

## **Episode 19: Reflections- Simple vs. Complex**

### **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 19, Paul and Amy welcomed two guests to discuss simple and complex reflections for episode resources, links to episodes, contact us, and other information, please visit the Lions and Tigers and Bears MI website at [mtplainsattc.org/podcast](http://mtplainsattc.org/podcast).

Lions and Tigers and 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 ten years. We've been facilitating Mi learning collaboratives and providing trainings and coaching sessions focused on the adoption and refinement of MI we're also members of the motivational interviewing network of trainers. Join us in this adventure into the forest, where we explore and get curious about what lies behind the curtain of MI

Paul Warren: Hello, Amy.

Amy Shanahan: Hi, Paul.

Paul Warren: How are you doing?

Amy Shanahan: Great. It feels like it's been a long time since we recorded, and I have been looking forward to this today.

## **Billie Joe Smith and Ivy Aoka Solomon join us for reflections podcast**

Paul Warren: Well, as I said earlier in our preparatory meeting, I have been looking forward to this all day because I am so excited to announce that we have two guests on the podcast today, and I'll give each of them a moment to introduce themselves. I know that one of them because this is her third. Let me underline that third appearance. Billie Jo Smith is joining us, and we're very, very excited and happy to have Ivy Aoka Solomon joining us for this podcast recording this episode, which is going to focus on reflections, simple and complex. So I'll turn things over to Billie Jo and then to Ioka to just take a moment to just briefly introduce themselves, and then we'll dive right in to reflections.

Billie Jo Smith: Well, thank you, Paul and Amy, for having me back, as you mentioned, for a third time, it feels like quite an honor to be here. Not once, not twice, but now three. So I'm going to hang my hat on that. and I very much look forward to this really engaging conversation about such a valuable skill that we use in motivational interviewing reflections. So thanks to you both.

## **Ayuka Salomon is our first self proclaimed motivational interviewing enthusiast**

Ayuka Solomon: All right, I guess that's my cue to go.

Paul Warren: Yes.

Ayuka Solomon: I am Ayuka Salomon. I'm very excited to be here today and just kind of discuss motivational interviewing and specifically reflections as well. should I share anything else about myself?

Paul Warren: I leave that entirely up to you.

Ayuka Solomon: Sure. so I am a licensed social worker in the state of New York. I'm very passionate about mental health, on both fronts, the administrative side and the clinical side. And I'm also a motivational interviewing enthusiast.

Paul Warren: And that is why you're here.

Amy Shanahan: I love that. I'm stealing that royalties.

Paul Warren: Well, I suppose if we're going to have guests on this show, we probably want them to be motivational interviewing enthusiasts. So, loka, you are our first self proclaimed motivational interviewing enthusiast. And let me just note, you proclaimed that on your first visit to the podcast, not your second or your third.

Billie Jo Smith: Yes, maybe by the fourth or fifth, I will take on that title, but we'll see.

Paul Warren: Well, as you know, if you do, Billie Jo, you will be paying royalties to use it to Ioka Solomon.

Amy Shanahan: About aficionado.

Paul Warren: Yes. Oh, yes. Yes. So, Amy, what are your thoughts? How should we begin this conversation?

### **Amy: How do you describe simple and complex reflections**

Amy Shanahan: Well, first, of all, I want to welcome you both. Thank you, Billie Jo, for coming back. Ayoka, it's such a pleasure to meet you and hear your beautiful podcast voice. And they can't see your beautiful face, but I can. You too, Billie Jo.

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Amy Shanahan: I think it would be nice to start talking about simple and complex reflections. What are they? And I'd be curious, and I'm always curious about how folks describe them. And, I'm going to refrain from sharing something that when I was talking to a layperson that wasn't an Mi enthusiast, he didn't even know what mi was. He had questions about the terminology. So I'm curious, how do you describe simple and complex?

Billie Jo Smith: I know that. I think that's a great question, Amy, because even with doing trainings, and learning motivational interviewing over the years, finding ways that truly capture the idea of a reflection, aside from the idea of it being like a mirror, this

idea of we're offering something up so that the person can hear what they're saying in both a simple way, which I think we're going to get into on this podcast, I don't want to dive in too deep, but either with just kind of what it is that they're saying, or maybe going a little bit below the surface and incorporating what we think might be lying underneath there. Just a thought.

Amy Shanahan: Thanks for that thought.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah, I think when I think of simple versus complex reflections, I think it's, a way to communicate that we're listening, right? Definitely. I think that that's what I think of. Like, how do you convey that you're listening? And you can do that in a couple of different ways? You can, again, stick really close to what the person has said, or like Billie Jo said, offer an interpretation which would be the complex.

Paul Warren: Yeah, yeah. And you know, it's funny because, when I'm engaging in a learning community conversation about reflections, again, one of the four core communication skills of motivational interviewing that Bill Miller and Stephen Rolnick did not invent, they simply. I know, I know.

Billie Jo Smith: Insert shock noise.

Paul Warren: I know, I think it's been inserted. they did not invent these and they've never claimed to. And the thing that's so fascinating is people, and we've talked about this in earlier episodes, people think because they're using these skills, that they are practicing motivational interviewing. And again, without the intention behind using the skills, they're really not.

## **Billy Jo and Ioka discuss differentiation between simple and complex reflections**

One of the things that I like to particularly emphasize with reflections before I even get into what Billie Jo and Ioka, what you've started to lay out already is the differentiation between simple and complex. I like to emphasize that reflections end in a period. They are not questions.

Paul Warren: And I think that that is a powerful place to start because, I don't know about you, but I was trained to come up with questions and doing reflections is another skill set.

Amy Shanahan: If I could add the thing that the person that's not an MI enthusiast said, asked me about, he said, what's this notion of complex reflections? It sounds to me like that means they're harder because of the word complex. And it made me think, They might be harder because we're slowing ourselves down to listen, to understand and reflect back with a different meaning than what they're saying and they shouldn't. Don't have to be difficult. I know Steve Rolnick shared with us. Let's not get too clever around the use of the skills. What do you think about that comment?

