

Episode 8- Noticing & Responding to Discord

Lions and tigers and Bears MI is an interactive podcast about motivational interviewing

Amy Shanahan: CASAT Podcast Network.

In episode eight, Paul and Amy explore Discord. They discuss resistance versus ambivalence and how professionals can cause a client to be quote unquote resistant, as well as ways to course correct. For, episode resources, contact us and other information, please visit the Lions and tigers and bears MI website at nfartec.org/mipodcast. That's n f a r t e c.org / MI podcast.

Paul Warren: Hm. Lions and tigers and Bears MI An interactive podcast focused on the evidence based practice of motivational interviewing, a method of communication that guides toward behavior change while honoring autonomy.

Amy Shanahan: I'm Amy Shanahan.

Paul Warren: And I'm Paul Warren.

Amy Shanahan: We've worked together over the past 10 years. We've been facilitating MI learning collaboratives and providing trainings and coaching sessions focused on the adoption and refinement of MI We're also members of the Motivational Interviewing Network of trainers. Join us in this adventure into the forest where we explore and get

curious about what lies behind the curtain of MI

Paul Warren: Hello, Amy.

Amy Shanahan: Hey Paul.

Paul Warren: How are you today?

Amy Shanahan: Good, how are you?

Paul Warren: I'm great, thank you.

Noticing and Responding to Discord is different from Rolling with Resistance

So here we are for episode eight of Lions and Tigers and Bears.

Amy Shanahan: A.m. I.

Paul Warren: Exactly. And our topic today is Noticing and Responding to Discord.

Paul Warren: And Discord is kind of a New idea. Edition 3 of From Miller and Rolnick's book.

Amy Shanahan: Different from Rolling with Resistance.

Paul Warren: Yes. Which you and many other people have talked about being very attached to that particular framing.

Amy Shanahan: Yes. It took me a while to get over it and you were really helpful, helping me unpack it with your explanation about discord versus Resistance. That was really helpful. I think. I like the phrasing of Rolling with Resistance.

Amy Shanahan: And yet really kind of defining the difference between resistance and discord was really helpful for me. And I'm wondering if you would share a little bit about the difference between the two words.

Paul Warren: Yeah, I mean, for me, I can tell you why I really appreciate the framing of Discord, and the move from the second edition to the third edition of their book. And this, this may seem, I don't know, like an academic point. And I, I think it's actually not an academic point because it really speaks to the idea that it's really easy to label clients as, quote, unquote, resistant. You know, oftentimes when I'm in a training, I'll say to people, as a way of beginning this conversation, I'll say to them, you know, have you ever had a client who was resistant? And they're like, oh yes. And they you know, they raise two hands and they're so thankful that somebody's asking them about it. And we talk about that in the training. And I often use that as the way to introduce the idea of ambivalence, which, of course, ambivalence, feeling of two minds about something. Something is completely different. I think the reason that I like that Miller and Rolnick, through their research and their analysis of data, they came to the idea of discord is because discord means m. That something has been interrupted in terms of the engagement between the provider and the client, the patient. And, what they're talking about is that that's kind of a, That involves two people. It's not just one person, quote unquote, being with resistant or being resistant.

Amy Shanahan: It complements the, partnership in a sense. When there's discord, there's

00:05:00

Amy Shanahan: something going on in that partnership because there's two people there. And like you, I've heard and still get a lot of questions around, what would you like to get out of this training? Today I'm coaching a group of practitioners, and we asked them what they needed as far as advancing their practice of motivational interviewing and get consistent questions. How to deal with resistant people. How to deal with resistant patients.

Paul Warren: Yeah. Hot topic.

Amy Shanahan: Or patients that won't do. or mandated patients. So there's, a lot of labeling still going on around the adjectives being added to the person coming to us.

Paul Warren: You know, when you said that, Amy, it made me really think of how powerful the writing reflexes. M. Because, you know, these folks are doing really hard work. They're doing work with people who. Their autonomy often hasn't been respected. They. They may be actually mandated to treatment or whatever program they're involved in. And, you know, they're. They're providers, they're helpers. They want to help this person to, you know, achieve a particular goal, go in a particular direction that may improve their life. And I think it's.

I think you can't talk about discord and resistance without discussing

the writing reflex

I think you can't talk about discord and resistance without also talking about the writing reflex and how the writing reflex, sometimes is what creates the discord in the relationship, disrupts the engagement between the collaborative partnership.

