

Remembering When: Fire and Fall Prevention for Older Adults

Enhancing Communication with a Dash of Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing is a collaborative conversation to strengthen a person’s own motivation for and commitment to change. This counseling approach evolved from work by William Miller and Stephen Rollnick in the treatment of problem drinkers.

The Spirit of Motivational Interviewing (MI):

Spirit refers to the way MI techniques are employed. Spirit is based on three key elements:

- **Collaboration:** The helper is viewed as a partner rather than an authority figure. Conversations are not confrontational and designed to build partnership. The helper does not necessarily agree with the client but the process is focused on mutual understanding rather than the helper being right.
- **Evocation:** The helper draws out the client’s own ideas, motivations, and skills for change. The helper does not tell the client what to do or how to do it.
- **Autonomy:** The client is responsible for making change happen. The helper accepts that there are multiple way that change can occur.

In the table below, the spirit of MI is contrasted with the opposite.

This is Spirit of MI:	This is NOT Spirit of MI:
Partnership- There is no uneven power difference in helper/client relationship. This is a joint decision process. After all, it is the client who ultimately has to make the change.	Confrontation- Helpers are confrontational when they assume that the client’s reality is wrong and override their comments and concerns with their own reality.
Acceptance- The client knows more about themselves than anyone else AND they can fire the helper (you) and go off in their own direction if they want. No matter who they are and what they've done, the helper shows no judgement and values the client. The helper also seeks to affirm the client.	Too much information- While there can be a role for education, when information is presented in a non-partnering, directive way, it seems like the helper assumes the client lacks knowledge, insight, and or skills that are necessary for change to occur. It’s as if the helper seeks to address client deficits by providing information.
Evocation- The helper learns what interests the client most, what they already know about the behavior change that’s being considered, and what their reasons and arguments are for change. The helper takes the attitude, “You have what you need.”	Authority- The helper tells the client what he or she must do. The helper takes the attitude, “I have what you need”.

Infusing MI into Remembering When Conversations

1. Practice EPE: Elicit Provide Elicit

Helpers should communicate a sense of collaboration to clients. Developing partnership early will prevent the helper from making assumptions that the client wants or needs the information. The EPE method guards against the notion that clients will magically change by virtue of the helper sharing information.

E- Elicit- The helper should ask clients what they already know about the topic being addressed. The helper will LISTEN to what the client has to share and reflect a bit on what is heard.

P- Provide- The helper will ask permission to share the information related to the topic. Once permission is granted, the helper will share the message about cooking safety, safe lighting, escape plans, etc.

E- Elicit- Check in and make sure the person understands what you said. AND check to see what they think about the information that you shared.

Here's an example of how EPE might work with Ms. Archuleta:

A scenario: *Ms. Archuleta is a very independent 68 yr. old who lives alone in a small farming community. She loves to cook and garden. A perfect day for her is one when she is able to spend some time tending to her property. She's on a number of medications for her heart condition and sometimes gets drowsy, needing to nap throughout the day. She keeps a very tidy house, but you notice throw rugs throughout the home, even over her carpeting.*

Elicit: *“Ms. Archuleta, what do you know about your medications and any side effects?”*

Provide: *You know quite a bit. You take those medications very seriously and you've made it a point to take them. Can I also tell you a little bit more about how they might be affecting your balance?*

Helper- Elicit: *What do you think about all of that information? What thoughts do you have about what I shared with you?*

2. Seek Collaboration

Seeking collaboration is another way helpers can show that they see the people they are working with as partners. It helps eliminate the hierarchy in the relationship. When there is a hierarchy, people tend to get defensive and may argue against the behaviors the helper is trying to get them to change.

The following questions are examples of seeking collaboration with Ms. Archuleta:

- *“Ms. Archuleta, would it be OK if we spent some time today talking about some ways to make your home safer?”*
- *“Ms. Archuleta, I have some information about common causes of falls, would it be OK if I shared that information with you?”*
- *“Ms. Archuleta, what are your ideas for making your home safer?”*

3. Emphasize Autonomy

Helpers put an emphasis on client autonomy by overtly stating that the client is in charge. This is a powerful part of the change process. When the helper reminds both parties that the client is 100% in charge of her own behavior, the change is much more likely to be made.

Here’s an example of emphasizing autonomy with Ms. Archuleta:

- *“Ms. Archuleta, no one is going to force you to do any on particular thing. You are in charge of your own life and no one can make you do anything you don’t want to do unless you are seriously endangering yourself. If that were to happen, we’d have to make a referral on your behalf.*
- *“You’re the one who knows yourself best here. What do you think ought to happen to keep you safe in your home?”*
- *“Engaging with me around home safety is a something that you see as both an opportunity and a challenge. You are weighing the options and figuring out what will work best for you.”*

4. Ask Open Questions

Open questions convey a sense of curiosity and a genuine sense of really wanting to know what's going on with the client. Open questions are those that have many possible answers and often start with *What, How, Tell me about, or Describe...* (Questions that start with *Have, Had, Has, Which, How many, Did, Do, and Does* are usually closed questions leading to one specific answer.)

