Chapter 5: NVC & Motivational Interviewing in Coaching
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NVC & Motivational Interviewing in Coaching

"Why not go out on a limb? That's where the fruit is" – Mark Twain

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After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Define Motivational Interviewing (MI) and discuss how it relates to coaching.
- Define empathy and discuss how it relates to coaching.
- Define both change-talk and resistance-talk and discuss how they relate to coaching.
- Demonstrate facility with an empathy protocol called Nonviolent Communication (or NVC) developed by Marshall Rosenberg.
- Demonstrate facility with four MI tools, including a variety of reflective listening statements and the use of rulers to evoke readiness to change
- Define and describe the differences and similarities between AI (Chapter 3) and MI.
- Use both AI and MI techniques/questions during coaching sessions.
DEFINITIONS

Motivational Interviewing: A client-centered, directive method for motivating change by exploring and resolving ambivalence.

Nonviolent Communication: A process for enhancing empathic connection and honest understanding between people.

Empathy: A respectful understanding of another person’s experience, including his or her feelings, needs, and desires.

Change Talk: Any talk by the client that makes the case for change (or for not staying the same).

Resistance Talk: Any talk by the client that argues against the case for change (or for staying the same).

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Motivational Interviewing (MI), a counseling methodology developed over the past 25 years, initially arose in the addiction treatment field. The goal of MI is to encourage change-talk and discourage resistance-talk. The more clients make the case for change, the more likely they are to actually make changes. Conversely, the more coaches make the case for change, the more likely coaches are to increase client resistance, and the less likely change will occur.
MI works with four general principles: *expressing empathy, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance,* and *supporting self-efficacy*. These four principles assist clients in gaining awareness of the thoughts and feelings that are the foundation for their behaviors. By increasing such awareness, MI enables clients to resolve ambivalence and pursue alternate behaviors.

The principal architects of MI, William Miller & Stephen Rollnick (2002), highlight the following elements of the four general principles:

1. **Express Empathy.**
   - Acceptance facilitates change.
   - Skillful reflective listening is fundamental.
   - Ambivalence is normal.

2. **Develop Discrepancy.**
   - Change is motivated by a perceived discrepancy between present behavior and important personal goals or values.
   - The client, rather than the coach, should present the arguments for change.

3. **Roll With Resistance.**
   - Avoid arguing for change.
   - Resistance is not directly opposed.
   - New perspectives are invited, but not imposed.
   - The client is a primary resource in finding answers and solutions.
   - Resistance is a signal to respond differently.
4. Support Self-Efficacy

- A person’s belief in the possibility of change is an important motivator.
- The client, not the coach, is responsible for choosing and carrying out change.
- The coach’s belief in the client’s ability to change becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

These principles not only underlie MI, but also apply to other methodologies, such as Appreciative Inquiry. (see Chapter 4)

**IMPORTANT:**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the “first question is fateful.” That’s why coaching starts with appreciative inquiries into client learning goals, strengths, and values. By starting with the 5-D Cycle of AI, coaches can often inspire clients to move beyond their reluctance, ambivalence, and resistance to change. That’s the power of vision as a “target that beckons.” MI comes into play when clients are painfully aware of being “stuck in the muck” or of being conflicted about their ability to move forward. That’s when the need for empathy is large, and when the MI techniques for developing discrepancy and rolling with resistance become invaluable (see the MI & AI section at the end of this chapter for more discussion.)
PRINCIPLE ONE: THE EMPATHY FACTOR

Empathy is the respectful understanding of another person’s experience, including his or her feelings, needs, and desires. It is not a prelude to the work of coaching; it is the work of coaching. Through the respectful and appreciative understanding of our clients’ experiences, we help expand their awareness, create openness, and facilitate change.

MI starts with the premise that change talk is facilitated by a calm, safe, judgment-free relational space, in which people are free to honestly share their thoughts, feelings, needs, and desires without fear of judgment, ridicule, or pressure. This is especially true when clients experience a seemingly irresolvable conflict between what they want and where they are currently. The more a client feels “stuck” and unable to move, the more important it is for coaches to express empathy and to appreciate the discomfort of being on a fence.