Paul Warren: I think it's insightful, and I'll add another piece to it that oftentimes people will make the assumption, and I don't know if you've experienced this in the conversations you've had, they'll make the assumption that a complex reflection is better than a simple reflection. And from my perspective, it's not any better. It's different. It's a different tool at a different moment in the conversation, and simple and complex. There are also other kinds of reflections as well.

Billie Jo Smith: And Paul, I think that hits on what you've already talked about in terms of intention. How can we use, or, what is our intention when we're using either a simple or a complex?

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Billie Jo Smith: and how does it help to continue to move and guide the conversation? And I think that we can choose either one depending on, you know, what it is that we're discussing and how we're hoping it lands on the individuals that we're talking with.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah. Something that I've noticed, too, with some of the trainees is that people often confuse complex reflections for the length, like how long it is, how much they've said. And I think that that's something that you sometimes have to work through.

Billie Jo Smith: More is not always better.

Amy Shanahan: Right?

Paul Warren: Yeah. And I love that you said that both, both of you said that, because sometimes more is not better. and I love it because as people practice motivational interviewing, and again, depending on the depth of listening that you're doing, a really powerful complex reflection can be really brief. And I wish that this was tv, because Amy just did, like a little gesture indicating brief.

Amy Shanahan: Small.

Paul Warren: Yeah, small. Tiny.

Amy Shanahan: Brief. Small.

Paul Warren: Yeah, yeah. Ioka is doing it now, too. So by all means, take a moment and do your version of tiny, distilled little reflection, complex reflection.

### **Ayoka: The intention behind doing reflections is to communicate understanding to person**

And I can't help but think it goes back to something, Ayoka, that you said a moment ago, which is that, and Billie Jo, you just alluded to this, the intention behind doing the reflections. And I'll tell you, I'm just going to say off the top of my head, my intention when I'm either doing complex or simple or any other kind, is to communicate my understanding to the person.

Ayoka Solomon: Absolutely, absolutely. I think that's what it's about. Right. To make sure that the person, feels that what they're saying is important, that you've heard what they have to say.

Amy Shanahan: And to tie in the length of, if you've noticed. I know that I've noticed. When I've heard or used a reflection that was maybe a little bit long, sometimes it lands on the person and they'll say, yeah, that sounds about right. And they're not even sure it sounds right because it was too long.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And again, not that we're trying to, offer you a prescription or a word count for how long a simple or a complex reflection is. That's not the point. The point, I think, is that our goal, ah. And I can't help but think of this phrase from mi spirit, which is



accurate. Empathy. Our goal is to accurately reflect back their meaning, not what we think the meaning is their meaning, as best we can.

Billie Jo Smith: And Paul, that was kind of coming to mind, as we were talking about. This is when I was early in practicing mi. I think that my reflections were a little bit longer because I wanted to ensure that I was really capturing the essence of what the person was saying. And something else that you had said, Paul, about reflections being statements, they end in a period, not a question mark. That almost by the more words that I threw into this really complex reflection was my way of inquiring, like, did I get that without asking a question? And so getting comfortable in. As I practice the skill, can I refine it to really capture what it is that this person is saying without having to write the cliff notes version of it?

Paul Warren: Yeah.

Ayoka Solomon: Also, I want to say, something to Billie Jo's point. I was also thinking about that, too. Like, the reflection that you offer clients, it doesn't take them out of what they're saying or what. What they're thinking or what they're describing to us. I feel like sometimes when we, like, maybe offer, too long of a statement or sometimes questions, it can take them out of the moment. And I think that's something that we have to be mindful again. So sometimes the shorter, condensed version allows the client to continue their thought process.

Paul Warren: And, you know, that is the. It very much relates to what Amy said, and she was quoting Stephen Rollink. The idea of, we don't want to be overly clever with it, because that's really about us or about me. Let's talk more about me. and we want to sort of earn our sort of salt for the day. exactly. Our pat ourselves on

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Paul Warren: the back, like, oh, wasn't that a clever reflection that I did? Well, guess what? It can, like you said, ayoka, it can take the person out of their moment. And how effective is my cleverness? Not very.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah, yeah.

Amy Shanahan: Not.

### **Paul: I hear a lot of trainees practicing complex reflection**

I'm wondering, as we're talking about the complex reflection and the deeper meaning and saying something more than what we heard. I hear a lot of trainees, and I think that that was probably a lot of my discomfort in practicing in front of other people, was that you're creating a hypothesis and guessing at the underlying meaning. And I hear a lot of folks learning it or practicing it, maybe for the first time. not actually. I think Billie Jo and I were in a workshop where folks were saying exclusively, you do not hypothesize what a person says, and we're saying, no, you do. but they felt uncomfortable with that. Some people do. I wonder what your thoughts are about that. Have you heard that? And how do you respond to that? And what would you tell listeners about that?

Paul Warren: I mean, I'll throw out very clearly, I've heard that and I've heard it stressed even slightly differently, which is that I don't want to make an assumption about what somebody else is feeling. And one of the things that I often will say to folks who are reticent or horrified at the idea of doing that, and it's often the scale between reticence

and horrification, if that's a word. but I will often say to them, what you're really doing is you're offering a hunch based on your honest, authentic best guess. And we're, you know, we are really, at this moment, we're focusing on the essence of the complex reflection, which is that added meaning that we may be getting from what the person has communicated to us.

Billie Jo Smith: And I think in the workshop that Amy's talking about, and I'm, actually surprised Amy hasn't thrown out the quote yet about listening to what Amy. They often listen to respond. and so. And the other side of it is what Amy, go ahead.