Being genuinely curious is a part of the change process. Open questions invite people into the conversation in a more meaningful way. The client is more likely to engage with the helper as they consider their responses.

Here are some examples of open questions to help people consider why they might want to participate in a home safety check:

- *“What about the way you live in your home now works well for you?”*
- *“What are some of your worries about the way you live in your house now?”*
- *“What would be the worst thing that might happen if you don't change?”*
- *“If you did decide to make changes in your home's safety, what might be some of the things that would get better?”*
- *“If you did decide to change, how would you go about doing it?”*

5. Affirm Client Actions and Values

Affirmations are statements that recognize client strengths and acknowledge behaviors that lead in the direction of positive change. Helpers who affirm and give voice to a person’s attributes, and strengths have clients who are more willing to engage. They are more likely to trust, listen to and be open with their helpers.

Many clients need help finding and building importance about and confidence in making a change. When the helper points out the strengths possessed by the client, it can help the client build confidence around this change. Affirmations might also shine a light on what’s valuable to this person, increasing their sense of the importance in making this change.

To increase the sense of partnership, the helper should avoid statements that puts the helper in the position of judging– good or bad. While it might seem like compliments or praise might be beneficial, they can chip away at the sense of equality as the helper becomes judge and jury of client actions. As helpers, it can helpful to remember that the clients will be doing this hard work, out there in the world. The client is the one doing the heavy lifting.

Affirmations are different from praise. One trap to avoid is starting out with the word “I”. Statements that begin with “I” are more about the helper than the client.

Affirmations DO:	Affirmations DO NOT:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize who the client is. • Emphasize what the client has done. • Help clients reframe • Point out values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make judgments about the client • Evaluate the clients behaviors • Focus on the helper • Start with “I”
What affirmations look like:	What affirmations do NOT look like:
“You used a helpful strategy by using a timer when cooking this week.”	“Great job! You used a timer when cooking this week”
“Your persistence is paying off. You feel your balance is improving as a result of your Tai Chi exercises.”	“I’m proud of the way you stuck with your Tai Chi classes.”
“It was challenging to convince your husband to smoke outside but you made it happen.”	“I’m so impressed with how you convinced your husband to smoke outside.”

Read the examples of affirmations for Ms. Archuleta:

- *“Ms. Archuleta, the fact that you live alone shows independence, strength and courage.”*
- *“It’s important to you to remain in your own home. You take a lot of pride in your home by tending the garden and keeping a tidy house.”*
- *“You value your health and take good care of yourself by taking your heart medications every day.”*

6. Use Reflections:

Helpers use reflections to show they are listening, to show that they care, to show that what the client is saying is important, to help the helper and client be on the same page about what's being said, and to help clients organize their thoughts.

Reflections tend to keep the client talking and since the client is the best source of information on themselves, helpers want to do everything they can to get them to talk. It is especially useful to get the client to talk about change.

When we reflect, we essentially say, "What you said is important", "I want to be sure I have this right" and "Tell me more about that".

Here's are two examples of conversations with Ms. Archuleta. The **reflections**, **open questions**, and **affirmations** are marked.

Conversation #1:

Helper: *Ms. Archuleta, What are some of the things that you like about living here in your home?*

Ms. Archuleta: *Well, I like being able to have my own garden, I have my privacy and I like having a space for my children and grandchildren to play when they visit.*

Helper: *So the things that you like about your home are your garden, your privacy and having a place for your family. [REFLECTION] You really love your family and having them into your home is important to you. [AFFIRMATION] What else do you like about living here? [OPEN QUESTION]*

Ms. Archuleta: *Not much else, I guess I just really like it here.*

Helper: *You really like living here on your own. When you think about living here alone, what are some of your concerns?*

Ms. Archuleta: *Well, I do worry about having something happen that makes it so I can't live alone. That's happened to some of my older friends and I don't want that to happen to me.*

Helper: *You love living alone and you want to do what it takes to continue to live here. [REFLECTION]*

Ms. Archuleta: *Yes, I don't want to jeopardize living here.*

Helper: *You don't want anything to mess up your good thing. [REFLECTION] What might happen that would mess things up? [OPEN QUESTION]*

Conversation #2:

Helper: *You really like living here on your own. When you think about living here alone, what are some of your concerns?*

Ms. Archuleta: *Well, I don't really have any concerns about living here on my own.*

Helper: *You love living here alone. [REFLECTION showing empathy]*

Ms. Archuleta: *Yes, I really do. I get a little lonely at times but for the most part I like to have my own say in how I spend my time.*

Helper: *It's important to you to make your own decisions in how you live. [AFFIRMATION] From your perspective, there is absolutely nothing about living here that worries you a bit. [REFLECTION amplified; No sarcasm].*

Ms. Archuleta: *Well, I there are a few things that worry me about living here alone. I do worry about what would happen if I fell and no one was around to help me.*

Helper: *You worry about falling and not having anyone there to help. [REFLECTION- Simple: reflecting change talk] What else worries you? [OPEN QUESTION- seeking additional change talk]*