IMPORTANT:

Although coaches widely recognize the importance of creating such a generative relational space with clients, it is sometimes difficult to maintain a calm, safe, judgment-free posture in the face of health-risky behaviors. It becomes even more difficult when those behaviors persist in spite of a coach’s best efforts to support self-responsibility and behavior change. As the coach, you may want to push hard to make change happen. It is important to remember, however, that this can actually interfere with empathy and provoke resistance to change. MI
holds that such promotional efforts are usually counterproductive because they encourage resistance talk rather than change talk, which hinders the advancement of the client’s agenda and the work of coaching in general.

To summon empathy and leave promotional efforts behind, it helps to recognize health-risky behaviors as expressions of a client’s unmet needs. No change is possible until and unless those needs are fully and respectfully recognized and expressed.

People often confuse empathy with pity and sympathy. Understanding the distinctions is important for the mastery of both MI and coaching.

- Pity means grieving someone’s experience, usually because of circumstantial hardships. For example, we may pity a starving child or an outcast member of society. Such sorrow can lead to charitable actions, such as giving assistance or showing mercy. Although helpful, these actions, which stem from viewing and relating to people as casualties, usually do not serve to empower them.

A person who pities someone communicates, in effect, “I feel sorry for you.” That attitude undermines self-efficacy and has no place in coaching. Few people like to be pitied, no matter how difficult the situation. Coaching comes from the framework of believing in the client’s ability to learn from and grow in any situation. Pitying runs counter to this framework, implying fateful resignation.
• Sympathy means identifying with someone's experience primarily on an emotional level. Sympathizing with someone means “I feel your pain,” or “I share your joy.” Sympathizing with someone who feels sad can make us feel sad. So, too, with every other emotion, both positive and negative. That's because emotions are contagious.

Although such “emotional contagion” is a dynamic shared by virtually all animals (De Waal, 2006), utilizing some of the same faculties as empathy, it doesn’t involve listening with the whole being. Indeed, sympathy often interferes with listening, since it turns our attention more to our own feelings, needs, and desires than to those of the other. The result can be overlooking clients’ needs and desires. That’s why, while expressing pity and sympathy can help at times, it does not have the transformational power of empathy.

• Empathy is not about feeling sorry for someone; it’s about understanding and respecting where someone is coming from. Empathy necessitates both emotional and cognitive awareness to appreciate a person’s experience, to connect respectfully, and to give voice to what people may be feeling, needing, and desiring. Empathy requires full engagement and deep appreciation. There is no hurry or judgment in empathy. There is rather a safe, calm, no-fault zone where people can discover and develop their truth. Whereas sympathy is typically not discretionary, welling up in us like an intruder in ways that are sometimes helpful and sometimes not, empathy requires
treasuring emotion as a guest. Its impact is to open clients up to significant new learning, growth, and change.

When we are empathetic, we say, in effect, “I respect your pain,” or “I celebrate your joy.” To do so, we recognize the emotion for what it is, and appreciate what it has to teach us. This requires us to learn and use the language of empathy.

**The Language of Empathy – Nonviolent Communication (NVC)**

Expressing empathy requires us to develop a different language. It necessitates conscious engagement of emotional intelligence and the intuitive dance of dialogue. It takes real mastery, especially when people are acting out their pain in hostile or destructive ways.

Since the 1960s, Marshall Rosenberg has studied and developed a method for expressing empathy. It can be effective whether or not someone is making it easy for others to hear their feelings and needs. Rosenberg’s method, known as Nonviolent Communication or NVC, takes a moment to learn and a lifetime to master (Rosenberg, 2005, 2006).

Undergirding Rosenberg’s method is an awareness of a causal connection between personal feelings and universal needs (i.e., “When universal needs are being met, people feel good. When they aren’t being met, people feel bad.”). These feelings and needs are often below the surface. An empathetic connection can bring them out, helping
people to feel better. Once they do, there's no limit to the constructive actions they can take and the behavior changes they can make.

