

Episode 9-Building Motivation in Clients

Paul and Amy focus on the motivation piece of motivational interviewing

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In this episode, Paul and Amy really focus on the motivation piece of motivational interviewing. They also cover language of ambivalence, softening, sustained talk, and much more. Want to ask our host a question or share your thoughts about any episodes you've listened to? Contact us at the Lions and Tigers and Bears MI website at nfartec.org/mipodcast Again, that's nfartec.org/mipodcast

Paul Warren: 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.

Paul warren and Amy Shanahan discuss Mi learning collaboratives

Amy Shanahan: I'm Amy Shanahan.

Paul Warren: And I'm Paul warren.

Amy Shanahan: And we've worked together over the past ten 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 Hey, Paul.

Paul Warren: Hi, Amy. How are you?

Amy Shanahan: Good, how are you?

Paul Warren: I'm good, thank you. Good to talk to you again.

Amy Shanahan: You too.

Motivation is central to the practice of motivational interviewing

This is episode nine.

Paul Warren: Absolutely. And our topic today is motivation change talk and sustain talk. The language of ambivalence.

Amy Shanahan: Sounds deep.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And I'm really glad we're talking about motivation because it's central to the practice of motivational interviewing, hence the name motivational interviewing. So I think having an opportunity to focus on motivation and how that relates to change talk and sustained talk and ambivalence, will be a helpful topic to

discuss.

Amy Shanahan: I agree. I was thinking a lot about terminology that we use around motivation and what we think. And, I know that we're going to talk a lot about what motivates people, and I'm also curious about what do you think when a person doesn't seem motivated, and then whatever do you think about that? What do you do? And I think that it's important to really, we'll, talk about navigating these waters, and our thoughts and our beliefs around these things.

Paul Warren: You know, it's funny because to me, maybe a starting place for that, because you're kind of laying out some other aspects of motivation that we'll talk about and how we can use motivational interviewing to help strengthen motivation. I think, and I'll just throw this out for your consideration, is that maybe a ah, solid starting point.

Amy Shanahan: For.

Paul Warren: this conversation about motivation is to talk about sort of the worker or the provider's perspective on motivation. because I don't know about you, but I've heard oftentimes people will say, oh yeah, I practice motivational interviewing. I motivate my clients to change all the time. And when I hear somebody say that I motivate my clients to change, a bell goes off in my head, kind of a warning bell.

Amy Shanahan: Sure. Yeah. And I know that I've received feedback in my travels that I have used statements like I have to get someone to do something or I have to get them to want to go or do or whatever. so I was fortunate to have a guide and a mentor let me know that I use terminology that still in my head of thinking I must have had some notion that I had some responsibility for people's motivation to change and it took a

while for that to shift some m practice and we'll talk all about that stuff.

Motivational interviewing is not about getting people to do something

Paul Warren: Yeah. And the idea that I've heard workers say like, you know, well I share

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Paul Warren: a lot of educational information with the person and that's what's motivating them to change or you know, I've given them referrals to this particular thing and that should motivate them to change. And to me that actually has nothing to do with motivational interviewing. That's, that's really in some ways I'm wondering and tell me if you think this is too strong, but in some ways that's a little bit more about the writing reflex and kind of centering the worker or the provider, that the provider feels like well, the way I'm supposed to help this person or motivate them is educate them, give them the answer, give them referrals, not that information isn't important, not that referrals aren't important, but ultimately those aren't necessarily the things that are going to motivate somebody to, or help somebody find their own motivation.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, I think it's worth repeating that it's normal, it's natural that we have this desire as humans to want to help people, to want to heal them, to want to fix it, to want to change it. And especially for those of us who are in the helping professions came to the table thinking that's our primary job or goal is to get people to change or to motivate people to improve their lives or their functioning. And motivational interviewing is not about getting them to do it. It's about guiding them, and it's actually about quieting that writing reflex.

Amy Shanahan: To invite them into this collaboration and conversation.

Paul Warren: And to also let the clients or the person who is, seeking help to let their motivation actually rise to the top and to invite that motivation into the conversation so that the person can really motivate themselves to move toward a particular change. So maybe like myth number one is, MI is not a way to get somebody to do what you want them to do.

