

Episode 22: Task Three-Evoking

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 22, Paul and Amy welcome a guest to discuss evoking. For episode resources, contact us and other information, please visit the Lions and Tigers and Bears MI website at 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. hi, Paul.

Paul Warren: Hello, Amy.

Amy Shanahan: Here we are again.

Paul Warren: Here we are again. And I have to say I've been long awaiting this particular episode because of our special guest today.

Amy Shanahan: Me too. And I'm glad that I, got to meet our special guest recently in a practice group that we're in.

Paul Warren: Yes. So I think before we go off into a different topic about our practice group, I think we should let our special guest introduce himself. We're very, very happy to have joining us today, Brandon Merkley. And you can remember that by, it's like Berkeley with an M. Yes. So, Brandon, we're so glad you're here and thrilled that you're going to be part of this Lions and Tigers and Bears episode. On task three evoking. So to that end, can we evoke a little bit from you about so our listeners will know who you are?

Brandon Merkley: Absolutely. Well, thanks, Paul and Amy, for having me here. Feels so honored to be here with you all. yeah, my name is Brandon Merkley. I'm a licensed professional counselor in the state of Colorado. my background, my education and my initial clinical work was, in individual and group settings. In the past five years, I've, been doing a program called High Fidelity Wraparound. It's an evidence based program that's a high level care coordination program and we work with youth and families that are multi system involved. And so my role is as a facilitator for those teams and then a coach, helping other staff towards a credentialing process, in the evidence based, program. And, let's see here. So I've been, I was first introduced to motivational

interviewing about ten or eleven years ago. and then I had a training about five years ago that really sold me on it. I had a wonderful trainer here in Colorado. and I have a work environment that really promotes motivational interviewing, its use and its, in its spirit, its ideas.

Paul Warren: So would it be fair to say, Brandon, that you would label yourself an MI enthusiast?

Brandon Merkley: That is completely fair. An am I enthusiast, a champion, a lover of MI, yes.

Amy Shanahan: How about aficionado? Someone came up with that word, aficionado.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah, that's a good one. I think I'm aficionado. Yes.

Paul Warren: Well, perhaps we'll all have an opportunity during this particular episode of our podcast to all get our aficionados on and, to discuss. That's task three, which is evoking. And I have to say, I'm so thrilled. Let me just repeat for the record, I'm thrilled that we're talking about evoking, because in my opinion, and I'm very curious as to what the both of you think. In my opinion, evoking is probably one of the most ignored and often stepped over of the four tasks

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Paul Warren: of the evidence based practice of motivational interviewing.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah, yeah, I agree with that. And I think it's so important of a task,

like, I kind of consider the sustainment task, you know, engaging and focusing and planning are also powerful. And if we aren't helping a person be able to speak to the reasons they have once were out of their life, maybe this wouldn't be something that could necessarily continue. And so pulling forth from them, helping them identify, that is so powerful.

Amy Shanahan: You mentioned the other tasks, Brandon. and I was thinking of a visual that some of us use in trainings. And for the listeners, if you imagine stair steps, and the first step was the first task of engaging, the second one is focusing, what are we working on? And the third one is this one evoking. And then you mentioned the fourth one is planning. and to your point, Paul helps me think of stepping over evoking. Oh, I'm all excited. I know what you want to do. So I want to jump to planning, and I've done that, and I've heard a lot of people talk about that. But to me, evoking is that reminder step to be curious. Like you said, Brandon, to draw out what they think, what they've done, what they've tried. So it's my, it's what I think of as the curiosity step, but it also really complements the spirit, believing that the person has it in them. So if I jump to planning, I may not necessarily believe that, like, oh, I'll tell you how you could do things. So evoking is really important. And yes, I agree with you, Paul, oftentimes an ignored, active ingredient of motivational interviewing.

Paul Warren: And I will go so far as to make this bold statement and sadly, this is not going to be visually captured for our, listeners. But I would be very curious for you to verbalize your reaction to this statement, which is that I go so far as to say that if you ignore evoking, if you jump from focusing, identifying the behavioral change goal, and then you and the hopefully collaborating client or patient go to planning, you're actually cutting out the essence of what motivational interviewing is one of the core, central elements of strengthening or building motivation. It's through the evoking that that

actually happens. At least that's my take. So, so my bold statement is, is if you're ignoring evoking, you're basically cutting the heart out of the practice of motivational interviewing reactions.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah, I agree with that. And it makes it, I would say, a bit more like directive as well, of like, you know, we're focusing on what we want to do and then now we're going to talk about how we plan it. and again, we aren't really, if you're ignoring evoking, you aren't creating something that's going to sustain long term, like evoking helps with.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, right. The person might decide to do what you think they should do and we didn't consider what's inside of them. And I'm not going to argue with your bold statement, Paul. I'll actually add that it really, really, captures that essence of responding back and drawing it out and reflecting back what we're hearing around the change talk in this evoking process, so that the person hears themselves talk about change and that's really powerful.

Paul Warren: And, you know, to that, and to what Brandon was saying earlier too, I have often seen and heard, when I've listened to audio recordings where the worker will prematurely jump to planning and all of a sudden they rip their mi hat off and they revert to being directive. It's sort of like, okay, we engaged, we focused, we identified with the behavioral change goal is now, let me tell you, you as the expert worker, what you need to do and what needs to be on your plan. And that's contrary to what the spirit of mi is. And it's certainly contrary to effective, use of this particular evidence based practice.

Brandon Merkley: Even if we are helping people, in

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Brandon Merkley: supporting people in their identifying what the planning is. I think, yeah, we have to be careful with that because at least for me personally, we are natural helpers and we like to support people. And so there can be kind of this, I don't know, uncomfortability of like just kind of sitting with something and building on something, someone's, internal motivation. And it's like so powerful and it's the core of like, you know, what we're talking about. So I think that could be so important to be very conscious of ourselves as helpers. Like sitting with a person in that and not moving to that planning prematurely so that we can kind of check something off a box.

