

# **Episode 21: Listening to Understand Before Planning**

**Lions and Tigers and Bears 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 21, Paul and Amy welcome a guest to discuss listening to understand prior to planning 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: Hello, Paul.

Paul Warren: How are you today?

Amy Shanahan: I'm, fabulous. The listeners don't know this, but I'm, way in the midwest, in Nebraska.

Paul Warren: Okay. And what are you doing in Nebraska?

Amy Shanahan: Well, I'm doing some strategic planning for some folks around how they could use resources like the opioid settlement dollars and other things to help close the gaps in their communities. I think it relates, though, to our special guest today, which is why I.

Paul Warren: Even mentioned where I was understood and we, as Amy has tipped us all off. Ah, we are in store for a very honored and special guest who's making her debut appearance on the podcast today. And we wholeheartedly and enthusiastically welcome Kate Speck, our colleague in MI things and friend in all things motivational interviewing and other. we invite, Kate Speck to join us as our guest today, and we want to give her a warm welcome and invite her to introduce herself.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Dr. Kate Speck: Well, thank you, Paul and Amy. And it is a thrill for to be on this podcast with you all. You both know how much I admire you and how much fun we have when we are teaching together and collaborating on many different things. And so it's thrilling for me to be on the podcast with you. I also, you know, as Amy mentioned from Nebraska, I'm about two and a half hours away from where you're at now, Amy. And, Yeah, and my background is that, I've been in motivational interviewing. I was trained in the year 2000 in Quebec City, and it was back when we didn't have to do a lot of, we just, you know, you just joined, you just joined the mint and you went to the training and then you went from there. And so it was quite early on. And I tell you, the progression of how we have moved forward in these several years has been wonderful in the past 20 some years. It's been terrific. the learning, the kinds of things that we know about this. My background is in working with substance use disorders. And so I started out early in my career working with substance use disorders and, kind of gained more, more, I guess love for working with families who were not understanding what substance use does to the family. And so that became my love really, in working with that. I also do a lot of work in teaching mi now with, healthcare providers, families, behavioral health folks as well.

## **What changed about motivational interviewing was when it became an evidence based practice**

Amy Shanahan: Well, it'll be great to get your perspective, having been in the training realm around motivational interviewing, what has changed? Because we're gonna be talking today about listening to understand before planning. And I wonder how that even compares with, when you were first learning about Mi in the early two thousands and this whole notion around the four tasks.

Dr. Kate Speck: Yeah, that really wasn't available to us. And in the early two thousands, I remember coming back from my training and kind of setting up some Mi trainings and the reaction was

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Dr. Kate Speck: not happiness. People didn't really feel, it was kind of like, what's the new flavor of the day now? What are we going to learn about? so it was kind of a, oh, let me get my ces from this. And maybe there's a few things that could be helpful. What really changed things, I think, was when motivational interviewing became a best practice and an evidence based practice. when they made the, evidence based practice, what was that that Samhsa had? It was that, Bill, Miller actually put it on, the evidence based list. And so you could go on and say, oh, motivational interviewing is an evidence based practice.

Amy Shanahan: Oh, the nrep site. The nrep site that had what, our evidence based practices.

Dr. Kate Speck: Right. Thank you, Amy. Yeah, I couldn't remember that. And so when that happened, it just blossomed. It blossomed more than what I thought it was going to blossom. So all of a sudden now, you know, we couldn't give an MI training away prior to that. Now we couldn't catch up with the request.

Dr. Kate Speck: For mi training because of the evidence based. Yeah.

Paul Warren: You know, Kate, you reminded me of something that came up in a conversation that Amy and myself and a couple of other colleagues had with Stephen

Rolnick where, and you may remember that video we all watched where Steve answered questions that we had. And one of the questions that I asked him is, if Mi is not a way to get people to do what we want them to do, why should we do it? And he was very funny. He said, well, I could give you the smug answer. And the smug answer is that it works. And again, I think it relates to what you're saying is that the evidence really began to bear out, which was the anecdotal information, was that Mi as a method of communication to help people in their change process. We started to have the hard evidence that it actually did accomplish that. And to our topic today, understanding, listening, to understand before planning. I really want to underline that because it's a very nuanced view of the four tasks, because often people think of the four tasks as, you know, task one, task two, task three, task four. And what we're sort of going to entertain and think about today and talk about today is that we are really, taking the time to listen, to have that accurate empathy, to understand deeply as a way of more successfully and effectively moving into planning after we've accomplished the other tasks as well. So it's something that I felt was important as Amy and I were discussing the topics. And this topic was one that we landed on because people often, and I don't know if this is your experience, and maybe both you and Amy can comment on this, but people often when they think about motivational interviewing, they really want to rush to planning.

