

## **Episode 28- An MI Consistent Approach to Engaging**

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

CASAT Podcast Network.

Lions of Tigers and Bears MI is brought to you through a collaboration between the Mountain Plains ATTC and NFARtec. In episode 28. Paul and Amy welcome a guest to discuss an MI consistent approach to engaging 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).

Paul Warren: Lions and Tigers and Bears MI an interactive podcast focused on the evidence based practice of motivational interviewing, a method of communication that guides toward behavior change while honoring autonomy.

Amy Shanahan: I'm Amy Shanahan.

Paul Warren: And I'm Paul Warren.

Amy Shanahan: And we've worked together over the past ten years. We've been facilitating MI learning collaboratives and providing trainings and coaching sessions focused on the adoption and refinement of MI. We're also members of the motivational interviewing network of trainers. Join us in this adventure into the forest, where we

explore and get curious about what lies behind the curtain of MI.

Paul Warren: Hello, Amy.

Amy Shanahan: Hi, Paul.

Paul Warren: How are you today?

Amy Shanahan: I'm, fabulous. We're back in the studio again.

Paul Warren: Yes, we are back in the studio. And we're laughing because that is actually going to become a running joke for this podcast series. Sounds, very posh. We're in the studio.

Amy Shanahan: I have this gaming chair that I'm sitting in and. Really comfy.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And if only this were, in a film, you could see our super special secret guest laughing at us, talking about the studio, because we're all at home in our respective spaces or offices, recording through the magic of Zoom.

## **Blair Atkinson is a credentialed alcoholism and substance abuse counselor**

Yes, we are delighted to kick off this first episode of our podcast series with our special guest, whom I've had the privilege of knowing for two years. Plus Blair Ekkenson, who is going to introduce herself and tell us a little bit about herself. Welcome, Blair.

Amy Shanahan: Hey, Blair. Welcome to the studio.

Blair Eckensen: Thank you for having me to the studio. so, my name is Blair Atkinson. I live in New York. My educational background is at a bachelor's degree in addiction studies, master's in psychology. I'm a credentialed alcoholism and substance abuse counselor. professionally, I serve on a couple advisory panels for addiction service agencies, and I work as a counseling clinician, with folks with substance use disorder, co occurring mental health disorders. currently, I'm staffed at a low threshold harm reduction, medical practice in my community. And, yeah, I'm honored to be here because I love the mi spirit. The spirit of mi.

Amy Shanahan: Beautiful.

Paul Warren: And we are delighted that you're here. And we may borrow a term from a prior podcast. to share with you, if it's a term you want to, adopt, is that. Do you consider yourself. And I know this is a closed question, but do you consider yourself an MI enthusiast?

Blair Eckensen: I do. I do. And I think a lot of people who know me would probably consider me one, too, because I like to talk about it, even if they don't know what I'm talking about.

Paul Warren: The sign of a true enthusiast is that they will chart through the conversation whether the other person knows what a reflection is or nothing.

Amy Shanahan: I think if one of our other colleagues were here, she would reference the metaphor, analogy. So you drank the Kool Aid, which is interesting, because when I

was at a, training of new trainers, we had some folks from Korea, and they heard us use that phrase, we drank the mi Kool Aid. And they were

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Amy Shanahan: really curious what we meant by that. And then we all went, that's not really a good comparison from the history of that story in the United States, so maybe we should come up with a different analogy. But until then, you drank the Kool Aid, I presume.

Paul Warren: Feel free to reject that phraseology if you'd like.

Blair Eckensen: I was going to say we could say I caught the bug, but then maybe that's not the best thing to say either, right outside of a global pandemic.

Amy Shanahan: Boy, we are, yes, women in this sea trying to figure out the right one.

Paul Warren: Well, perhaps some of our guests, who are listening, would be able to guide us in regard to that terminology. A better one, a better, better metaphors that we could use in regard to that.

## **Paul: This podcast focuses on the intentional practice of motivational interview**

And it's appropriate to mention, hopefully, our audience, because with this particular six episodes of the series, we are thrilled that Blair is here with us. And Blair has prepared

in advance and not shared with Amy and I, super secret, super special questions, no pressure, Blair, that are related to the topic of our podcast today that Blair is going to lay on, the roundtable for the three of us and you to ponder and discuss and what we want to invite everyone or anyone who or the one person who is listening to this podcast. I don't want to make assumptions. We want to invite you to comment and to write in if you have any thoughts about this particular topic or if you have any particular reactions to what we've said. This series of six episodes is designed to begin with the framing out of an am I consistent approach, and then making a transition with the third and fourth episodes into the practice, the intentional practice of motivational interview. So this is episode number one, and we are going to focus on this idea of an intentional use of an am I consistent approach as a means to engage folks in care. I think Amy wants to say something in regard to this.