The NVC model for expressing empathy is a four step communication process that works with four important distinctions:

1. *Make observations, not evaluations*. By limiting our descriptions to what can be perceived by the five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) in specific times and places, we stave off the tendency to judge, exaggerate, interpret, generalize, catastrophize, assume, or criticize. For example, “I failed to exercise last week,” is an evaluation. “I went to the gym one time last week,” is an observation.

2. *Express feelings, not thoughts*. The English language is notorious for confusing thoughts and feelings. Although grammatically correct, none of the following sentences express feelings: “I feel like a failure.” “I feel it is useless.” “I feel that my boss is controlling.” and “I feel inadequate.” These are thoughts, masquerading as feelings, and are not useful in expressing empathy. NVC refers to them as “faux feelings.”

3. *Identify needs, not strategies*. The distinction between universal human needs and specific strategies to meet those needs represents the crux of NVC. Although grammatically correct, none of the following sentences expresses universal needs: “I need you to stop at the store.” “I need to work out
every day.” and “I need to get going on this project.” These are strategies for meeting universal needs. They do not represent the needs themselves.

4. Make requests, not demands. Once we’ve become clear about the feelings and underlying needs, it’s time to either confirm our understanding or agree on an action. Either way, NVC uses the language of request: “Would you be willing to tell me what you heard me say?” or “What agreements would you be willing to make with regard to exercise in the coming week?” It is important to respect both the autonomy of the person and the possibility of the moment.

The following diagram depicts the NVC communication model:

![Diagram of NVC Communication Model]

*Figure 1: The NVC Communication Model*
This model works equally well as both a format for expressing gratitude and celebration (when needs are being met) and for requesting understanding and agreements (when needs are not being met). Both dynamics are two sides of the same coin.

To express feelings rather than thoughts, and needs rather than strategies, it helps to have a robust vocabulary of feeling and need words. The following lists are representative but not exhaustive. When needs are being met, people may feel:

- Awed, Amazed, Astonished, Enchanted, Inspired, or Wonderful
- Calm, Peaceful, Composed, Relaxed, Quiet, or Tranquil
- Excited, Energetic, Buoyant, Creative, Eager, or Vital
- Happy, Content, Pleased, Cheerful, Delighted, or Playful
- Interested, Absorbed, Curious, Intrigued, Fascinated, or Stimulated
- Jubilant, Ecstatic, Elated, Exhilarated, Joyous, or Thrilled
- Thankful, Appreciative, Expansive, Grateful, Moved, or Touched

When needs are not being met, people may feel:

- Afraid, Anxious, Dread, Jittery, Nervous, or Worried
- Angry, Enraged, Furious, Indignant, Outraged, or Vengeful
- Confused, Conflicted, Dizzy, Doubtful, Torn, or Uncertain
- Disappointed, Discouraged, Dismayed, Dissatisfied, Troubled, or Upset
- Disengaged, Aloof, Apathetic, Cold, Reluctant, or Withdrawn
- Embarrassed, Ashamed, Deflated, Insecure, Shy, or Sorry
Sad, Anguish, Depressed, Despondent, Heartbroken, or Sorrow
Tired, Bored, Fatigued, Heavy, Lethargic, or Weary

The universal needs that give rise to feelings, and are common to all people, include (but are limited to):

- **Autonomy** (Choice, Freedom, Independence, Space, and Spontaneity)
- **Connection** (Acceptance, Affection, Appreciation, Belonging, Closeness, Communication, Community, Companionship, Compassion, Consideration, Consistency, Cooperation, Empathy, Inclusion, Intimacy, Love, Mutuality, Nurturing, Respect / Self-Respect, Safety, Security, Stability, Support, To know and be known, To see and be seen, To understand and be understood, Trust, and Warmth)
- **Honesty** (Authenticity, Integrity, and Presence)
- **Meaning** (Awareness, Celebration of Life, Challenge, Clarity, Competence, Consciousness, Contribution, Creativity, Discovery, Effectiveness, Efficacy, Growth, Hope, Knowledge, Learning, Mattering, Mourning, Participation, Purpose, Self-expression, Stimulation, Understanding, and Work)
- **Peace** (Beauty, Communion, Ease, Equality, Harmony, Inspiration, and Order)
- **Physical Well-Being** (Air, Food, Movement / Exercise, Rest, Sleep, Safety, Hygiene, Sexual expression, Shelter, Touch, and Water)
- **Play** (Humor, Joy, Leisure, and Relaxation)
More examples are included in The Introduction to NVC by Greg Kendrick (2007) and other summaries (e.g., Lamb, 2002). The point is not to memorize and quote such lists, but to become aware of the generative value of connecting with people’s feelings and needs in a calm, safe, and judgment-free way. Whether clients show up for a coaching conversation with positive or negative energy, having their feelings and needs acknowledged can quickly set things right.