Dr. Kate Speck: Well, I think that's very true. And as you were talking about this, I'm thinking back to my first training in my first, 2000. And I think what we were trying to do is just learn the basics of this, like OARS and so forth, and how, how to ask questions and how to make, reflections and all those kinds of things. We've come to such a deeper understanding and a deeper, way, of thinking about how we interacted, how we interact. So, you know, we talk about the motivational interviewing spirit and about how, how we are. And then I love that in the third edition, they brought in these new things.

It's kind of like everybody wanted the recipe. Why do I do motivational interviewing? And these four tasks that we're calling them now really help clarify things. And in particular, what we're talking about today was that, that intentional kind of piece, when we're really thinking about how are we intentionally listening to understand, really give some space to the client to lay out what they really, really need to lay out for us to understand.

Amy Shanahan: I love the analogy or the metaphor of using a, recipe. There's not really a recipe. At the same time, I know you use these terms, Paul. Ingredients. There are though, essential ingredients to motivational interviewing. And I love this listening to understand topic from the perspective of a different Stephen. Sorry, Steve,

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Amy Shanahan: but Stephen Covey, a leadership, writer speaker, talks about most of us listen with the intention to respond to versus that intention to understand. And I remember recently listening to Terry Moyers, another MI researcher, talk about we get into this habit of, I ask you a question, you answer it. I ask you another question and you answer it. And we go back and forth, back and forth. And I think that that's an introduction, if you will, to slow it down and listen.

Paul Warren: Absolutely. And you know, Amy, you make an excellent transition to something that I want to pose as a very, concrete point of reflection, which is, you know, we're talking about. And I love that you brought in that quote, which you've mentioned in prior episodes of the podcast as well, the idea of listening to understand and not to respond. And I guess, I'm curious if we could talk a little bit about how we see the difference between those two. Because in am I. It's to our great benefit when we're

choosing to use this method of communication to intentionally listen to understand, as opposed to launch our next question or give our two cent. So, I'm wondering if we could spend a little bit of time being very direct about the difference between listening to understand and listening to respond.

Dr. Kate Speck: As baby counselors or baby human service professionals, we often learn about active listening. And active listening portrays, ah, a balance. It portrays that we're doing as much talking as we are listening to the client. With this new understanding that we're talking about today, this gives us a chance, the client more weight, more time, more space to, be able to instruct, us as listeners about what to understand about from their perspective, which is very different than active listening back and forth, back and forth. Right. Kind of what you were saying, Amy, about we have, you know, we give each, each person equal time in the conversation, and that's really the unequal part. Giving the client more time is what we really want to try to achieve. So we understand.

Amy Shanahan: I love that you offered that. It used to be this balance of back and forth, and I could see you moving your hands like, the scales, right, if listeners can't see us, but just even hearing that, it's this and that, it's this and that. And I would add my experience around connecting to what you're saying, Kate, is that was hard for me to shift the balance and listen more to the person rather than do more talking. And that's been my transition in learning and practicing motivational interviewing. And what I would say from my experience as a practitioner person that listens is when I'm listening to respond. I could tell you that most times than not, it's when those fixing reflexes are kicking in. It's when those roadblocks, Thomas Gordon's roadblocks to listening are popping up for me, which are very interrelated to me, that I want to help, I want to offer something I want to relate to, I want to make someone feel better. And for me, when I'm

listening to respond, it's usually because of those things happening, I'll have to pay attention as I go along. Since you now pose that question, Paul, very good question. What do you think, Paul?

Paul Warren: You know, I really appreciate what you just said about how listening to respond, although not necessarily, as effective as listening to understand an mi m, it doesn't come from a bad place. It comes from the desire to help. It comes from the desire to be a resource. And again, I think in motivational interviewing, to Kate's point, if we make the space for the client to lay out their story, their narrative about this behavior change they're considering, when we do respond, eventually we're going to be able to offer a much more informed,

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Paul Warren: informed response that is either reflection or crafted, open ended question or affirmation of strength or effort, because it's going to be based on a deeper foundation of understanding this person's, considerations, needs. So, it's very important, I think, for us to not pathologize or stigmatize the desire to respond, but to understand that we can choose to suspend it so that we can invest in a deeper understanding. And then when we do respond, that response can be more, effective.

Amy Shanahan: Thanks for that clarification, Paul, because it was validating for me that it comes from a good place and I have a choice to slow down, put my stuff on the side. It doesn't mean that my stuff isn't important. Maybe there's a way that I could effectively bring it up if it's relevant, but actively seeking to identify and understand the person's goal, their points of view about how and when and if they want to get there. Yeah.



