.

The last piece about affirmations is avoid using affirmations to make the client feel better. So this is an important distinction and a little tricky. In order for us to change behavior, we have to be uncomfortable about it. We have to have a feeling of discrepancy, meaning a rub or something doesn't feel good. Because if it feels good, why change, right?

I mean, going back to our eating styles. Eating in an unhealthy fashion oftentimes feels, at least to me-- it feels good. And so, therefore, why change? And I have to suffer enough-- it has to be bad enough for me to say, OK, it's time for me to change. So that's that discrepancy, the rub.

Now just because as a practitioner you don't think that this behavior needs to be changed, if the client's expressing discrepancy, don't use affirmations to make them feel better. I'll give you an example of something I did. It was a while ago. As I explain it, you'll notice how I misused an affirmation. So I had a client who was talking about wanting to be a better mom.

And at that time, I was very, very self-conscious about being a bad mom because I was working a lot, and I didn't feel like I was really attending to my kiddo. And so the client said, I want to be a better mom, and I asked an open question. Tell me what a better mom looks like to you. And the client said, well, I really want to cook more at home.

And I said, oh, how frequently do you cook at home now? And the client said, well, guess I make home cooked meals three days a week, but I want to do five days a week. Are you kidding me? Three days a week, you're already cooking at home, right? That's what went through my brain. And so what fell out of my mouth was, wow, client, you're already doing so well. You're a great mom.

Now that affirmation came from a good place. I mean, I was trying. And yet what I inadvertently did was shut the client down.

I essentially said, this discrepancy that you're feeling, don't worry about it. It's not that bad. And I took away the client's motivation because the client responded by saying, oh, OK, well, I guess I'll just stick with three times a week. And the little spark of change that the client had I inadvertently diminished.

A different example might be when a client relapses. And they haven't relapsed in a while. And we say, oh, it's not that bad. You've been doing so great, client. Don't worry about it, right?

So I just want to caution us with these affirmations. Make sure that we're not using the affirmations to make ourselves or the client feel better. Really allow discrepancy to be OK.

So let's talk about a different set of skills. We've talked about open questions. We've talked about affirmations. Let's talk about reflections. Reflections are really at the heart of motivational interviewing.

I think they are the most important skill. They express empathy like no other skill. They're also tough, and they're really, really tough to master.

A reflection is a statement or a guess about what the person might be saying. It tries to convey understanding, and it might start with some of these stems that you see on the screen like so or sounds like. We can have different levels of reflection. We can do sort of simple reflections where I kind of stay at the surface or depthful reflections, complex reflections.

So I'm going to ask Greg to help me out here. And I'm going to ask Greg to make client statements, so just statements that clients would say. And then I will provide potential reflections. And just remember reflections are not witty comebacks. They're not stabs at the client.

They're not a way to end the conversation or win the conversation. They're a way of softening the conversation, softening the client, expressing empathy, conveying understanding, and allowing the conversation to move forward. So I'll ask Greg to just give me a client statement. I'll come up with a reflection just to demonstrate the skill a little bit. So, Greg, how about a client statement?

Nobody listens to me, not even my lawyer. Nobody wants to hear what happened.

You really feel unheard right now. So all I did was just make a statement, right? I used a lot of heart. And I tried to get to the meaning, maybe what the client is kind of saying but they're not saying. I'll do

another one for that very statement that Greg just said.

You're worried that no one is going to listen to you. That might be a different way of going about it. I'll do one more for the same thing that Greg said, and then I'll ask for a different one. You feel really frustrated and quite alone in this process.

So that would be a reflection of feeling and maybe a little bit of meaning as well. Greg, that was a great client statement. Let's do another client statement.

I'm really just tired of all this. I just want to get this probation thing past me.

Yeah, you're feeling really done with it all. So that might be one. A reflection of feeling might be you're just exhausted with this. It's taken so much out of you. Maybe a different reflection could be you're ready to move on.

So I hope you can tell reflections are short. They have a lot of empathy. I have to connect with my heart, but also listen to what the client is saying. And then once we deliver the reflection, we just wait. And we wait for the client to respond.