IMPORTANT:

Ambivalence is a universal experience in the process of change and should be welcomed and explored. Moving through the ambivalence can be a real challenge when clients are innervated by evaluations, thoughts, strategies, and demands. It helps to remember that behind every evaluation there is an observation, behind every thought a feeling, behind every strategy a need, and behind every demand a request. Becoming curious about underlying observations, feelings, needs, and requests is the key to developing and expressing empathy. Warm empathy is an incredible gift that can propel the conversation forward in unexpected and dynamics ways. As Carl Rogers once said, “Empathy feels damn good” (Rosenberg, 2005, p. 113). It is the key to building up the emotional capital that undergirds positive, health-promoting behaviors.
PRINCIPLE TWO: DEVELOPING DISCREPANCY

Once an empathic connection is made, MI encourages coaches to use open-ended questions, reflective listening statements, as well as a variety of rulers to develop awareness of the gap that may exist between present behavior and important personal goals or values. The coach should not point out the discrepancies. That only serves to break with the language of empathy, trigger resistance, and interfere with behavior change. Rather, clients should be encouraged to notice the discrepancies for themselves. When they do, they will experience new feelings, become aware of new needs, and express new desires. Exploring these in the context of an empathic field will enable clients to become more open and motivated to change.

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions (OEQ) are questions that require multiple words to answer rather than one or two. They beg for descriptive or narrative answers. More than 50% of all questions in a motivational interview should be open-ended questions (OEQ).

MI is not alone in celebrating the value of open-ended questions. For example, all of the questions in the Discovery phase of Appreciative Inquiry (related to best experiences, core values, generative conditions, and heartfelt wishes) are OEQ. Such questions allow clients to take an active role in the coaching conversation as they explore both the positive and negative impacts of their behaviors.
Some examples of open-ended questions that evoke change talk are:

- What’s the best experience you have had with your desired future behavior?
- What concerns do you have about your current behavior?
- What values do you seek to represent in your life?
- How might your desired future behavior lead to benefits in the future?
- How might your current behavior lead to problems in the future?
- What changes would you like to make in your routine?

**IMPORTANT:**

As clients tell their stories and give expression to their thoughts, the discrepancies that become self-evident may overwhelm them. If this happens, the coach can best help a client by expressing empathy.

*Reflective Listening Statements*

Reflective listening statements function like mirrors, enabling clients to see themselves in new ways and muster the motivation for change. Receptive and timely reflections lie at the heart of MI when it comes to developing discrepancy.

MI uses more reflective listening statements than questions of any type. That’s because questions tend to generate intellectual, left brain-dominated, responses and a multitude of questions tend to make people feel interrogated (even OEQ). The ideal ratio of questions to reflections
over the course of a motivational interview is about 1:2. This is a good rule of thumb for coaching too.

Four powerful reflections used by MI practitioners to develop discrepancy are: simple, amplified, double-sided, and shifted-focus reflections. Each can be followed by an NVC-style empathy reflection, as noted in the following examples:

**Simple Reflections.** These reflections are like the images we see in a flat mirror. A simple reflection paraphrases and restates what clients are saying, utilizing their own words without exaggeration, interpretation, or distortion. The impact of such simple reflections can be surprisingly powerful.

*Client:* I don’t have time to exercise. My friends and my spouse don’t either!