Amy Shanahan: Well, I was wondering, Paul, if, before Blair reveals her super secret questions. Are those your pronouns, Blair? I didn't even ask.

Blair Eckensen: Yes, they are. You think she correct?

Amy Shanahan: Yes, I did. Thank you for that. Paul, I love how you talk about this consistent approach compared with the practice of mi. I try to talk about it when I do trainings, and I'm glad you're not there to listen. I don't know that I do it as eloquently as you, and I'm wondering if you would indulge us and let us know how you describe the difference. Is that all right? Can we start there?

Paul Warren: We can. I mean, I'm positive that Blair and you both have thoughts that you would add to this. and before I say anything more, I want to invite you to comment if there's anything you want to say about the distinction. Or I can start however you want

to proceed. Blair, is there anything you would put on the table in regard to this, in terms of the distinction between an am m I consistent approach and the, practice of motivational interviewing?

Blair Eckensen: yeah, I would. I would say that an am m I consistent approach is the spirit of counseling. It shows a genuine desire and an attempt to understand the person through care. Deep listening, curiosity. while the practice of mi happens when there is a clear behavior change goal and uses the four tasks and communication skills to help a person explore and resolve ambivalence, find motivation to make that change.

Amy Shanahan: Love it.

Paul Warren: I got nothing to add.

Amy Shanahan: I think the thing that I think about is the word consistent when we have

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Amy Shanahan: a consistent approach, and I noticed, Paul, that you are modeling it in this conversation. So, for example, I asked you a question to maybe describe it for us, and instead of taking the bait and answering it for us, you partnered with the two of us and asked us what we thought as well. So there is an example right there. And when I think about consistent, does it mean with all the people we serve, does it mean at home with our. Her loved ones and friends? yeah, I'm just curious about it.

Paul Warren: Me, too. And I will tell you, it's a very, How can I put this? It's a very complex consideration, because I'm going out on a limb maybe by saying this, but one

of the things that I love to say is that you can use an MI consistent approach in any and every conversation that you have with another human being.

Paul Warren: You can't practice MI with every person you're in conversation with for the very reasons that Blair and you, Amy, and others have identified as to whether we are able to in our everyday life. Well, let me make an I statement. Whether I am able to in my everyday life when I'm speaking to my loved ones or my partner or somebody, I might be interacting with in the grocery store who's just run over my foot with the shopping cart. Am I able to consistently practice, an MI consistent approach?

Probably nothing. I certainly have brought it into areas where I thought it might be really helpful if the person felt I was trying to understand them and actually making the effort to understand them.

Amy Shanahan: I know I have a harder time at home using. I have this habit of doing things that might be inconsistent with an MI approach. Giving advice, for example, telling somebody what to do. I try not to be confrontational ever in my approaches with anyone I talk with, which would be an inconsistent aspect of an approach.

Paul Warren: Again, I think that we can choose. And again, Blair, I'm thinking about the work that you do and the work that I was aware of, and I know you're doing new work now, too, but the work that I was aware of, and how when you sit across from somebody in the social service context, you can really intentionally choose to interact with that person regardless of what's happening. Because the context invites an MI consistent approach, it doesn't mean necessarily that you're always going to be met with that. But we can certainly employ it to see what happens. Blair has got a big thought about this. You can't see her face, but I can. And I could be completely wrong. Blair. I could be completely wrong.

Blair Eckensen: Yeah. Well, is it fair to say that an am I consistent approach? So you have, the practice of am I the goal or the use of it is to explore ambivalence, articulate motivations to change, and perhaps the goal of an am I consistent approach, well, might not be the right word, but is to strengthen the engagement with the person you're interacting with.

Paul Warren: I would say 100%, and I would go so far, Blair, is to underline what you're saying and say that it is the goal.

Amy Shanahan: Right. I agree. and I liked how you put that. It made a whole lot of sense and simplified it in a way, because when I hear the spirit, it's so packed with a lot of different things, and I'll get a little vulnerable here. there's times when I am realizing that I'm not being all that empathic, like with a friend or a family member. I'm not taking in their perspective

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Amy Shanahan: as much as I would, in an intentional practice of mi. And I. I'm not saying I shouldn't. I would like to be better at that, but that's just one example, because the spirit itself is so, so packed in. But I love that you distinguished for the purpose of engaging someone in a conversation.