Sometimes they're not used to somebody hearing them. And so they kind of look at you for a second, and then they're silenced. Be OK with that. Just get comfortable. The client will come back. Yeah, go ahead, Greg.

Anjali, I was going to say, what if the person is just extremely angry? Do these skills still work with a person who's really escalated and angry?

Yeah. So reflections help quite a lot when a person is angry, defensive, escalating, and they help for a variety of different reasons. So let me provide a neurological perspective.

One of the reasons they help so much is because we have these things called mirror neurons that are picking up on what's happening for the other person. So if the client is escalated and I stay really calm, it's really helping the neurology of the client to also calm down. Whereas if the client is escalated and I escalate with them, we've kind of lost, right? So that's one of the pieces.

The second piece is that reflection conveys empathy, and empathy helps de-escalate the situation. So when a client's really angry, it might take a few reflections. But helping bring that down is definitely one of the strengths of a reflection. Just a caution. Avoid using words like I understand or calm down, right, or any of those kinds of sort of statements.

Just be careful about those because those sometimes trigger the clients. If I say, I understand. The client will say you do not understand. You've never been in my shoes, right, all of that.

So really go for the meaning underneath or match right where the client's at to help kind of de-escalate some of those responses. That's a great question. Greg, should we do one more example?

Sure. So everyone's out to get me. It just seems like everyone's telling me what to do.

Yeah, you're really tired of everybody thinking they know better. So that might be one, or you're really ready to take charge of your own life. And that reflection was a little sneaky. I don't know if you all noticed, but I'm trying to move the conversation forward. Because if the client responds with, yeah, I want these people to stay out of it, my question that follows up might be, so what are some things that you want to do to move forward, right?

So reflections are really in service of empathy. They're in service of gathering more information, but they're also in service of moving the conversation forward because I don't want to just get stuck. I don't know whether you've experienced this. I know I have where I feel like I'm having a groundhog day experience, right? I'm having the same conversation over and over.

So I really want to make sure that I'm moving the conversation forward. So you can be a little bit sneaky in your reflections in that way. Thank you, Greg, for that. That was really helpful.

So we have open questions, affirmations, reflections, and then the fourth fundamental skill is summaries. And summaries are really a series of reflections. They are three or more reflections. They're kind of bundling things up. They're putting things together.

You'll know a summary is coming because you'll start with something, and then you'll end with something. And we call these bookends. So a summary might start with let me see if I have this right, or let me summarize. Let me see if I've got you correctly.

And then you put in all the information. And then you end. And you end with a strategic question depending on where you want to go next.

So I use summaries in a variety of different ways. If I'm doing an assessment, I use summaries to wrap up one section and move to the next section. So for example, let me see if I've understood you correctly. You live alone. You have three brothers. They live in a different state, et cetera, et cetera.

I put all of that in. Now let's talk about your work, right? So my follow-up bookend, transitioned to a

different section.

I could use a summary differently. I could use it to get to the next step, and that might sound like let me see if I've understood. You're really sick and tired of feeling this way. You recognize that drugs and alcohol have had a pretty severe, negative impact on your life, and you're ready to do something different. What do you think your first step is? So my bookend is, right, what's your first step?

So we can use summaries in pretty strategic ways. I also use summaries sometimes to get control back of the conversation if the client is talking too much. I might interrupt and say, client, I'm going to interrupt you for a second because I really want to make sure I have understood what you've shared with me. You said this, that, and the other, and then I direct the next bookend to a different topic. Now tell me about this other thing. So it's a way of me getting control back in there.

So we've been talking a bunch. We just went through open questions, affirmations, reflections, and summaries. And I'm curious to hear from the group what comes easiest to you? Which skill is the easiest for you? So, Greg, if you could help me with the polling question, please.

Got it. So the next polling question is which skill comes easiest to you-- open questions, affirmations, reflections, or summary? Interesting results. Open-ended questions seemed to come easiest to most people.