Amy Shanahan: I really like that relationship that you shared about the writing reflex and discord and how they're connected and certainly are. When you think about. Or, When I think about times where there was discord, it was oftentimes when I would want to come in and fix something or advise someone and analyze. Analyze what's going on with the person without their Permission or inviting them into the conversation, judging it, telling them, you know, or labeling them, just like we said.

Paul Warren: M. And, you know, I think it's important. Maybe it would be a good idea to sort of define specifically kind of what this dynamic of the writing reflex is, which, I'll throw out my understanding of it and then. Please elaborate or refine what I'm saying, Amy. Which is that it's a normal impulse that the helper can often have, the provider can often have when met with ambivalence or met with. In a situation where they feel that the person should do a particular thing in order to, progress or proceed.

Amy Shanahan: Great. Yeah. I don't have anything to add other than I'm curious about what Miller and Rolnick will call it in the fourth edition, which they're working on, and told us that it might be out in 2023. And they're considering getting rid of some of the lingo or the language, that might be more technical. I don't know if they'll change writing reflex or not. And I'm curious to ask the listeners what they think another term would be. I remember asking folks what. What's the opposite of change talk? And someone said, staying the same talk. So. Simplifying it. So. Yeah, but that, that, that. That gut reaction

to want to take. Take it on, to fix it, to help to make someone feel better, to tell them what to do. Because it seems easier. Like, why wouldn't you. And I. I'm really curious about people's thought patterns, language patterns, my own. I talk about, Even today, still caught. Get caught up in the trap of saying, getting people to do something. And when I invite people to explore, that what happens to us when we think we're going to get someone to do something or when we think of a person coming to us as a resistant person, how do we then respond to that thinking pattern?

Paul Warren: M And how do we respond to that person?

Amy Shanahan: Exactly?

Paul Warren: Because if we've determined, in our mind and heart, perhaps that this person's resistant,

00:10:00

Paul Warren: that that puts us in a particular, relationship or lack of a relationship with that person. And it's. It's sort of a ripe opportunity for the writing reflex, the desire to tell the person what to do, fix the situation, solve the problem, determine what their treatment plan is without their contributions or particip. and the sad thing about that is that unfortunately, and this is one of the things I love about motivational interviewing is that, bottom line, MI is not a method for getting people to do what you want them to do.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: It is an opportunity to engage with somebody in a way that you can

actually talk with them because you are engaged, and invite them possibly to consider something or find out what it is they're actually considering in terms of a particular change. And, you know, that maybe doesn't feel as satisfying as feeling like, well, you know, I've shared the information that I have about this with them, and, now it's up to them to decide, you know, what they're going to do. And if they don't do what I want them to do, they must be resistant.

Amy Shanahan: Yes. Because I'm the expert and I know what they should do. Because I. And I think to the point of it's a meaningful intention that we want to fix, we want to heal, we want to make better, hopefully, our intention. And that's what we were taught to do. And this use of motivational interviewing turns, that around a little bit. And when.

Paul: The spirit really is important in these aspects

When you were talking, Paul, about the aspects of the writing reflex and being that expert in the room, wanting to tell people what to do or how to do it, I was thinking about how that's actually the opposite of any partnership or collaboration. So the spirit really is important in these aspects and really suspending that notion that you have any authority over, because it's an over someone when you're wanting to advise or tell them what to do and judging that they should or shouldn't be in a certain aspect. And I think coming from the substance use disorder field, for me, it was hard for me to let go of that vest, if you will, that I'm here to help people get off of substances. I'm here to help people heal from that. That notion that they're coming to me for this. So it's this expected, agreement that that's what we're doing together. It took me a while to get rid of that thinking. I don't think it was so overt in my mind. The exact feeling that I had that that's what I'm doing when I'm sitting in my office waiting for someone to come.

Paul Warren: You know, it's funny because, as you said that it really made me think that practicing motivational interviewing during these conversations about behavior change, it's not a whole lot different than that, other than you're positioning yourself as a collaborative partner who has the training, who has the experience, who has the expertise that they have. You're positioning yourself as someone who's engaging in a conversation about this, not somebody who's determining or deciding what's going to happen and you can choose to position yourself. And again, I really appreciate that you mentioned MI spirit, because you can choose to position yourself in a truly person centered way by allowing this person the space to consider and exercise their own autonomy about what they want to do or maybe what they don't want to do.

Amy Shanahan: Right. And I think for me, when I, as we've said already, want to do those other things where the writing reflex kicks in, perhaps then we see the discord.