Dr. Kate Speck: I think there's an inherent magic key in motivational interviewing. So, you know, when, even when we're listening to respond. We're listening to try to hear what the client is actually saying. And then, of course, you know, we're supposed to use our skill and active knowledge about whatever it is to respond to that person with information, with motivational interviewing. We're still listening, not so much to respond. We're still listening for the barriers. We're still listening for the ambivalence. We're still listening for the meaning of the issue to that person, which is deep. I mean, it's a deep kind of thing. And that magic key, I think, that we have is reflections and our open questions. It's actually using the small tools that we have in OARS about, you know, reflecting back and clarifying and getting deeper understanding. And if we're off base, this gives the opportunity for the client to say, well, yeah, that, but, this too, or not that at all. So I think there's that magic that goes in that conversation. Yes, we're listening, but that doesn't mean we. That doesn't mean we're not involved deeply. As you were saying, Paulinavia in the conversation as participant.

Paul Warren: And it's funny, Kate, I would agree with you 100%. And I would also say, and, maybe I'm going out on a limb by saying it this way, but I think we're also more deeply involved in the conversation, even if our mouth isn't moving because. And sound is coming out because we are really trying to understand from that person's perspective so that when we do actually speak, it's going to be based on something as opposed to just what's in our experience or our head. It's actually going to be based on what we've come to understand about what this person has told us. And Kate, I love the fact that you just referred to reflections and summaries as these, like, magic keys that offer us clarification. And to be quite honest, it's also how you build motivation and decrease ambivalence. The person hears themselves reflected back based on the change talk that they offered.

Dr. Kate Speck: Right. Go ahead, Amy.

Amy Shanahan: I was just going to add to, just connecting to using the skills and sometimes responding to my own reflex to want to jump ahead or I move faster. Another magic piece of it is if that rapport is built, that spirit you're dancing with someone, it's easier to course correct and still stay engaged with someone and navigate those waters of, oops, you know what? I maybe went too far and got all excited and the person might be more forgiving. And I recently heard Bill? question like, geez, I wonder. Don't know. I mean, how many times could we jump in and want to fix it, or jump in and want to do something? And I'm not, I'm not speaking to the exact quote, but this notion of, I don't know how many times, depending on how good your rapport is, can you navigate that water before you're ruining that rapport, if you will, that someone no longer wants to dance with you and walk down the road with you? You know? So it's really thinking of it in that term that I constantly want to stay engaged, and I misstep and step on their toes a little bit on the dance floor.

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Amy Shanahan: And, how long do they want to continue to dance with me if I got two left feet out? All the time. So I think it's that whole notion of intentionality that we're talking about as well. But go ahead, Kate.

Dr. Kate Speck: Well, right. Well, I guess my thoughts have changed since you just made those comments. So, so, just the whole, even the whole idea of the deep respect that we have for the individual to try to understand why, even if we see the status quo as a disadvantageous thing for that person, our respect of listening to that and understanding why the status quo is meaningful to them, rather than what we might

jump into, as you were mentioned earlier, Paul, that, right, that fixing reflex, just jumping in there and saying, oh, no, that's not the way we want to go at all. Understanding, what that meaning is for that individual, I think, is really important. And that, to me, equals respect to them, to their ideas, to their thoughts, and to their understanding of the issue.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And that respect grows into rapport and deeper engagement on their part, too. And, you know, that those things are built during a conversation. They're not automatically assumed in terms of that. Yeah. Just that, you know, we communicate our respect to the person we're working with by giving them the space to, tell us about why they're considering this behavior change, why they want to keep doing what they're doing, what's important to them. And giving the person the space to be heard is a way of offering respect and building engagement.

### **Another magic key for me in conversations about change involves paying attention**

Dr. Kate Speck: I think another magic key for me in conversations about change or around change has to do with the paying attention. And that's that intentionality that we're talking about today, really, paying attention to when the person backs away from us or pulls away from us in some part, the discord that we might not be understanding. And we can tell that through body language, through maybe facial expressions. And of course, there may be some verbal stuff to that as well. at the same time, it's a way for us to really pay attention to knowing that we might. As you said, Amy stepped on their feet during the dance.

Amy Shanahan: That's a great visual to remind me to pay attention to the person's body

language. And sometimes it's really a subtle thing. I recall having a conversation with someone where they literally just subtly back their body up, just a hair, enough for me to notice, and they actually got less enthusiastic, but it wasn't huge. I bet if somebody were watching the video, they wouldn't have maybe catch it, and I felt it. So when you're in sync on that dance floor, it doesn't take much to misstep and feel that, oops, I was starting to do the tango and you're still doing the waltz. Maybe we got some movement going in the same PACE, but, I started to dance to a different beat a little bit.

Paul Warren: And you're setting up the great argument for it's natural during the course of an MI conversation to have course correct, because there's a way to come back from going into a different dance than the person's in. And, you know, Kate, when you said, I love that, when you said, you said, like, you know, and sometimes there's, like, some verbal indication that we're not on the same page, and I was imagining the person saying something to the effect of, like, you can't tell me what to do. And, like, that would be strong verbal indication that you've moved into a different place and you know something, it's possible to course correct from that too, right?