Amy Shanahan: When you were talking about that, Brandon, it made me think of a question that I'm curious about what anybody thinks and what you all, how you would respond is how do you know when you're guiding with someone, guiding someone, which is, am I consistent? We're guiding people through these four tasks together. Of course. How do you know when, the shift happens and the ambivalence has kind of softened a bit and this change talk is stronger, sustained talk is softened and they're starting to talk about planning. How do you know and what do you do when you start to move so that, you know, how do I stop that reflex of wanting to help and advise and make some suggestions? I get all excited. And, you know, another thing that I've realized over the years I'm adding to my question with my own fillers is my ego sometimes gets in the way because I think it makes me feel good to think I'm helping someone. And that has taken me a while to quiet that ego part of me down, that I don't have to feel good about helping someone because even just using am I with people has made me feel good because I love to see their eyes light up when they figure it out for themselves. But anyway, my question is, how do you know when it's time, when the shift happens?

Paul Warren: Well, I'm very intrigued by your question and I want to respond to your question, and I want to add something in preface to your question, which is, I would go so far as to also say that if you are truly doing, am I spirited planning, you are continuing to evoke, but you're not evoking change talk necessarily. You're evoking the elements, actually of the plan. Because it goes back to what you were saying, Amy, that, mi is about believing that the person has some of this, or at least some of the ideas in them already. And yes, they, you know, they may not have the information, they may not have a particular skill or whatever. Ah. And yet they may have an idea that that's the direction that they need to go in. And there's great power in evoking that as part of their plan, because the evocation there is does actually make it their plan, not a plan that we're imposing on them.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah, that's a strong point. And the evoking is happening through a lot of the tasks, multiple tasks, and just speaks to its importance overall.

Paul Warren: I think to your question, Amy, which I really like, because I think in mi, there are two particular transitions between the tasks that people find particularly, mysterious, murky, confounding. One is the transition from the identified behavioral change goal, the focusing into the evoking.

Paul Warren: Like how to make the transition once you've identified the behavioral change goal, how to actually make that transition into then intentionally, as the guiding provider, evoking around that behavioral change goal. And I think the second transition is really the one that you've identified, which is that when change talk has been evoked, when ambivalence has been explored and resolved to some degree, and all the signs which I think we do need to enumerate are there that the person is ready to plan, then how do you make the transition from that change talk evoking into evoking the elements

of the plan? M and those are two very unique

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Paul Warren: transitional junctures that I think sometimes are hard for people to navigate or to understand.

Amy Shanahan: And I think, Well, I don't think I've heard, I think Bill Miller, when he was talking, I think he talked about it in Chicago at the forum at the MI conference that we were in, that we were there, and he mentioned this evoking for change talk and then evoking for planning. So I'm curious if they're going to expand on that in the fourth edition, which by the way, I don't know if you got your email, but I got an email from Guilford Press that my book is on the way, so. Oh yeah. So I'm excited to see, all of the changes, but definitely mentioned, I believe that there's going to be something around that very thing that you just described so well, Paul, this transition and that evoking happens differently in planning, but it's still happening.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah, it's a great question, Amy. And like, I don't, I mean, I think for me personally, I'll start noticing more commitment and activation language. And then that, indicates, okay, it's time. Let's get into some planning. But, you know, we talked about a few minutes ago how, sometimes people might want to go right into planning. but then you also want to balance out the other side of not, stewing in the evoking for too long when you're hearing good language. That indicates that people are ready to get to that planning piece.

Paul Warren: Brandon, can I ask you a follow up question?

Brandon Merkley: Absolutely.

Paul Warren: Because you alluded to something that I understood what you meant, and I think partly it's because I know you. and I'm wondering if I could invite you to elaborate on this a little bit further. Because you said, I, know they're ready to plan when I hear commitment language or when I hear activation. And again, I know what you mean by that, and I'm just wondering if you could just lay out specifically what examples. What is the client actually saying? Or what are you hearing when you're hearing what you just sort of described from. And I'll put it this way, an, am I practitioner aficionado perspective. So what are you actually hearing, from the client or the patient? because I think people understanding, like, what they're really listening for or what they're, you know, what the signs or what the symptoms are, and I mean symptoms in a good way, that they're moving toward planning, might be helpful. and hopefully that made sense to you.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah. Yeah. So, I mean, I think if I'm hearing statements like, you know, I might do this, or I would be willing to try that, things that, as we see them, as that mobilizing change talk on the other side of the hill, when I'm starting to hear those, kind of buy ins from people, then I know that. Okay, let's talk a little bit more. Let's plan about how we can make those things happen.

Paul Warren: Okay. So the person is actually offering you, they're offering you. You're not suggesting to them, but they're offering to you that these are some of the things that they're kind of thinking that they could do in order to move toward that goal.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah. Yeah. A willingness, things that they're thinking that they could do. yeah. Again, like you said, coming from them. Not, not from me, but coming from

them. Yeah.

Paul Warren: Okay. Okay. Did any examples come up for you, Amy, in terms of when, what you might hear or experience, when a person has kind of communicated to you that they're, you know, you've evoked enough change talk, the ambivalence has been explored enough and now, you know, the, the planning kind of, you know, lights are going off, so you as the worker are going to guide in a different direction now.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, things like, you know, I'm going to start doing this or I'm going to change that. I was talking with someone about changing, some of their eating and dieting habits and they said that they were going to start small and the first start Washington drinking more water and I'm going to drink more water and I bought this water jug and I'm going to use that. So the commitment language has a little bit, more teeth in it, if you will, that it's almost like they say they're going to do something or they did something already or they, like you said, it's mobilizing. It's not, I think I'm going to, or

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Amy Shanahan: I wish I could, it's more of a I did it or I'm going to do it. So it has a little bit more oomph to it that it feels moving towards definitely gonna do it. And I thinking as you were sharing your examples, Brandon, that, yeah, it makes sense, Paul, when Paul described evoking for change talk versus now I'm evoking for planning because my evoking for planning on your examples popped up in my head that I'd be curious of the person, what might get in the way or what things would strengthen your commitment to moving forward. So my evoking questions or my thoughts, my curiosity thoughts shift to not just change talk, but what would strengthen someone's plan. So in my head it pops. I think maybe because of your description, Paul, and you, Brandon, sharing your

examples, that I was able to go, oh, I could hear myself calculating what I might do to guide the person now to the plan. And I loved your analogy or metaphor of stewing because it comes up a lot where I could feel people's relief when we move to planning because they're tired of the evoking. Like, all right, stop asking me or stop reflecting on these things or affirming all these things. I want to do something. That's what I came to talk to you about.