In terms of when discord is occurring, what do you see when

And I'm curious about your experience of what things do you see when that happens or hear when you listen to tapes? Because I know you listen to other practitioners.

00:15:00

Paul Warren: Absolutely. In terms of when discord is, occurring.

Amy Shanahan: Right. Because we talk about, practice this, see how it lands on someone or how does the person respond? That it's not just practicing what we're saying and doing is watching how the person responds to it. So what do you hear or

see?

Paul Warren: Yeah, and I appreciate that you're, you're underlining that, watching the person's response to it. Because that's the dance, Right. Because the dance is we say something and that something has an impact on the person. And is the impact continuing the engagement or is the impact decreasing or threatening the engagement?

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: And I mean, some of the things that I see when.

One of the things about motivational interviewing is there is no script

Well, before I give the example, let me say this. I think one of the things, and I'm so glad you brought up the writing reflex and made me think of the writing reflex, because one of the things that I think providers find really interesting when we engage in this conversation about sort of acknowledging and figuring out how to respond to discord, because if discord happens, it doesn't mean the conversation has to be over. And that's one of the wonderful things about motivational interviewing is you can course correct, you can attend to that response that you just mentioned and you can do something different. But I think one of the things that folks find interesting as we engage in conversation about MI and as we practice motivational interviewing together is they realize, oh, what I just said or did caused this person to offer sustained talk.

Amy Shanahan: That's a really good point. Go ahead.

Paul Warren: Yeah, what I just said or did cause this person to disengage.

Amy Shanahan: And m.

Paul Warren: And that's a revelation for some people.

Amy Shanahan: I was just going to. That's what I was jumping out of my skin thinking about that. It takes a lot of time for us people, for us practitioners to realize that we can affect the reaction, that what we did and said mattered. I was talking about, reducing swearing and Someone responded back with a nice reflection that I wanted to stop using vulgar language. Right. Well, I didn't like that.

Paul Warren: Uh-huh.

Amy Shanahan: So it seems like a reasonable reflection. But me as a person didn't particularly like the word vulgar. So. And I use that as an example just to say that people say, what. What should I say in this instance? Or, hey, my patient said X, what? How would you have responded to that? And my writing reflex sometimes kicks in and I wanna, ooh, this is what I would say. And I often say it's really hard to give you advice about what to say because I'm not in the space. I don't have the relationship. I don't know, is it early on in engaging, Are you evoking what, what. What are the four processes are you working on with the person? So it's difficult to just say, this is what I would say.

Paul Warren: Absolutely. And I'm so glad you said that, because I think, you know, when, when. When folks learn motivational interviewing and when they're learning motivational interviewing and when they're, you know, and I'll use Bill Miller's term here,

when they're rehearsing motivational interviewing, and when they're even practicing it, one of the things that will come up is like, well, you know, what skills should I use? And. And what should I say? And your, Your illustration is just such a. Such an important and rich one because there is not a script.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: The script that, what you say and how you say it comes out of the moment that you're in with that particular person you're partnering with at that moment. So, so there are a million things you could say, but what's going to guide the person toward change? What's going to continue the collaborative partnership?

Amy Shanahan: And I'm thinking of Steve, Rolnick's conversation when we interviewed him. And I trust that his C's will be in the new edition. But the notion of stop being so clever. Don't worry about being so clever about what skill or strategy you're going to use. I recently had a

00:20:00

Amy Shanahan: conversation with. I'll just leave it generic. With a friend, with someone close enough to me that that's when my writing reflex kicks in a lot. Or my habits. I think it's habit of communication. We volley back and forth. This is what happened to me. Here's some advice for you. And it's not always am I informed. And I was intentionally listening to some pain, and discomfort. This person was talking about emotional pain. And I decided not to be too Clever. At the same time, wanted to practice being with them and using a lot of the skills and strategies that I. Without looking like I was doing it right. Because when I'm being clever, most people know I'm doing something. Even

people that aren't in the helping professions get a sense that I'm talking to them a little different than I normally would. And this person said something when I paused and just waited and was with them about what they were talking about. And they said, you know, it's all right there on the table, isn't it? Everything I just said, I could see it more clearly because I said it. And it was really powerful to not get involved in stepping on this person's toes with creating some discord by telling them what to do or advising them. Or did you think about doing this?

