

Episode 14: MI and Clients Mandated to Services

Lions and Tigers and Bears MI is an interactive podcast focused on motivational interviewing

CASAT Podcast Network Lions and Tigers and Bears MI is brought to you through a collaboration between The Mountain Plains ATTC and NFARTEC. In episode 14, Paul and Amy welcome guest and fellow mintee Billie Jo Smith to discuss practicing MI with those who are mandated to services. For episode resources, links to episodes, contact us and other information, please Please visit the Lions and Tigers & Bears MI Website at Mtplainsattc.org/podcast Lions & Tigers & Bears MI is 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: And 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 Smith welcomes Billy Jo to talk about mandated treatment on our podcast

Paul Warren: Well, I'm very excited for this particular episode of our podcast.

Amy Shanahan: Hey, Paul, we have a special guest again.

Paul Warren: We do. And it's a special guest that our other podcast listeners may recall because this person is the first and only guest we've had on so far.

Billie Jo Smith: It was an honor then and it's an honor now.

Amy Shanahan: I think I should sing. Welcome back, welcome back. Welcome back.

Paul Warren: You know, thank you so much for saying that, Billie Jo, because had you not come back, that might have sent a different message. And we're so excited to have you back and to be engaging in this conversation with us about this particular topic.

Billie Jo Smith: I'm excited to be talking about this particular topic. being able to use our MI skills and strategies to help engage people that maybe aren't as excited to see us and maybe aren't as interested in making change. I think that that's one place that these, these skills can really be used.

Amy Shanahan: That's a perfect definition of people who are, quote, mandated to services. Yeah, sometimes we think of that as criminal justice or, you know, child and youth services, if you will. Yeah, it could be someone's spouse.

Paul Warren: Absolutely. And you know, I appreciate that that Billie Jo was adding kind of another focus or another spin to that because I think there can be a danger of framing it as like, well, let's now talk about mandated clients. And in some ways the challenge, I think with that is that it's labeling folks who are, where they are in their particular process of change or self reflection, or where they are in the moment of their life, which may have something to do with their behavior or circumstances or maybe because of things entirely out of their control. And it always, raises a flag for me when folks that I have the opportunity to talk with really frame it as well. Yeah, I work with mandated clients as if that was kind of one flavor when I appreciate Billie Jo. You framed it. They may not be as excited or open or gung ho about talking with us in a particular conversation. And why would they be at possibly that particular moment?

Billie Jo Smith: Yeah, and I think, just from trainings that I've done with Amy, she talks a lot about, like, who would get excited to have to go to nine hours of treatment every week. and the reality is, like, that's not all. It's not easy. It's not an easy decision to say, like, oh, yeah, I got all this free time

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Billie Jo Smith: on my hands. I would love nothing more than to spend it with you and all these other people that I don't know that are also being told that they need to spend at least nine hours in your program.

Paul Warren: Right.

Amy Shanahan: You know, it's a good point you're making, that I want to underscore. They chose to come, and that's a nice place to consider and start. Bill Miller writes in

his On Second Thought book about types of ambivalence, and there's ambivalence about whether I should stay or go. Should I keep this job or take this new one, Should I move to a different state, which don't necessarily have any negative connotations to it, if you will. And some people, like the folks that may be mandated to services, have a choice.

Amy Shanahan: If I don't do this, then this will happen. So they're two not so positive choices to make. And I think it's a really nice thing to underscore. It is a choice. And they did choose to come and.

Paul Warren: Talk with you, Truly. And as you said, Amy, and as Dr. Miller has kind of framed in this, reflection on ambivalence. You know, not all choices are with great options. And you know, yes, the person made a choice, they exercised their autonomy, and they still may not like what it is they chose, but they chose it because the alternative is even worse. And for some reason, a, specific example keeps coming into my head, which is, let's say a parent is, quote, unquote, mandated by the court to treatment. And their choice is they will either choose to go to treatment or they will choose to surrender their children to the foster care system. Neither of those may Be a very attractive choice to that particular person. And the person may choose, all right. I don't want to lose my children. I'm not thrilled about going to treatment, but I'm choosing to go to treatment and, okay, who's this Billie Jo Smith person that I'm now sitting across from? And I'm not so pleased about this.

Amy Shanahan: Choice and probably want to convince her that I don't have a problem with substances. I just have a problem with this entity being in my life.

Billie Jo Smith: I think it also speaks to the importance of looking at internal and

external motivation and how helpful, or useful both can be in the change process. And so utilizing that change talk that the individual comes in with is, you know, I want to continue to have custody of my children. I don't want to be in your group. I do want custody of my children. And for that, you know, being able to use that change talk as we work through the processes with that individual, change can be really beneficial and helpful while they maybe start to consider their own internal motivation for making changes. And, Paul, I feel like you're telling a story of my life. I can think of a particular individual that came into my IOP and was like, I don't want to be here. And I respect that honesty. Right. To be able to be open and talk about where a person's at, can help us build that relationship with that person.