Affirmations followed that at 27%. Reflections followed that at 27%. And reflections followed that at 20%. And summaries at 12%. Again, open-ended questions are 41% of the audience. Thank you.

Thank you. And, yes, those responses definitely are pretty common. Open questions are definitely our easiest skill. They come easiest to us, and we tend to be folks who like to ask our questions.

Sometimes we get stuck in the open questions.

Sometimes we get stuck in closed questions even. So reflections will definitely be our way out. And I find myself having to just sort of remind myself to use at least as many reflections as questions, if not more. So I kind of gauge when I ask a question. I kind of tell myself make sure you reflect before you ask the next question.

And then I love that affirmations was the second highest at 27%. That's fantastic. There's some research that tells us that the greater the number of years that we have in the field, meaning the longer we've worked in the field, the fewer affirmations we tend to do, which is a bummer.

Maybe it's because we maybe get jaded or cynical. Maybe we forget that we need to affirm certain

things. So it's just something for us to be thinking about, to not lose our ability to just appreciate and affirm our clients. Great, wonderful.

OK, so we're going to shift slightly away from these basic skills, these fundamental skills, which by the way, without these skills, we're not doing motivational interviewing. So I don't want to dismiss them at all. This is fundamental and hugely important. But we're going to shift to kind of getting a little more strategic in our conversations.

So here are some things that we might tailor our open questions and reflections to be about. And so if you're experiencing righting reflex or you're seeing ambivalence in the other person, start to get curious about what are their concerns on their side? What are the concerns about change?

What are their concerns about staying the same? What are their abilities? Do they feel like they can not do it, that they need the support or if it's they have the ability but just don't know where to start or don't have the motivation? So just get curious about that whole ability piece.

And then get curious with them about if they did make a change, how would things be better? Or if they did make a change, how would things be worse, any of those? So those are some things to just get curious about. And in motivational interviewing, go through kind of several processes or steps. These aren't linear.

We sometimes go backwards and forwards. But if you start to get stuck, you might just want to take a step back. So engaging is where we start. And engaging is the part that I was talking about earlier, where we just get curious.

We gather information. We explore the ambivalence. We just sort of are swimming in this huge, big ocean of information. We're just gathering information.

And then we start to hear what the behavior really is, and we start to focus in. And the caution here is not to focus too quickly. An example might be-- I'll give you a silly example. A client comes in because they have a DUI. They got pulled over for drinking and driving.

And, immediately, I think, oh, the problem is alcohol, right? That's an example of the premature focus. So I focused in too quickly because the problem may not be alcohol. It might actually be relationship issues, or stress in the workplace, or inability to manage emotion, or a whole bunch of other things. And alcohol is just sort of one tiny piece of it. So just be careful that we focus on the right thing.

In our criminal justice world when we're thinking about focusing, think about our criminogenic needs and sort of how they lay out for this particular client. What criminogenic need is really coming to the surface? What do I need to pay attention to? So criminogenic needs will also help us in that focusing aspect.

Once we've gotten clear about what behavior we're focusing in on, and we're exploring ambivalence around that behavior, we start to do something very specific to motivational interviewing, which is we start to evoke or draw out something called change talk. Change talk is language from the client in the direction of change, meaning supporting change. And I'll explain a little bit more about that in a minute. So that's evoking, drawing out change talk. And it's only once we've done that that we jump into planning.

So planning really comes last in this conversation. And, unfortunately, some of us, and I know I'm guilty of this, jump to planning way, way, way too quickly. So just making sure that we're not planning too fast. Ideally, it comes last. So engaging, focusing, evoking, and then planning. So let's talk again about change talk.

I said in the evoking category we're really drawing out change talk. So let's just see what change talk is. So change talk is any conversation from the client that supports or is in the direction of behavior change.

We can categorize this change talk into them expressing a desire to change. And desire sounds like I want to, or it sounds like I'd like to, or they give us ability talk. I can. I've done it before. I guess I could if I tried. All of that is ability talk.