Amy Shanahan: It's harder to listen to understand, and I would love to steal that, but it's not mine, it's Stephen Covey's. And most people know that, unfortunately, I.

Billie Jo Smith: Thought Amy was going to throw that one out there. and I think that in the workshop, kind of playing off of that is really looking at reflections as a way for us to demonstrate that we're trying to understand what a person said less so than, you know, putting words in people's mouths or telling people how they're feeling. But me just kind of, again, reflecting or providing back what, I'm trying to understand what you're saying and offering it back in that way of a reflection. and, yeah, it can be a little nerve wracking because we don't want to be wrong.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah.

Amy Shanahan: You used the comparison of a mirror. It's not just a verbal mirror. And I remember someone giving me feedback and shared that I actually was reflecting on someone's body language at times. Like, wow, you really lit up when you said that. So listening is hard, and we're paying attention to someone's words, we're paying attention

to their body language, the tone of their voice. Did it go up? Did it go down? Did it get loud? Are they frustrated? And we're listening to these things and I, don't know. One of the things that I think about is we don't give ourselves credit for the work that we do. And the biggest part of that is listening to understand.

Paul Warren: I want to go back to something that Billie Jo said because it seemed like it evoked a reaction. And again, you can't see our faces, but I can. When Billie Jo said, we don't want to be wrong in our hunch, and you know, what I want to say to anybody who might be listening to this podcast is take the risk to be wrong, because the client will tell you if you missed it, if you didn't get it right in a helpful.

Billie Jo Smith: And evocative way, based on our relationship with the individual. I do. I absolutely agree, Paul, and I think that comes in with that fear or trepidation that Amy was talking about is that if, based on our relationship, if we didn't hit

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Billie Jo Smith: the nail on the head metaphor, then it provides an opportunity to elicit more information from the individual for them to be able to say, well, no, it's not that. It's actually this. And we still learn so much.

Ayoka Solomon: M yeah, I really value making hypothesis, when it comes to clients, I think it's really important. I was just having a discussion earlier today about the importance of hypothesizing, especially if it's like a double sided reflection, adding, you know, if maybe they're trying to get some change talk in there, you can make a hypothesis to see if that's something that the client is experiencing, to kind of shift the conversation a bit. And if you happen to be wrong, the client will correct you.

Paul Warren: Yeah, you know, Aoka, you remind me of a story that Bill Miller told once. And, you know, there are lots of stories associated with Bill Miller, and I'll let you all do the research to find out if this is true or not. But I like this story, and it kind of proves the point that, and tell me if you've heard the story that Bill Miller was talking to, a client, a woman once. And he said to her, yeah, after this conversation, he reflected, he said, yeah, after this conversation, you're the, you're really ready to make a change. And she paused and she said, no, she said, I'm not ready to make a change. I have to make this change.

Ayoka Solomon: What a correction.

Paul Warren: What a correction. Right. And, and how powerful that this woman had enough rapport in that conversation that she could clarify her deep meaning that she had to make a change, not that she was just ready, she had to make a change. Yeah. What a correction.

Ayoka Solomon: Yes, yes.

Paul Warren: I hope it's a true story. Bill Miller, please write in and confirm whether this is a true story.

Amy Shanahan: Invite him to write, let us know if we're wrong.

Ayoka Solomon: You could always invite him to the show.

Paul Warren: We could, we could loka, you may be onto something there.

## **Billy Joe: I think intentional use of reflections can help build rapport**

You know, I just I want to circle back to something because I want to link what we've been talking about in terms of the intentional use of reflections to one of the specific tasks of motivational interviewing, which is engaging. Because, let's face it, folks, and I'm thinking about, we're talking about the depth of listening. If you really want to build rapport with somebody, try and understand where they're really coming from, listen deeply enough, take the risk to reflect back to them. And again, like you said, Billie Jo, how that, that really communicates the authenticity or the empathy or the sincerity of the collaborative partnership. To me, that's how reflections are a key tool to engage people in the MI conversation. I throw that out there as kind of a belief that I hold.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah, I think I have a similar belief as well, Paul. I think that especially when you are getting to know someone outside of their behavioral change goal, their quote unquote problem, I think it's very important to catch on and just kind of get to know them outside of that. If someone mentioned something about their weekend or shopping or you want to get curious about it, and a reflection would be a great spot to just kind of pause and just kind of get to know them just a bit.

Paul Warren: Agreed.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, I was thinking about, and my background is in substance, use disorder treatment. And I train a lot of folks in that arena, too, although outside of that arena as well. And when we talk with folks who are meeting with someone for the first time, they have their own tasks, which aren't the four tasks of mi. They have a task to get the confidentiality forms done and do the assessment and start asking lots of questions. And sure, they say, hey, when we're walking down the hall, but we talked with

other

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Amy Shanahan: folks and say, how long does it take you to really listen and engage? And then what do you get out of that engagement conversation? A lot more than some of those questions you're about to ask. And for me, I don't know about anybody else. It actually slows down my process of making assumptions. You're here. It's an addiction clinic. Well, obviously, you probably want to change your use of substances. Well, maybe that's not the case. Well, nami, one thing simplifying an example, but go ahead, Billie Jo.

Billie Jo Smith: Yeah, yeah. No, one thing that stood out about what you just said is that I think sometimes the assumption is that we need questions to gather information. And so in the engagement process, we want to get to know someone. And I think that the idea is that we can actually gain, like you said, a significant amount of information by using reflections. And so it's not that we can only use questions in the engagement process, but actually being able to demonstrate or build that rapport based on my level of understanding by using reflections, it.

Billie Jo Smith: Can be so helpful.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah. I think you can learn a lot about someone's values or things that their interests just by offering a reflection.