*Simple Reflection:* I hear you saying that you don’t have time to exercise and that your friends and your spouse don’t either.

*Client:* That’s true, except for one of my friends who is an avid runner. I don’t know how he does it!

*Empathy Reflection:* When you say you have a friend who is an avid runner, it sounds like you may be feeling intrigued because you need to spend time on many other activities and you are wondering how he manages to find the time.

**Amplified Reflections.** These reflections are like the images we see in a convex or concave mirror. They maximize or minimize what clients say in order to evoke disagreement from them in the
direction of change-talk. By reflecting an increased or decreased intensity of the client’s perspective, magnifying both the affect and the outcome, we spur our clients on to react quickly with new insights and reasons to change. To avoid being manipulative, the coach should use such statements only in the service of client-generated goals. To avoid being mocking or patronizing, the coach should deliver such statements in charge-neutral terms.

Client: I don’t have time to exercise. My friends and my spouse don’t either!

Amplified Reflection: I hear you saying that you don’t know anyone who has time to exercise and that it’s impossible for you to fit exercise into your schedule.

Client: It’s not impossible for me to exercise. It’s just hard to find the time. Once in a while I do manage to exercise, and I know there are people out there who exercise regularly, so maybe I could figure out a way.

Empathy Reflection: When you say that you exercise on occasion, and that maybe you could figure out a way to exercise more regularly, it sounds like you are feeling stimulated because your need for the benefits of more consistent exercise would be met.

Double-Sided Reflections. These reflections are like the images we see in trifold mirrors – revealing multiple perspectives at the same time. By encouraging clients to look at different facets, perhaps comparing a current resistant statement with a prior readiness
statement, we enable them to gain perspective and make different decisions as to if and how they want to move forward.

**Client:** I don’t have time to exercise. My friends and my spouse don’t either!

**Double-Sided Reflection:** I hear you saying that you don’t have time to exercise and that your friends and spouse don’t either. But I’ve also heard you say that exercise makes you feel better and that regular exercise would be good for your energy and health.

**Client:** That’s the problem. I want to exercise, and it does make me feel better, but it cuts into my time with family and friends. If I could figure out how to do both, perhaps I could make exercise stick.

**Empathy Reflection:** When you say that you could make exercise stick if it didn’t cut into time with family and friends, it sounds like you are feeling discouraged because your needs for both exercise and connection are not being met.

**Shifted-Focus Reflections.** These reflections are like the images we see in a periscope. They redirect our attention away from a resistance-provoking subject in order to focus on another area. Once change talk begins in that area, the resistance-provoking subject can be reconsidered with more success.

**Client:** I don’t have time to exercise. My friends and my spouse don’t either!

**Shifted-Focus Reflection:** Since you don’t have time to exercise, let’s talk about the dance class you started with your partner. You
were doing pretty well with that I remember you saying that you were enjoying the classes.

**Client:** Yes, that’s the best decision I’ve made in quite a while. No more sitting in front of the TV on Thursday nights! It’s been great to actively do something together. We may even add a second night to the schedule.

**Empathy Reflection:** It sounds like you are feeling happy with dancing and the time with your partner, because it’s meeting your needs for both physical activity and connection. Would you be willing to tell me what you heard me say?

**IMPORTANT:**

It is important to note that when we employ amplified and empathy reflections, we venture a guess as to what will stimulate change talk and what feelings and needs may lay behind a client’s words, body language, or tone. Whether we guess right or wrong does not matter. What matters is the integrity of our intention to generate change talk and to connect with honesty and empathy. Such attempts generate appreciation, awareness, and movement in our clients. Because such reflections often bring to the surface strong feelings and deep needs, it’s important to stay with the language of empathy until clients feel acknowledged and heard.

**Decisional Balance**

MI has a model for decisional balance that is similar to the TTM model described in Chapter 3.
Decisional balance involves evaluating the pros and cons of change: What are the costs and benefits of not changing? What are the costs and benefits of changing? The point of utilizing open-ended questions and reflective listening statements is to encourage clients to consider the pros and cons of change. Since action is usually preceded by thought, the decisional balance conversation can assist clients to think their way through to a desired course of action.