Paul Warren: And it's funny because that is often what I hear in audio recordings is people jumping in and saying, well, you ought to do this, or you have to do this, or I have this information, I'm going to share with you because. Because that's what I'm trained to do. And that's where the. Where sustained talk can be evoked or that staying the same talk that you mentioned can be evoked. And that's also where the discord can happen in the relationship.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. And there were times when I noticed that happening in this conversation. A little bit of, stepping on the toes while we were on the dance floor. I like to think about that, we don't have to leave the dance floor. Like you said, we as practitioners can stay and figure out the cadence and the flow with this person. And there were a couple times that I kicked in and said, have you thought about this? Have you thought about that? From my heart, it wasn't wagging my finger in their face. And I caught myself because the person then argued for the other side of change, as we know happens. When I'm arguing for one side, they'll argue for the other. And that's what this person did. And I was able to catch myself as I started going in to use a little bit more of epe or making sure I'm asking permission, or if I misstepped, followed up with, what do you think about that? Thanks. Yeah, yeah.

Paul Warren: And thank. No, thank you. Thank you for using that phrase, misstepped.

Paul: Missteps are natural. I think Steve Rolnick says that

Because I think if there's one takeaway message, and maybe there's more than one, but if there's one takeaway message that, I personally would like people to take away from this particular episode of the podcast, is that it's normal to misstep. It's. It's part of the MI conversation. I think I recall Steve Rolnick saying once that, like, you know, people get MI right about 70% of the time. And that's, you know, 70% of the time is great.

Amy Shanahan: Pretty good.

Paul Warren: It's pretty good. So missteps are natural. They're normal. And again, I love the fact, the example that you just gave, because you just said, and again, you're talking about a personal conversation. And again, you're sort of reflecting on this personal conversation. And the example you gave is so helpful because you realized because you offered something without permission or you told the person what they should do, you realized because of their response, you know, what course, correct. Go in a different direction because that's the response that happened.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: And that's the acknowledgement of the impact. So you change your dance move and you do something different to continue to engage the person.

Amy Shanahan: You know what I noticed too, Paul, and this is going into the question that I asked earlier about what do we see when

00:25:00

Amy Shanahan: there are missteps, or true discord or disharmony in the conversation? That there were times where I maybe made a list of things and said, have you thought about this just as an example, without getting into details? And the person said, oh, yeah, and I've tried some of those. And I think maybe I should try some of those again, because they worked for me. So while I was responding to my own writing reflex, the person responded positively, which gave me the impression that I was onto something. And, you know, for that moment, I felt good as the helper offering up something. At the same time, I also know from my practice of motivational interviewing that it may or may not be a genuine response from the person. They might just be saying yes to quiet me down because I'm arguing for one side of something. And they might just be saying yes because there's some engagement, there's engagement going on and they want to please me, so they're saying yes to that. and it's still my choice, intention, and responsibility to consider staying with the spirit of partnering.

Paul Warren: And you know, I think this gets back to what we were talking about, about why Miller and Rolnick made the change from rolling with resistance to discord. And I think the reason, and again, I think some of these examples have kind of highlighted that, but I think kind of boiling it down, simplifying it, rolling with resistance means, well, the client's just being resistant. So I'm just going to kind of go with that.

Amy Shanahan: Roll with it.

Paul Warren: I'm just going to roll with it. And discord says, no, no, no, no, no, no. You're in a collaborative partnership with this person and what you say can decrease the engagement. You can actually create discord in the partnership. And that's not you. That's not you just rolling with what's going on. It's you actually impacting the depth and potential of the conversation that you're actually having.

Amy Shanahan: It really flips the switch that it's, it's the responsibility of the practitioner to be able to do something about it. Even, even though for me, again, it took me a while to get over rolling with resistance because I thought it was the same level of ownership on the practitioner. The practitioner had the opportunity to roll with the person's resistance. at the same time it's starting off on the wrong foot of labeling someone as resistant and trying to fix that by rolling with it. So it took me a while to articulate that and I don't know if I'm articulating it well here because it took me a while to get to this point.

Paul Warren: And it also does not acknowledge that you actually may be responsible for having created the resistance. Indeed. Or you may actually, as the provider, be responsible. And again, that's not the provider's intention. Again, whether the person is operating out of the writing reflex, the desire to fix, solve, rescue or save the person, whatever the impulse may be, it's probably not the provider's, conscious intent. Like I'm gonna, I'm gonna make discord in this relationship today. And it can happen.