Paul Warren: Yeah. By accepting that person where they're at at that particular moment and not pathologizing that or not framing that as, you know, that person's being resistant. They should come back to me when they're ready to change. And you didn't say this, but I think you implied it. And tell me if I'm maybe reading too much into what you're saying. It speaks to where this person may be in a change process. And maybe they're in pre contemplation. They don't believe they have a problem, and it's the court that's making this problem for them. And you as the worker making the problem for them, they, you know, they don't, at this particular point, see it. And I, mean, you know, I'm very interested to see what both of you think about this. When I practice motivational interviewing, I don't believe it's my job to make this person see that they have a problem, nor do I believe it's my job to tell, them that they're in denial. I may explore with them

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Paul Warren: what their, you know, their relationship to either alcohol or another

substance that they're using. And I may really try and understand it from their perspective. and. And, you know, developing, discrepancy can be a very helpful and supportive tool. But ultimately I have, I have heard people, providers say sometimes that they feel it's their job to get this person to admit that, quote, unquote, they have a problem. and that I think is complex for a lot of different reasons.

Amy Shanahan: We had people discuss this recently in a training that we were in, and I was curious around the same topic. What do you do now? Because some providers get caught up in that process. Well, if I can only. And I think it's well intended because they want to help them get off of probation or out of, this relationship with Children and Youth Services, for example. How. But they think that the way to get there is to get them to address their substance use.

You have to build a relationship before you address discrepancy, Billy Joe says

So we talk about how do you navigate the expectations of an institution and having a conversation? And some things came up in that conversation, just like you said, Paul. Developing discrepancy. So here's where you are, and here's where you want to go, and what things you have to do to get there, ask them. And first and foremost, we know this. You have to build a relationship before you address the discrepancy. And the other thing that came up is not necessarily, am I related? And you can do it in an am I consistent way, is providing informed consent, putting the choices the person has on the table. for example, I don't trust you. What are you writing down in my record? So having a conversation about what that means, because I will be reporting to this entity, et cetera. So how you can use ask, tell, ask or elicit, provide elicit to inform them of

what may happen.

Billie Jo Smith: And that's the importance of that collaborative piece, right? That we're really in this together. I may really want to help somebody make a change because I'm caring and compassionate. it's what I came into the helping profession for. And with kind of the MI shift, we really start to look at how can I support an individual on their journey and if that individual comes in, maybe considering doing something different, you know, I see that my substance use has gotten me to this point, and maybe I want to look at something different. Or going back to the example Paul gave of, I don't have a problem, I don't want to be here, it's the court's fault, it's your fault, it's the system's fault, and how can I be with an individual on what that journey must Be like, how can I be collaborative with a person that feels like the system is negatively impacting them in their life and being able to sit with those emotions in that, in that process of engagement, and then hopefully we can do the other stuff, you know, Amy, I love that idea of using Ask Tel ask to say, like, hey, let's really talk about what the options look like. I want to make sure you have all the information to make a choice that you feel suits your life in the best way possible.

Paul Warren: I wanted to underline something that you mentioned, Billie Jo. The idea that the person comes into the conversation at a place of, let's say, pre contemplation, they don't have a problem. Court's making the problem, you're making the problem. And I wonder if some providers may feel that if they don't confront that, that then they're, enabling the person. And I'm wonder if. I'm wondering if we could take a little bit of time, the three of us, just to kind of drill down on. So we're shifting our mindset to thinking that, like, pre contemplation is an opportunity. And as an. As someone who's choosing to interact in an am I consistent way and then possibly practice motivational interviewing because a behavioral change goal becomes apparent.

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Paul Warren: I'm wondering, if the three of us could kind of put our heads together about how we might support a provider to navigate that particular place in the conversation to build engagement and to build trust when they may feel the call to sort of be like, well, you need to face the fact that you're here because of X, Y and Z. So what are your thoughts about that?

Bill Miller: Start with a beginner's mind and talk with them

Amy Shanahan: I have one thing that I'd like to start with, and it's hopefully simple. It's what we talked with Steve Rolnick about. If you believe that the person sitting across from you has the wisdom within them, and I say that because I'm sure I've been there and I've seen it a lot, that people equate pre contemplation with what you said earlier, Paul, denial, as opposed to being really curious that this person truly doesn't think about it or believe they have a problem. And I think investing in. In them that way and sitting across from them and believing that what they're saying is true, then what Bill Miller would say is, start with a beginner's mind and be curious and talk with them. But I'll pass the mic over to Billie jokes. I know that you have a lot of wisdom in you and you're Going to share with us what you think.