Paul Warren: You know, two things I just want to throw in in regard to that. One is that, you know, the examples that you both gave, I also on that mobilizing side of change talk, which is the commitment, the activation and the taking steps, using the example that you gave Amy, the person saying, you know, one of the ways I'm going to achieve this goal is I'm going to drink more water. I could imagine that person coming in maybe for their next conversation and they say, hey Amy, I want to let you know I drank more water this many times that week. So that to me that's like a crystal clear, no pun intended example.

Amy Shanahan: Hopefully their water is crystal clear.

Paul Warren: Crystal clear, yes. of taking steps. And again, that signals to me this person is strengthening their plan, they're strengthening it with their language, they're strengthening it with their considerations of the actions they're going to take, and they're strengthening it with the actions they have taken and they are reporting on. the other thought that really came to me was sometimes it's so powerful when the worker maybe gets some of those signs and gets some of those indications and then the client says, well actually no, no, no, I'm not, I'm not. They backtrack.

Paul Warren: And that's great information too, because then that means perhaps there's

more ambivalence to explore. Perhaps there's more change talk to be evoked in regard to this particular change because they're not ready to commit, they're not ready to identify actions or they are, or they're not. They're definitely not taking any actions.

Amy Shanahan: It reminds me of like New Year's Eve, a lot of people are in commitment language and they say they're going to join a gym and they buy a treadmill and they bought those sneakers or got them for the holiday or Christmas if they celebrate. And then the first of the year comes and there those things sit. Right. So just because someone's committed doesn't mean that their plan is strong yet.

Paul Warren: Yeah, I'm thinking that maybe there are these two sort of transitional junctures that we've kind of been talking a little bit about. This idea of the transition from focusing into evoking change talk around a particular change goal and then the transition from some resolution of the ambivalence and enough change talk where the person is now offering commitment language and how that shifts what we're evoking on. Maybe it could be helpful, and I defer to both of your thoughts on this to be clear about like why we are evoking change talk and what that mechanism does. Because if you're jumping over evoking in terms of change talk and you're just jumping to planning, which is kind of prescription planning where the workers writing the prescription, so to speak, or the plan. So if

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Paul Warren: we're just looking at evoking around change talk. What are your thoughts about what would help people to better understand why we do want to invest in evoking? We don't want to stew or linger there when the person's ready to plan, but it is the heart or the motor of how motivational interviewing works. So I'd be very curious to

hear what your thoughts are about that or what you think might help people to have a better sort of connection to what evoking actually is. And maybe we'd skip over it less.

Brandon Merkle: I mean, I love this idea that like, you know, we as helpers, supporters, practitioners, whatever you call our, like, you know, we're change catalysts and we're supporting someone on their journey in a specific time in their life. And it kind of goes back to some of the stuff Amy was talking about, about like people having like a certain inflated ego. It seems like we're putting a heavy amount of emphasis on ourselves if we think that we're here helping this, supporting this person, and then that's going to be all they need. And so I feel like having this idea of us as change catalysts and that we are supporting the person in identifying what is within them so that they can sustain it long term. It's like making, investments in this person so that once we're gone and out of their life, they have built their self efficacy, they've increased confidence to where they can overcome obstacles. Because we have been with them in a position where we've supported them and being able to vocalize, those reasons.

Amy Shanahan: I love that, that it's a, forward movement, that if they walk away from working with us, they still have it in them and they, it's kind of stirred up a bit. That's the way I look at evoking, is we draw it out, but we stir it up too. I, when I use evocative strategies, which will here illustrated in this podcast, some of them, when I use some evocative strategies or reflect back what a person said, you could almost see them thinking. Oh, you could see the wheels turning in their heads. I think that my answer to your question, Paul, ah, really comes out in my head as a question to the listeners to think about a change that you've talked about. Even if you are committed to making a change or doing something about, or starting a change, and maybe a friend or a family member or somebody at work you're talking with about it starts diving in and offering you ideas and what they did and shared what, what they did. I think of a couple of

situations where I was talking with some folks and they started making all kinds of suggestions out of the kindness of their heart. They're all jazzed up, they're excited, they want to have this conversation with me. And they've been there before. but I kind of start to shut down because there's so many paths to change. There's so many different ways that people change and at different speeds. So, you know, I was talking about running again. And someone, that I knew started, you know, diving into, oh, let's go running trails and running. And I'm like, you know, I live in Pittsburgh and if anybody knows about Pittsburgh, trails means hills. Not going to do that. So, but, so all the two and a half minutes goes by. Not a long time, but I'm thinking, well, this person never asked me any questions about where I was with running, how far I've gotten. And if they did, they would have really realized I was just shuffling. I wasn't even really running yet. So, I just invite people to think about how they feel and how they react in their heads. Maybe even when someone starts to dive in and offer their suggestions, even if the person means well. So that's my question to the audience and you and Brandon to think about as well. And the other that leads me to, I think that that's why it's the ignored active ingredient and why it's important because really we can't ever influence people to change. And that took me a while to get over because that's why I got into this business, to change the world, to change people. so when I really started studying and practicing MI we really can't influence

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Amy Shanahan: people's change. So evoking is so important because it's within the person and guiding them to think about what they already have inside them is, to me, the piece of evoking that's so important.