Richard Botelho (2004) uses a quantitative rating system, along with the decisional balance conversation, in his tool (see below) for promoting change talk and increasing motivation. Coaches can use this tool during coaching conversations.

Clients are first asked to list the benefits and concerns about not making or making a change. Once the lists are generated, clients are asked to rate, on a scale of 0 to 10 (with 10 being the highest and 0 being the lowest), what they think and feel about their lists. After looking at the thinking and feeling scores, clients are then asked to assign composite scores to their levels of resistance and motivation to change.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons to Stay the Same</th>
<th>Reasons to Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the benefits of staying the same?</td>
<td>2. What are your concerns about staying the same?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(List as many as possible.)</td>
<td>(List as many as possible.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are your concerns about change?</td>
<td>4. What are the benefits of change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(List as many as possible.)</td>
<td>(List as many as possible.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking Score =</td>
<td>Thinking Score =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Score =</td>
<td>Feeling Score =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite Resistance Score =</td>
<td>Composite Motivation Score =</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
None Low Moderately High Very High

**Rulers**

MI also makes use of scoring rulers to enable clients to think out loud about their readiness, willingness, and ability to change. When clients feel ready, willing, and able, behavior change is more likely to occur.

To evoke willingness, MI asks clients to rate the importance of making a change right now. The coach might ask, “On a scale of 0 to 10, how
important would you say it is to change your ____________ at this time?"

**Willingness Ruler**

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<tr>
<th>0</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>About As Important</td>
<td>Most Important Thing At All</td>
<td>As Everything Else</td>
<td>In My Life</td>
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</table>

To evoke an ability rating, MI asks clients to rate how confident they are at being able to make a change right now. The coach might ask, “On a scale of 0 to 10, “how confident are you that you can change your ____________ at this time?”

**Confidence Ruler**

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<tr>
<th>0</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Do Not Think</td>
<td>I Have a 50% Change</td>
<td>I Will Definitely</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I Will Achieve My Goal of Achieving My Goal</td>
<td>Achieve My Goal</td>
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After exploring importance and confidence, it may be helpful to ask directly about a client’s readiness to change right now. The coach might ask, “On a scale of 0 to 10 “how ready are you to change your ____________ at this time?”

**Readiness Ruler**

<table>
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<th>0</th>
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<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Am Not Ready</td>
<td>I Am Almost Ready</td>
<td>I Am Very Ready</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To Change</td>
<td>To Change</td>
<td>To Change</td>
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</table>
IMPORTANT:

With all three rulers, it is important to talk with clients about the number they selected. Why did they not pick a lower number? What would assist them to get to a higher number? Open-ended questions such as these, followed by reflective listening statements, can evoke change talk and support behavior change.

PRINCIPLE THREE: ROLLING WITH RESISTANCE

MI holds that resistance talk by the client says more about the approach of the coach than about the client’s readiness to change. It has been noted, “People do not resist change, they resist being changed.” NVC describes resistance creating approaches as life-alienating communication.

Rosenberg (2005) notes that the following forms of communication are intrinsically life-alienating. They increase resistance and interfere with empathy:

- Moralistic Judgments
- Diagnostic Labels
- Enemy Images
- Guilt Trips
- Making Demands
- Denying Choice or Responsibility
- Rewards & Punishments
- Making Comparisons
Holley Humphrey (2000) notes that the following communication patterns also interfere with empathy, whether they are intended to be constructive or not. That's because they come more from pity and sympathy, than from empathy.

- **Advising**: "I think you should..." "How come you didn't...?"
- **Educating**: "This could turn into a very positive experience for you if you just..."
- **Consoling**: "It wasn't your fault; you did the best you could."
- **One-Upping**: "That's nothing; wait till you hear what happened to me."
- **Story-telling**: "That reminds me of the time..."
- **Shutting down**: "Cheer up. Don't feel so bad."
- **Interrogating**: "When did this begin?"
- **Commiserating**: "Oh, you poor thing."
- **Explaining**: "I would have called but..."
- **Correcting**: "That's not how it happened."