Billie Jo Smith: Well, Amy, I think that you do bring up a good point in terms of really starting with believing that the individual has it within them, it doesn't become our role to insert it into them. more so how can we have conversations, how can we build relationships to begin to explore what maybe a person hasn't considered before? and what came to my mind, Paul, when you were kind of talking about this is in some of the

trainings that we've done, we encourage our participants to think about something in their life they're ambivalent about. And we do that for a lot of different reasons. But one that stands out to me is I think that it helps us to really utilize the spirit when sitting within a person, because we can start to imagine what it feels like. Right. We can have that compassion. and so in order to be able to be with a person as they're exploring, really thinking about our process in, you know, things in maybe our life that we have been in that position. Right. Maybe pre contemplative, I think it can help us with. To kind of reduce that judgment of, you know, this person is in denial, they're resistant, and. Or this idea of I have to do something to get this person to see the light and really make it about how can I just sit with a person for however long it takes while they kind of sort through what they already have inside them?

Paul Warren: So I want to sound an alarm here for just a minute because I'm trying to put myself in the place of, maybe a provider. And I've felt this before. I don't know if either of you have felt this pressure, but I felt this pressure before of sitting across from somebody who states, you know, I don't have a problem. And, you know, when is this over so I can get out of here and get back to my life? So I know for me, what's come up in that moment is sometimes fear that I may not be able to help this person because I think there's something I'm supposed to do. So. So I just want to put that on the table as, as kind of keeping it real based on my own experience. And I don't want to assume that other people have had that experience, but that's been my experience at moments. So building on, what the two of you have said, I really want to pull out that as the provider, I could say to myself, no matter where this person is at this particular moment in their life, whether they believe they have a problem or don't believe they have a problem. I'm going to remind myself that this person has their answers in them. I don't have their answer for them.

Billie Jo Smith: Paul, I appreciate that you talked about fear, and I even can take it a step further, and sometimes it's inadequacy. Right. So fear can be a fear of a lot of things, and fear that I'm just not good enough as a helper, as a provider. and so kind of, I do think it's important to keep that in mind, that my job is not to do it for them.

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Billie Jo Smith: My job is not to convince, to manipulate, to get a person to see that they have a problem and need to change. Because I think if so, at the end of the day, I'm walking out quite often with, wow, I'm really just not good at this because I can't get people to do things that ultimately they don't want to do.

Paul Warren: Yeah.

Billie Jo Smith: And then I'm not going to get to come do the podcast because I'm just not. My skills are not adequate enough to be here.

Paul Warren: Well, your skills are, and that's why you're here a second time.

Amy Miller says being curious is key to managing the writing reflex

I want to connect what you just said, though, about that, that telling oneself that, like, I'm going to try and let go of the fact that I've got to come up with their answer, I've got to solve it. And I think what Amy said, that beginner's mind that Dr. Miller talks about, Amy underlined it, that you can tell yourself in that particular moment as the worker, you know what my job right now is to be curious about where this person is coming from.

It's not about convincing them. It's not about fixing them. It's about trying to understand them. And by being curious about it and trying to find out more, the possibilities increase and certainly the engagement can increase because you're, you're, you know, you're allowing this person, you're inviting this person to be heard.

Amy Shanahan: You know, as I was thinking, as you were both talking back and forth about the scenario, that I too, have felt all, all of those things, inadequacy, fear, question pops up in my mind, or, oh, now what do I do? And I remember not feeling like I had the skills or strategies to continue the conversation. So the, the pieces of the writing reflex or the roadblocks to listening pop up in my mind that those are the anecdotes to our. Our fears or our feeling of inadequacy and pausing and believing, following the MI Spirit, believing the person has it within them. And having that beginner's mind and being curious are the anecdotes to managing the writing reflex and the, and our, our desire to want to help and fix the issue. And sometimes fast, like it's just quicker for me to get there. it just made me think about how easy it would be for me that the writing reflex or the roadblocks would start to step into play when I feel inadequate or I feel like I don't know what to do next.

Amy: Authenticity is a must when working with someone. It's like a smell

Paul Warren: I think the other piece connected to this is. And I want to throw out this word and I'm, and I'm very interested in your reaction to this. but I want to throw out the word authenticity because to authentically believe that this person, you know, you enter into it with the spirit and the acceptance of that this person has their answers. I don't have their answers. I may be able to supply information in an am m I consistent way. I

may be able to help them talk through options and let them make whatever choice they want to make. And ultimately they will come up with their answer. I don't have their answer. And then that curiosity piece authentically, you know, I think, and maybe this is just a sensitivity on my part, but I'm of the mind that people can really tell if you're being authentic or not. It's like a smell. They can smell it if you're being inauthentic. And you know, that's not something you can fake.

Billie Jo Smith: I think it's a huge piece that we talk about when we talk about the spirit of MI you know, how can we use the different parts, the collaborative partnership, the acceptance, compassion, in an authentic way for us. How can we bring ourselves to the table? And I think we talked about a little while ago, like the mistrust. I think it's so important for us to be authentic if we really want to base, create a relationship with a person that's not sure that they can trust us, that's not sure if they want to trust us or has been let down in the system or a myriad of things. I think our authenticity coming through, saying I'm just genuinely curious about what's going on with you and how I might be able to just be with you and support you on this journey. But I think authenticity is, is a must.