Paul Warren: I would agree with that. And I would add, and, I'm just talking about perhaps, an unforeseen gain that I've experienced from practicing motivational interviewing and from practicing and trying to employ an. Am I consistent approach? I think, and this is, take it for what it's worth, this is my subjective opinion. I, or experience or both. I think that I have gotten better at trying to understand what somebody else is



communicating to me before I shoot my mouth off. and I think an mi consistent approach has helped me to do that because I love that.

## **Blair said deep listening is much more than just hearing what the person said**

Blair said, when you were talking about the distinction between the two, you mentioned deep listening, and deep listening is much more than just hearing what the person said. It's also really considering all the other elements and areas of what this person is communicating. Their affect, their history, their, where they are at any particular moment.

Blair Eckensen: And you had mentioned the work that you knew I was doing and I'm still doing, and the deep listening, the like, truly understanding, or making an attempt to understand somebody. It really is that relational foundation is a huge part of the work. And if not all, in some cases, it seems like it's all of the work, but it's certainly the foundation for any more work to come, especially when working with folks who are feeling pretty disregarded and disempowered, whether it's against addiction or abusers or within the criminal justice system or financially, to just have a space where they feel affirmed and validated and heard. that in and of itself sometimes seems like it leads to positive changes or, it lays the groundwork.

Amy Shanahan: you made me think of some folks that I've been working with in the, I don't want to say criminal justice system, in the system of foster care and child and youth services, where some folks have struggled, when coaching them with having a consistent approach of mi m, that I'm just at this point in the system where I, as a

worker, just have to tell the folks what they have to do to keep their kids or get their kids back or whatever the parameters of the court is. I think that's a beautiful place to talk about what you just said with these folks that you really get more out of having this consistent approach of really listening to understand them. And I've noticed that when some of the workers do that, the caregiver or the parent gives up the information that they would have offered them anyway by saying, well, I know I need to take this class even though I don't need it, or I'll do anything to get my kids back. So I guess I'll go to that treatment program that the judge said I had to go to. and it comes out even sooner than if a person decided to tell them, hey, this is what the judge said you had to do. Really thinking about that and having a conversation with folks about having a consistent approach because they feel overwhelmed with the minutiae of all the aspects of the spirit and the skills of MI thinking, well, I only see this parent for this length of time, and I have to instill in them that they have to follow the court rules.

Paul Warren: I want to underline and.

Amy Shanahan: Identify,

Paul Warren: Something that Blair said, and Amy, you just touched on it. That really, really resonated for me, which is that. And Blair, this is the way I heard it. Which is that sometimes engaging, using

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Paul Warren: an MI consistent approach is the work. And the thing I really want to underline in regards to that, it is good, solid work. It doesn't mean you're not working if in that conversation you haven't identified a behavioral change goal or if you haven't

made the transition into focusing and then practicing motivational interviewing, what may be called for in that moment. And I believe what you said, Blair, I think really great things can come out of that. And frankly, if you really think about it, isn't that what the essence of what Bill Miller's research about the elements that counselors have that make it the proper conditions for people to actually change. That's what he was talking about, my sense of it, and that's my two cent. And if somebody disagrees with that, or if you have a different perspective, please share that with us. or, Blair, you or Amy think differently about that. But to me, that's one of the unique things that Bill really identified in his early research, is that there was a way of being that the counselors were bringing to the conversation that made things possible. And you brought me right back to that, Blair, the way you said what you said.

Blair Eckensen: And I think it ties in because what you were just saying, Paul, sometimes I think you alluded to, sometimes it's hard to have the patience almost to sit in the, engagement, to have my consistent approach to create engagement before moving forward to focusing. And that's, I believe one of the answers, actually, to my first question, which is, what do you think are the common traps that practitioners fall into that stunt engagement?

Amy Shanahan: Whoa. That's a great question.

Paul Warren: Well, Blair, to your point, the first one that really jumps out at me is pressure to push the conversation into a premature focus. That's the first thing that popped into my head.

Blair Eckensen: M. Yeah. And I think when I was saying, and there's an urge there to do that, sometimes you're in it and you're like, well, I should be doing something. I should

be helping more. I should be. They should walk away from here and feel like something has changed for them. And though when I was saying sometimes the building, the partnership and that relational foundation being the work, to remember that, I try and remind myself that this is important, too, and this is actually critical to any of the other work being able to happen or any of those future things happening.