Sometimes clients give us reasons. Because I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired, or financial reasons, or for my family. So desire, ability, reasons, and then need.

I really have to. I should. I really got to do this, that kind of need talk, right? You can hear the kind of pressure. So desire, ability, reason, and need, they form an acronym DARN.

And that's sort of the beginning part of change talk just for us to start to listen for. Is the client starting to give me a desire, ability, reason, or need to change? And then I start to tailor my open questions to get more change talk. And sometimes clients will give me change talk in the middle of a whole bunch of not wanting to change talk, which is also called sustain talk. So the opposite of change talk is sustain talk.

So they'll say something like I really wanted to take my UA, but I missed the bus, right? So I really

wanted to take my UA, but I missed the bus. And the change talk is I really wanted to take my UA.

So I have to be careful to not jump into problem-solving and to not say to the client, oh, you missed the bus. Here's some bus passes, or here's a way to track your schedule better on your phone or a million ways to sort of solve the client's problem. I need to stop that, and I need to focus on the change talk. I really wanted to take my UA.

So a follow-up question might be what makes you want to take your UAs? How come you just don't blow them off. And what I'm doing by asking that is getting the client to make the argument for change.

Now some of you might be rolling your eyes thinking, oh my gosh, the client doesn't really want to take the UAs anyway. And that might be true. But here's the interesting thing. The more we get the client to argue for change, the greater the likelihood that the client will actually change behavior.

So the more we really support their change talk, the more we get them to move in favor of change, the better, the greater the likelihood that the client will change. So desire, ability, reason, and need forms that first bit of change talk. Sometimes we call it preparatory talk.

And then the next pieces that we're trying to go for once the client has given us that level of change talk is commitment to change or taking steps towards change. And commitment sounds like I will, I'm going to, I promise, those kinds of sort of commitment statements, the statements that tell us where the client is. And commitment increases, like I said, the likelihood of actual behavior change. So we're looking for this DARN stuff, the desire, ability, reason, need. The more we get it, the more we know we're going to get commitment talk. And then we push for commitment talk.

And by push for, I mean we asked the questions, right? So what's your next step? What are you going to do from here? Sometimes the client will say, well, I think I could blah-b-dee blah, right? And that's not commitment talk. That's ability talk.

So I might respond by saying I really hear that you're thinking about it, but helping get over the hump, it could really convince me. Tell me what you are actually going to do. So I'm holding the client's feet to the fire to really get commitment talk. And that increases the actual steps that the client takes towards behavior change.

So, Greg, I'm going to pull you in here and ask you as you're having conversations with clients, what are ways in which it's easy to miss change talk? What happens for us sometimes when we're talking

with clients where we just miss that they are giving us some change talk?

Great question. I think some of what I see in the work that I've done in training people is I see that there's this push and pull from the system. Probation officers, victim services people, they want to get through the paperwork. Like here are your 16 terms and conditions. I expect you to follow these and to do that. And it may be that they're missing change talk opportunities in that because they've got a little bit different agenda, so that's one of the examples.

Excellent. Yes, for sure. My agenda missing the client's agenda in a lot of ways. Sometimes I miss change talk inadvertently because I don't quite believe it. The change talk is coming at me, but I'm thinking, yeah, yeah.

I don't know if you're really serious about it. And it's such an unfortunate thing because I'm missing opportunities, these really incredible opportunities to actually increase the likelihood that a client will change in the long run. As I'm hoping all our practitioners are picking up, there's a lot of space in motivational interviewing for us to do our own growth and not just sort of helping the client move forward but for us to increase our own level of awareness as well.

Anjali, I think there's another piece, which is they're willing to make a small change. And we don't recognize this, and we push them too far, particularly around abstinence. And instead of one day at a time, we're looking at much larger blocks of time and not recognizing when they are making small changes towards the direction we'd like to see them.

Excellent point. So, frequently, I'm hoping for this big change, right? No more criminal activity, complete sobriety, all of these sort of huge pieces.