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Billie Jo Smith: And you're right, I do think people smell it if it's not there.

Amy Shanahan: Well, they're watching. They're watching us. They're watching for signs and cues to see can we help them. Do we understand? Are we listening? So they're watching our every move, our facial expression, when our eyebrows go up, the tone of our voice, which is why we talk about that in training. I'm going to be a little transparent. A lot of transparent here. I'll be authentic, because that's what transparency is. Right.

There's been a long time, I think longer than I'd like to really admit, where part of me believed that I had something to teach someone. That's why I got in this field. So I think my writing reflex kind of had a stuck part. The button was stuck for a while, that part of me thought I could help. I had something to give and offer. And part of the way I even got out of that was pausing and asking permission and following up with Paul. You use the term course correct. And now I know when I jump in to do that, it's not because I don't believe they have it in them. It's because I have the habit of, hey, I got some information for you. Or, hey, I could tell you something that might be helpful. now I pause and ask them what they think about it and give them their autonomy back and reset that dang, writing reflex button that sometimes gets stuck in auto. But I think over time, I think that's the complexity. The, deceptively simple piece of MI is I intellectually knew and believed certain things, and it didn't always connect in my heart or vice versa.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And I think that connects to the smell of authenticity or the lack thereof. Because, again, you know, as you were saying that, Amy, it really made me think that, you know, MI doesn't mean that we don't have something to offer and that we don't have something to contribute.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: It means we're doing it in a way that is emphasizing the individual we have the opportunity to work with. It's emphasizing their power, their choice, their ideas. And that's a contribution. It's not the contribution, though. I think we've been trained to think has value. So, I can understand. And I've shared your experience of, like, I worked really hard to get this information. And I know that if I share this information with you, it will help. And that's about me. It's not about them. It'll help me feel like I helped you. And that doesn't necessarily help you.

Amy Shanahan: It's not about us.

Paul Warren: Right. Right. And, I think it takes perhaps a lifetime of continued practice, because for whatever reason, you know, there are times when I want to Go back to that very familiar, place that feels on some level powerful to me. And practicing MI is a contribution. It's a unique way to engage in conversation and support somebody in their process. And it feels very differently than maybe what we think, quote unquote, helping actually is.

Billie Jo Smith: Yeah. Giving people the opportunity for them to find it themselves versus us pointing it out. Hey, the answer to the questions over here, it can be such a different kind of reward to sit back and let somebody, you know, allow somebody to have that aha moment or I love when you provide a reflective statement and they say, yes, that's it. And the reward that we get as practitioners is just kind of that mental of like that. Huh? Those were your words. I was just giving it back. That guiding principle of, am I? That the reward really is the relationship that we've built with a person that's created the space to explore things. That taking it back to the start of our conversation that maybe somebody wasn't thinking about when we first met them.

Amy Shanahan: I just had a conversation with somebody. This, that very play, that play happened where I was evoking and affirming and navigating the conversation. And the person said, yeah, thank you so much, you've been helpful. And I think about Antoine, who

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Amy Shanahan: did this with me. So listeners, I'm just, putting it out there. I'm not going

to speak in his French accent because he has one, but I often do in the training room. He's one of my mentors who have got, has guided my practice of motivational interviewing. But the one time he just gave this simple and strong affirmation and I gave it back to this person yet the other day, and I said, you did it. So I didn't go, oh, shucks, no problem. And you know, you're welcome for me helping you, which is what I used to do or what I'd think about doing. Like, yeah, no problem, happy to help. Which is partially true because I sat in partnership with this person. but I liked when Antoine did that with me. I felt really tall, like, oh, yeah, I did it. and just gave this person back an affirmation. Since you did it, you figured you had it in you, you did it.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And it speaks, I think, to the purpose of an affirmation, which is to identify that individual's strength or efforts so that they can walk away from that conversation and access those strengths or efforts.

Paul: Sometimes practitioners may find it difficult to identify individuals' strength

Which is very different than I'm proud of you or I commend you, or I think it's Great that. Because then it reflects back to being about us.

Billie Jo Smith: And, Paul, I'm so glad that you brought up this, you know, tying in Amy's idea of affirmation, because I'm thinking back, if we're talking about individuals that are mandated, that are quote, unquote resistant or in denial, sometimes practitioners may find it difficult to be able to identify what the strength is. You know, when somebody's coming in to your office or your space and is not the most friendly or warm or welcoming, it can be challenging to sit back and to be able to put all that aside and still

find the strength of the individual. And not only that, then be able to give it to them, give it back to them and say, like, hey, you do have it. You did it. As Amy had mentioned. And it can be such a valuable tool to start to build those relationships and break down the walls, to say, like, no matter what kind of colorful language you're speaking to me with, or what volume you're speaking to me with, that I. My intentions are still the same. To demonstrate all of those pieces of the spirit and be with you.