Paul Warren: And it very much relates, ayoka, to what you said before. It's not about derailing the person. It's about inviting the person to continue what it is they're revealing

to you in that moment and you having a deeper insight into who that person is, what's important to them, what they value.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah. I also think that one of the things that I often talk about too, is sometimes it's in these, engagement process that we're able to even, like, develop discrepancy at some point later on. Right. Because, like, we have this knowledge or this information that they've shared as something of value, interests, that we can then use that at some later point. So I always think it's really important to just kind of have those moments where we can just talk and I pause a little bit. I think it's important.

Paul Warren: You know, I would also link the intentional use of reflections and also summaries, because summaries are really a collection of reflections, to the importance of evoking and sort of employing the change talk.

### **Billy Jo: Paul, one of the points was employing change talk**

And Billie Jo, I know you kind of had a question in regard to that, as my putting that on the agenda is something for us to talk about. So I'm wondering if you would elaborate or say a little bit more about that. And then.

Billie Jo Smith: Yeah, absolutely. And so, you know, Paul, you had mentioned that the prerecording meeting, just to kind of get our bearing, and we have this idea of some things that maybe we want to hit on. and I did find it really interesting that one of the points was this idea of employing change talk. And how does that, or how were you envisioning it relating to our conversation about reflections and summaries?



Paul Warren: Really, really, intently connected or powerfully connected. Because really, change talk is the motor, the language that the person offers about their desire to make the change, their ability or reasons or need to make the change, or their commitment to make the change or their activation. And by using reflections, we then are increasing that person's motivation. And let me give a concrete example. Person says, well, you know, I'm considering cutting down the amount of weed that I smoke on a daily basis. Because I don't want to lose my job. And my boss has told me very specifically that I'm going to get fired if I'm back from lunch late one more time. And my girlfriend tells me that I'm disrespectful to her when I'm high. Now if you think about that, the client just said that that's change talk. I cannot tell you how many times I've listened to audio recordings where the client has offered these two gold nuggets of change talk. And the next thing the worker will say is, so what are you going to do to cut down the amount that you're smoking? Now I don't mean to be critical by pointing that out, but what I want to say is folks, by

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Paul Warren: not employing a reflection, you've just left two big gold nuggets of change talk on the table that have not been employed. And I always refer to that as employing the change talk. You've got to make that change talk work for the MI conversation. That's my two gold nuggets or two cent about what I mean by employ.

Amy Shanahan: That's what I was chuckling about. You often say don't leave change on the table.

Paul Warren: Right, right.

Billie Jo Smith: And what an opportunity for the counselor to mirror that back, to allow that individual to hear their own change talk and then grow it.

Paul Warren: Yes.

Billie Jo Smith: versus it being about us as taking the conversation in a direction and missing that valuable moment that the client just gave us.

### **Use reflections at the onset more than questions when engaging someone, Amy says**

Amy Shanahan: You know, there's two points that are highlighted as you're out talking, especially around engagement and using reflections. And around change talk is when we start to engage someone and we use reflections at the onset more than questions. Oftentimes people who have been to helpers or been in a treatment scenario before, they often look at us like with a crooked brow going, wait, you're not going to ask me a bunch of questions or you're not going to tell me what I got to do next? They're often surprised that we're listening to understand, and I forgot the other point, but that's one of them later in the conversation where it's not relevant.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah, I think there's really something special to reflections. I think it's definitely, again, communicates that we're listening and offers the person the opportunity just to kind of share as well.

Paul Warren: And that is a perfect example, like the example that I just gave where if you simply did a simple reflection to employ that change talk, that's just reflecting back

to them just what's on the top and letting that sort of do its work with that particular person, Trey.

Billie Jo Smith: And I think if we want to tie that back into something that we previously discussed today, what. What an awesome opportunity to build that relationship, that rapport that says, I'm not trying to push you in a direction. I'm not pushing you toward. Okay, you have reason. So now what's the plan? But instead, I'm sitting with you and I'm exploring what your thoughts are about that behavior, that change goal that you may have for yourself. I'm, acknowledging you as an expert in your own life versus me telling you, while other people who have had similar experiences have found these things helpful in making a change. Right. So, again, really building that relationship.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah. And leading with curiosity.

Amy Shanahan: Your point reminded me of my second point.

Billie Jo Smith: Most oftentimes it was my intention.

Amy Shanahan: Thank you for leading me there. Some people will often thank us for the idea or the thought or the whatever, and it's their idea when we reflect back their own words or maybe using a different word or going deeper with a hypothesis. Oh, thanks for that. Give us credit for it. And it's theirs.

Paul Warren: It's so funny that you'd say that, Amy, because I mentioned earlier, before we started recording that I had had the opportunity to be involved in a three hour part, one of a two part mini training, and I was doing this little demonstration about a particular scenario, and the participant said afterward, oh, well, you did actually motivate me

because you mentioned this. And I then said to him, well, actually, you said that, and I just repeated it back to you. I just reflected it back to you. And there are many different kinds of reflections. They all have different purposes. We've talked a little bit about complex. We've talked a little bit about simple. We've talked a little bit about double sided, joined with an.

### **Amy mentioned amplified reflections as a way to develop discrepancy**

And as a way to develop discrepancy, Amy mentioned amplified reflections, again, that need to be used very carefully and depend a lot on rapport. But when we think about the anatomy of a reflection, we also have to think about the intention

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of the reflection. To build rapport, to accurately communicate understanding, to employ and strengthen the person's motivation by reflecting their change. Talk back to them, not ours. Their change. Talk back to them. And sometimes I think with the core skills which Bill Miller and Stephen Rollnick didn't invent. Excellent. Billie Jo, perfectly timed. And who knows? They may write in and tell us they did invent them. I don't think so, though. But it's easy to lose sight of the fact that we're using a reflection intentionally to create a particular or to guide in a particular direction.