### **Blair: I hear a struggle for workers in beginning of assessment process**

Amy Shanahan: One that popped up into my mind to your wonderful question is, I hear a lot the struggle for folks in the beginning of a process, let's say, in an institution of treatment, or care, that the worker first feels like they have to gather information and or have a context about what the person is coming to the table with. I've heard people say I didn't have an easy time doing a, am I consistent approach? I wasn't aware of the context of their story. And then I hear others say, I have to get to the list. I have to get to that assessment. I don't have time to do this other stuff. And I was just in a training this week, and someone called it fluffin stuff. I don't have time for this fluffin stuff, this soft stuff, and I'm probably adding more than one trap in one. That's my style. I ask three questions instead of one, and I offer three answers instead of one. Some people think that this mi. Stuff is soft and social worky, and I have to get to the point. What do you all think?

Paul Warren: Fluff and stuff

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Paul Warren: sounds right to me in the sense that I could see. And, Blair, I would link it to what you said about this pressure that people might feel. and. And I'm going to throw this out. I also kind of think, and help me if you think I'm being too harsh by saying this, but I think also the worker might feel more comfortable proceeding with their agenda. Ah. Than sitting and fluffing stuff. For a little while, because sitting in fluff and stuff, and I love that phrase. I, I dont necessarily agree with it, but I love the way it sounds. Sitting in that place, to me, can be, not always, but it can be more patient centered. It can be an, invitation to deeper insight and to blairs point earlier, it can also be an opportunity for deeper listening. Is that harsh, saying that maybe the worker feels comfortable with their own agenda?

Amy Shanahan: Depends m on how you mean it.

Paul Warren: I don't mean it harshly.

Amy Shanahan: Well, it makes sense if you put yourself in their shoes. And I think about new workers, I think about people who have been in a culture of, this pressure of having to gather the information and get to the next task or to get to the next thing. maybe they don't realize that they have the skills and the tools to do it and, or go against what they think they're supposed to do. So there's a lot of nuance there about, it probably is easier, it feels like it's going to be easier for me to just get this three, four, or 24 page assessment done because I only have an hour and 15 minutes. And someone actually said that in the training this week, I have an hour and 15 minutes to gather 20 pages of information. And, until I was in the field long enough and remembered all the questions, they had a hard time engaging with what they would think was, unimportant information, like, how did you get here? How you feeling today? What's the weather like outside? Or whatever they perceive is the road, of engaging, of engaging with people.

So easier, perhaps, for them to just get to the task at hand that they need to accomplish something and get to the next spot with the person.

Paul Warren: That takes me back, though, to what Blair said earlier, because I wholeheartedly believe that if you create a context where people can tell you what's going on with them and they can tell you who you are, you're going to be able to more effectively do your job and firing questions at them. Although it is a necessary part of the process, I think the questions don't have to be fired at them. But, but focusing on the prioritizing of those questions, and I'm wondering if maybe it just takes, experience to be able to sit with somebody and let them kind of. And Amy, I was so struck when you said, well, all this extraneous information or unimportant, ah, use the word unimportant. And it's interesting because I would go so far as to say that sometimes that, quote unquote and I'm putting air quotes. You can't see it, but Amy and Blair can.

Paul Warren: That unimportant information is revelatory. M. In terms of that, you can actually have deeper insight sometimes in this unexpected tidbit that may present itself. Yeah. When it's actually very relevant to this person's experience in their story, of course.

Amy Shanahan: And I'm glad you used air quotes because, that unimportant wasn't my word. My word necessarily was the context of the conversation. Like, I have to get to this other stuff.

Paul Warren: Yes. Right. Which has been deemed important.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: And for very valid reasons. You know, funding numbers, all of those very valid

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Paul Warren: reasons. And I've certainly had the experience where, when I've trusted that if I engage the person, I get all the answers that I needed.

Paul Warren: And probably a whole heck of a lot more, and I will have built some sort of rapport with that person.

Blair Eckensen: Well, I know being in. I've certainly been in that position that you described of having a very long assessment to get through. That's the expectation of my role. This person's on your schedule. You need to get through this, if you have a limited amount of time to do it. And, I mean, it makes me think about the communication skills and am I. And so that assessment is. Those are sort of questions that are forced upon you or given to you as a script you asked to go through. But, then you can also infuse that, trying to tease that with the other skills. You can put in affirmations and reflections and summaries as they're answering your questions and so that you are truly listening to them and what they're saying.