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Dr. Kate Speck: well, for me, the goal is to not get the person or put the person in a position to have to feel their defensive. And I catch myself doing that all the time. It's like I hear it in their voice and it's like, you know, ooh, I need to. I need to stop doing something. I need to course correct. You know, it's okay for us as practitioners to share that we have concerns with the people that we're serving. Right. We can share with them, you know, and. But also, we can also share with them that there are many ways that people change.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Dr. Kate Speck: And that, you know, let's. Let's think about our, what options would look best for you in this change process, which can kind of lead us intentionally into that.

## **Kate and Paul discuss strategies for eliciting change talk in motivational interviewing**

Let's start to talk about that planning piece. Let's keep this in an intentional, direction so that even while you might be feeling ambivalent and so forth.

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The person may have some great ideas about, you know, what they, what they could conceptualize for change. Look how change might look for them.

Amy Shanahan: You know, I'm curious, from your experience, Kate and Paul, yours as well. m when you think about talking with people and using the spirit and skills and strategies of motivational interviewing, what key things do you listen for or pay attention to? What makes, because we're talking about body language and verbal language and this communication style, what do you take notice of when you know that it might be time to test the waters, if you will, or or guide the person from that evocation aspect to moving to planning? What are some things that you take note of?

Dr. Kate Speck: They're telling us, it may be subtle, but they're telling us, I think they're expressing an intention in some way or another. and I think that is where I pay attention

to that change talk as much as I pay attention to sustained talk and that importance of that. But also it's like that may be quite subtle, it may not be, oh, I'm ready to do it tomorrow. It, may be, you know, I've thought about this in the past and that's all they say. But using our intentionality, by drawing that out so you've, you know, and by reflecting that and then, you know, once again, if we get in the conversation now, we're summarizing what they've thought about or what it might look like to them and using our strategies of OARS. And, I guess, you know, other kinds of, eliciting types of things. You know, when we talk about eliciting those ten strategies for eliciting change talk, I kind of don't like to go into the on a scale of one to ten kind of thing, I don't like to do that because it seems kind of, should I say tricky? Well, it seems like it's a trick or not a trick necessarily, but like it's too techniquey. If I'm in a conversation with somebody, I find it really hard to walk into a conversation with saying, well, on a scale of one to ten now, it's a useful strategy, you know, in general. but it has to be the right, it has to be the right mixture, of stuff going on with the person. Because if I start in really quickly with those strategies, then it feels like I'm not really paying attention. I'm using the strategies to try to get to something when I really don't need to.

Amy Shanahan: You know, you make a good point, about, I took, picked up on genuineness. If you're using the skill or any skill or strategy at the wrong time or the wrong place, it may feel like you stepped on someone's toes, because it just doesn't work for that moment and it doesn't have the intentionality. You're using it just to use it. And another point I wanted to make, after talking with people like you and Paul and Billie Jo and other colleagues, that we don't always have to use all the skills and strategies too. If they don't fit, if they don't feel comfortable for us, that will also make it a little disingenuous and clunky.

Dr. Kate Speck: Part of the whole structure is that we are confident and we are bold in

our, you know, in moving ahead with the client. I think that's really important. Sorry, Paul.

Paul Warren: No, no, not at all. Thank you for finishing your point. And, you know, I think what, I'm taking several things away from the exchange that you two just had about this. And the question that, Amy, you were posed, and one thought that's really coming to me is oftentimes what may be kind of a disconnected use of, quote unquote, a strategy is because the practitioner lacks understanding of what is important to this client. Or so the whole idea that if you have a deeper understanding, you're going to be able to respond in a way that is more organic to the conversation as opposed to technically sort of skill driven or skill laden. And that's really, I think, where MI makes the transition into the art of the MI conversation, as opposed to the technical execution of an MI conversation. And frankly, I believe that's based on engagement and deeper understanding.

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Paul Warren: Because with that deeper understanding, with that engagement and rapport, you're going to possibly have a more fluid and a more, flowing kind of exchange with the person where it's two collaborative partners as opposed to, I am now going to whip out the importance, confidence and readiness rulers, because technically speaking, that's the strategy I'm resorting to at this particular moment.

Dr. Kate Speck: Yeah. And I'm not saying not to use them. I'm just.

Paul Warren: No, no, not at all.

