

# **The Power of Coaching in Motivational Interviewing**

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CASAT: Lions and Tigers and Bears MI is brought to you through a collaboration between The Mountain Plains ATTC and NFARtec In episode 31, Paul and Amy welcome a guest to discuss why coaching is essential to establishing and refining the practice of MI. 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 and we've worked.

Amy Shanahan: Together over the past 10 years. We've been facilitating MI learning collaboratives and providing trainings and coaching sessions focused on the adoption and refinement of MI We're also members of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers. Join us in this adventure into the forest where we explore and get curious about what lies behind the curtain of MI

Paul Warren: Hello, Amy.

Amy Shanahan: Hi, Paul.

Paul Warren: How are you?

Amy Shanahan: I'm doing very well right now.

Paul Warren: Yes, I am too. I'm very excited that we have a returning special guest to our sixth season of the podcast, which over this six episode season, we are predominantly going to focus on coaching MI practice. And before I turn it over to you, Amy, to invite our special secret guest to introduce herself, I will just reiterate what the title of this episode is.

Amy Shanahan: Okay.

Paul Warren: and the emphasis of this particular episode, and we're delighted to have this special guest back, is the focus of why coaching is essential to establishing and refining the practice of motivational interviewing. And with that, Amy, I turn it over to you.

Amy Shanahan: Well, I'm excited and I feel grateful for these next six episodes with you, Paul, for two big reasons. One, not necessarily in this order, it reminds me of when we started and why we name the podcast Lions Tigers and Bears MI. Because it's about my favorite topic because before our time together I was doing some training and stuff, but I wasn't getting a whole lot of coaching and mentoring. And that's when it got a little kind of fun and nerve wracking at the same time. And we locked arms and without you and other folks like our special guest, I don't know that I'd be where I am today with my MI practice. So I'm excited to talk about all that stuff. And the second thing is that we do have guests for all of our six episodes and I'm thrilled to invite Laura Saunders back

with us. So, Laura Would you please say hello and introduce yourself or say whatever you'd like to say about your time with us. And am I.

Laura Saunders: Well, hello again, Paul and Amy. It is just a thrill to be back on Lions, Tigers and Bears. And This, I've been. I introduced myself once before, but this does the same here. I'm ah. I've been kicking motivational interviewing around officially for 19 years and unofficially for closer to 25. Almost 30 years.

Laura Saunders: Yeah.

Laura Saunders: So, so thinking about this topic of coaching and when, as I was listening to you, Amy, I was thinking about when did coaching Enter. Enter my practice, when did I first start getting coached and when did I start coaching others? So I started getting coaching pretty much from the beginning. I learned somebody listened to me practice fairly early on. But it begs the question. I'm not sure that the person was qualified to be coaching, but I did get coaching. So,

Paul Warren: So Laurie, you're saying that there are sort of hallmarks that one would want to have in place in order to act as a coach?

Laura Saunders: Yeah, I mean it. Yes. I mean, I think about. I think it was a little bit.

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Laura Saunders: It was, it was the early days and I think that it might have been a little bit of the blind leading the blind. I. You know, and so you do. It does make me wonder. And even coaching that I first started doing, I, used to listen to people's practice, but

without an instrument, I hadn't learned any particular instrument and in fact thought that I couldn't use an instrument because I was using a specialized application of motivational interviewing I was using, ah. I was evaluating people who were doing SBIRT screening and brief intervention, referral to treatment. And I thought I couldn't use an instrument because the instrument couldn't handle the fact that they were, you know, asking some close questions and doing some of the SBIRT processes. So I stayed away from learning instruments and I can tell you that was, that was a big mistake. So. So I've learned some things about myself getting coached and myself being a coach.

Amy Shanahan: You know, reminds me again of our beginning when, Paul and I first met. We invite. Well, we're standing on the shoulder of some giants that you might have heard and have been guests on our show. Kate Speck one of them, Christine Higgins, not a guest on our show, but, was one of our mentors that came out and trained us in some of those coding instruments and even before that, how we started to practice together and give each other feedback. And I think about those times of. I didn't learn how to use those instruments, until the MIA step, which is one of the instruments that, were put out by the addiction Technology transfer centers. it was nice to be able to have something to give each other feedback. Even at times when I felt uncomfortable that I wondered uncomfortable in that I didn't feel like I was skilled enough or trained enough. And in those early days, like you were saying, Laura, unofficial, I think. Did you say the word unofficial? In my unofficial days, I think I had the intellectual knowledge, certainly because I was training motivational interviewing and I had some basic skill practice, but I wasn't sure. And I hear that from a lot of trainees that come to the room rooms that I train in. I think I'm doing it, but I'm not really sure. Then when I met Paul and we started, practicing together, it became more and more clear what I needed to do. I wasn't even sure what I needed to do to become more and more proficient.