Paul Warren: You.

Blair Eckensen: Know, clarifying what they're saying and build that rapport while going through the TD's less the checklist.

Paul Warren: Yeah. You know, it's funny. As you were saying that, Blair, I, really had a

strong picture in my mind and what you described. I could see two people talking to each other with the burden, quote unquote, of the checklist. I could see the worker extracting what they want from the person, but there's no true back and forth. And I, agree with you that infusing, even asking questions, using the core communication skills can be a way to make it a conversation as opposed to an excavation or an extraction. I wonder if we're sufficiently warmed up for question two.

Amy Shanahan: Hm.

Paul Warren: What do you think, Blair? Are we ready to move on, or should we touch on this a little longer now?

Blair Eckensen: Let's move on.

## **How do we create engagement with a client who asks a lot of questions**

So on the topic of questions how do we create engagement with a client or a person who asks a lot of questions of us? and I think about situations where it could be that they're just a very inquisitive person. They're very curious about you, or perhaps. I mean, I know I. When I'm feeling nervous or even defensive, I ask, I'll ask a lot of questions, but I have found that to be, sometimes a challenge. Creating engagement with a person who asks a lot of questions of me and sort of sets me up. I feel. I end up feeling set up to be directive sometimes. If the questions are, you be the expert here. Answer me this. That's a very long, question. Did the question make it through?



Amy Shanahan: I heard it loud and clear. I think it's another great question around. How do you navigate? Maybe even the fixing reflex. I'm putting that word in there, or navigating. Just someone who's asking you a lot of questions. And I was thinking, boy, that could be for a lot of reasons that they're doing that, and you offered one, Blair, you know, maybe you're nervous and you feel uncomfortable, so you're asking lots of questions. I remember a gentleman asking a lot of questions around the consents to treatment and the consents to release information, and this person had a legal background, and I knew that they understood these documents well, better than I did. And when I was a new clinician, this was happening, and I

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Amy Shanahan: thought, well, this is interesting. I'm feeling really stumped because I can't answer his questions. And I knew that he could answer them much better than I could. And then it dawned on me that he wasn't sure he wanted to do it. This it. Finish the assessment, enter this relationship of treatment. And I reflected that back, at the time, and said, I get a sense that you really are not sure about wanting to do this. And, boy, he just breathed a sigh of relief when I said that, said, yeah, I feel like I already committed to this, and I am taking up your time. And he was nervous about that, and he knew in his head he. Once he was sitting with me, he just didn't. He wasn't ready yet to, come in and go through with it. So that's one example that I have from my own experience, but I'm thinking of the, why are they asking a lot of questions? I'm curious about that and thinking in my head, there might be lots of different reasons why they're asking lots of questions.

Blair Eckensen: I like your answer. Oh, sorry, Paul.

Paul Warren: No, go ahead, Blair. Please.

Blair Eckensen: I like your answer. They creating engagement. Even when you've sort of been switched on, you and, you were being asked a lot of questions, and you were able to reflect what you saw, and he felt heard and understood. And even if you had gotten it wrong, that would have given the opportunity to maybe go a little deeper and him to correct it. I thought it made me think of an example, a similar example of a situation that I've been in, I mean, multiple times, where I'll have a person asking, well, you know, are, are you in recovery? How would you know? You know, what do you know about this? what's your experience with this? And, to feel put, like in the hot seat. How do I answer this? And, you know, are they testing me to see if I'm qualified to be sitting here? and to have been, to have reflected. Sounds like you really feel like it would be hard for anyone to understand you and what you're going through. A reflection. I like your answer.

Paul Warren: I, really like both your answers. And I'll tell you, one of the things I like about them is they're very evocative. And I can almost see the conversation playing out of, and I can see that moment of where the person feels heard, where they feel like they've been listened to.

**Blair: Two words: Power and safety. And Amy, I loved your example where the guy clearly knew**

And two things popped into my head about this position of the person asking you questions. Two words, really. Power and safety. In the sense that the person who asks the questions generally in the social service setting is the person who has the power.

And it's like I want to switch roles because maybe I don't feel safe. And my thought about that, and this is, I think, definitely related to Mi spirit and an MI consistent approach is that I would definitely want to affirm this person's autonomy in terms of that. You know what, I'll give you the best answers I can possibly give you. And Amy, I loved your example where the guy clearly knew more about these legal documents that you did. And basically it's a test.