Dr. Kate Speck: Yeah. Careful, carefully. And as we get into a conversation, when it's

going to add to the intentionality, for instance, if we're like on that precipice of the change piece, to both your and Amy's points, it adds to the conversation to say, help me understand a little more the importance of this to you. You don't even have to say one to ten. Tell me about the importance of this to you and what this. And the other part of the confidence is that, you know, finding out what the confidence level of the person is, is because I know for myself, in my own change process, trying something numerous times and then flatly just denying the fact that, I failed, you know, it didn't work. And then saying to myself, well, you gotta die of something. You know, when I was, you know, cooking up those cigarettes, right? And so when I try to quit, nothing was working for me. And up to a point, even though I wanted it very much, but, I kept saying to myself, well, you're a failure. You didn't try hard enough. there must be something wrong with you. And so a lot of times underneath that, underneath all of that stuff, all that trying is a persistence, but the person's brainiac stuff is interfering with their ability to really move it along.

Amy Shanahan: What a good point. that the person is struggling with their own judgment about how they're doing, how they're not doing. And while you both were talking about engaging to understand and listening to understand. And sometimes it goes this way and sometimes it goes that way. I literally was brought back into the analogy of our podcast theme of Lions, tigers and bears. Am I? And walking along and thinking about working with someone, walking along the path, just being curious together about, well, what do you think, Kate? Just like we're talking here about our practice of mi, I feel like we're walking along this path and sometimes we try things and they don't work, and sometimes we say things and it doesn't sound right, or sometimes it doesn't have fit for me, but we're still walking together. We're still on, that path together, because the person may not know, we may not know. And just even listening to understand that confusion or that uncertainty is still part of that collaborative process.



We might be examining the wrong thing together as a helper and a professional of, the expert of themselves, the person that we're helping, we may be exploring things that just aren't going to work. And it's neither their fault or problem or our fault. It's just we're exploring. And it really, the whole term curiosity, really is a good word for me to keep reminding myself that we're walking together on this path to be curious.

Dr. Kate Speck: Well, yeah. And with our clients, the whole issue of the exploring we're supposed to do that, we need to do that, we need for that to understand. At the same time, there's a place for that to stop. We need to then move that into that whole issue. Do we have a conglomeration of change talk? Do we have a critical mass of the person wanting to move forward? If we're getting that sense, or even if we're not getting that sense, how do we push that into the conversation in some way? Because we kind of have to. Otherwise we're going to explore and plan and plan and plan, and nothing ever really, no action actually takes place.

Paul Warren: Yes, yes. You know, I want to go back to something that Amy said a moment ago, because I think it's a really important takeaway in this conversation. And yes, there's a part of mi that is technical, and there are technical strategies that we use. And again, with a deeper understanding, maybe we can use those strategies in a more flowing, more effective way. And Amy, you made the point earlier that sometimes in a conversation, we don't need to use all the strategies. We don't need to

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Paul Warren: do x, y or z. And I think the thing that I want to underline about that is that because you're not using a strategy doesn't mean that it's. Am I incomplete us? It just means that I had to use my latin background.

Amy Shanahan: Making up things sounded more like Harry Potter.

Dr. Kate Speck: It sounded like a diagnosis right there.

Paul Warren: I'm suffering from mi incompletis. But, I just want to underline that because sometimes people think like, oh, my gosh. Well, I didn't ask an open ended question, therefore, I must not be doing am I to. No two conversations are the same. There's not a formula. And again, we're speaking to the converted here. I'm sure people understand that.

Dr. Kate Speck: Yeah, but which is why I love this. Listening to understand. That's what. That's exactly what it is, Paul.

Paul Warren: Yeah.

Amy Shanahan: You know, I'm reminded of a story about someone in supervision. So I'm not talking about a client, I'm talking about someone that I supervised. And I'm going to just tell the quick story that there were things that had to be done, of course, from a management perspective, and we'd go back and forth and I would evoke and elicit and try to problem solve. What's the best strategy with this person? I felt like it was that collaboration, walking down this path together. And after a while, I thought that I was beating my head up against the wall, because nothing was. Well, I don't wanna say nothing was changing, but very little was changing to move this situation. And then it reminded me, I think, your story, Kate, about, trying and feeling like you weren't succeeding and beating yourself up when you were trying to stop smoking or reduce your smoking. at some point in the crossroads, it dawned on me, and I think it ties into listening to understand. And it took a while. What I understood was that this person

didn't want to be in the role that they were in anymore. And it was a tough thing for them, probably, to admit. And I definitely had to put my big heart on and not be frustrated as the leader or manager. I like to say leader, and I genuinely, and with a heartfelt level of sadness, trying to understand, gosh, that must be a tough thing to consider. I ask this person in a reflective way. You really don't see yourself doing this job in this way. And it was exactly the nail on the head, to listen, to understand over time. So sometimes we're walking down the path, we have our focus. We know where we're headed, we know what we're working towards. And for me, I realized that people changed their mind and they changed their focus. And how do you navigate that walk? Because if I rushed to plan for this person, I don't know a latin word for it, I was thinking deleterious things could have happened, and I, you know, would have gotten the pink slip out. Right. Instead of having this collaborative conversation about what they wanted to do in their career.