Paul Warren: It's normal. And we can, we can course correct and we can continue to engage and you know, one of the biggest ways of course correcting. And I'm curious as to what your thought is about this too, Amy. and if you would add anything to this. But one of the biggest ways I think we can course correct from, if we acknowledge and realize that discord is now occurring, we can ask ourselves, okay, what am I saying or

doing right now that is either evoking this sustained talk or creating this disharmony, this discord in the relationship and

00:30:00

Paul Warren: always going back to acknowledging the person's autonomy in terms of that they have, you know, they're the ones who will decide. You know what, I just made a suggestion. I can see that that didn't land. Didn't land. Right. And I've got ahead of you.

Paul Martin: There are lots of ways to apologize to someone

So let me back up. And what are your thoughts about what you'd like to do, what you'd like.

Amy Shanahan: To do and what a genuine thing to do is just call it like it is and say it. geez, you know, and I've done that before. I got ahead of myself. I got all excited about moving forward and let me slow the train down a little bit and see where you are with some of these things that we talked about. So there's all kinds of ways, use your own style of language, apologizing, saying, oops, I might have went too fast, went too far. What M do you think about what we just talked about?

Amy Shanahan: But what a genuine way to do it, Paul, to be able to just say it made a mistake.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And I don't want to lose sight of something that you said that I earlier that I think is really, really, It's so articulate, simple, and yet wise, which is the

idea that we say something and we really want to be paying attention to how that thing lands on the person across from us.

Paul Warren: Or across the screen from us or over the phone from us. We really want to be paying attention to how that lands with them, which means that we have to be present with the person, we have to be listening to them and we really need to be attending to all those nonverbal and verbal signs about how. What's the impact that that just had on them and not just kind of moving on to the next thing.

Amy Shanahan: Right. What should I say next? And. And I recall, and it still happens sometimes now. I was thinking about the recent conversation that I was just telling the story about. There were times in my head where I was thinking, Hm. What should I say now? Or how should I respond to that in a more strategic way than it used to be? before it used to be, what questions should I ask? What reflection should I use? How should I let this person know that I'm listening? I want them to know that I'm listening. And I realized when I was listening to this close person of mine that I was listening M and I was talking less that it didn't matter what I said really, in a sense, because I wasn't counseling or guiding this person anywhere. At the same time, I was listening to understand. So that if she invited me to help or guide, I could choose to do that. So it was a little different in the beginning. It would be more about the skill and the strategy. And that makes so much sense. And I think I've referred to this in earlier episodes about learning to play the saxophone. And in the beginning, where were my fingers? Was it on a B? You know, all the notes and, and the particular details. And then after I learned to flow with all the notes and fingering, I didn't always have to think about the notes. I was just putting my fingers on the, on the pad, on the, on the pads. Right. Just playing. And I felt that in reflection of my own practice in this conversation, that I was thinking more about what to say or do next with more intention than about what skill I

was going to use.

Paul Warren: You know, you saying that and giving that sort of beautiful analogy with your experience of becoming more proficient at playing the saxophone made me think of kind of the combination of two things which we've mentioned earlier, which was it made me think of when Steve Rolnik was telling us about those six Cs and about getting, letting go of being clever in terms of what clever am I informed thing can I say next to guide this person toward change, letting that go. And ah, I love that because I love how practical and simple that is. And it really destroys the myth of that. You know, there's, you know, there's a, there's a right way to do this. You know what, there's a lot of ways to do this.

Steve: Rule R U, L E is listen to your client

And the other thing it made me think of was. I'm not sure if you're familiar with this. Are you familiar

00:35:00

with the acronym rule R U, L E?

Amy Shanahan: I am, I am familiar with it. But if you tested me right now, I would fail miserably. Well, there will be no test, so do tell.

Paul Warren: Yeah, there'll be no test. But it made me think of it because of something you said and you said as I was listening to this. And tell me if I captured this correctly

because I was listening closely to you. I hope you said as I was listening to this person, I was really listening to understand them.

Amy Shanahan: yes.

Paul Warren: And did I get that right?

Amy Shanahan: That's right.

Paul Warren: Okay, so when, when you said that this light bulb went off in my head and I thought of that acronym rule, which I think it's in the third edition. I'm not positive. And I use it in trainings a great deal. And it's just an ah, you know, MI M in acronyms. Love acronyms. It's an acronym that is the R stands for resist the writing reflex. the U is understand your client's motivation. The L is listen to your client. And the E is empower your client.

Amy Shanahan: Love it.