Amy Shanahan: Right. We don't use it to manipulate people to make a change that we think they should make.

Paul Warren: Right. Maybe myth number two, when you're practicing motivational interviewing, it's your job to motivate the person to change.

Amy Shanahan: And repeating what you said, perhaps myth number three, when you give people education and information about the harm and or the good that they can, do to make a change, m is not what motivates people to change.

Paul Warren: Generally not. Yeah. Yeah. And again, that doesn't mean that there aren't instances where information or, you know, all that is very helpful, of course. but there is a way to do that in an. Am I consistent in an MI consistent way.

Amy Shanahan: Right. And when we've talked about the spirit, you can do it in an MI consistent way and honoring their autonomy and choice that even when you give them the information, education, et cetera, they still can choose to do something or not do something with it.

Paul Warren: Right. And you, when practicing motivational interviewing, are supporting that autonomy.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: And creating a space for that person to exercise that autonomy.

Amy Shanahan: I just hear a lot, of folks from the myth, from the myth side of the coin, giving information, educating people, talking to them about concepts, and then walking away feeling good that they offered them this, plate of morsels. And then I get surprised when they don't take them or eat them or use them. so that kind of balance of giving information and then getting frustrated that the person, or frustrated in, oh, what didn't I do? Or what did I do? Putting the onus on ourselves as the helper. that they didn't take what we had to offer them. And I could say that over time, when I let go of that, I don't know what you'd call it. Feeling thoughts, control over thinking that I had some. Something to do to motivate. It was my job to motivate someone. It really freed me up to not think that I had something that it's not about me to motivate someone. It's freeing.

Paul Warren: When you were describing the morsels and you were describing how like the workers kind of like head scratching about like,

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Paul Warren: you know, why aren't they eating those morsels or why aren't they so good? Right. Why aren't they taking those actions that I came up with? you know, it's interesting to me because the thought that immediately came to my mind was that's where then the labeling can happen. Where the person, where the worker might say,

you know, out of frustration or confusion might say, well, this person's just resistant. This person's not ready to change or unmotivated. Or unmotivated to change. Absolutely.

Amy Shanahan: Ah.

Paul Warren: And the wonderful thing about motivational interviewing is it's saying and providing the opportunity. And I think this is where sometimes it's really an adjustment for people. It's sort of saying you can set that sort of morsel driven agenda aside of and focus on understanding where this person is and what's important to them at this particular moment.

Amy Shanahan: and what morsels are already on their plate without making an assumption that a person comes to the table with nothing.

Paul Warren: Right. Right. Which also touches on the idea too, Amy, that I think is central to motivational interviewing, which is kind of holding the belief that that individual has the capacity to actually make a change if that's what they choose to do.

Amy Shanahan: Right. And that they have it within themselves. And what do we do with that? How do we, how do we navigate that?

Paul Warren: And how do we engage it?

Paul Warren: And bring it sort of out.

Amy Shanahan: I don't know if there was ever a time, and I'm trying to articulate it for

myself. You're really good at, summarizing some of the things that I have to say about it, but there was a time when I understood these concepts and may not have truly believed it in my heart yet because my behaviors were, still feeling like I had responsibility to help fix, change, the people that were coming for service. and I don't know what clicked, but at some point it clicked. And I heard you say that, you hear the language that people use and are like, whoa. And now when I hear people say I have to get people to do something, I hear the same thing that I used to say. And just that whole shift, when did it shift? Because it's not, and you know, Bill Miller says it a lot. It's not just, it's a heart set. It's not just the mindset. So I don't know which comes first, the chicken or the egg, but changing my thoughts helped. I think watching how am I works when you're curious about people and really listen with the intention to understand and draw from that person the morsels that they have within them. that it's less frustrating, it's less stressful.

Paul Warren: And probably the outcomes are more effective in terms of that. A person probably can, actually move toward change. The client can actually move toward change and feel, like they have a collaborative partner to help them do that.