Dr. Kate Speck: Yeah. And, Amy, you know, it's kind of like, just like you said, you, rather than getting stuck in the strategies of how to get around this, you listen with your heart. you basically said that, you know, with heartfelt respect to that individual, even though in your head it was like, oh, don't do that, you know, or even like, I don't want to lose this employee. This is a great person. At the same time, that person's life force was telling, you know, stretching him in a different area, stretching him in a different way.

Amy Shanahan: And when I think about, people talking about their own change, this person was saying, yes, I want to do this. Yes, I am trying this. Yes, I. These are the things that I understand, I want to accomplish. And they didn't realize either right away or it took a while.

Paul Warren: Yeah, beautiful example.

Dr. Kate Speck: I think that's natural.

Paul Warren: It is. And it's a beautiful example of the power that we, as the listener, can actually share with the person that's being understood. Because this person didn't even quite understand, but because you were able to deeply understand that, and you tested it out. You didn't tell them that that's where they were, but you tested it out, you explored it with them, and as you said it was like the nail on the head. Like, wow. Now I have insight into myself.

Amy Shanahan: Right?

Paul Warren: Ah. And

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Paul Warren: that's one of the powerful benefits of being the listener who seeks to understand can actually offer.

Dr. Kate Speck: And if, Amy, if you had taken this person into a planning after, after that revelation, after that new insight, that wouldn't have been the time to do that. You instinctively knew that. But that has to maybe sit and percolate a little bit, in the person until they say, okay, now I know I'm a now, now this idea is taking shape, and it feels like there's something there. And now I feel like I can move toward something related to planning. Maybe not plan the next three months out, but maybe I can start thinking about what that might look like for me. So we can be gentle in the planning session. We don't have to get a plan put together now. We can be gentle in the exploration around planning.

Amy Shanahan: Also, m I'm kind of starting to chuckle because I'm imagining the it's not about the nail video that some of us may or may not use when we talk about change and focus and change talk. Because I use the, we hit the nail on the head because I think in that if folks haven't seen that video, you can google it and check it out on YouTube. Not about the nail. Not to genderize, poor listening because I'm a female and I'm a poor listener sometimes, but, in that video, this person talks about other things, and we could focus on those other things, and maybe at some point she'll be ready and able or deciding that she might want to focus on the nail, but, not at first. And I think that in my scenario, with this person in management, we were focusing on the other things, the tasks at hand, the things to do, the preparatory things that you need to do, the responsibilities as a manager, and things that you have to do around that. And, well, I don't like doing this part, but I don't mind that part and just even learning about each other. So I think, I'm getting at your connecting, to your point about intuition, that I'd like to believe that a good part of it is that intuition, and the other part is the intuition is get heightened because of the intentional listening to understand. I'm paying attention to the patterns. I'm paying attention to the cues. I'm, paying attention to the things that this person likes and didn't like. And then it all kind of culminates either for them or for me. It just happened to be me at that time that I was like, maybe, there's something here they might, we know that about change that we could have had this conversation, not even talk about, hey, you're not really sure you want to do this anymore. That person may walk out and say, I don't think I want to do this anymore. Right. So it's not always us, the listener, that figures that the person may figure that out.

Dr. Kate Speck: That plays to a point. I kind of wanted to ask both of you if I may ask a question here. I wonder if what your thoughts are around when there is more directive type of, elements that you might put into a planning conversation. So, are there times when you decide this is the time to insert something? Maybe, maybe it's just to throw it

in there to see the reaction. But are there times when you feel like there's more direction should be given in our mi conversations for certain aspects of change?

Paul Warren: We're both contemplating your question.

Dr. Kate Speck: I thought you froze there for a moment.

Amy Shanahan: I didn't.

Paul Warren: No, no, I'm seriously contemplating your question, Kate. And my answer to your question is absolutely. And ultimately, if I make that, offering, it's with the proviso and with, the clarification of that, ultimately this person will consider what's best for them. And I think, Kate, that this relates back to something that you said earlier, because technically speaking, for just a moment, if we're engaging in a conversation with somebody about a particular behavior change, and they're offering lots of change talk, and their ambivalence is being explored, and their ambivalence is coming to the forefront in regard to their consideration of this change. At a certain point, there is a tipping point where evoking needs

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Paul Warren: to move into planning because there's enough motivation and we need to be testing the waters when we get those signs to see is this person ready to plan? And if they are ready to plan, we move forward with that. If they're not ready to plan, we go back to evoking and it really becomes a deficit if we continue to evoke only change talk when somebody is really ready to make a plan. so I don't know if I would frame it as being directive, I would frame it as guiding the conversation and testing out of where

the person is at that particular moment.

Amy Shanahan: I'm so glad.