Paul Warren: I love the juxtaposition and the connection that both what you and

Brandon just said, at least how it's kind of connecting in my mind.

Amy Shanahan: I'm glad it's connecting. I hope you can make sense of it.

Paul Warren: No, I believe I can. And I leave that to the listeners to decide whether, whether I've made sense of it or not. But, and not but. And what I'm hearing is, you know, Brandon, you made such an eloquent argument for how am I? Is truly a method of interacting with somebody that doesn't encourage dependence, it encourages strength identification, it encourages self efficacy, it encourages something that's created that the person can walk away with. It's not dependent on us. It really is about, that is truly what a collaborative partnership is. A, dependent connection is not the same thing as a collaborative partnership. And, Amy, it was so striking to hear what you said, following what Brandon said, because you kind of illustrated the idea that, like, when you yourself have been in a position of where you're considering a change, when well meaning people have, you know, you know, tried to motivate you, tried to give you suggestions that contrary to helping you move toward that change, it actually does the opposite. And it kind of, and it kind of spoils the connection between you and that person. And to me, the thing that I really love about motivational interviewing is our goal is not to influence somebody and we can be an influential collaborative partner because we are focusing on that person's strengths. We are evoking the motivations from that person. They're not our motivations. They're not why we think they should make the change. So we become the agent of reflecting back to them their strengths and abilities and the agent of helping to amplify their motivations. And to me, that's why evoking is so critical, because I don't want the person to be dependent on me. I mean, maybe there was a time in my career where I wanted to feel like, you know, I was the one who was helping them. and, you know, the more I've lived with motivational interviewing and the more I've done this work, I've realized that that's, I am not the

Center of that. like you were saying, Amy. And I don't know, I just, I really, I hope that maybe listeners will go back and listen to both of what each of you said and think about them, how they were connected, because it was really a, beautiful illustration of, really what mi m is trying to do and how we want to position ourselves as the collaborative partner in the conversation.

Amy Shanahan: Well, and also listen to how you summarized it and connected the two dots. And I'm going to add the word that Brandon used that stood out to me, that we're catalysts, so we're not, you know, we're not, not important in the, in the journey with the person. We're a catalyst. That doesn't mean I'm going to make someone change or I'm going to influence or I love that motivate someone because, even if a person talked to me about what they've done, it sounds inspiring, but I wouldn't say that I'm necessarily motivated to do exactly as they did.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah. And I was also thinking like going back to your point, Amy, of like when people have maybe not helped evoke things from you and they've just told you suggestions or this is what you can do, how it doesn't sit right with you. I think that I totally agree with that. I do also want to point out from my perspective in the work that I do with a lot of youth and families that are, involved in multiple

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Brandon Merkley: systems and used to a more system approach of like, this is what you do and this is how you do it, that when we start using motivational interviewing with them, it can feel uncomfortable and intimidating to them from feedback that I've received. And so I think that it's obviously still very important and we should do it. And I think it's important to think of that and to be able to sit in that uncomfortability, that

discomfort, because that is where some real positive change could happen.

Amy Shanahan: That's a really important point, Brandon, that I see in my experience working with adults as well. And I don't know, I'm not comparing saying they're similar. It makes me think of that quote, that culture eats strategy for breakfast, that when people go to the doctor, people go to the dentist, people come to the helping professional, they almost expect a prescription, a diagnosis, a list of things. And that makes sense. So, I mean, our whole culture of healthcare and behavioral health care is set up in a similar way that, you know, we assess, we diagnose, we write up a treatment plan, we identify what level of treatment you need or how much treatment or services you need. I think that there's a way that we could balance those things out, you know, to your point, so that people aren't so like put off by, wait, wait a minute. Why aren't you telling me what to do?

Paul Warren: You know, we, we have alluded to this a couple of times, but I don't know if we've said it directly that we are, we do have a scenario that we're going to share with folks, that, a role play scenario that we're going to read out and then discuss. And I'm wondering maybe before we jump into that scenario, if it might be helpful to talk a little bit about sort of, and this is a technical part of the practice of motivational interviewing, that, yes, we're saying that evoking is important. We're saying that it's the heart and kind of the motor of motivational interviewing. And what I can tell you is I've had the experience of listening to lots of audio recordings where people have actually evoked change talk and then they've done nothing with it. And m, I think it's important to understand that or to consider that, yes, evoking is part of what we do. It's one of the four tasks. And once something is evoked, it then needs to be employed, it needs to be put to work. So it's, it's not enough to just use an evocative strategy to evoke something, then what is evoked has to then be, for lack of, a better way to put it used.

And I'm, and I'm curious as to what your thoughts are about that. And, and, you know, it wouldn't be a conversation about the evidence based practice of motivational interviewing unless there was at least one acronym. And that is, and the one I'm throwing into the mix here is the one ears, e a r s, which is, which is kind of a modification on OARS. but I'm curious as to what your thoughts are about this idea of, employing or using what is evoked from a technical perspective in order to strengthen motivation, and to move toward planning.

Amy Shanahan: It made me think of the phrases that you use, Paul, about not leaving change on the table and tying it into your metaphor, Brandon, of stewing. Like stewing and evoking. It'd be like leaving the pot of stew on the stove after you made, after you made it. Now what are you going to do with it? So, yeah, moving, moving towards getting out of the, making the stew and serving it, doing something with it.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah, yeah. It's like that idea that the knowledge without any application is ineffective or useless, maybe. and so how do we take the knowledge that we have gotten from this person and apply it to be able to use it?

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Paul Warren: Yeah. And to me that's where I think of that acronym, M ears, because one of the things that I try and underline for folks is, yes, you want to have command of these evocative strategies and then you want to do something with what the strategy evoked.