Paul Warren: And hopefully I spelled that right. Rule R, U, L, E. So it, it, it, it really reminded me of that because letting cleverness go and being present to really understand and listen to the client, understand where the client is coming from. That's the essence of what motivational interviewing is. And yes, there is a strategy to it. yes, there are skills that we use to it. If you can bring that willingness to understand, listen at a level where you're understanding where the person's coming from and really attending to their response, if discord comes up, you're, you're. You're probably going to be better prepared.

Amy Shanahan: To course correct and recover from it. Right?

Paul Warren: Yeah. Yeah.

Amy Shanahan: Can I tell you a little secret?

Paul Warren: Of course.

Amy Shanahan: It was. It was harder to listen, to understand in this particular instance that I'm talking about. And it dawned on me that it took energy because I have a lot of preconceived notions about the person, their situation. I'm too close to it, in a sense.

Paul Warren: Right.

Amy Shanahan: and it was a really neat practice thinking about how I typically might have had a conversation with this person. Again, I said they're close to me. So I knew the scenario, I knew the situation, I knew maybe some other pieces to the story. And that caused a lot of thought bubbles to go on, which we often say, think twice, speak once. The carpenter's rule. Transition to listening. And sometimes I had to think a few times in my head I was saying, oh, that's not true. Before I responded, I thought, wait, I want to really understand this person's perspective no matter what I know, no matter what the other pieces are. And that was really powerful for me because I think about people in professional relationships and the helping professions. I may know them well enough because I've worked with them for years and have the same, the same opportunity to maybe judge what they're saying because it doesn't complement what they said earlier or what I've known about them from the past. And really being careful about discord can happen at any point in the process that you're with a person, early on

in engaging, or later on when you're evoking and moving to plan. It can happen at any point in your relationship. M and it just dawned on me that knowing a person well enough sometimes can hinder me. I'm only speaking for myself, that I thought too much into not the moment, but the whole gestalt of the person.

Paul Warren: And you were able to intentionally set that aside so that you could have a deeper understanding of their experience without your preconceptions.

Amy Shanahan: Right. And I think I wanted to highlight that it takes energy. And it. Oh, it's hard for me to often articulate.

00:40:00

Amy Shanahan: For me, that's one of the notions of MI is deceptively simple and not always that easy. And when I take it as Steve invited us to not be so clever and get rid of the clutter, that was so powerful for me to just be and not worry about I'm supposed to be a certain way or say a certain thing.

Paul Warren: You. You reminded me by saying that, Amy, of kind of a, concept related to letting go of clutter and letting go of being clever. When Steve shared those six Cs with us, which will probably make it into the fourth edition, he also talked about entering into the conversation with the belief in your mind and in your heart that the person actually has the capacity to figure out what they need to do or what they might want to do in order to change. And I really appreciated his sharing that with us and sort of reiterating that, because I think based on those preconceived notions that we may have about somebody, it could be very easy to forget that. That the person across from us actually has strengths, they have resources. And we want to honor and welcome and bring

those strengths and resources into this collaborative conversation. We don't want to go with all the preconceptions that we may have about the experience this person has, the trouble that they've experienced, experience the problems that they've had. but taking that moment to sort of say, this human being has strengths, resources, and I want to invite and welcome those into this conversation. This collaborative partnership, that was.

Amy Shanahan: That was another thing. And thanks for sharing that.

You use motivational interviewing to engage and to move the conversation forward

another thing that I did with intention was highlight their values. And it's just powerful for me because I've known this person for a long time, and the dance that we were doing this time was very different than in the past from my perspective. And that was really an important thing that I noticed. This person soften a lot when I talked about their values. This is really important to you. you. You really know what's best for you. You know, just highlighting the affirmations and the strengths was m. Not something I typically focused on with this person, which.

Paul Warren: Again, is such a wonderful example of how to use the tools of motivational interviewing to engage and to move the conversation forward as opposed to, well, you know, I've studied your problem, and this is what you need to do and get, back to me after you've done that.

Amy Shanahan: Well. And, you know, I was thinking of, you know, how when we do the angel, devil kind of exercise where someone's doing change talk in one ear and sustain

talk in the other ear. Like convincing you to stay the same or convincing you to change. It was actually happening with me as a practitioner, just thinking in my head, just like you illustrated. Well, this is what you should do and tell me how that goes. The other thing that was on in my one side, the devil side of my head. You've been through this before and you've done nothing about it. You know what to do when you haven't done anything about it. Oh, come on. Do you really believe that? I'm, again, I'm close to this person, so it would make sense if, And just refraining from responding to my own, I don't want to be too judgmental about the person or myself. I was going to say my judgments. My judgments about it and refraining from it, like, because it's irrelevant. My, my judgments are irrelevant to the person's process or current perspective or where they are and what they truly believe in that moment and not taking that away from them. Help them own their own truth no matter what.