Amy Shanahan: You know, when we mentioned that, we heard Steve Rolnick say, trying not to be too clever. And he has two other c's around. Being there to listen, to understand. He talks about being calm. Right. How can we be reflective and listening to understand when we're not regulated ourselves and then express our compassion, our

desire, like so expressing our empathy is more about suffering with or, showing that compassion. I'm really curious because their fourth edition is coming out in August, if those c's are going to be in that book.

Paul Warren: He kind of told us during that conversation, because we had a brief conversation with him, he kind of told us that he was thinking of including them. Am I remembering that correctly?

Amy Shanahan: You are.

Billie Jo Smith: And I'm actually very, excited about the idea of that happening. Because in the moment, though, he invented the six c's, he could only remember five of them. And so for that amount of time, I have been genuinely curious as to what the missing c was.

Amy Shanahan: But we won't tell the rest of the world that that happened.

Paul Warren: I think we just did. But aside. But, but Billie Jo, I love the fact that you were curious. I created a hypothesis of what the 6th missing c was. And it's so interesting because I sent an email to Steve with my hypothesis. And let me just say, he did not respond.

Amy Shanahan: Shucks, the mystery still is right.

Paul Warren: Continued. exactly.

Billie Jo Smith: The sound effects on this episode are amazing.

Paul Warren: Well, we are breaking new territory by having two guests at this particular point.

Amy Shanahan: We're doing, quite a few new things this episode.

Paul Warren: Oh, speaking of which, speaking of which, Amy, would you like to introduce the next new thing that we're doing?

## **Today's topic is simple and complex reflections**

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. So we thought Billie Jo and Ioka and listeners, assuming there's a few out there, and me too, and Paul too, you already know, okay. That we wanted to do like a role play so that listeners can listen in. And we're going to target it around our topic. So today's topic is simple and complex reflections. We actually will have this script available for you on, the website where you found a. Lions, Tigers, Bears. Am m. I. So if you wanted to take a look at the script before you listened in, you can pause now.

Ayoka Solomon: Beep.

Amy Shanahan: Beeping is the pot. I love this.

Paul Warren: Well, Billie Jo asked for sound effects.

Amy Shanahan: I love onomatopoeia. Paul, you can take a look at the script and pause and, listen in for, and identify simple or complex reflections. And then when we're done with our scenario, we'll have some more discussion, a little bit about what you heard.

Paul Warren: Absolutely.

Amy Shanahan: Do you have anything more to add to that, Paul?

Paul Warren: only also that we're going to play the scenario out for you, and then we're going to look specifically at what the worker said in the scenario, the written scenario. And if you don't want to hear what we have to say about what the worker said before you've looked at it yourself, you can stop the recording and you can have your own thoughts about it. And then if you want to listen to what we have to say, you can unbeeep

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Paul Warren: and listen to the rest of the recording, and you'll hear what we said about what the worker did. And remember, this particular episode of the podcast is focusing on reflections, simple and complex.

## **Am m I is a practice that requires practice and reflection**

Okay, so, having said that, Ioka has graciously volunteered to be the worker in this scenario. Amy has graciously volunteered to be John, and Billie Jo has graciously agreed not to be one of the characters in the scenario. So, just wanted to be clear about that.

Billie Jo Smith: That's accurate.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah.

Paul Warren: Thank you. So my function at this particular point will be to share my screen with Ayoka and Amy so they can see the scenario, and they will read it out to all of us. And then we're going to come back and we're going to talk about what the worker said, and I'll just throw out, before I share the scenario with Amy and Ioka, that one of the reasons we're doing this, folks, is that it is a practice that requires practice and reflection. And we can actually develop our skills at, reflection by looking at scenarios, by listening to audio recordings, and by focusing on our own practice, because we can actually refine and deepen our abilities to effectively and intentionally reflect. So before I bring the scenario, document up for Ioka and Amy to see Billie Jo.

### **Amy, Ioka, is there anything you'd like to say before we do that**

Amy, Ioka, is there anything you'd like to say, or anything you'd like to add before we do that, or any sound effect you'd like to make before we do that?

Amy Shanahan: I was going to say, this might be your last chance to pause.

Paul Warren: Okay.

Ayoka Solomon: Waiting for my award in the mail.

Paul Warren: Excellent. Oh, all right. I just. I hope everybody heard what Ioka just said. She will be waiting for her award in the mail. Excellent. All right, I'm licking the postage now for that award.

Billie Jo Smith: I.



Paul Warren: Excellent.

Billie Jo Smith: I think you're going to need a few stamps for that Grammy. I imagine it's a little bit heavier than a forever stamp.

Paul Warren: Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. So, Ioka, Amy, whenever you'd like to begin.

### **John Vernon says his wife keeps accusing him of missing in action**

Ayoka Solomon: All right. Hi, John, come on in. It's good to see you. Please, take a seat. Make yourself comfortable. Welcome to my office. Such as it is. Tiny, right?

Amy Shanahan: Well, let's just say, it's good. I'm five foot eight and I have limited wingspan.

Ayoka Solomon: That's good. Limited wingspan. I'm going to remember that for the future royalties?

Amy Shanahan: M. No, the first one's on the house.

Ayoka Solomon: It's hard to know where to start.

Amy Shanahan: you know, I actually came here on my own. My. My wife didn't make me come. And the court didn't stipulate counseling either.

Ayoka Solomon: You're here because this is what you want. And now that you're in this

tiny, limited wingspan room, now what?

Amy Shanahan: Well, I've never been to counseling before. Lord knows time has come to do something. There's a lot at stake this time. she almost left. She almost left with the girls. And honestly, I don't know why she didn't.

Ayoka Solomon: Almost losing the girls got you here.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, if I lost them, I don't know. I don't think there'd be much reason to go on.