Paul Warren: You know, you. I think you also speak to, I was imagining sort of like an internal, question that I might ask myself, like, well, why is this person being nice to me when they've come in? I'm here to help them. And you know what? I think that's an expectation that I may carry and that folks may carry, is that, you know, I'm a helper. I'm here to do good. So why wouldn't I be treated with respect? Well, guess what? Because maybe this person is in a very difficult moment in their lives. And don't misunderstand me. No provider deserves abuse or to be disrespected at all. And I think we have to question, or I have to question my expectations about how somebody who is seeking care or been told they have to get care, I have to check my expectations of how I think they should be interacting with me. You know, what if they're suspicious? that's where they are. And why wouldn't they be suspicious? They don't know me. They, may have chosen to come here, but they chose that instead of going to maybe jail.

Amy Shanahan: You share so many important points that came up in our conversation in the training around these things. And we asked the providers to think about what happens in their minds when they think this way, that those expectations you mentioned, this particular question, was around the words they used. What do you think about when you assume the person's in denial, or the person is being disrespectful to you, when you're there to help them, what happens to your desire to want to help or, what's the words that come to your mind or mouth when that you want to say to this

person? Because our thoughts really drive what happens next. So if you're thinking, we have this.

Paul Warren: And you better come back when you want help.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. And it came. It became really clear to me when you were talking about the expectation of, well, I'm here to help you,

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Amy Shanahan: and then the discord's already in the room without you even opening your mouth yet. Because I think you should be more respectful instead of being open and curious, man, you're really ticked off about having to come here, and I, you know, maybe stepping into my own vulnerabilities, maybe I would be too. Of course I would be. And like you said, of course you don't trust me. Of course you don't want to be here. You just. Then you can validate that by affirming them, by offering a reflection, saying, yeah, of course you don't want to be here, and you chose to come anyway. What do you think we could do together in denial?

Billie Jo Smith: Yeah. No, I was just thinking. You were.

You were talking about discord. Sometimes we invite it into the room

You were talking about discord. And what came to mind is sometimes it enters the room when the individual enters the room, and sometimes we invite it into the room, you know, in a lot of different ways. We can, you know, if we come in with a mindset or. I

mean, let's be honest, I still have moments where I may create discord unintentionally just based on something I say or. Or an assumption that I have. and so being aware of the discord in the space so that we can take an opportunity again to get back to that engagement and that collaboration to say, like, hey, I'm sorry, I didn't intend, you know, whatever it was to have this impact. And I'd really like if either I could say it in a different way or we can look at it from a different perspective. because, you know, sometimes it. Like I said, it came with the person, and sometimes we're the one that silently whispered for it to come on in.

Paul Warren: Or not so silently. We may have. We may have made a misstep, which is normal in the practice of motivational interviewing. And, you know, I think it's important for me as somebody, who has the opportunity to engage in this form of communication, that if I sense that there's discord in the room. I need to take responsibility for that and try and come back to, like you were saying, Billie Jo, try and come back to how can we engage and how can we be in a collaborative partnership? And it may not happen that day. I may lay the foundation for when that maybe could happen the next time or the time after that.

Billie Jo Smith: Yeah. And there are so many factors that come into play. You know, like, I'm, very vividly being transported back to being early in the field while working in residential treatment, having this idea of it was my job to fix it for somebody. And then I would invite the discord into the space by saying things like, I can't help you if you're not willing to help yourself or some other, I'm sure very fancy way of saying those exact words. and again, it comes with good intentions. Right. Because in my heart, I just want to help people. And so if we're working with all individuals, not just the ones that were mandated or told that they had to be here or maybe not excited to see us, but how can we prioritize the relationship and recognize, like, what we bring to the table and how to

partner with folks to be okay with the fact that, again, going back to this idea of, like, they may not be excited that they're sitting in front of us today, and that's okay. And we can take time to work through that together so that hopefully we can create a relationship, that does foster a partnership where we can start to look at what is happening in their life and are there things that maybe they've thought about doing differently?

Amy Shanahan: I was laughing at the phrasing because we were listening to some people saying, still using the phrase telling patients people that they care for, I'm working harder than you are. Almost like they're shaming them because they're not doing as much as the helper is. And. And it just comes from that culture of, I think the way substance use disorder treatment has been provided for many, many years. I mean, they used to be common phrases we'd hear.

Paul Warren: Come back when you're ready.

Amy Shanahan: Oh, when you hit bottom, go, use more. Come on. Go use more. Come back when you're sicker. It sounds really ridiculous. And I laugh.

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Amy Shanahan: Not because it's funny, out of embarrassment, because I'm sure a lot of that stuff has come out of my mouth as well. Because it's what I learned.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And it's so contrary to, am I spiritual? To the practice of motivational interviewing, to the process of engagement. it just works counter to that. And it's a good example of what Billie Jo was saying earlier about how we can bring discord into the

room.