Amy Shanahan: I think it was the last episode I was talking about having a conversation with somebody that I was really familiar with and part of me, because I care very deeply for this person and know what they're going through, part of me thinks, I know exactly what you need to do to make this better. And I'm laughing because it's so silly for me thinking that way. And it still comes up for me, that writing reflex kind of thing.

You asked permission to share what you observed with another person

Well, I've had subsequent conversations with this person and we don't always have that wonderful opportunity to hear what someone's going through. And some of us do when we work with people for over a long period of time. But in a short period of time, I heard this person talk about some steps they were taking to, make some changes in their conversation and relationship. Just to leave it generic enough because I don't remember the details of what I shared last time. It was really neat to hear that they had the morsels within them. I asked them some questions about what was going on and how they did it in

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the past, things of that nature.

Amy Shanahan: And was able to hear this person with almost a spring in their step, like a, softness in their voice about confidence about doing something. And I don't know what motivated them to get to this point. I hope that my desire to not want to fix it helped.

Amy Shanahan: Because I was accepting this person where they were. And in my heart I did believe somewhere inside them that they had what it took to get through whatever they were getting through.

Paul Warren: M you know, as you described that, it really made me think that you honored what they brought to the table. And you were curious and probably used open ended questions to find out more about what was important to them and what they were bringing to the table. And the more they talked about it, the more their motivation increased and maybe their confidence as well.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, see, you do have a nice way to summarize things. And I remember when I had a thought, it's not always a judgment. People think. Judgments are always negative. But I had a thought about what might be blocking this person. And, in one aspect, and I asked permission to share what I observed and put it on the table and ask them what they thought. And they said, oh my, I don't just do this with this particular person. I do this, all the time in my conversations with people. And I said, what do you think about that? So open questions, what are you thinking about that? Instead of saying, I think this blocks you from, I just said, if it's okay, I could share what I noticed in this exchange with this person. And I shared what I saw.

Amy Shanahan: And left it. I sat there and left. I could have said, and I think it's blocking you. I didn't add that part even though it was in my head and just said, what do you think about that? And I think that that was a pivotal thing to being able to ask permission to, share what you see and let them have the opportunity to digest it and tell you if they, if it fits or not.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And to invite that conversation, their reaction to what you ask permission to offer feedback about.

When a person is ambivalent about a change, it doesn't mean they're resistant

Amy Shanahan: So, Paul, what do you think about when people then don't seem to take the morsels? They, you don't hear them move in a direction or even talk about moving in a direction for change?

Paul Warren: Well, again, I think what we're kind of talking about is we're talking about how we can be in partnership with somebody to kind of get an understanding of where they are. And again, you painted a picture before of the worker sort of conceiving of their job as to offer these morsels and to support this person, to carry out the instructions that were given them, which is very different than say, the worker saying to the client, what are your thoughts about this? Where are you with this? What do you want to focus on? What's most important to you at this particular moment, and then sort of providing the space to let the person respond to that. And, you know, some people are in a place where they can identify a particular change they may want to make. Not everybody is in that place. And even if they're not in that place, it doesn't mean that they're resistant. It, just means where they are at that particular moment is they're not able to articulate a particular change that they may want to make, or they're ambivalent about a particular change that they are considering. And again, that's a, a tremendous opportunity with motivational interviewing. When a person is ambivalent about a.

Amy Shanahan: Particular change, one of the key ingredients. Yeah. And we also know that we can reflect

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Amy Shanahan: back the things that we're hearing them say about change specifically.

Amy Shanahan: And they may talk themselves into change sooner than I, we, or they would even have anticipated.

Paul Warren: When you say that, are you specifically referring to sort of the change talk that they may offer? Because as part of that ambivalence that they're sharing, they're

going to be talking about their desire to make the change, maybe their ability, their reasons or their need to make the change. And they might also be talking about why they don't want to change, which would be the sustained talk, right. And that would be normal, right?

Amy Shanahan: Yes, of course. Right. In the example that I shared about the conversation that I had with somebody close to me, I intentionally listened for the change talk, desires, abilities, reasons and needs. And at first it was interesting to navigate because the person was talking about wanting other people around them to change more than their own reactions or their own behaviors. So it was navigating in there about asking them what did they want to see differently. Right. So in my mind I would think, oh, maybe back in the day get frustrated that, oh, ah, you want everybody around you to change, but you don't want to change. and just softening that thought process and judgment about it and being able to explore with hearing this person wants something to change and seem to believe that everyone around them had to change, not them.