And then I'll miss the small steps that are so incredibly important. They're the foundations of bigger change. So, yes, missing kind of those smaller steps, smaller pieces is really a trap that we fall into for sure. Thank you.

Yeah, and I think one other piece that's important is, and I think you talked about this earlier, catching people doing right. We're really good, for instance, with drug testing, catching people using. We often fail to ask the question how many times did they say no before they had this slip up or lapse and behavior relapse?

And that's such an empathic way of looking at the client, right? Rather than looking at it as a failure, how do I see the success in there? And the success was how many times did they actually say no before they relapsed or whatever the behavior is? It doesn't have to be a relapse.

Yeah. Great. So definitely a different frame, right, a different way of looking at our clients. So the last piece that I want to cover is just the difference between sustain talk.

So remember I said sustain talk was the opposite of change. Change talk is I want to change, I'm ready, I can, all of that. The opposite of change talk is sustain talk. There's a difference between sustain talk and just flat out sort of relational resistance. And the term that we use in motivational interviewing for that is discord.

And the reason we like to separate it is because my response will be slightly different. Sustain talk is the client pushing back about the behavior, whereas discord is the client pushing back about the relationship. So there's a big difference between I can't do this, it's too hard and I can't do this, you can't make me, right?

There's a big difference between those two statements. I can't do this, it's too hard is sustain talk about my ability, my ability to do the particular behavior or to make a change, whereas discord is I can't do this, you can't make me. It shows that there is a gap in the relationship.

So if it's sustain talk that I'm getting from the client, I continue with exploring the behavior. Whereas if it's discord that I'm getting from the client, drop the behavior, have a conversation about the relationship. So if the client says, I can't do this, it's too hard, I continue with the behavior. Tell me a little bit about what you're worried about, or tell me a little bit about what's hard. Tell me about times you've tried to do something differently. I might really stick with the behavior.

When it's discord, I can't do this and you can't make me, I move into the relationship. So I want to take a step back here for a second, client. It sounds like you're feeling like I'm pressuring you to do this, right? So I'm not commenting on the behavior. I'm commenting on our relationship. So it's just helpful to be able to separate pushback from a client into sustain talk or is it about the relationship, which we sometimes call discord.

I'll still use all my open questions and reflections, but I'll use them about different content. When it's sustain talk, I'll use it about the behavior. When it's discord, I'll use it about the relationship.

All right, so there you have it. And I'm so curious to know what questions we have. So, Greg, if you can help me with the questions that our participants have.

I can, Anjali. Thank you. We're now moving to the question and answer portion of our webinar.

Let's also move to the next slide so we can see Dr. Nandi's contact information. And we'll do that as we open the question and answer. So, Anjali, we have a couple of questions. The first one is relating back to that study you referenced on giving advice, is there any differentiation between what would be considered solicited advice versus unsolicited with respect to the pain response?

Oh my gosh, what a brilliant question. And yes, in fact, there is. So thank you for asking this question because I completely forgot to mention this caveat. The pain response diminishes substantially when the advice is solicited. And there are a couple of different ways that we can make this happen.

So, one, the client just says, hey, what are some ideas you have, right? So they openly solicit it. But a sneaky way of getting them to solicit it might be to say something like, you know, client, I have some ideas. Would you be open to me sharing them?

And when the client says, yeah, actually I want some ideas, that reduces the pain response. So we're sort of pushing the client along a little bit and saying, hey, I've got some ideas. Would you be open to hearing them?

Now the caution there is only provide a few. So don't go on for too long, maybe just three ideas, or two ideas, something like that. And then end your ideas with inviting the client back in. So that might sound something like I have some ideas, client. Would you be open to hearing them?

The client says yes. I say you could do A. You could do B. You could do C. What do you think you might do?

Or as you're listening to those, what other ideas come to mind for you? So I'm very actively inviting back in ideas from the client so that we're sort of getting them empowered and involved again. So, yes, excellent question.

Thanks. We have a question about if you could expand a little bit upon the idea of discord.