Paul Warren: By what we say or a particular position we take in the conversation.

Amy Shanahan: So we've been talking, quite a bit and shared some examples about the spirit and being there with people and believing that they have it in them and just being curious, having that curious mind, that beginner's mind about, you know, what are they coming for? They chose it. Affirm that. And then the hard part then is now what. What's the focus? What's the person going to work on? when we talk, I love to show that it's not about the nail video for folks who haven't seen it. I know some of our folks think it's a little gender imbalance. And I'll put a caveat out there. This isn't to say that men aren't good listeners because I certainly am not a man and I stink at listening. I have to really work hard at it. So. But I love to use that video to, to talk about what are we going to focus on? because we underscore in this podcast, episodes over time, that MI is about having a conversation with someone who's ambivalent about making a change. And the person chose to come just despite not wanting to come. What are they ambivalent about? Not making the assumption it's the relationship with substances. Maybe they're ambivalent about following suit with the. Whatever the mandate is. Right. So how exploring that. Because they may choose that they don't want to stay in treatment. They'd rather take the punches, if you will, their kids going off to foster care or going to jail, whatever the, Whatever the consequences. And of course, being curious, we don't want that to happen for people. At the same time, it's not up, us to make that decision.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And you know, Amy, that is a very. When you said that, it kind of, broke my heart, is not quite the most articulate way to put it, but I had a visceral reaction when you said that because I could imagine if I were a worker. And the patient

said to me, the client said to me, well, you know, Paul, I've decided that I really don't want to, engage in this. And, I've decided I'm going to go to jail. I don't know about you, but for me as a worker, I might feel like I failed. And again, I think the thing that's so powerful about motivational interviewing is that I think we need to acknowledge that people have the right, individuals have the right to exercise their autonomy and make that choice, even if they don't identify it as a choice. And it may not feel good to us what they choose to do or not do. And that doesn't mean we haven't done our job or practiced motivational interviewing effectively. I know so many people who think, and Billie Jo, you alluded to this earlier that, you know, motivational interviewing is this magic bullet that gets people to do what we want them to do. And that's not what it is. And you know, I'm sorry if that causes you to not want to listen further to the podcast, but ultimately that's not what motivational interviewing is. And ultimately we want people to exercise their autonomy and we want to give them a respectful, non judgmental, welcoming space to consider what their choices are and what choice they might want to make.

Paul: I appreciate you coming to tell me this. I think it raises a powerful question

Amy Shanahan: You know, Paul, you hit a nerve a little bit. Because I did have a situation where I worked with someone for an extensive time. I could trust that we were engaged. This person tried a lot of different things and after many m months and was mandated as services from

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Amy Shanahan: his workplace. And he eventually weighed all his options and came to me and told me, I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to stop drinking, I don't want to come to treatment. And you're right, I had that very thought about, oh, no, I didn't do a good job. And I literally wanted to grab him by the shirt collar, no, not literally, figuratively, and pull him off the cliff. And my writing reflex kicked in really strong. I started to, I did ask permission, thankfully. Can I guide you and help you with a relapse plan? Because he didn't want to still lose his job. is it okay that I share some information with you about what I know, about what might happen? Like, I was literally scared. And he refused all those things. Nope, nope, nope, I don't want those things. And I said, okay, you, you've really given this a lot of thought and you don't want to come back. And I appreciate you coming to tell me this. My only hope. And I still can feel my heart, feeling bad or feeling worried or a lot of different things, feeling a little bit like a failure, that I could have done something different. And I talk about that story a lot from the perspective from am I? He resolved his ambivalence, didn't he? And. And from a treatment perspective, I always ask what would be the disposition we'd put on the discharge plan. And I think it fits here from a provider perspective of managing the institutional expectations and being with someone who. And believing that it's really up to them to choose what they want to do when they want to do it. I know that was a little long of a story, but it, I think it fits so nicely in here.

Billie Jo Smith: Well, it does. It really highlights the point that MI is deceptively simple. Right. That each part of this journey, there are moments where we have to stop and check ourselves because we bring a lot to the table. This idea that we can be, you know, really utilizing the spirit in our skills and building rapport. And then in one moment where we work to help somebody resolve ambivalence, and it doesn't go on the side that we would have liked, how easy it is for us to slide back into some of that other stuff that ultimately impacts the relationship, impacts a person's autonomy. So are we aware,