Amy Shanahan: I have a thought. I'm wondering if we could invite listeners and maybe we could say this twice. The ears, as you said, are a, modification of the OARS, which

are open questions, affirmations, reflections and summaries. And ears is that shift. The e is elaboration, affirmations, reflections and summaries. So it's similar in that way. So if you know the OARS already, you just have to think about the open pieces asking for elaboration that we might, when we go through this role play, that you could put those ears on and listen in for these things when the role plays happening. and there might be some other strategies called evocative strategies that are going on as well, perhaps, but just inviting folks when we get into the role play, to kind of tune in to the ears, the elaboration, affirmations, reflections and summaries.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And just to underline, and maybe it's a good time to go into the role play, but to underline that we're intentionally asking for elaboration about something that helps strengthen the person's motivation. We're intentionally affirming a particular strength or effort that the person made as it relates to the identified behavioral change goal. We're intentionally reflecting or summarizing as a way of strengthening motivation.

Amy Shanahan: Right. We're not just using them to throw them on the wall to see if they stick. We're using with the intention of listening in and responding to the change talk.

Paul Warren: Yes. Again, if we are not at the place of planning, and even when we are at the place of planning, if somebody offers things that could be on the plan, we could ask them to elaborate on those. We could reflect or summarize what they say, because that's planning still is a part of evoking and we still want to strengthen that plan as well. Any additional comments or thoughts before or anything else we should touch on in terms of this task before we go to the role play?

Amy Shanahan: I'm good to go into the role play. Brandon, do you have anything to add?

Brandon Merkley: No, not right now. I'm ready for the role play.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. All right.

Paul Warren: The role play it is.

Amy Shanahan: So we have a role play between the worker, Jackson, and the person looking to consider a goal of increasing their exercise. This is Raphael. So Brandon is going to play Jackson, the worker. So you will hear now Brandon's voice as Jackson, and you will hear Paul playing Raphael. So they are going to go through this role play for you all and.

Paul Warren: Amy, before Brandon and I do that, is there anything else? I know you asked people to think about ears.

Paul Warren: Is there anything else you want to tee up for people or anything else you want to invite people to consider in terms of what they may hear, in this particular scenario?

Amy Shanahan: Well, I think it would be if you want to. Listeners also pay attention to what Rafael is saying. And are you hearing change talk? Are you hearing sustained talk? and how is Jackson navigating that and what continues to happen? So that's what we do. We train our ears to listen for that change talk. And then use those ears, the acronym, to respond to that change talk. So those two things, listening in for both sustain and change talk. And then, listening in for the skills that Jackson is going to employ here.

Brandon Merkley: Hey. Ready, Paul?

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Brandon Merkley: Rafael. Hello, Rafael. Thanks for coming to talk to me. So, what's been on your mind?

Paul Warren: Well, I'm thinking about my exercise. I used to do more rigorous exercising. I would run a few times a week and be more mindful of my eating. But over the last five years, I've been doing less and realize that I'm putting on weight.

Brandon Merkley: You're not happy with the changes and you'd like to get back into a routine.

Paul Warren: I still have a routine. It's just that I've been doing less over the last five years. I haven't run much at all. And even though I have healthy eating habits, I'm gaining weight. I must be taking in a lot more than I'm burning off.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah, you're really committed to taking care of yourself, and you'd like to do more than what you've been doing lately.

Paul Warren: That's it. And for some reason, I keep promising myself I'll do more. And you know what they say, tomorrow never comes.

Brandon Merkley: Tomorrow has arrived.

Paul Warren: Today, I keep telling myself that I should do more exercise. And it feels

forced when I start to think about jogging again. I, don't mind jogging. And I know that when I get into it, I feel better, mentally and physically, but it's just so hard to get myself to do it. There was one or two weeks where I got myself to run a mile or two, and I go back to the routine of making a promise that I'll do it tomorrow.

Brandon Merkley: You ran a mile or two, right?

Paul Warren: Two out of 100 isn't bad.

Brandon Merkley: What are some other things that you've considered?

Paul Warren: Making smaller promises, like only committing to running once per week. I also just recently heard a podcast where a runner committed to getting out there and only running for five minutes. And then they did more. I suppose having lower expectations is the thing, but so far that hasn't worked. I've also thought about getting my bike out, but it would probably need a lot of work. And then what am I going to do? You know, come winter time when I travel, I'll go to the gym and pass by the treadmills and get on the stair climbers.

Brandon Merkley: Lots of options. And you've been taking some steps. So what's worked for you in the past? Getting into exercising more.

Paul Warren: That's the thing. I don't really know. It seems to just happen that I get up and do it and then do it again, and voila. It's a pattern. And now I'm thinking about it. Whoa. I used to run with a friend, and now I don't have that luxury. They had knee surgery.

Brandon Merkley: So having someone to run with was helpful for you?

Paul Warren: It was. When I didn't feel like doing it, they did. And vice versa. It wasn't only their knee surgery. My schedule has changed so much that I don't have access to a running buddy.

Brandon Merkley: And now you're determined how to figure out, how to go about this solo.

Paul Warren: Well, I have no choice right now. This helps explain why it's been so hard. I hadn't thought of that. And I have been so frustrated with myself.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah, getting going on your own isn't always easy. I'm wondering if you looked ahead a few months and you were less frustrated. What do you see?

Paul Warren: I see me doing more rigorous exercise, even if a few times per week. Even mixing things up, listening to a music or a book keeps me going. Once I get started, I can look ahead at travel days because I seem pretty good about getting to the gym. I can consider days when it's best for me to do more than walking.

Brandon Merkley: Doing, more doesn't just include jogging. And you'd have music or a book to keep you going. You can see yourself being more planful.

Paul Warren: I guess.

Brandon Merkley: Ah.

Paul Warren: That I have to do something to push myself. And getting started with anything takes more thought. Funny, I thought I'd just wake up every day and just do it. I have tried to plan. Maybe I need to be more deliberate.

Brandon Merkley: And, this is really important to you, and you want to jumpstart about making some specific plans. Rafael, would it be okay with you if I shared a couple things that have worked for some other folks?

Paul Warren: Yes, that would be great. I'm already feeling some momentum with the idea of planning more.