All of these approaches increase the likelihood of resistance talk. No one likes to be told to change. People typically push back and dig in their heels. The use of empathy, inquiry, and reflection increase the likelihood of change talk. As noted above, empathy, a form of life-enriching communication, makes the relational field between two people both safe and interesting, opening the door to new possibilities and facilitating change. Instead of arguing with clients or fighting fire with fire, empathy – like Aikido, a Japanese martial art – helps to redirect and thereby defuse the energy of resistance in constructive ways.
IMPORTANT:

Learning to roll with resistance is an essential part of masterful coaching. Pushing back against resistance can move people backward in their readiness to change. Whenever we find ourselves tempted to confront resistance directly, such as by arguing, diagnosing, fixing, or any other communication pattern that fosters resistance, it is important to take a deep breath, to give ourselves empathy, and then to respectfully explore the client’s underlying feelings, needs, and desires. The more curious we become as to those underlying feelings, needs, and desires, while suspending our judgments, interpretations, assumptions, evaluations, and agendas, the more chance we will have of making a life-giving connection and facilitating change talk.

The followings shifts may assist coaches to roll with resistance:

- **From correction to connection.** The more we seek to correct people, the more they resist change. In contrast, the more we seek to respectfully understand their experience, the more open they become.
- **From competence to confidence.** The more we claim to know, the more resistance we provoke. In contrast, the more we claim to believe in the client’s ability to learn, the more confident they become.
- **From causes to capacities.** The more we dig for the causes of problems, the more trouble we may dig up. The more we search for capacities, however, the more excited clients become.
• *From counter-force to counter-balance.* The more forcefully we argue against ambivalence and for change, the more we generate push back. The more we counter-balance client ambivalence with awareness, however, the more we generate change talk.

**PRINCIPLE FOUR: SUPPORT SELF-EFFICACY**

In many respects, self-efficacy represents one of the most important outcomes of coaching, along with lasting change and helping clients become their best selves. Self-efficacy is, in fact, so important that we devote the entire next chapter (Chapter 6) to exploring the subject. By bolstering clients’ convictions that they are able to achieve and maintain their goals over time, coaches enable clients to become self-confident learners who can boldly take on and master new challenges. Apart from self-efficacy, little change can take place. With self-efficacy, all things are possible. As Henry Ford once said, “Whether you think you can or you can’t, you’re right.” The job of coaching is to assist clients to think they can.

Empathy, the first principle of MI, begins the process of supporting self-efficacy by assisting clients to quiet judgmental voices, the nay-saying internal voices that arise both from within and from some external influences. The more coaches assist clients to respect, understand, and appreciate their feelings and needs, the more they bolster self-efficacy by assisting clients to get out of their own way.
Developing discrepancy and rolling with resistance, the second and third principles of MI, continue the process when clients might otherwise get bogged down in their own thinking and feeling processes. Through mindful listening, open-ended inquiry, and perceptive reflections coaches assist clients to talk their way through the dilemma, identifying motivators, overcoming ambivalence, and generating new possibilities.

Until and unless clients believe they can achieve their goals, they will never even attempt to fulfill them. That’s the power of self-efficacy: it moves clients to action. Coaches help to awaken such confidence by conveying certainty that clients have what it takes to learn what they want to learn and to achieve what they want to achieve. Once that belief takes hold, clients can take quantum leaps forward in the direction of their dreams.

The next chapter, Chapter 6, details the four sources of self-efficacy as well as a variety of techniques to enhance self-esteem. No factor is more significant, however, than the thrill that comes from experiencing progress. The more mastery experiences clients have for themselves, the more confidence they gain and the more progress they make. It becomes a happy, upward spiral. That’s why masterful coaches assist clients to get quick wins under their belts by aiding them in setting appropriate goals, developing new relationships, learning from others, practicing new behaviors, designing supportive environments, and reframing setbacks as learning opportunities.

**MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING AND APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY**
Given the different origins and foci of Motivational Interviewing (MI) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI), it is understandable that these approaches have somewhat different orientations and methodologies. Nevertheless, the two disciplines overlap, at times, and are complementary when used together.