can we have acceptance that people are going to make choices that they see fit with for them, and it may not be what we would have liked. I would love for everybody to stay in IOP with me. Irene. Great IOP. It's 100 times better than jail, I'm sure. and yet, at the end of the day, I guess I got to respect that somebody didn't think I ran the best IOP and that jail was a better option. and I say all that in jest, but that's the reality, is that, just because I think that a decision might be best for a person, they've weighed their options, we've helped them explore their ambivalence, and they're going to make a decision. And if we're true, if we're authentic, can we support them in that decision that they made? Because we said we were going to. And it can't just be contingent on if it's the decision that we were hoping they were going to make.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And I think you raise a very powerful question because it is possible to support somebody's choice and also not like it at the same time because you. Because I, as an individual. And again, this is. This is, about me, because I hope for a different outcome for them in this moment, and I can support your autonomy. And. And, you know, I think the thing with ambivalence is, of course, ambivalence is never probably completely resolved. So, you know, that just may be where that person is in their process of change. And where they are in their process of change at this moment is they are. They've chosen. Yeah, I'm, I'm choosing jail over continuing this treatment process. And again, I don't, I don't have to like that. And MI still gives me the ability to honor that person's autonomy and keep the door open if that person chooses to engage again at a different point in their process.

Amy Shanahan: Radical acceptance. Yeah.

Billie Jo Smith: Yeah. And I think that maybe it's a little easier, you know, if we

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Billie Jo Smith: go back. You use the example of IRP or jail. I mean, sure, I would think that jail wouldn't be the preferred option. So maybe, it's easier for me to have acceptance around that. And it can be a little bit difficult if the decision impacts somebody's health. Right. If we're talking about taking a medication that could save a person's life and an individual chooses not to do that, that really feels like it ups the ante, if you will. And am I able to have that radical acceptance with that, just as I am about some of the other choices that people will make?

You touched briefly on the idea of developing discrepancy. And I believe in one of our previous episodes

Paul Warren: You know, you made me flash back to. Because we touched briefly on the idea of developing discrepancy. And I flashed back on that because I think the thing with the strategy of developing discrepancy is that there's a certain tension that can be created or a certain discomfort that can be created when we put these two things next to each other and we say to the person, you know, help me understand that, you know, you're, you're, you're doing this and this is how you want to be. Help me to understand this. There's a certain discomfort that goes with that. And I think as a helper, anytime I fear that the client is feeling some sort of anxiety or discomfort, I want to allay that or spare them that. And again, I think sometimes if I act on that, I'm depriving that person of their change process. That perhaps they need to have that experience if that's what they're experiencing. Not to where I'm causing distress, but where they have the discomfort of that. And maybe when a person chooses the thing that maybe I don't feel so great about their choice, maybe in their change process, that's the discomfort they

need in order to move forward in their change process.

Amy Shanahan: Well, especially because you delivered it in a compassionate, curious way versus a, confrontational way. And I believe in one of our previous episodes we talked about that very thing about developing discrepancies.

Amy M. asks questions about transition from engaging to planning next steps

And I was, I was curious, I was going to ask you both, and I think this is a nice lead in that you shared as you gained some connection with someone, you engaged with them, and now you're sitting there with them. and it's time to start to wrap up. Where do you go from here? How do you help providers consider language or things to think about for setting the agenda with the person? What's next? Would it be maybe offering that discrepancy on the table to see if there's something there? It could be what, focusing to explore next time? Where do we go from here? You don't really want to come here. And right now at this time you're choosing to come here. Where should we go next? I'm just really curious. What, what would you do and what would you offer for people who struggle in that transition from engaging to. Gosh, they don't really see that they have a substance use problem. They have this problem with probation or cyf. As we were talking in different mandated pieces.

Billie Jo Smith: Well, and Amy M. As you were talking, what kind of came to my mind is I love the idea of summarizing kind of some of the really salient points that we had, highlighting that discrepancy, if you will, if it comes up, and tying in with autonomy, asking the individual, what are your thoughts about next steps? Right. So primarily I.

Well, in recent history I've worked in an outpatient setting, always putting it on the table of is it something that they'd like to do in terms of coming back to talk about this more? Because in an outpatient setting, the reality is they may choose now, you know, I don't really want to schedule anything at this time. and if we kind of do like the ask, tell, ask, so I ask them and then is it okay if I share some of my thoughts? I think it might be helpful if. What do you think? in an inpatient setting, it's a little bit different. however, I still think that we can honor people's autonomy in a collaborative way and saying, like, what are your thoughts about the next time that we meet? Or, you know, where do you think it would be

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Billie Jo Smith: helpful if we went next? And I think that it can go all the way back to really building that trusting relationship that maybe they didn't have entering into the space. Because I genuinely am interested in their ideas of where we go from here because they're driving the car.

Amy Shanahan: Nice, Nice metaphor.