Brandon Merkley: Okay. And so some people start off by adding one thing each week.

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Brandon Merkley: I've also seen others mark their calendars for the best days, like you had mentioned. and for others, it's been helpful. Who've had a goal in mind? Something to strive for. So, what do you think about these?

Paul Warren: I like the idea of starting off with one day each week and even going so far as to only promise short runs. I think my expectations have been so high that I just say, screw it. I might consider the goal thing. Worry that that might be too high of our reach. Out of the gate, you could see.

Brandon Merkley: Yourself sticking to it if you lowered your expectations?

Paul Warren: Yes, yes. Just thinking about it that way, it seems more manageable. I

think I would consider doing one different exercise and put that in my calendar.

Brandon Merkley: Could I ask you a question?

Paul Warren: Yeah. Okay.

Brandon Merkley: So if you considered your confidence on a scale one to ten, and one being you're not confident at all and ten is you're extremely confident, where would you say you currently are right now?

Paul Warren: I'm probably an eight.

Brandon Merkley: Okay, you're an eight right now and why not a seven?

Paul Warren: Yeah. you know, I've made these promises in the past and now that we've talked it out, it actually feels doable. Manageable. And honestly, I'm tired of hearing myself talk about it. I have to do something.

Brandon Merkley: It feels different talking this out. So, what would you think that it would take to move you from an eight to say, like an 8.5?

Paul Warren: Honestly, just seeing myself do it for a few weeks, I'm the only thing that really gets in the way. And it will be helpful to check in with you. that'll be a bit of accountability, that I'll have in the back of my mind.

Brandon Merkley: Okay. So coming back in a few weeks, you want to give an update about what you've done. And, you know, it's all a process. It's up to you how you go

about your plan and I'm happy to support you.

Paul Warren: Thanks. Yes. I'd like to come back and update you on how I did. you've been helpful listening and helping me sort things out. It feels. It feels a bit clearer to me now.

Brandon Merkley: This sounds like a good next step. So I'll see you here in a few weeks, Rafael.

Paul Warren: Sounds great. Thank you.

Amy Shanahan: Bravo. Bravo.

Paul Warren: That was a double bravo.

Amy Shanahan: Double bravo. One for Paul and one for Brandon, who are playing Raphael and Jackson. So I'm curious, I guess when we asked the listeners to listen in for change and sustained talk as you were playing through the role play, and either one of you could take the question first, it's up to you. What did you notice around the change in sustained talk? How would you summarize that after you went through the role play?

Paul Warren: I mean, for me, as the person considering the change.

Paul Warren: One of the things that I really liked that I think the roleplay illustrated with honesty is that ambivalence really can be a very back and forth. Like I wanted, I've done this and, oh, it's not that great. And I'm thinking this way and, oh, you know,

maybe it's not going to work. And, and I love the way that the worker was with me in, in that whole up and down because it felt very like hills and valleys. Hills and valleys. And I felt like the worker was really with me and listening to that and attending to that and clearly was kind of reflecting or using his ears to, particularly identify the top of the hills that were helping me to move into the direction and into the direction that I wanted to go in.

Paul Warren: So that's, that was kind of my take. It rang true to me that somebody would be exploring their ambivalence and would have like change talk and sustain talk. Change talk and sustain talk. That it would be that closely, linked to each other.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah. This script like rang true

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Brandon Merkley: to how a conversation would happen. yeah, I agree with what you're saying, Paul, there, about the ambivalence. And I like how the worker really attended, and responded strategically to that, change talk that we saw throughout.

Amy Shanahan: And you could have seen that there could have been an opportunity for the worker to lean into the other side of the butt and not intentionally, as Paul said before the role play, intentionally respond to the change side.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And what I can say is that this client, this person gave ample opportunity for the worker to lean into, could have explored, could have asked questions about what would have really just evoked more sustained talk, you know? And the worker, the worker was able to communicate that they heard everything and

they still intentionally focused on what was guiding me toward the change and actually guided me toward a plan.

Amy Shanahan: Mm.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, yeah.

Brandon Merkley: I think we heard that. That part in there where there was some of that activation language of they would consider doing one different exercise, putting in a calendar. And then that's kind of when the worker went into the confidence scaling questions, they kind of guided it more towards that planning piece.

Paul Warren: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And again, that was clearly one of the evocative strategies, using the confidence ruler.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah. Confidence rules. I love confidence rulers. I use them all the time. I feel like, yeah, we have that. Why isn't the number lower? What are those strengths that you have that we can leverage and we can build on what's going to make it higher? Like, what do we need to support you with to get to that place that you want to be that you know is best for you?

Paul Warren: Go ahead, Amy.

Amy Shanahan: And we, are going to offer the script for folks to see. And maybe if they're visual learners and don't just want to listen, it's up to you. You could do either or both. will offer the script, and you could see the words and see the reflections and see the skills and see the ruler written out in the script as Brandon was sharing. and you

could also look up evocative strategies, but we could probably share the list of the evocative strategies as well, because we, in this script, employed the use of the ears, but also some other evocative strategies. And I wonder if you caught a couple others, Brandon or Paul.

Paul Warren: I'm thinking about that question, Amy, and before I respond to it, because I need to think about it a little bit more, and I may call the script up again so I can see it. because I guess I'm kind of a visual learner, having the words in front of me could be helpful. I do want to make a point about something that I got from the script that I wouldn't have gotten from the script if it hadn't been for the conversation we had before. And it relates to a point that Brandon made earlier. I thought that there was an overt mention of this is up to you, which is emphasizing my autonomy about what I want to do, how I want to approach this. And the worker verbalized that. And I. And I think the other thing that the worker did, too, and again, I think this was a really good example, is the worker didn't attempt to make me dependent on, him. And he did allow himself to be available as somebody that the client could be accountable to, because the client said, you know, being able to come back to you and give you an update would help me to feel like I'm being accountable with somebody. But the client came up with that.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: So I think it's a great example of how the worker made themselves available to the client's strategy, and yet the worker didn't impose that, didn't say, well, how about if you come back and report. Report to me about this? You know, it really was the client. It was client motivated, and the worker was available to do it. And, again, I feel like there's something so portable about that. Even if the client

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Paul Warren: finishes their work with this particular worker, they can walk into their lives with this idea that, you know, for me, as somebody who's considering change, it can be helpful to have somebody that I'm accountable to. And that worker can walk away with that as their own strategy, because they experienced it, because they came up with it. It's theirs. It's not because the worker suggested it.