Paul Warren: And because they hold or express that quote unquote sustained talk, it doesn't necessarily mean they're not motivated, it doesn't mean that they're resistant. It simply means that that's just another part of the ambivalence. And MI provides a safe place for the person to talk about why they want to make the change and why they don't want to make the change.

Paul Warren: So we want to attend to the sustained talk. We don't necessarily want to encourage it and invite more, but we don't want to judge it and consider it as bad or negative either.

Amy Shanahan: Right. And what I think, I mean, I don't have the recording or anything of the conversation. What I think happened was honoring what they were sharing about their frustration about other people around them, not doing what they wanted them to do, and exploring the other side of that sustained talk. Meaning, m asking this person, what did they want to see different? What did they hope? What did they see? what they could do or what they've done in the past. I think that that was some key things.

Amy Shanahan: In exploring potential change talk.

Paul Warren: So again, you know, this idea of that the sustained talk is going to be normal. It's part of the language of ambivalence. It's probably going to be part of a conversation where we're focusing on a change. We can allow it, we can provide space for it, and we can attend to it, and we can actively pursue exploring the change talk and inviting the person to offer elaboration on the change talk. Summarizing the change talk, reflecting the change talk back specifically so the person can hear it again.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, I'm just really, it really highlights that it's an opportunity. When you hear sustained talk, it doesn't mean lack of motivation or it doesn't mean resistance. Like you said, that it's an opportunity for us to explore the opposite. Is the change talk there?

Paul Warren: And ultimately, like we were saying, that ambivalence is a key ingredient to the practice of motivational interviewing. And with ambivalence, you're going to get sustained talk and you're going to get change talk. And we want to attend to both. We want to employ the change talk, but we want to attend to both because we may, as the person continues the conversation, we may start to notice that there's more change talk than there is sustained talk, that the sustained talk begins to diminish. It m may not

completely disappear, but there might ultimately be more change

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Paul Warren: talk, which again, is a sign that the person is actually building and increasing their motivation.

What is softening sustained talk look like to you sometimes

Amy Shanahan: What is softening sustained talk look like to you sometimes? If you could share some examples.

Paul Warren: Yeah, I think for me, softening sustained talk, I think of two specific things. When I think of that. One is that if I'm going to include it in a summary and I would make an intentional choice, I would include it in a more general way as opposed to a specific way, and I would include it at the beginning of the summary, and I would conclude the summary with much more specific change talk. That's one way that I would soften it. And again, I would intentionally choose to do that because I would want the person to know I was attending to their whole story, and I would want to be intentionally emphasizing by placing it at the end and being more specific, the change talk. Another way that softening sustained talk might, play out for me if I were in a conversation and it was present, is that I would certainly be attending to what the person was saying, paying attention, letting the person know. And if I were going to follow that with an open ended question, or if I were going to follow it with, some sort of reflection or summary. I might intentionally do that in a way that links it more to change talk than finding out more about the sustained talk. Makes me think of that image, and I

can't remember who I heard say this first, but the idea of you get the dog you feed. So if you start asking questions and asking the person to elaborate about the sustained talk, you're going to get more sustained talk, and the person is going to stay where they are. If you invite the person to elaborate about the change talk, you're going to get more change talk. So those are two ways for me. What about for you?

Amy Shanahan: Nice. And that's really helpful. because to me, when you said, when we use the term softening sustained talk, at first I would do it by almost ignoring it. M and I got feedback that we don't want to totally ignore it. Like you said, tend to it. We don't want to ignore it because we don't want the person. So think we weren't listening to them.

Paul Warren: Right.