MI is a tool or technique for assisting clients to change which, like AI, also represents a mindset, a framework, and an inspirational way of being with people. Recognizing that addicted populations have significant resistance to change, particularly to change recommended by experts, MI has developed a change model that preserves client autonomy and utilizes collaborative partnerships in order to evoke the motivation for change. These characteristics also ring true in the AI change model. Both MI and AI empower clients to discern and determine their own reasons for and paths of change.

As noted above, the four general principles of MI are to: express empathy, develop discrepancy, roll with resistance, and support self-efficacy. The 5-D Cycle of AI addresses these issues as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AI</th>
<th>MI</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defining What and How to Learn</td>
<td>Expressing Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovering the Best of What Is</td>
<td>Supporting Self-Efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreaming of What Might Be</td>
<td>Developing Discrepancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing What Should Be</td>
<td>Rolling with Resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivering What Will Be (Destiny)</td>
<td>Supporting Self-Efficacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Although empathy is never discounted by AI, it should be noted that AI does not work with empathy as much as MI works with empathy. That is due, in part, to the fact that AI was neither born nor developed in clinical settings with addicted populations. Empathy looms large in such contexts. That said, AI works best when empathy is in the mix. Inquiry without empathy feels like interrogation. Even appreciative inquiry, without empathy, suffers this risk. Such inquiry, with its focus on the positive, can also feel Pollyannaish in its approach to problems. That’s why coaches should incorporate empathy into the appreciative interview every step of the way. At the outset, when clients are asked to Define what and how they want to learn, empathy can warm them up for change. In the Discovery phase, as we ask about best experiences, core values, supportive conditions, and heartfelt wishes, empathy can bolster both the authenticity and generativity of the inquiry process. In the Dream, Design, and Destiny phases, the respectful understanding of feelings and needs can make sure that client visions, plans, and goals are appropriately scaled and infused with energy.

It should also be noted that although AI does not use the language of "rolling with resistance," it works with the same principles in that it is a client-based, client-driven approach to change. The coach does not determine for the client what their Dreams, Designs, and Destiny will be; that is both inauthentic and fraught with danger. Indeed, that recognition is part of what led to the development of AI in the first place: the organizational development world is filled with expert consultants who study problems and tell people what to do. AI takes a different tack. It leads clients through the process of discovering that they are capable of great things and then it creates the space for provocative possibilities.
and transformational action-strategies to emerge. No wonder AI holds so much promise as a method for bolstering intrinsic motivation.

Developing discrepancy and supporting self-efficacy are clearly addressed in the AI model. By getting clients to dream big dreams, clients become profoundly aware of what the future is calling them to be. By trusting clients to be resourceful and creative, both in what they bring to coaching and in their ability to design and deliver innovative possibilities, clients develop not only a “can-do” attitude, but a “can-do-much-more” attitude, that represents the hallmark of self-efficacy.

AI and MI are thus complementary approaches, best used in tandem to generate outstanding client results. Start by making the empathic application of AI your first move with clients. Often, that will be enough to move clients forward without using some of the specific MI techniques to resolve ambivalence and promote behavior change. When clients are on the move, don’t slow things down with worrisome considerations. When people are stuck in the muck, however, they may need intensive empathy combined with other MI techniques, such as decisional balance and the “ready, willing, and able” rulers, to break free of their internal constraints. That’s when NVC and MI prove their worth in the coaching toolbox.
REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

1. Define Motivational Interviewing. What are the four general principles of MI?

2. Define empathy and discuss how to use it in coaching.

3. What is the difference between empathy and sympathy?

4. What is Nonviolent Communication (NVC)? Describe the four steps and distinctions made in the NVC communication process.

5. What does developing discrepancy mean? What tools can a coach use to develop discrepancy?

6. Name four types of reflections and give an example of each.

7. Define decisional balance and discuss how it is used in coaching.

8. What are rulers? How are they used in coaching?

9. What is rolling with resistance? How can you decrease the likelihood of resistance talk?

10. Describe the differences and similarities between AI and MI.
References