Brandon Merkley: And to answer your. Go back to your question as well, Amy, I think I noticed, in there that looking forward strategy. were he asked if you were to look ahead a few months, you're less frustrated. What do you see? I think looking forward and looking, back are very powerful because sometimes depending on where we are in change, it can feel kind of overwhelming in the moment. It could be, our glasses are fogged or muddied and we can't see clearly, just being in it. But asking a question like that, I think can be so powerful to have someone see beyond the current state that they are and where they want to be, or if we're talking about looking back, where they have been in the past and the successes that were going on then.

Paul Warren: And looking back was clearly demonstrated, you know, what about in your past made it possible for you to do this? And that's where the person kind of had the epiphany of like, oh, I used to have a running partner and I hadn't thought about that. And here I was giving myself a hard time, but now I don't have. And it's so interesting because that makes such sense. A running partner is a collaborative partner you can be accountable to.

Paul Warren: So there's, you know, clearly for this person, the strategy of having another person to connect with about it is beneficial. So that was another evocative

strategy. Looking back is. But that's a specific example in the scenario that, where I saw that happen.

Amy Shanahan: Well, the e in ears and also elaboration by itself is an evocative strategy. And that was, I think, I think you asked, what have you been considering or what have you thought of which could be an elaboration. Tell me what you're already thinking. which is a nice way to put that kind of question in your back pocket to be curious about what have people given consideration to already? Before we dive in, and I noticed, the worker also offered some suggestions only after, Rafael shared some things that he was already thinking about. So you frame it that way where you draw out first and then, well, let's see if I can offer up some things.

Paul Warren: And I would also like to highlight, since you mentioned the offering of the suggestions and the timing of when the suggestions were offered, that the worker also evoked. What are your thoughts? What are your reactions to those strategies? And again, affirming the person's autonomy, that they'll make the decision about what they want to do, what they think is best, and asking for their reaction is another, is another intentional evocation. And that's part of the EPE, the provide illicit strategy or the ask tell, ask, which, which this episode is not focusing on that, but needless to say, it was also demonstrated.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah, yeah. It was really powerful to figure out where he was, what's been considered, what's helped. What do you, how you feel about that before providing the insight that the clinician had and you know, asking that, that permission question. Can I, can I share some ideas with you? Which I think, Paul, you've stated so well before when we've talked about like, permission questions can be the ultimate, like, exercise in autonomy.

Paul Warren: Yeah, yeah. And I'll say, mostly because you're, you're a skilled role, player. Brandon, that when you asked me that question, I believed that I could have answered you either way, even though the script indicated that I was going to answer yes. But I felt like you asked me and I believed that you would have accepted whatever answer I gave.

Brandon Merkley: Well, that's great to hear. That's a powerful statement.

Paul Warren: Yes.

Amy Shanahan: You

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Amy Shanahan: felt like you weren't being pushed either way and there wasn't an agenda.

Paul Warren: Nope, nope, no. And I'll add that I felt like I was invited to be in a conversation. And to be able to do that with your tone of voice, is a very eye, level and effective skill.

Amy Shanahan: I noticed that too, Brandon. Your PACE was right on target and the sound of your voice was very warm and affirming, even without the words. Just the way you introduced, what you were going to say.

Paul Warren: Yeah, no, go ahead, Brandon.

Brandon Merkley: Oh, I was just saying that. Just something that's so powerful of being, as we all know, being so conscious of our tone of voice, our body language, our eye contact to make it to where it is a conversation. And it's not like I'm the expert here. I have this agenda that we're going to check these boxes off, we're going to hit all these points and I'm going to get you fixed and taken care of and then on your merry way. You know, it's like just being with that person, there's so much power to more than just the words that we use.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And you know, I also think, although yet again, not the expressed topic of this particular episode, it also was a wonderful demonstration of how engagement continues through every task of motivational interviewing. It's not like you stop engaging now. I'm focusing on evoking and you know, you were clearly still engaging, using all your tools of engagement in addition to using evocative strategies. So I hope that when people hear it or when they read the scenario, they will also consider those elements of what was demonstrated, as well.

Amy Shanahan: I was going to mention, I've been hearing a lot because I've been sharing what I know is coming out in the fourth edition of Miller and Rolnick's book, and some participants in the trainings, when they hear, and I don't know if we said it in this episode, we might have said it in previous episodes. And definitely when we talked about the fourth edition book, coming out, we talked about the four tasks used to be referred to as the four processes. And when I share that with folks that I've been training in my transition, I. They actually, I, have a mixed review that they think task is a checklist and it messes with their heads. Right. And I love this demonstration in the roleplay because it is a conversation. And this particular conversation naturally rolled into planning and being curious about planning without there being like, it didn't sound like you had a checkbox and that you're pushing Brandon, when you were role playing

Jackson, that you're pushing Raphael towards that plan or that you were hurrying the conversation along to the point of the cadence of your voice. There wasn't any angst or hurriedness about it. And just for folks to listen in for, you may be a worker with this person and hand them off to a different type of worker, depending on what your role is in your system of care. So it's not meant to be a task that you check the box. It's just you may be focusing on evoking more, and maybe someone else on your team is going to be doing more of the in depth planning. But I love the illustration that you both played, because you went from evoking to planning without a checkbox and in about, I don't know, six or seven minutes. So you can imagine how much depth you can go to in a short period of time. Being curious about people with neutrality.