Paul Warren: And it's funny because I don't think what's actually being tested and I could be wrong. I don't think what's being tested is the accuracy of the information. I think what's being tested is the authenticity of the engagement.

Paul Warren: And I think. I think that when people come to talk to people, they don't necessarily know they have the right to not trust me, of course, because they don't know me.

Paul Warren: So if it makes them feel more comfortable to feel like they have power in the situation. I'll share that to the extent that I can. You know, I think I was a little distracted at first, Blair, when you asked the question, I needed to sit with it a little while because I wasn't sure where you were going to go, is if the person was asking personal questions as opposed. And maybe it's a mix of both. but again, I think that in some ways, that comes down to safety, too, and certainly asking you if you're in your recovery as well, like, well, you know, how could you help me if you're not in recovery?

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Paul Warren: Is a very personal question.

Amy Shanahan: You know, I think to that one, which I wished I had a bucket of answers for the times that I've been asked, are you in recovery? Have you ever used cocaine? Have you ever been in, you know, I know, I understand now what they're, what they're probably asking, underlying. They don't really want, necessarily want to know the facts. They want to know, can you help me? Do you understand me? Or all those things? And I think it was Bill Miller that recently shared that when asked, do you have children? He, put it back in a way, and Bill, if you're listening and you want to tell me it wasn't you, that's fine.

Paul Warren: Welcome to Bill Miller said.

Amy Shanahan: I often quote Bill Miller and Steve Rollink, and I have no clue if they really said it because I heard it from somebody else. So anyway, if it were Bill, he said something like this, you know what? I'm willing to answer that question, but I want to hear from you first. What's your thought? If I say, no, I am not a parenthood, and what do you think about it then? If I say, yes, I do have children, what does it mean to you? It's a different evocative strategy to have that requester of the information think about why they're asking the question. I don't know.

Blair Eckensen: Why is it important to you?

Paul Warren: I had a similar scenario once when I was leading support groups for people who are newly diagnosed with HIV. And one of the questions that folks would ask who were in the group, they would ask about my HIV status, like, why are you leading this group, and why did you develop this group? And do you have the authority or, do you have the answers? And the thing I did in a couple of occasions is I said, I can absolutely answer that question. Very similar to Bill, but as a group, let's talk about what

it means if I answer the question this way, or if I answer the question, and again, I want to be clear about that. That's not a tricky dodge.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: You know, that's not, that's not a, strategy to like, not. I would not say to them, I'm happy to answer that question, unless I meant that. So if they were ultimately, and it's funny because in that situation that I'm thinking of the group eventually kind of said as a body, you know, actually your status doesn't matter.

Paul Warren: Because you don't participate in the group. You just make sure that we have a space to be together and you help us to talk to each other. So the group came to that conclusion in that particular situation. And again, I want to be very clear about the use of a tricky dodge. Like, don't ever agree to answer a question that you're not really, I don't think. Don't ever really agree to answer a question that you're not willing to answer.

Amy Shanahan: Oh, say you're going to do it and then you're really not willing to do it. Oh, absolutely. That wouldn't be genuine.

Paul Warren: It would not. It would not. And genuineness is very critical to an MI consistent approach.

Amy Shanahan: And when I was sharing the example and then you shared yours, Paul, it resonated with me that it's actually leveling the power over, it's a partnership type of question from the perspective that at least my intention or my thought would be about it. I would imagine Bill's too, if he were the one that asked the questions that I'm willing to

answer this because, you know, it seems withholding if we don't answer their question about us, then, and I know I've done the dodging of the question, have you ever used, are you in recovery? You're just book smart, you don't know about our lives. I, dodged it and I wished I had the tools that I didn't have to totally dodge it. And I was listening to understand and or willing to answer it. After exploring with them.

Paul Warren: And nothing wrong with setting a boundary, there are some questions that we may get asked that are absolutely not appropriate.

Amy Shanahan: Oh, sure.

## **An am I consistent approach is the heart of client centered work**

Blair Eckensen: I am, I am thinking on what you said, how the group came to the conclusion that your status didn't matter, to them in the group because you weren't a part of the group, but you were facilitating and holding space. I feel like that is a testament to the fact that you probably had had an Mi consistent approach with this group already and you had brought the Mi

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Blair Eckensen: spirit to this group because there was a level of safety that it didn't really matter. You had gained enough, you had created enough partnership, shown enough acceptance and compassion that it was okay. And they didn't need it to be. To have this, sameness, to not feel judged.