Paul Warren: You know, I love your question, Amy, because I love the complexity of it and I love the fact that a general answer that I could give in terms of what my response might be would be it would depend on what happened in the conversation before. I think what I could generally say, is I would certainly want to reflect or summarize the things that helped us to engage. And I would want to include in my reflections or my summaries my attempt at understanding where this person was coming from and asking for clarification about my understanding. And I'm thinking about this specifically from the more beginning parts of developing a relationship. And after maybe having

done that and asked for their feedback about my understanding, if I understood them, if there's anything they'd like to add, I might invite them to, I might ask permission to ask another question. And then if they grant me permission and I ask this question, I might ask them, you know, so what do you think would be, where do you want to go next? Very similar to what Billie Jo was saying. And I, and I might pose that at the end of the conversation, and really listen to what their response is. but again, that might be different if an identified behavioral change goal had been agreed upon. I'm assuming that where we are in this particular conversation or what I'm commenting on is the primary thing I'm focusing on is engagement in this conversation. And that's the strategy that I might employ around engagement.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, and really good points because it is complex and there's not, as we always say, a black and white answer when people say, what should I say in this situation? Or what would you have said to this person? Because you're in a relationship with the person and it's your style, it's who you are. And I appreciate the general pieces of skills and strategies that you both underscored that those are possibilities of things to consider if it fits for you in the moment, talking with someone.

Billy Joe: There's not really one thing to underline about this episode

Paul Warren: I guess, you know, as I think about this particular episode, and if there was one, if I could only underline one thing in terms of this episode. And I think there are, far more than one thing to underline. If there was only one thing I could underline, especially when we're talking about folks who are coming into the conversation feeling like they don't have power, they weren't given a choice, they don't have a problem. I think the one thing that I would underline is the authenticity piece. Because to be able

to be authentic and real with that person in the moment and truly engage in a conversation with them and truly try to understand where they're coming from could be the thing that communicates to them that this person does want to understand, this person does respect Me. And maybe there is some benefit to my coming back for the next conversation. And again, that's long before any kind of behavioral change goal is identified or anything, because that's what I might underline and remind myself about. To focus on the authenticity, the curiosity, the belief that this person has their answers.

Billie Jo Smith: And that's it. Paul, exactly where my m. Mind was right. So if we're underlining a particular thing, for folks who are working with individuals who may be mandated, as you said, can we sit with a person and truly believe that they have it within them? I think can be so helpful, kind of just in the process to build that relationship, as you

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Billie Jo Smith: said. And sorry, Amy, I didn't mean to interrupt. I was just so moved by where Paul ended. I was like, I have to take my shot while it's there.

Amy Shanahan: I think we're all doing a great job trying not to get all excited and talking over each other because we love to talk about MI M. No worries, Billie Jo. And you, you. You lead me to the point that I'd, underscore because, Paul, you said there's not really any one thing. But I'll add to that by saying what. What stands out that I'd want to underline is being curious and open to what comes out. What comes on in your head, what are you thinking, what expectations, what maybe labels or thoughts that you have in your head. And if it comes out in the space, you have an opportunity to course correct that and shift gears and still engage with people. You don't have to give up

because you care and you want to help people resolve whatever's going on for them.

Billy Joe, second time on the podcast. What's your take on this conversation today?

Paul Warren: Billie Jo, second time on the podcast. Any, Any concluding words of, wisdom, thoughts? What, what, what would you. What's your take on this conversation today?

Billie Jo Smith: well, I think just having the opportunity to be here in general is, Is amazing. and I am really grateful that you guys invited me for this particular conversation because there is a soft spot in my heart, for folks that are mandated or folks that are externally motivated to do things that are seen as. I'm using air quotes for people who can't see it, that are seen as difficult or resistant. they, I think, I enjoy working with them as much as I do other people. And the process is so similar. And for us to be able to have a really candid conversation of some of the struggles of why it may be difficult to work with individuals that aren't excited to work with us. and yet, what are some of the strategies and skills that we can use to have a really, strong, helpful, supportive relationship with individuals, I think is really helpful. I hope it's helpful. It has been helpful to me in my practice with working with folks. And so I'm just grateful to continue to have an opportunity to talk, to give people a chance. don't give up on people because they're, because it's too difficult. believe that they have it within them. And so hopefully this reaches one person. And if not in the spirit of mi, I have acceptance about that too. So thank you both for having me again.

Paul Warren: Thank you. And you know, Amy and I, as we talked about this particular

topic, we knew that you would be the person that we'd want to invite to have this conversation. And we look forward to hopefully speaking with you again, about some other topic related to motivational interviewing. and again, can't thank you enough for your generosity in this conversation.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, thanks, Billie Jo. Your stories and your travel through MI and your experiences in helping people, have been authentic. So you're role modeling here in this space, letting us know how you transition through. So your stories are always very powerful. Thanks for coming again.

Billie Jo Smith: Thank you.

Paul Warren: And folks, we want to hear from you. So by all means, feel free to send, us an email, give us your thoughts, give us your reactions to this particular conversation, and certainly we look forward to being responsive to whatever feedback you give us. And, again, really appreciate this opportunity to speak with Billie Jo and with Amy about this particular topic.

Amy Shanahan: Bye.

Paul Warren: Bye.

Billie Jo Smith: Bye.

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