Brandon Merkley: yeah, I love that you pointed out that task piece because there's so much I've heard is coming out in the fourth edition that I love and I'm excited about, but the tasks versus processes, that is something that I've kind of wrestled with, I guess. and feeling like, just like you said,

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Brandon Merkley: Amy, that task seems like you check the box off, you move on. This has been completed. so it'll be really interesting to see how it's talked about in the.

Amy Shanahan: Book, how they elaborate on it.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah. What do you all think is like, is behind the changing of evocation, the spirit component to empowerment, but leaving evoking as the task and not changing it, like to say empowering.

Amy Shanahan: It makes a lot of sense to me, I think, because of the redundancy. So when you talk. When I would talk about evoking from the spirit perspective, I talked about evoking from. You believe that it's in a person, that you have that heart set, that you believe that the person you're sitting across from M has it in them and you're going to. And then the drawing out of it, the evoking, the other side of it is the task, the skill that you're using. You're using these evocative strategies, you're using your ears to evoke more change talk, drawing it out. So one is a belief and one is a do so, one is being and one is a doing. So for me, it makes sense. I recently put, a spirit cartoon video together for an asynchronous course. Paul, I haven't shown it to you yet. Paul has been my sounding board actor to help me out with some of these. And, we just finished it up last week, and I had a really good time diving into the word empowerment. And I learned by. I've learned the spirit of mi by really examining the opposite of empowerment. So, that was really interesting to me, and I know that I'm going to want to play with it more and noodle it, if you will, so that I feel even more confident talking about the notion of empowerment. But speaking of high fidelity rap, I was working with a group of young folks that work with, folks in the system of child and family services in Pennsylvania. And, they were just a really keen younger group of folks that really talked about the spirit, and they called it the soul. And I loved that. And they got empowerment. They believed it. They loved it because they didn't have the clinical nuance that I had when deciding, did I like the word empowerment compared to evocation or not? So, I'm really enjoying having the conversations about empowerment.

Brandon Merkley: Yeah. There was, like, something more pure about their perspective. It wasn't muddied by the clinical terminology.

Amy Shanahan: And everything, and 1520 years of language around, you know, how we've been using it, training. Yeah, exactly.

Paul Warren: I actually really like the change, and I like the change because for me, empowerment has always been about the exercise of autonomy. And I think that it's. It's helpful to make that change in spirit and also the clarification of that, because there can be sort of some murkiness around the word empowerment, that empowerment means. It's almost like empowerment is almost like motivation. Like, I'm motivating you, I'm going to empower you. Well, actually, no, am, I is about helping that person to find their motivation. And empowerment in mi really means that that person gets to exercise their autonomy and their power. And I love the change because the motor of mi, the thing that makes mi work is the process or the task of evoking. And, that language, I think, needed to stay the same and with spirit there, there did need to be the change. I think it makes sense to me just from keeping it client centered. So, yeah, thanks for.

Amy Shanahan: Go ahead, Brandon.

Brandon Merkley: I was going to say thanks for sharing that. The insight of, and it's clearly the spirit piece, the skill are two totally different things and they deserve more of a distinction as opposed to how they're, labeled now.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, they all work in concert, but when you pick them apart, they're all different instruments or different things that are part of the concert. I

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Amy Shanahan: really love the young folks that when we are doing the spirit exercise, I invite groups to work in small teams and, look at partnership and what does it look like? What does it look like when it's not happening? How do you know you're experiencing it? So they really dove in. I said, google it. Do whatever you want to do to learn more

about it. And they talked about empowerment, and there's empowerment in different areas. And I loved what they said. I was like, oh, my goodness, I wonder if Miller and Rolnick wrote about it. But I said, if not, maybe you should write to them and talk about it. But they talked about, some people are empowered, feel empowered in one area of their life and not in another. And they started to talk about the different aspects of, disenfranchised people and people that don't have resources. And it was a really rich discussion. It was one of my favorite conversations around the spirit. So, yes, evoking needed to stay and work in concert with the spirit of empowerment, partnership and acceptance and compassion.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And we also felt it was important to dedicate one of our episodes of the podcast to evoking because of the, phenomena, I'll put it that way, of jumping over it or ignoring it or kind, of, exiling probably one of the most active ingredients of this particular work that we have the opportunity to do. And, you know, I, I'm so glad we spent the time to kind of talk about this, look at the scenario. And of course, we want to invite people to share their thoughts, their questions, their reactions to this or their perspectives to this particular, topic and to this particular podcast and any additional or final thoughts, about this particular topic. Task three, evocation, that either of you would like to add before we conclude our conversation. At this point.

Brandon Merkley: I would say just simply just echoing everything that you've just said, all throughout all of our time together. But what you just said of just yet, the utter importance of this task and being such a critical ingredient, to the whole process. And I'm thankful that you all dedicated a whole podcast to this and thankful that you all have me on here.

Amy Shanahan: We're grateful that you joined us, Brandon. It was enjoyable

conversation and thanks for playing your role play as Jackson.

Paul Warren: And again, thank you, Brandon, for being here with us, for sharing your insights. And, I knew that this would be a natural fit for you. And I'm so glad, that you joined us and that we had this opportunity to talk.

Brandon Merkley: It was great. Thanks so much for having me all.

Amy Shanahan: Thank you. And one last note to the listeners that we'll put the transcript on the website, probably the Mountain plains ATTC, website, which would be mtpainsattc.org/podcast so Mountain Plains ATTC is where the original podcast sit, and you might be able to find that transcript there, if you wanted to listen again or listen in, or check out the script and see if you can. If you're a visual learner like Paul and myself, you could see the skills that were employed and you could.

Paul Warren: Always just send an email to that address and say, I want the evocation script for Lions and Tigers and bears. Am I sweet? Well, until next time, thank you both so much.

Amy Shanahan: Thank you, you all. Bye bye.

Brandon Merkley: Thanks for listening to episode 22 of Lions and Tigers

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Brandon Merkley: and Bears MI be on the lookout for new episodes coming out in the near future.

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