Yes, for sure. So discord is this rub on the relationship. It's the discomfort. It's a signal that the relationship is in trouble or maybe in trouble is too strong of a word, but it needs attention. It's different from sustain talk.

And the reason we separate it is because it's very easy to call clients defensive, or resistant, or those kinds of things without separating what exactly are they pushing back about because it is incredibly normal to push back about behavior. That's a part of the process. And so I shouldn't get terribly upset when a client is pushing back about behavior. That needs to happen.

It's very, very normal for a client to say, you know, this is too hard, or there's a part of me that just doesn't want to do this. Or I don't know if I can. I've tried before, and I keep failing. Or I'm just so tired of trying, right? All of that is normal, good stuff. I sort of stay in the conversation and explore the behavior more.

Discord is a little bit different. And discord I take really seriously. I attend to quite immediately because what discord tells me is that there is a gap in my relationship with my client. And as you remember from when we started, the relationship really, really matters.

It's really important that we have a solid, strong relationship with the client because it predicts long-term behavior change. And, therefore, if there is a discord comment, which might sound something like I don't want to change, you can't make me, or you're just pushing me around, or I don't see why I have to do this, it really isn't that important, but it seems to be important to you, or other people keep telling me what to do, all of those tell me that I need to attend to the relationship.

And so in response to a discord comment, I usually step away from the conversation about behavior and kind of get back into it sounds like you feel like I'm pushing you around, and that really isn't my intention. Tell me what you really want to do about this, right? So I'm kind of re-focusing, reorienting. And again, it's about putting the power back with the client.

Thanks, Anjali. We have another question. What should be the next step when asking open-ended questions, but you don't necessarily get the response that you were looking to get?

Yeah. So a couple of thoughts. When we ask an open question, ideally, we're really hoping for whatever the client is bringing. If you were expecting a particular thing, then it reveals our agenda. And it's totally fine for us to have an agenda, but it's important to just know that sometimes our agenda is not in line with the client's agenda.

So when we ask an open question, we're kind of ready for whatever the client brings. Maybe the client completely misunderstands the question, and I need to tailor the question a little bit. Or maybe the information is that the client is in an entirely different place than I thought the client was. And so I have to kind of recalibrate and either think, OK, I need to step back a little bit. Maybe the client's in a different place. Or I need to tailor my question a little bit better so that the client either understands it or answers the specific information that I was looking for.

Great. Thank you. We have a question about Native American populations and trauma playing a big role in their healing process. How does MI help with coping, addressing with both historical and

current trauma?

That's an excellent question. So one of the beautiful things about motivational interviewing is that it really supports a trauma-informed lens. By that I mean that when we view clients behavior, it's very easy to view it from kind of a lens of they're being manipulative, or the clients acting out, or they're being defensive. And a trauma-informed lens offers us a different perspective. Essentially, what it's saying is that the client might be responding this way for good reason.

It might be a protective response. It might be a learned response. It might even be a trauma response. So a trauma-informed lens takes out the judgment, which is really in line with motivational interviewing. I mean, that's really what motivational interviewing is about.

It's such an incredibly nonjudgmental process that privileges the wisdom of the client in front of us and their experiences too, everything that they bring. So motivational interviewing is beautifully aligned with kind of this trauma-informed lens. And it allows us to get curious about the client's behavior versus judging it as problematic.

Thanks. We have a question about when dealing with people who are anti-social, narcissistic, or have another type of personality disorder, does MI work? And are there some different strategies for those types of individuals?

Yeah, excellent question. So personality disorders are really interesting. Oftentimes, we know that we're working with somebody who has a personality disorder based on how I'm feeling, right? Whether it's somebody with borderline personality disorder, for example, I frequently will start to think, oh my gosh, I don't know if I'm coming or going.

Are we on the same page, or are we on a different page? Or are we friends, or are we mortal enemies? What is going on right now? Kind of feeling this incredible confusion.