Paul Warren: Thank you for saying that, Blair. And I'll tell you something, when, I did that, that was long before I ever knew, about motivational interviewing. Practiced motivational interviewing. And if you think about it, an am I consistent approach is the heart of client centered work. Unconditional, positive regard, building trust and safety and, yeah, having enough safety, that it's okay that we're different. I can fulfill my role. You can be in the group and partake of that, and I can be in a different role. Is there a third question?

Amy Shanahan: No.

Blair Eckensen: You'd only told me to do two, right?

Paul Warren: oh. oh.

Amy Shanahan: You didn't tell her five. There's five questions. No.

Paul Warren: I wish you could all see the look on Blair's face. Well, I will throw out based on what we've talked about. And again, you're two excellently prepared and wonderful questions. Blair, have laid the stage for anything else that we may want to mention about an am I consistent approach and sort of the distinction between an MI consistent approach. and just one thing I'll throw out that I would like to add is I do want to link an am I consistent approach. And, Blair, you've done this repeatedly in what you've said, but I just want to underline it. The linking of an MI consistent approach to the spirit of mi, partnership, acceptance, compassion and empowerment. And that alone is not the practice of mi. It does make it possible to practice mi, though.

Amy Shanahan: I'm curious about something related to having a consistent approach in

practice of mi, and I'd love to get your perspective on this. And I grapple with it in various ways from being a trainer of motivational interviewing, teaching, coaching individuals. And I was thinking about, talking with my best friend, and I have this rapport with her. Of course, I've known her since I was twelve. I don't think she's listening, but. Hi, Cathy. I feel like I'm on a game show where I want to mention my best friend's name.

Paul Warren: Shout out to Kathy.

Blair Eckensen: That's, really important to you.

Amy Shanahan: Nice reflection. She is very important to me. And I've been paying attention to my approach with her and she had recently asked me a question. Hey, you know, my husband told me to ask what you would do and, oh, I dove right in and told her I would do. And of course, I try and remember, and I did in this time, asked her, what do you think about those things that I said, you know, that's my style. And I think she said something to the effect of, yeah, that wouldn't work. So, but I think about that from being, having an am m I consistent approach with a close person and then teaching and coaching and just how do you balance when you give the information, when you tell them what you think? And certainly we know there's a strategy that we can use. One of the things that I just offered up is putting it back on them and honoring their autonomy to think about it. But, I'm just wondering, how do you talk about that? Am I consistent approach in teaching, coaching, supervising people?

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Amy Shanahan: either one of you could take a stab at that one. You notice I asked a question that.



Paul Warren: Three different layers to it, or so could our listeners.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Paul Warren: Amy, what you're asking is how we make the determination about whether we share, quote unquote, our answer or our information with somebody and how we kind of move through that process with people that we love and care about.

Amy Shanahan: Mm And, or people that were teaching or training or coaching. And I, because I think about it from the context, and I didn't add this, that we can integrate mi and we can integrate mi approach into what we do. It's not the panacea, it's not everything we do. So I'm always, you know, Paul, I always question, like, what don't you do? Or what's the opposite of this? And how do you balance it all the time so that I'm, I exhaust myself thinking about, should I say this right now or shouldn't I say it right now?

Paul Warren: It's funny because. Go ahead, Blair.

Blair Eckensen: I was just going to say, I was thinking of your example with, Kathy and that, I was thinking of, I think about it a lot with parenting. I have a nine and a half year old daughter and she comes to me with her life stuff. And I mean, my initial urge is to be like, don't do that or do this, or I think you should do this, or that's a bad idea. And trying to sort of embody the am I spirit with her and slow down and ask her questions. And, I was thinking when you were saying that sometimes when I come to a point where I think that advice or input is warranted or could be helpful, I guess it's trying to not be directive about it and more offer it in a softer way of, could I tell usually what I do with her is, could I tell you what I think I would do in that situation? And then after sharing what I think I would do, I ask her, what do you think about my idea? And, yeah, I think,

point being, I try. And, yeah, it's hard. It's like sometimes you get to a point where you're like, well, I think it would be helpful to give some input here, but how do I give the input in a way that's, less directive and still a partnership in trying to work through this, situation?