Dr. Kate Speck: That's a good, I think that's good. Yeah, go ahead. Sorry, Amy.

Amy Shanahan: No, no, no. I'm so glad that you answered first, Paul, because I was thinking what I don't know how I'm going to answer this? I don't know. This is turn it back on the audience. What do you think?

Paul Warren: Write in and tell us what you think.

Dr. Kate Speck: The whole idea of the commitment language, where, you know, like, when it comes into commitment language, when somebody's really saying, I'm, or they may not be saying it directly, I'm ready to move ahead, but you're sensing it or you're getting that idea that it's time to insert something in there as a test, like a little test.

Amy Shanahan: Well, and I was thinking of that, and, I was thinking of a scenario where I was talking with someone about change and doing the exploration and engaging and finding what is the focus. Maybe we had two things, and then I could sense that there was a clear priority of focus, even though there were a couple of different things going on. I think the ultimate thing is, yes. And it's more directional still for me, because there's still that element of permission. And I'll share exactly what kind of happened. I, said something along the lines, if it's okay with you, I'd like to share some thoughts about maybe some ideas where you could go next. Because I heard commitment language, I heard even taking steps. So, the person said, well, yeah, that's why I'm talking to you. And you could hear almost like that. I'm so glad we're done exploring,

because, so there was an element of, I asked permission, but they were also like, I'm telling you, I want you to help me. Where, where might I go next? That's why I'm seeking your, your help or your guidance or whatever.

Dr. Kate Speck: So m that makes so much sense. That makes so much sense, Amy. And that's kind of exactly what I was talking about. About is that, when are we going to be done with all of this stuff? That I'm ready to move ahead. And you can tell that in some, sometimes, but sometimes you can't.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, let's spinning the wheels. But for me, it still feels directional. We're guiding and there's still permission there. So to me, directive would be, hey, Paul, I think it's time to put down the ice cream spoon and, you know, pick up those carrot sticks. Right.

Paul Warren: Ouch. That hurt.

Amy Shanahan: Don't touch my ice cream.

Paul Warren: Keep your hands off my ice cream spoon. Yeah. And that would definitely be directive.

Amy Shanahan: Right? So I love the term directional.

Paul Warren: Me too, me too.

Amy Shanahan: But, but, and I think to the point of once you get into moving towards plan, and we're not really exploring that ambivalence maybe we're putting the Mi tools



aside for a bit to use some other skills and strategies.

## **Kate and Amy, I'm curious about what you think about this**

Paul Warren: As we start to bring this conversation to a close, I do feel compelled to pose a particular question. And if both you and Kate will indulge me, I'd like to pose this question, and I'm really kind of fascinated to hear what your thoughts are about this. Would that be okay?

Dr. Kate Speck: Perfectly fine.

Amy Shanahan: I'm intrigued.

Paul Warren: Okay. I'm going to take that as a yes.

Dr. Kate Speck: Amy?

Amy Shanahan: Yes, you can ask the question. I don't know if I answer it.

Paul Warren: So my question is this. And I think my question is this. We've spent, however, much time we've spent in this particular episode, really kind of illuminating and digging into the benefits

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Paul Warren: of understanding before we move to planning. And frankly, I think we've

made some good reflection on that through our dialogue about it. And my question is this. If that is the case, though, what do you think it is that pushes us? And I'm saying us, because I have to acknowledge, I feel pushed sometimes to do this. What do you think it is that's pushing me or anybody else to prematurely run to planning before understanding? And I just want to pose that because I want to normalize the fact that I certainly at times feel pushed to fabricate a plan. And I'm wondering if any of our listeners feel that pressure, too. And I'd be very curious to know what your thoughts or your reactions are to that. And maybe that's a helpful way to kind of bring our conversation to some sort of pause.

Paul Warren: Until the next episode.

Dr. Kate Speck: I think this is an everyday occurrence, maybe several times a day. And I think that we get pushed in ways that we don't even understand. One, we might get pushed because there's an issue of funding, and funding might be, you know, for, you have to see this person in a truncated period of time, and you have to come up with a plan, a treatment plan within a 72 hours, for instance. Like that. I think it happens because we might be working with, fractions work, and we have to prove that what we're doing is worthwhile. And that's another thing. I think it's a trap that we, as practitioners get into in terms of, showing that what we do is effective. Right. We have to do that by showing what the outcomes are. And if we're not meeting those outcomes, does that mean that we're worthwhile or that we're making strides toward progress? I don't know. What do you think, Amy?