Amy Shanahan: Right. So I think similar things is, and I liked your, description of generalizing it instead of specifying it. So I had. I was thinking about it as you were talking that I don't, get into the details of this sustained talk. I might honor that. Yeah. Making this change is hard. At the same time, you're really thinking about different ways to go about something. Right. So adding the change talk towards the end. So it was just a shift for me. At some point when getting really good feedback from someone about you don't want to ignore it, you want to soften it. So really doing more about cultivating the change talk and testing the waters to see if there's more there. Oftentimes I get curious, too, that if someone's talking more about sustained talk, I don't want to ignore the fact that I think there's no change talk there. I want to test the waters and throw, throw out, maybe offer a double sided reflection and put some potential change talk, or the opposite of what they're saying on the table to see if it's. If it fits, if it lands for them, if it's there, not to plant it in them, but to see if it makes sense to them.

Paul Warren: So you'd kind of be operating on a hunch that you would include that to kind of see, like you said, to test the water.

Amy Shanahan: Like the person I was talking about kept, talking about, I wish this person would do this. I wish they wouldn't do that. I wish they would stop doing this. I wish they would stop doing that and, and just really externalizing their conversation, wanting everybody else around them to change. And my hunch was that I could explore this person's potential to want to make some changes themselves because they said nothing about making their own changes. So, it wasn't there. It wasn't there for me to reflect their, expressed words or language. It was there underneath.

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Amy Shanahan: I thought by, they wanted something to be different, and I went with that. So, softening the sustained talk, didn't ignore that this person was really frustrated with other people for not making the changes. And you really, you really wish your relationship was different or you really wish this situation m was better. Right. So it's the hunch that that's got to be underneath. What's motivating them to continually talk about wishing these other people or other things would be different.

Amy Shanahan: Does that make sense? I kind of want.

Paul Warren: It does.

You ended the sustained talk with the change talk, right? Yeah. Um.

Focusing on change talk for a minute

And I'm wondering, given the example that you give, if you could sort of give an, provide an example of what specifically you might have said, which is, and you've kind of done it, but I'm wondering if you could, if you could share sort of one more example of like, you're honoring the sustained talk and you're testing it with the change talk kind of at the end of the reflection or the summary that you're.

Amy Shanahan: Making sure, something that comes to mind. And again, I don't have the recording, but I know that I explored a lot of the feelings that this person was having, and may have said something along the lines of, this is, really painful for you, and you're thinking about maybe some ways that you could lessen your own pain. So starting around that, because this person was talking about, a painful situation and that it was these other, this other person, these other people around her were making decisions that were painful. so testing the waters out that way, honoring the pain. so I think your conversation about generalizing the sustained talk, instead of saying, boy, that really, that person really hurt you. Right. That might infuse, you know, add some fuel to the fire.

Paul Warren: Right.

Amy Shanahan: and instead reflecting on the pain that's really painful and you really would like to see, maybe consider ways you might make some changes to make it less painful.

Paul Warren: And you know, you used a word earlier, and I want to underline this word because, I thought your example really is, such a good example of this is the idea of honoring what the person is saying, you know, where the sustained talk is, just as much part of the experience of ambivalence about a particular change. And again, you

softened it and you ended the reflection with the change talk, right?

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. So that's usually how I would navigate. Softening the sustained talk is similar to what you said about the summary, putting it first and then adding the potential change talk, mining for it there afterwards to see if it sticks, to see if there's something there.

Paul Warren: Focusing on change talk for a minute, it really reminds me of the idea that we want to employ change talk that comes out in the conversation. And yes, there will be change talk that will happen of its own accord. Naturally, the person will talk about their desirability reasons or need to want to make a particular change. And of course we can ask intentional, open ended questions, we can reflect, we can summarize to evoke more change talk. But I do want to underline this idea of that when change talk occurs, it's important for the worker to actually do something with that change talk so that the person can hear the change talk again or it's offered back to them in a summary. Because ultimately, if you don't attend to the change talk, the person is not going to really be able. They're not necessarily going to be, guided toward increasing their own motivation for a particular change.

Amy Shanahan: So some examples of what we can do to nothing. Just leave it there. I think you'd say leave the change on the table.

Paul Warren: Don't leave the money on the table.

Amy Shanahan: Don't leave the money on the table. Don't leave the change. Right.

Paul Warren: Yeah.

Amy Shanahan: Right. Don't

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Amy Shanahan: leave the money on the table. So things that we could do is to respond with reflections, summaries.