Ayoka Solomon: The girls are your whole life and they're a reason to go on.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. My daughters, Mariah and Heidi, they're the best part of my life. Don't get me wrong. I love their mother. She's been on my back a lot these last few years. She accuses me of breaking up our family and being Mia. I'm really sick and tired of being told I'm missing in action. I work hard to keep a roof over our heads and food on the table. I'm around a lot more than Vern was for me and my sister and brother. You know, Vern Vernon is my dad. He's still knocking back 60 plus and he and my mom are still together.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah, you're working hard, being responsible and providing for Mariah, Heidi and

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Ayoka Solomon: their mom. You're trying to understand why your wife keeps accusing

you of being missing in action.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. Why are you never home? Why are you always hanging out with your friends? All you do is want to work, work, work. She's a broken record.

Ayoka Solomon: You would like more harmony in your home.

Paul Warren: Excellent. Thank you both so much. That's the conclusion of our brief scenario. And again, we are going to talk about that now. So if you would prefer to look at the scenario and look at what the worker said prior to hearing our conversation about it deep, you can stop the recording now and return. And then return if you'd like to, but please come back. But we are. We are going to now look at the scenario together and talk through what the worker is doing in the conversation with what the worker is saying. So I'm going to share my screen again for all of us to see and go to the top of the scenario and this first line that the worker has here, and I'll just read it out loud. Hi, John. Come in. It's good to see you. Please take a seat. Make yourself comfortable. Welcome to my office, such as it is. Tiny. Right?

## **Amy: How can a counselor make someone feel comfortable in their office**

So, Amy, Ayoka, Billie Jo, any thoughts about what the worker is doing with this particular. And we often use the term utterance. What the worker is saying is referred to as an utterance. So any thoughts about the intention or the purpose of this particular utterance?

Billie Jo Smith: I think the first thing that comes to mind for me is that idea of engagement. How can the counselor, right out of the gate, create a space figuratively, right. Tiny office. and metaphorically, how can we create a space that feels safe for someone coming in? and I think that that's what loka was portraying in her Grammy nominated version of the scene here is, how can we make this individual feel comfortable?

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah. I also like that there's an acknowledgement of, maybe the office being small. Right? Like, let's address the elephant in the room. Welcome to my really small space. Safe. Safe, perhaps. I like that.

Amy Shanahan: I know when I was list, you know, responding as John, I noticed the little tiny. Right. Like, it was a little sense of humor. And when I was listening and being that person, listening and being invited in, it actually eased a little bit of my angst.

Paul Warren: Yeah, yeah. I agree with you, Amy. And I have to say, and I agree with Billie Joe's hypothesis.

Amy Shanahan: Ah.

Paul Warren: About the award, the forthcoming award, is that, I feel like what loka portrayed really effectively was that, she was a real person and she was simply going to have a real conversation. And to me, that's the embodiment of mi spiritzen. From the moment the counselor opens their mouth, they have the opportunity to position themselves as a collaborative partner. And I was not left, at least with that first utterance that the client, the worker said. I was not left in any way that loka was saying, well, hello. Welcome. I'm the expert. I'm here to fix your problem. She's like, welcome.

Come on in. It's tiny. I know.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah.

Paul Warren: and I think that that was an intentional choice for this counselor. I want to put this person at ease. So John replies, well, let's just say it's good. I'm five eight and I have a limited wingspan. So, clearly I think the client gets the spirit of the foundation.

Amy Shanahan: Playfulness.

Paul Warren: Yes, that there is a playfulness. And then the counselor says, that's good. Limited wingspan. I'm going to remember that for future use.

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Paul Warren: Royalties. So again, the worker has not said, so what brings you here? What's your problem? What's, I'm curious, any other thoughts about this second utterance of the worker?

Ayoka Solomon: I really enjoy that. The repeating of the word like the, wingspan. I really enjoyed that. That one actually made me chuckle because I haven't heard that expression in a while.

Billie Jo Smith: And I think if we're drawing it into our conversation about reflections, that sometimes using the language or, the word choices of the individuals can help us to provide those accurate reflections back to the individual using their language, in a simple and or complex way. I think my gut wanted to say like, same language, simple.

I'm not adding anything. And in reality I could use their language and still have a complex reflection. So I scaled that back and wanted to correct myself.

Paul Warren: Yeah.

Amy Shanahan: And my thought about it was it, M that's. It's nice that we're still going along with like that kind of comfortable small talk, if you will, without diving in really deep, because I could say that as John, I obviously showed up with a problem and I'm waiting for it. So I don't feel rushed and I feel welcome.

### **Billy Jo: I think worker is saying this to build rapport**

Paul Warren: I'd actually like to make a bold statement here and I'm curious as to what your thoughts are about this, about this particular utterance, because it's my hunch and I own it. Please, please correct me if I'm wrong, but it's my hunch that the worker is also saying this and I connected to what Billie Jo said about reflection and using the client's language. I think the worker is saying this also to build rapport, because basically what the worker is saying is, I hear you, John. So that's my bold statement. I wonder what your thoughts or your reactions are to that. And feel free to write in if you have any either. But with the people who are here at the moment, I'm wondering if you have any thoughts or reactions to what I'm framing. And I'm sticking to it as a bold statement.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah, I co signed that bold statement.

Paul Warren: I knew that you were the right guest to be on here. Might I inquire and you're free to pass, but might I inquire why you co sign that bold statement?

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah, I think it's what it. I think it's really important to mirror the client's speech and then do it in a way that provides them with a comfort. Right. Again, there's so like, Amy was saying, there's still a playfulness, there's a relaxing, there's a come here, put your bags down kind of feel that's coming from this, reflection and the question.

Billie Jo Smith: Well, there's something that's also hitting me with this idea of using the language, the individual's language, that, I don't know, in some way maybe implies that I'm acknowledging that they're the expert. Right. Like limited wingspan. Like, yes, that's the right choice of words in this moment. but in some way really acknowledging, giving them the control of the space and saying, you're even dictating how we're going to communicate today. And I'm just kind of walking right along with it.