Paul Warren: And, and you know, I

00:45:00

Paul Warren: really appreciate that you're sharing about a personal conversation that you had. And I think it's fair to say that there are probably a lot of providers that have that, that soundtrack going on in their head about this person's. Whatever, this person's ability to do this or whatever. And again, you, you give such a good example of how that, that's, that's part of what we're able to contain if we intentionally choose to contain that and stay present in the moment to attend to what's actually happening. And again, I want to go back to what you said about. So that you can have a deeper understanding of their experience. You know what your preconceptions are. Great, thanks for sharing. I'm setting those aside. And you're not going to bring those into the conversation because you're intentionally choosing to partition that off and keep yourself focused on

understanding, having a deeper understanding of their experience and attending to their reactions. Because if discord were to arise based on something that you did, you would be in a better position to course correct.

Amy Shanahan: And you know, I'm thinking now of, back into the ring of helping professionals in specific scenarios.

M. M. asks about dealing with people who are angry or defensive

If you wanted to touch on them. Before we wrap up our conversation around discord, the notion of people coming in and they're already angry, they're already defensive, they don't want to come in, they don't want to do this. And when there's what I would call more enhanced emotion. Right. I think of a woman who was affirming, a person's frustration and anger. And the person was like, no, I'm not frustrated. I'm angry. And, she thought that there was discord. And she later found out, and I talked about this in a previous episode. She later found out that the person was relieved to have their feelings affirmed, that she was listening and being there with him. It was just anger. Right. So what are your comments about how to handle. Because this is really, the biggest question that people ask, about when people come in and they're angry and they're defensive and they don't want to be there. And. And there's the door. I could show them where the door is. And they. They seem to struggle with how to engage in that conversation. And I. In a sense, it's in my head what's going off is creating harmony. M. Even when it doesn't feel harmonious because the person is agitated or guarded or not trusting.

The first part of motivational interviewing is engagement. The first of the four processes is engagement

Paul Warren: Well, I want to go back to your example in a minute because, I really appreciate your example that you just gave about the person saying you're really frustrated about this. And then the person, the client coming back and saying, no, I'm not frustrated. I'm angry. I love that. And I want to specifically go back to that in just a moment. And before I do that, I just want to say that I think when we practice motivational interviewing, we really have an extraordinary opportunity. And the opportunity is to be with somebody where they are, especially in. I mean, always, but especially in the beginning. M. Because if somebody comes in and they've been mandated to see you by whatever system or whatever program or whatever, our job is not to try and take away what they normally and naturally are feeling in that particular moment. And yes, they may be mandated because of, you know, something that they did or some problem that they are having. Whatever they're feeling is valid for where they are in that particular moment. The first of the four processes is engagement. And probably the best way to engage somebody who is entering into the conversation in that way is to provide

00:50:00

Paul Warren: space for them to tell you about where they are at that particular moment and bear witness to it. Meaning, be present in the moment with them and be very careful. Because. Because the person is having those feelings does not mean they're being resistant. It, means that they're in that moment of their life and they're having that particular experience. And guess what? You have an opportunity to witness that and to be with them in that and to see if there is a possibility for a collaborative partnership.

And again, going back to your example, the idea of using the tool of reflection to reflect back to the person. And I love your example because the person did the reflection. Well, you know, you're feeling really frustrated about this. Which again, was a reflection. It wasn't. Are you feeling frustrated about this? It wasn't a question, it was a reflection.

Paul Warren: You're feeling really frustrated about this. The person's like, no, I'm not frustrated. I'm really angry. That's a home run as far as I'm concerned.

Amy Shanahan: Right. You got more information.

Paul Warren: You got more information. And the person is talking to you.

Paul Warren: And they're really letting you know how they're feeling. And the. And again, the beauty of it is with the reflection. A reflection is just a hunch. We test out the hunch. And perhaps that may have led to further conversation between them.

Amy Shanahan: Indeed. And that was what she came to learn. He came back and wanted to talk more about things and felt for the first time someone cared about what he thought about the situation. It was a family session and. And he wanted to come back and talk more. And he apologized for getting so animated and maybe making her feel a little scared. He noticed. Yeah.

Paul Warren: Wow.

Amy Shanahan: Mm.

Paul Warren: So he brought a lot of insight to the moment as well.