Paul Warren: Absolutely.

Amy Shanahan: Maybe some evocative strategies to see if there's more there.

Paul Warren: Yes.

Amy Shanahan: What other things are you thinking about? What we can do.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And with that, evocative strategies, just keeping it simple, just asking, inviting elaboration about the particular change talk.

Paul Warren: Yeah.

Amy Shanahan: You know, just in keeping with this example, when I followed up with the person, I was shy in a sense, tiptoeing, not wanting to, bring it up again, as if it's my agenda, because I did want to see how things were going, and I wasn't in therapy with this person I mentioned. This is a person that's close with me, and I asked generally, so how are things going now that could have gone anywhere? The weather is great, I'm ready for Christmas, whatever the conversation was. and the person knew that I was checking in about the particular situation because it's been a quite stressful one. And

this person said, you know, I'm really focusing in on changing this behavior. I said, oh, that's interesting. And how's that going? How has it been? It's only been a few weeks. And since we had talked and, they said, well, it's not very easy to change. And shared how they fumbled around and learned even more about themselves by realizing that their behavior was no longer helpful for them in getting through this painful situation. So it was just interesting, you know, there wasn't a magic wand that voila, this person started talking about making a change in their behavior, that they're going to do it and everything's going to be better. M and at the same time she said, yeah, it's not easy. And I'm very aware of my behavior.

Paul Warren: I really appreciate you adding that because it really underlines, and I'm sure anybody listening to this, If you stop and really think about it, change for anybody is not easy, generally speaking, and even sometimes, specifically speaking, it's not easy. And it's a process.

Paul Warren: And that it's not like you have one conversation and the change happens and we move on. I love that you use the term fumbled around and through that, fumbling around, the person that you're mentioning found out more about themselves.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Paul Warren: And, and again, they are in their process of change.

Amy Shanahan: And exploring what's inside themselves and from a strength based perspective. And I think that that was another intention, that I had when I was talking to this person, because a lot of the conversation was around what can't happen, what won't happen, which could spiral anyone into a state of inertia, ah, or lack thereof,

speaking from motivation or unmotivated, that asking questions around what could happen, what might happen, how did you handle these types of situations in the past? When were you most effective? So asking strength based questions, exploring the strength that I heard by reflecting back what I heard, I think was a little powerful instead of focusing on just the problems.

Amy Shanahan: How are you going to fix this? How are you going to change this seemed daunting. Ah, m

Paul Warren: And you had mentioned before that when you had a subsequent conversation with this person, that their confidence seemed to have increased. So the idea of like focusing on strengths, helping a person to realize that they have within them their own morsels that they can leverage and use to move toward a particular change, can also help increase confidence.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, yeah.

Amy, this conversation is about motivation. And, uh, I'm wondering

Paul Warren: You know, I'm wondering, Amy, before we conclude, because this conversation is about motivation. And, you know, I've heard sometimes workers, out of frustration and out of caring, say, you

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Paul Warren: know, well, you know, this person's just not motivated. They don't want to

do this for themselves. They're doing it because somebody outside is telling them to do it. And I'm also thinking about, you know, folks who are mandated to care or to services. And, I'm wondering if maybe we could conclude our conversation with just talking a little bit about sort of what approaches we can have there. Because. Because somebody's mandated to services, because somebody is considering, a change, because of, somebody outside wants them to do it also does not mean that somebody is resistant or not motivated. So from, from an MI perspective, what are your thoughts about how we can or what we would focus on or what we could, work on with folks who maybe come into the conversation at that starting place?

Amy Shanahan: So two mythbusters are coming into my mind. The one is, maybe we said it already at the beginning, that mythbuster one is really believing that people have it within themselves to change. And I only have two mythbusters. I know we talked maybe about three or four myths, but, the second Mythbuster is around this notion of what you're talking about when people are motivated by external forces or external reasons, believing that they made a choice to do something about it, even though it was not intrinsically motivated at the time. Right. And we know, and science tells us that people change just as well when they're motivated extrinsically. It's then what do we do when they show up? So I think from the perspective of what can we do? Some of the things are things that I just said about the conversation that I had with this person that I care about is, number one, believing that they made a choice to come and honor that and let it be known in the space you're really considering, there might be some merit to making some change. There might be some merit in what people are saying that you chose to come to explore it with us. These collaborative, honoring their autonomy kind of language, focusing on the strength that they came.