Paul Warren: Wow.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah. Ah, I like that.

Paul Warren: Me too.

Billie Jo Smith: Maybe that's my bold statement.

Paul Warren: I like it. I co sign your bold statement. And you know, Billie Jo, I can't help but be reminded of something you said prior to us hitting the record button, is that we're not in any way saying that these are the only responses that the counselor could give. Because the counselor could have responded differently here and it wouldn't have necessarily been more right or more wrong or either. So I just want to underline that we're not saying, like when you're talking to John, you know what I mean? We're not in

any way trying to prescribe how or what you should be reflecting. And I really also am, appreciating the depth at which we're looking at what the utterance could mean to John.

**Amy: That's a complex reflection. I m think it's complex**

Paul Warren: Speaking of which, Amy, any Amy, aka John, any thought about what your reaction

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Paul Warren: is to the counselors utterance at this particular point?

Amy Shanahan: Ah, I think it's worth underscoring that I'm nervous because I know I'm coming here for something that's problematic and I do feel engaged. So the bold or, I feel the rapport build, build that you're using humor. Aoka, counselor, one thing that I'll add, and while you were talking about the coming alongside, I'm also thinking that there's some subtlety here around the. I'm going to remember that for future use royalties. It was playful and I'm thinking about the subtlety of feeling like I have something to offer m even though it was playful and that we are now starting to even formulate a partnership in humor, I'm playing with you, you're playing back with me. And now you actually liked the term I used and it made me feel a little good, even though I know we're playing m. Yeah, that's my bold statement.

Paul Warren: If you co sign that bold statement, say beep now. Beep. And hopefully you felt you could do that at home. If you co signed or wherever you.



Amy Shanahan: May be listening, people driving in their car going, beep.

Paul Warren: Excellent.

Billie Jo Smith: I think we can also invite them to actually use their horn if they are in their car.

Paul Warren: Right. If you're driving in your car and you co sign that statement, please beep your horn now.

Ayoka Solomon: Hong Kong.

Paul Warren: Academy Award for sound effects. Excellent. So John says, no, the first one's on the house. And then he goes silent.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. As John, I know that we have to somehow get down to business and I'm, you know, feeling okay, I'm connected. I don't know what made me pause, but I'm like, oh, part of me feels comfortable and the other part of me feels uncomfortable. Like I want to run and leave because I'm nervous and I know I'm about ready to get vulnerable about stuff. yeah, yeah.

Paul Warren: And then the counselor clearly creates space for that moment. And again, beautifully demonstrated, but creates space for that moment and says, it's no, it's hard to know how to start. Now. To my mind, I have an idea of what kind of reflection I think that is.

Paul Warren: But I'm going to zip my lip because I'm curious as to what other people's

thoughts are about what kind of reflection that is.

Ayoka Solomon: I think it's complex. And I think it's complex because, I think the counselor is picking up on John's silence, picking up on John's hesitation to, like Amy said, like, get down to business. And I think she's adding a little bit there, creating some space for John to, out, like, yeah. Holding up a mirror to John's experience in that moment.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, I'll piggyback off that. It's like we're not always just mirroring what someone's saying. We're mirroring the body language, the discomfort. And that's a really empathic statement too. Like, gosh, it's hard to know where to begin. So I vote too ioka that that's a complex reflection because I didn't say anything about starting.

Paul Warren: You also didn't say anything about it being hard.

Amy Shanahan: Right?

Paul Warren: Yeah. What was that? Ayoka said?

Ayoka Solomon: Hypothesis.

Paul Warren: Yes, yes. Say it out loud. Hypothesis.

Ayoka Solomon: Hypothesis.

Amy Shanahan: We got onomatopoeia, words and singing coming now.

Paul Warren: Absolutely. It's a whole new world.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah, that's what I thought.

Amy Shanahan: Finishing the sentence. That's a complex reflection.

Ayoka Solomon: Oh, yeah.

Billie Jo Smith: And I think what it does is to go back to this idea that we talked about, the desire to want to be right. This creates a space for John to either agree right with what the counselor is acknowledging. Like, this is difficult. And he could also simply say, no, I know where I need to start, and then dive into

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Billie Jo Smith: what brought him to the counselor. So I think that reflection of what the silence meant was a way to evoke a lot of really valuable information, whether the counselor was right or wrong.

**Jeff: Billy Joe, what you just said exemplifies the power of reflections**

Paul Warren: Jeff, you know, given that you said that, Billie Jo, I'm wondering if I could invite you, if you would read John's next line. And you can, by all means. You can say pass or beep or whatever you want to say.

Billie Jo Smith: You wanted to say Hong Kong, whatever works for you.

Paul Warren: But the. But the reason I want to invite you to do that is because of what you just said. And I love what you just said, because it really exemplifies the power of a hypothesis in the moment and the fruit that that hypothesis can bear. So if. If you're open to it, Billie Jo, I'd like to invite you to read what John said.

Billie Jo Smith: I will read it. No, just joking. I don't know if my anxiety came across. I'm probably not winning a, Grammy for that one, but we'll see. So, John's responses. I came here on my own. My wife didn't make me. And the court didn't stipulate counseling either.

Paul Warren: All I can say to that is, wow. Wow.

Billie Jo Smith: You might be the only one, Paul.

Paul Warren: Am I the only one saying that?

Ayoka Solomon: No, no, no.

Paul Warren: Are you. Are you co signing that?

Ayoka Solomon: I'm, Co signing.

Amy Shanahan: There's an opportunity to turn that wow into a reflection.

Billie Jo Smith: Teachable moment.

Amy Shanahan: One of my m mi mentors would say, you know.

Paul Warren: I think I know who you're talking about.

Amy Shanahan: You use a lot of idiosyncratic words, and you have an opportunity to turn that wow into a reflection. Well, I'm trying not to do his french accent.