Paul Warren: You know, this is a very unexpected direction that our conversation has gone in, which I really am enjoying, because it's often a direction that the conversations go in, in trainings, where sometimes participants in trainings will say, hey, I realize after I hear about this motivational interviewing stuff and this am I consistent approach, I can do this with my partner or my family or my daughter or my child or whomever. And I'm reminded of what Stephen Rolnick told us once during, and he did tell us this because we were involved in a brief conversation with him. I recall him mentioning something to the effect of that, and this is actually in a video, too.

Amy Shanahan: I was going to say, it's recorded so we can reflex.

Paul Warren: It's about what was formerly called the writing reflex, which is now called the fixing reflex.

Paul Warren: And one of the things that Steve mentioned in that very brief and instructive video is that it's hard to practice an am I consistent approach and m am I with people that you have an emotional investment with because you do want the best for them. Your fixing reflex really wants to go in to that conversation like, you want to tell Kathy or you want to tell your daughter, don't do it because you know, and it's understandable, given your, your feeling for them. Or, And I'm struck by something that you said, Blair, and I think it very much relates to an am I consistent approach, which is that you described slowing yourself down so you

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Paul Warren: can try and understand it from her, your daughter's perspective. And I think if we can offer that to each other, if we can offer that to our clients and our patients, that is really good work that creates the possibility of rapport, of trust, of possibly identifying a behavioral change goal and exploring motivations about that change goal. And I think it's tough work to integrate that into, because sometimes, if I might say to either one of you, like, well, what would you do in this situation? I really want your answer right. I really want to know what you would do in this situation, I don't want to reflect on what I think I would do. I don't want to do any of that. I just want to know what you would do.

Amy Shanahan: You know, that very thing came up in the training, which is why I was curious about what you all think, because some people are like, no, no, no. Don't ask the question of me. I asked it of you. Sorry, Paul. Glad. I didn't mean to cut you off.

Paul Warren: No, not at all. And, again, I think the challenging thing, too, is, and, Blair, I really got this from, the way you described your conversation with your daughter, is that whether it's a loved one or whether it's a client or whether it's a patient, the moment where we are in that moment and where that client is in that moment will also dictate and shape how we proceed if we choose to open our mouth. And I think that's one of the things that I love about motivational interviewing as a practice and an am I consistent approach as an approach is that there's no one way to do it, and you can't really advise somebody. There are options. There's lots of different things you could do, but the moment dictates what you bring to that moment and what the other person brings to that moment.

Amy Shanahan: You know, I was going to add, I think the scenario to the context is another Steve Roldnick story, was that he said, you know, I was always curious about using m mi and parenting, and and I realized that I dont want to really explore with my child whether or not they should clean up their room. And as in your situation, Blair, if my daughter comes to me and shares something sensitive that happened at school or with a friend, you might want to lean in and listen and have that am m I consistent, approach and that spirit.

Paul Warren: And it makes perfect sense, given the evolution of the work that Bill and Steve and the whole am I larger global community have done that. The book is now called motivational interviewing, helping people change and grow because growth is a part of it as well, and always has been. But now we're really acknowledging that growth can be a part of it.

Amy Shanahan: Well, I think it hits home the points, too, that not everything we say and do with people in our conversations is around mi, and the spirit alone is an mi, and it's the foundation of the approach. And I what's our intention when we're leaning in and having these conversations with folks? do no har, don't tell people what to do. Be curious about what they want to do, even if it's your loved one, your daughter, or my friend Kathy.

Paul Warren: Hi, Cathy. Blair, thank you so much for starting off this season the way that you did. so delighted that you joined us and very, very happy to have the opportunity to talk with you about this particular topic.

Amy Shanahan: Thanks, Blair. It was great meeting you and loved your questions. I hope the other listeners are thinking a lot about what you asked, too.

Blair Eckensen: Thank you for having me. It was really an honor that you asked me.

Paul Warren: Well, it's our sincere pleasure. Thank you for joining us. And just a reminder to our listeners, before I hit the pause button on the recording, as you listen to this episode, if you have thoughts, reactions, or questions or pictures of puppies that you want to send us, please send them in. And who knows? Your question or comment

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Paul Warren: may be part of episode two of Lions, Tigers, and bears.

Amy Shanahan: Am I.

Blair Eckensen: That's my.

Paul Warren: Take care, everybody.

Amy Shanahan: Bye.

Thanks for listening to episode 28 of Lions and Tigers and Bears MI. Be on the lookout for a new episode on using an MI consistent approach to planning. Coming soon.

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