Paul Warren: You showed up.

Amy Shanahan: You showed up. you know, oftentimes, I remember early on in my career in substance use disorder treatment, I worked with a lot of folks mandated by external forces. And the conversation was very assessment. Like, what did you do? Why did they send you here?

Paul Warren: Right.

Amy Shanahan: To explore what was related to substance use disorders. Right. So I was trying to assess, you know, and not start out of the gate with, well, so you. You decided to come and explore what's in it for you, what, how this might help you.

Paul Warren: You know, a thought came to my mind as you were saying that, which is that, I think it can be very helpful to communicate to somebody that we're a collaborative partner by allowing them the space to talk about either their frustration or maybe why they don't want to be there, even though they showed up, and not getting too worried that that means that the person's resistant or not motivated, because, let's face it, maybe they don't want to participate in this program or this particular conversation, and maybe they need to say that in order to get to a place and know that the person is hearing them before they can get to a place where they can maybe begin to explore what could potentially be in it for them.

Amy Shanahan: You know, I don't have the particulars, but Bill Miller just wrote a book, around this whole notion of ambivalence. And it's interesting to hear, I'm reading it to see the compartmentalization of ambivalence and making a decision. So I could be making a decision on whether I'm going to Disney or going to go to the Grand Canyon.

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Amy Shanahan: So there's some ambivalence there. I'm not sure which one, but those are two good changes. Those are two good things. And then there's, I have to decide to make one decision or not make the decision. Maybe not good or bad has, other people involved, and I don't have it all articulated well. And to this point of people being extrinsically motivated by external forces sometimes come to the table and have to make a decision between two not so good things. So this is not whether we go to Disney or the Grand Canyon. This is, do I go to jail or do I go to treatment? M. Do I keep my family intact, or not, because I have to give something up. They're not always two, they're two negative things that someone is making a decision about.

Amy Shanahan: And tough decisions.

Paul Warren: And they're, they're making some sort of choice. And that's a strength, right.

Amy Shanahan: And validating that and softening our hearts to understand what a tough choice, instead of the, you know, the old fashioned way of, there's the door, you made your choice, or saying not so nice things about, well, you decided to come, so you might as well buckle up and head to loP and go to treatment instead of really honoring in your heart that this was not an easy choice for someone to make.

Paul Warren: Yeah. Yeah. And that would really be accurately reflecting back to the person the reality of their choice. And that's where the empathy really comes in and the compassion.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Whatever motivator motivates someone is potentially a positive thing

Amy Shanahan: So what are some things that you've been thinking about with navigating folks that come extrinsically from external forces?

Paul Warren: Yeah, again, my way of thinking about that is, is whatever it is that's motivating them, is potentially, a positive thing. I have heard people say at times, and I'm thinking of a particular case where somebody wanted to quit smoking because of a family member. And I remember the worker saying, well, this person's never going to quit because they don't want to do it for themselves. And again, I have compassion for that worker because the worker acknowledged that they had quit smoking and the process that they went through to quit smoking and how they had to do it for themselves. So there was this sort of projection onto the client that unless they were going to kind of do it the way I did it. And again, I think the strength of motivational interviewing is that if we accept whatever it is that's motivating this person to consider this change and we stay in partnership with them, we're going to find other things too. So we don't need to judge something just because it's extrinsic.

Amy Shanahan: Right. And that the way we made a change, even if it's very similar to a change they're making. Like you said, I stopped smoking this way, so therefore this person is, you know, gonna fail because they, I failed that way too. Makes me think of a person in recovery who recently said, wow, it's embracing this notion of harm reduction that, that the federal government has recently endorsed, said, you know, for, for many, many, many years, I just thought everybody had to go abstinent or bust. And we're in

the same notion just exploring with people that there's so many paths to change, there's so many ways that motivate people, whether it's initially external, and maybe that external motivation is what drives them to continue on for a while.