Paul Warren: I understand. And you're. You're. You're succeeding. So what I want to. I want to clarify why I'm saying wow.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah.

Paul Warren: And the reason I'm saying wow is because. Think about it, folks, the power of reflections. This worker offers a hunch based on the nonverbal communication, based on the tone of voice, based on the stopping of the dialogue, and all of a sudden, from that, we find out what we just found out.

Billie Jo Smith: And I think that's where, as practitioners, maybe we need to give ourselves some credit, is that, when we're in the space, we're hearing the words and we're sensing the things that aren't said, we're noticing the. The length of the pause, maybe the lack of eye contact. All of these things are, maybe coming together to help us create that hypothesis of, this is a really difficult moment for this individual. And then to offer it up to say, I get it.

Paul Warren: Yeah, yeah.

Ayoka Solomon: It also seemed like a really nice launching pad for John as well. The reflection.

Paul Warren: Yeah. An invitation for John to finish the sentence.

Amy Shanahan: Right?

Ayoka Solomon: M. Yeah.

## **Commores: What do you take away from this conversation about reflections**

Paul Warren: So, you know, our listeners have this transcript to look at and to comment and to talk to each other about. And I'm just curious as a way of kind of bringing our conversation about reflections, complex and simple. I'm wondering, you know, what you're taking away from our engagement in this conversation.

Ayoka Solomon: I think what I'm taking away is that reflections aren't just what we use when we hear change talk. I'm taking away that reflections are the thing that can be used from very beginning. It can be used during engagement. I think that's something that I'm kind of like. I just feel like I took that tool

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Ayoka Solomon: out on you guys. Helped me polish it off a little bit. Just that reminder. Hey. Reflections are not only for change talk. Reflections can be used throughout getting to know the client.

Paul Warren: Thank you for adding that, ayoka, because you just identified something

that we didn't necessarily make overt, but I'm sure that people who listen to the scenario got it. There's no identified behavioral change goal yet. We're in the task of engagement in this conversation. So thank you for adding that.

Ayoka Solomon: Thank you.

Billie Jo Smith: I think to build off of it and look at how I can use reflections intentionally, both simple and complex, in order to gather information, and that I don't necessarily have to use questions to do it.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. The thing that stands out to me is, I guess, this level of humility, that when I watch other people and listen to other people, it has helped me over the years to validate that. Maybe I would have chosen a different reflection, and it wouldn't be bad. It's helpful for me to understand that maybe if I knew this person better or had already built a rapport, I might be intentionally using different types of reflections. So it really helps me to discern, I think, the notion of intentionality and that we all might be playing in the band and we all have different styles.

Ayoka Solomon: Yeah. Ah.

Paul Warren: And ultimately, I think in order to be effective at the evidence based practice of motivational interviewing, you have to bring your authenticity to it. And you know, Amy's talking to John. I know she was John, but she's, she might be talking to John at some point and she's going to hear things differently than if Billie Jo is talking to John. And that doesn't mean that m i m is not happening. It doesn't mean that one is better than the other. It simply means that if you bring your authenticity to the moment and your goal is to understand, to build rapport, take the risk, to offer your hypothesis

and be open to being guided into greater understanding of what the person meant. I am so thankful that we had this conversation about reflections because honestly, to me and I could be the only person thinking this. I think reflections are one of the most difficult and thrilling tools to use when practicing motivational interviewing because they do require your level of your depth of listening and your willingness to take a risk, to go out on a limb.

Billie Jo Smith: Yeah, I'd like to cosign that.

Paul Warren: If you'd like to co sign that, please honk your horn now.

Billie Jo Smith: Honk, honk, honk.

Amy Shanahan: Well, thank you both for joining us. I enjoyed the conversation. I hope the listeners did it well. did as well. I trust that, maybe we'll get some energy around what folks think about simple and complex reflections.

Paul Warren: And if you find the scenario, having the written scenario as a useful tool to reflect. And maybe again, I have to say this conversation has been so enjoyable. Ioka, thank you so much for your premiere appearance on lions, tigers and Bears and Billie Jo Smith. Thank you so much for your third let me underline.

Amy Shanahan: Hat trick. She's got a hat trick.

Paul Warren: Your third three times a guess. Oh, gosh, I had to work that.

Amy Shanahan: In, who sings it? We have to do this. No, I'm just kidding.



Paul Warren: I don't know. Who does sing. Who does sing that?

Amy Shanahan: Billie Jo and I had a conversation about this band one time in a training because we talk about our generational differences.

Billie Jo Smith: Okay, I probably just listened to respond, then nothing.

Paul Warren: Yes. And it is a choice to listen, to understand, isn't it?

Amy Shanahan: We'll just leave that as a cliffhanger.

Paul Warren: Maybe that's right. But I do want to underline. Thank you so much for everything you brought to this conversation. What a pleasure.

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Paul Warren: And I look forward to having some feedback from our listeners, and I hope that we'll get to be in future conversations on this podcast together. Amy, any final thoughts or any final words.

Amy Shanahan: Oh, that was the Commodores, by the way. Paul singing the Commodores.

Paul Warren: So much for a cliffhanger.

Amy Shanahan: Well, they hung for about 30 seconds, I think.

## **Ioka and Billy Jo, thanks for joining us today**

Paul Warren: Okay. All right. All right.

Amy Shanahan: That was a pleasure. Thank you both, Ioka and Billie Jo, for joining us.

Paul Warren: And any. Oh, of course. Any final. Any final comments? Billie Jo, Ioka, anything else you'd like to add?

Billie Jo Smith: Now? I just want to mirror. Thank you for having. For having me, for having us, for having this conversation today. I think it was really helpful.

Ayoka Solomon: Absolutely. And I think there's a lot of value in this conversation about reflections as well.

Paul Warren: Thank you.

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Take care, everybody.

Ayoka Solomon: All right.

Amy Shanahan: bye bye.

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