Amy Shanahan: Well, I'm going to piggyback off of that and get super clever with three e's because I had two written down and you added the third. So the. Or the first. The first e is external pressure, whether it's my own, I got to hurry up because we only have

so much time or theirs. Like you said, there's some mandate or there's some of their pressures or their desires, institutional or otherwise. The two that I wrote down, Paul, when you posed the question for myself personally as a practitioner person, talking to someone about change is, number one, excitement. I get super excited and I want to help and oh, you're talking about change and I can hear all this change talk and I get excited for the person who found what was inside their well of goods, right. So I get excited and then the third e is my own ego. I would love to say it's not here at the table, but it is. I then start to feel good about myself, that I had some, I was some catalyst in this change or this conversation, or maybe from my role in my institution, if you will, that I'm doing good. I'm doing something good for someone. So those are my three e's. External pressure, excitement and ego gets in the way and maybe helps me or not push a person to plan, maybe sooner than they're ready.

Amy Shanahan: What do you think?

Paul Warren: Well, you know, the first one, and I'm hearkening back to what we talked about earlier and I'm trying to keep the focus on myself in regard to this. I think the first one is, and it's related to ego maybe, but I would frame it as that. I want to feel of use. I want to feel that I've actually helped. I want to feel that I've helped this person. And I think one of the things that I love about motivational interviewing is it really reminds me that I'm a collaborative partner, I'm a guide. And the person is going to decide what step they're going to take. They're going to take that step, not me. And I'm a human being and I, and I do still want to feel like I'm helping somehow. And you know, it, it really reminds me, and I think I need to say this for me, that by being a listener who's committed to understanding, I may actually be helping more than if I jump in and try and actually prematurely plan

00:55:00

Paul Warren: with somebody. Because when it is time for me to say something, I'm going to say something possibly or make ask permission to make a suggestion that's actually going to be based on something that comes out of a deeper understanding as opposed to just my personal desire to feel effective, helpful, or satisfied with the interaction.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Dr. Kate Speck: Yeah. And that brings to mind the whole idea of when we start a conversation with someone, to even ask their thoughts about what would be most helpful for you in the work we do together. What are you looking for? Yeah. That might guide us away a little bit from some of those pitfalls that we can, or, those ditches that we can step into. Yeah.

Paul Warren: When you said that, Kate, it immediately made me think, and this is, again, one of the things that I love as kind of an outcome of practicing motivational interviewing. And to Kate's point, asking for their feedback about what's going to be most helpful for them keeps me from settling into my comfort zone. I have to constantly remain flexible in order to go on this ride or this journey with them.

Dr. Kate Speck: Absolutely.

Amy Shanahan: I love that. And I think the only thing, it's not even adding, it's probably redundant, but really just tying it into that external pressure again, that even if the person has some external pressure, being curious about what they want and what they

need and how they want to make this change helps us to really navigate with them. How are they going to manage the external pressure if whatever they want is in concert or not with that pressure? Or even my ego stuff? So all those things, it's really just making sure we're reminding ourselves that it's about that person and being right.

Dr. Kate Speck: And that's about that whole issue of putting a specific plan together when they're ready to do that. I mean, when you talk about implementing plan What does that look like? Where would you like to end up? how does your life look once you've implemented that plan? You know all ways for us to explore their planning process.

Paul Warren: Right. And I, again, I want to emphasize, Kate, you said their planning process, not my planning process, their.

Paul Warren: Planning process. That is, they get to be part of and they get to lead the crafting of their plan.

Dr. Kate Speck: Right. And that's us exemplifying the spirit of mi.

Paul Warren: Yes.

Dr. Kate Speck: The autonomy, the partnership, you know, that whole piece of having compassion for them. And you know, that it comes to me. They're empowered. They are empowered in their own right.

Paul Warren: Yeah.

Amy Shanahan: Well, I can ask the listeners as we wrap up our last few seconds, I'm curious what folks think about when they notice it's time to move towards planning and still be curious. And what do you notice when you're talking to anybody who's maybe getting close to that edge of wanting to move forward. That's what this episode is all about. Kate, thank you so much for joining us.

Dr. Kate Speck: What a thrill for me, you guys. Thank you so, so much for asking me to be a part of your wonderful conversation.

Paul Warren: Absolutely, Kate. And I knew that, I'm just so. I knew that this conversation would be as rich as it was. And so glad that you were here with us. And hopefully, you'll join us on a future episode at some point.

Dr. Kate Speck: I could. I could. I would.

Paul Warren: All right. All right. But it'll be entirely up to you if that's part of your plan to do so.

Dr. Kate Speck: if the opportunity is presented to.

Amy Shanahan: Me, you might accept it. Well, it's up to you.

Paul Warren: That's right. We want to respect your autonomy, empower you to act on that.

Dr. Kate Speck: There we go.

Paul Warren: Thank you so much. Great to see you both and to talk to you both.

Amy Shanahan: You, too. All right, bye bye.

Thanks for listening to episode 21 of, Lions and Tigers and Bears MI. Be on the lookout for new episodes coming out in the near future.

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01:00:32