So it's really important, I think, as practitioners that we pay attention to ourselves and what we're picking up because it informs so much about what might be happening with the individual in front of us. In terms of whether or not motivational interviewing works, there's so many books on motivational interviewing, and one is tailored to personality disorders. The caution I'll provide is really making sure that I'm being very clear about expectations and boundaries. So by that I mean that even though there's a lot of empathy and all of these skills are really helpful, I need to make sure that I'm clear right up front and on an ongoing basis what's OK and what's not OK.

So it's really important that the client not misunderstand and not think that, oh, she understands, so I can get away with, right? So just being careful about that. I find that I have to really be on my toes in terms of my skills with clarifying boundaries, clarifying what's OK and what's not OK, making sure expectations are clear, and then being so good about following up on expectations and kind of reiterating them.

Thanks. Really client specific question. I have a client who keeps overdosing but says that they don't want to die. Do you have some suggestions about how to work with them on this really serious situation?

Gosh. That does sound like a serious situation and a rather scary one because I mean, some of our clients are one overdose away from us losing them. So it is an absolutely important situation and really very tough. What immediately comes to mind for me is do we have the client in the right level of care?

So the reason I say that is because it's not helpful to our clients for us to keep doing the same thing thinking that things will get better. If the level of service that we're providing isn't sufficient, then we might need to think about increasing the level of service, even if it's just for a short period, whether that means more frequent appointments, whether that means a short stint at detox, whether that means sort of some kind of a transitional residential program. There might be additional support that's needed.

And so when we're thinking about clients specifically, there are three different things to be thinking about. One is containment, right? Does the client need a higher level of containment? The second piece to consider is is it a skills or motivation issue? We sometimes call that capacity.

Is it a skills thing? The client just doesn't know how to stay sober. Or is it a motivation thing? They don't want to stay sober. In which case, motivational interviewing is really helpful. Or is it that they lack support in the community? And which one should we prioritize?

So when you're looking at this particular client who is continually overdosing, my mind immediately jumps to increased containment. And then everything else sort of comes next, right? So I increase the containment, get the client safe, and then work on skills and motivation, and increasing support in the community. So that's just something to kind of be thinking about. And good luck. It does not sound like an easy situation at all.

Thanks, Anjali. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about motivational interviewing actually

working in the field and maybe talk a little bit about the black box study that went on with motivational interviewing trained and untrained officers.

Sure. There's so much research on motivational interviewing and using it in our criminal justice system. So I'll actually answer that question and then share a little bit more about some of the other things that we found. So by the black box, what Greg is talking about is for the longest time, we would say that we don't really know what is happening when a probation officer, for example, or a community corrections specialist is meeting with the client, right? What's happening during that time?

And the black box terminology came from photography. You see light going in, and then you get a beautiful picture. But we don't exactly know what's happening within this sort of black box. And so a lot of research started to focus on what happens within that. That research was based on taping conversations, recording conversations that practitioners were having with clients, and looking at what do we pay attention to.

What happens? How do we develop motivational interviewing skills? How do we sustain motivational interviewing skills, and does it actually lead to behavior change?

So one of the studies found that when we take a motivational interviewing training-- and this is very, very sad so I'm so sorry all of you. But when we take a motivational interviewing training, if we're not actively practicing it and receiving supervision and feedback about our skills, within about six months, there will be no difference between you who've listened to a motivational interviewing training and somebody who hasn't, right? That's the sad news, folks. I'm sorry.

That if you don't practice, if you don't receive feedback and ongoing coaching, your skills will slide right back to whatever you were doing before. Not that that was bad, but sort of the picking up of motivational interviewing skills doesn't happen through one training. It happens through ongoing feedback and coaching.

Another thing that they found was that when we use motivational interviewing consistently, if we do two things, one, pay attention to the relationship and, two, really focus on change talk, we dramatically increase the likelihood of long-term behavior change. So those are a couple of things that I think are really important to remember from this research that Greg is alluding to.

Thanks, Anjali. I think we're going to conclude the question and answer portion of the webinar. If you're interested in additional training, please visit www.ncjtc.org for a listing of upcoming training opportunities or to review our on-demand training. Thank you for joining us today, and have a great

day.