Amy Shanahan: To make a change.

Paul Warren: And I appreciate you bringing in harm reduction here because similarly, you know, harm reduction is a viable and an am I congruent goal. people can choose to lessen their harm and that's a change.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: And again, if you support a person to do that, as opposed to try and force them toward abstinence,

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Paul Warren: you have a greater opportunity of having an ongoing conversation with them and who knows where their harm reduction goal may go.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, it's interesting because I think we naturally use harm reduction approaches for less stigmatizing things in our lives. You know, like a person says, you know, I'm going to start with just cutting out carbs. That's where I'm starting to and that's what I'm going to do. And we don't send the list out and shame them for not changing all the other things or getting up and exercising and doing things to change their health. We support that. Say good for you. Right. And affirm their decisions. And it is so motivational. Am m I congruent to honor any change that honor anything that the

person is choosing to do.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And anything that they're considering.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: Because again, it goes back to that ambivalence. The ambivalence indicates, yes, as part of that language there may be sustained talk. And there's also something they're considering, and it's that thing that they're considering. It's that side of the ambivalence that has the potential to grow into something that actually will help the person move toward the change. The other part of it is going to be there. That's part of the change process.

You know, exploring motivation from the perspective of someone's engaged in the conversation

Amy Shanahan: You know, as we are wrapping up around this notion of language around ambivalence and motivation as an umbrella, I think about behavior change that I have made over the years and sometimes haven't made over the years. And, and I'm thinking of one particular behavior change that I can get in my own, trapped in my own head about telling myself I'm unmotivated when indeed I'm motivated most of the time. And I make attempts to do things and change things. And on, the day or the moments or the weeks that I don't do, it doesn't mean I'm unmotivated. I'm still motivated to make this change. I'm just thinking of one in particular. I'm motivated to do it. I'm just not taking action right away. So really exploring motivation from the perspective of someone's engaged in the conversation about what they potentially might do.

Amy Shanahan: And just because they're not yet taking full action, I think from that whole harm reduction approach, they're taking some action.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And people move toward action. And even before they move toward action, they move toward deciding what action they might want to take in terms of the planning. Like, you know, I think if I'm going to move in this particular direction, now that I've talked about why I want to move in this particular direction, I'm, now starting to think about to move in this particular direction. These are some of the things I could do to move in this particular direction. And now that I've identified these things that I could do, the first thing I'm going to do is this.

Amy Shanahan: And I invite folks to think about their own change process from this perspective. And I'm thinking of times when over the years, I've made a lot of changes around health. I'll just generalize. And I've learned a whole heck of a lot about what wasn't working, what didn't work, what won't work. I've gone swimming with people, I've gone running up hills. And two of those things I won't ever sustain making change because I don't like to swim for exercise and I don't like to run up hills. So really knowing that the people that we're working with and partnering with to explore change and to consider what they might do, continue to explore it because they're testing it for themselves as well, that's at least what I got out of my own thinking pattern in this conversation, that, people are testing what works for them, what doesn't work.

Paul Warren: For them, and they're considering that what's going to work for them, what isn't going to work for them, right? Absolutely.

It's not the workers responsibility to m motivate somebody when

practicing motivational interviewing

Amy Shanahan: So I wonder how you'd like to wrap up this notion of motivation and our conversation around the language of ambivalence.

Paul Warren: Well, I think one of the key points which we stressed at the beginning is that

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Paul Warren: it's not the workers responsibility to m motivate somebody when practicing motivational interviewing.

Paul Warren: MI is engaging in a collaborative conversation to help the person to explore what change they may want to make and to find out what may be motivating them. So that's one sort of key point I would underline again from our conversation.

Amy Shanahan: I think it's worth underscoring again too, to wrap up that really thinking. Do you believe it? Do you believe that people have it within themselves m to make the change, to consider change?

Paul Warren: Thanks, Amy. I really appreciate talking to you about this today.

Amy Shanahan: Thank you, Paul.

Thanks for listening to episode nine of Lions and Tigers and Bears MI join us for episode ten when Amy and Paul chat about MI spirit and the writing reflex.

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