Amy Shanahan: And she. Yes. And she was able to determine that while she thought it was discovered. Cord session one. Let's say she learned that it wasn't at all session two. So it didn't happen right away. It took her some time to realize that.

Amy Shanahan: She evoked and affirmed his feelings and he was appreciative of that. And he came back. So she did engage with him. M. It just didn't feel good. Right.

Sometimes I consider asking folks to think about m having to make a choice

And which is why I attached that scenario to the question of people creating some sense of harmony when someone comes to you and doesn't want to be there. And sometimes I consider asking folks to think about m having to make a choice and neither of the choices are great. And what is that like when you end up choosing and how do you feel about it? I think that might invite people to go inside of themselves to understand that the person coming to you is choosing the lesser of two evils. They didn't want either choice. And how do you engage in that conversation with people to let them know that you understand that they made the choice, they made this choice to come to give it a try.

Amy Shanahan: And don't really want to do it. Sorry, go ahead.

Paul Warren: No, no, not at all. No, no. I'm, I'm, I'm really kind of reflecting on that because I think that I keep going back to the idea of, and the experience of trying to understand where somebody is coming from. And just because somebody's not happy about being there, it doesn't mean that you, the worker, aren't doing your job. it just

means that that's where that particular person is at that particular moment.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: And how can, how can we bear witness to that and engage the person where they are at that particular moment? And that's the work.

Amy Shanahan: Right. And honor that and, and give voice to it. If they say it with their body language or their words.

Amy Shanahan: Put that on the table for them and let them know that you see that and you see them.

**Any final thoughts about acknowledging and responding to discord?
I was thinking of two thoughts about discord**

Paul Warren: Any final thoughts about acknowledging and responding to discord?

Amy Shanahan: I was thinking of two thoughts just in summarizing that discord may include the writing reflex. Often does. And it could be missteps, small taps on the toe, or you stepped on someone's toes. And it doesn't really create a whole lot of disharmony. And it's still an opportunity for you to get back into the dance and there's discord that. Where you really dive into the writing reflex and responding to wanting to fix and change. And no matter what, you still have a choice and an opportunity to create harmony, to course correct.

Amy Shanahan: To engage with the person.

Amy Shanahan: That's not wrong or good or bad.

Paul Warren: Yeah. It's just part of the dance. It can be part of the dance, sure.

Amy Shanahan: Right. Even, even professional dancers have missteps or, or they'll dance with a different partner and have a different cadence or a different feeling. Absolutely. And I think to give us all credit for the hard work that we do helping people change some tough things, knowing that you're dancing with a different partner every day, even if it's the same partner you're seeing frequently, it's a different dance every day.

Paul Warren: Yeah. Yeah. You know, as just as a final thought for me, you, you made me think of, how powerful engagement can actually be. Because if one's efforts are really spent on trying to understand somebody's perspective, what their experience, have a deeper understanding of where they're coming from, that, that actually can go a long way. And listening deeply to somebody and being able to reflect back what they're saying or summarize what they're saying can really go a long way in building engagement as well. So we're talking about discord because I think it's one of the things that people are most afraid of. And I think we're talking about it also because we've really acknowledged that actually there are things that we as providers, as helpers can say and do that actually evoke, create discord and that we can, as you were saying, we can sort of misstep and then recover.

Amy Shanahan: Right. Beautiful summary, Paul.

Paul Warren: Thank you. Thanks. Really, really. a pleasure to talk to you about this today, Amy.

Amy Shanahan: You too. I always learn every time we talk. I hope others do, too.

Paul Warren: I hope. Well, I know I do. I hope our listeners get something from m it as well. Take care. Bye.

Amy and Paul discuss clients who feel unmotivated in this podcast

Unidentified

Paul Warren: Lions and Tigers and Bears Am I. An i: Thanks for listening to episode eight of Lions and Tigers and Bears. MI Join us for episode nine, where Amy and Paul will discuss clients who feel unmotivated and change talk versus Sustain talk.

Amy Shanahan: CASAT Podcast Network.

Unidentified

Paul Warren: Lions and Tigers and Bears Am I. An i: This podcast has been brought to you by the CASAT Podcast.

Amy Shanahan: Network, located within the Center for the.

Unidentified

Paul Warren: Lions and Tigers and Bears Am I. An i: Application of Substance Abuse Technologies at the.

Amy Shanahan: University of Nevada, Reno. For more podcasts, information and resources, visit casat.org.

00:59:04