Paul Warren: You bring me back, Amy, to Originally we started together in a training. and from that training then we literally went into sort of peer practice with peer feedback and very similar. Laura, like you were saying, without an instrument and I think it's possible to provide sound coaching and support without officially quote, unquote, coding somebody. That may be heresy. And you'll let me know if you think it is. And there's a. There's a word that Amy said, and actually I just said it once too, that I want us to touch back on because I think it's the essence of what coaching really is. And it's prior to, you know, getting into a deeper conversation, which we probably won't touch on here, about coding instruments. But that word. And Amy said it. Amy said the F word during this, which wasised, which was feedback.

Amy Shanahan: Oh, that F word.

Paul Warren: Yes. And. And ultimately coaching is giving feedback and it's giving feedback hopefully in a way that's going to raise that person's awareness, help them define maybe a goal they want to achieve of refinement, and then also possibly provide them with some guidance around how to move toward that goal. and I can absolutely say that my MI practice is very different today as a result of the feedback and the coaching that I got than it was when I was kind of in that space that Amy described so well of like, am I doing it? Am I not doing it? I'm not really sure.

Laura Saunders: Yeah. I have

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Laura Saunders: a couple of things that, that I want to say in response to kind of everything both of you have been Saying but you know, one thing I, you know, I started

out and said oh, I don't know if I was getting coached by a good coach. Right. And, and I think in listening to you, I wanna pull back on that a little bit because I do think that peer to peer coaching people who are not officially trained to be coaches to give feedback can with some guard guide rails so that they don't go in the gutter. Right. Some of those things that go down the bowling alley. I can't think of what they're called now. Gutter guards. Right. That that we can give each other feedback. And I also, I think that in the very beginning especially, I think that that that is so key. And I think that as you and your peers evolve in your practice, you all get more sophisticated. Not only in your own use, but more sophisticated in being able to give each other feedback. What I like about eventually using the tools and what I liked about learning the tool was that it gives you a third party to bring into the room. Right. Like so you're like I am collaborating with you to help you become better at motivational interviewing. Well, this third party has given us this structured feedback. So it's not my opinion, it's not that I'm. I am capriciously and arbitrarily saying you don't use enough open questions. It's that there are these guideposts that helped me decide how many open questions you were using. And then behind that is all of the, I'm sorry but really boring psychometric research that tells us how many open questions and how. What the ratios of everything should be, and all of the ins and outs of the rest of motivational interviewing. And so I really appreciate those instruments for that for being the truth if you are willing to give them that right to being the truth. And then that's the fact which myself and the person who's being coached can work towards. Right. Here's what this thing says. If you're interested in getting good marks by this thing, I can help you.

Paul Warren: M. You know this, this is kind of backing up a moment, but I'm wondering if it, it might be helpful to do that just in the sense that I guess I want to establish the platform or the foundation.

Paul Warren: For.

Paul Warren: The rationale or the need for coaching. Because what I, I mean my take on this is most people who go to an MI training that predominantly focus on And you mentioned Laura, open end questions that predominantly focuses on OARS and gives them an opportunity to practice the core communication skills which they equate to the practice of MI Most training does not send the message and please tell me if you disagree with this at least my experience is that most training that I participated in did not send the message that I really needed to do too much after the training in order to become proficient in motivational interviewing and the intentional use of this evidence based practice. And to me that's an inherent shortfall of training that doesn't really cast itself as this is kind of the beginning and what you need to do after.

Laura Saunders: Well I can tell you that you don't get in the door or don't go out the door of one of my trainings without hearing that message. I think it's really important. I think we do people a big disservice if we think that if we give them the impression that, that they are going to leave and that their journey is over. Right. That would be a. To me that would be the most terrible outcome of a 1 hour, 2 hour, 2 day, 3 day, 4 day workshop would be your journey is over'I. Feel like it's my job to get people curious and interested in wanting to be. They don't have to be exactly like us. right. But we, I mean I still feel like I learn all the time. I learn new things in MI and so being able

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Laura Saunders: to keep your eye open towards. I will continually be coached and mentored and learn new things. I do think that there was certainly a time when that was the message and I think it was that it wasn't that we were lying to people. I think that we

really thought that. I think we thought that people could learn and whomever it was that told you Paul, you know, I go to this two day workshop and you'll learn motivational interereng and I think that's what the science told us. I think that's where we truly were and I. We've certainly evolved way beyond that of this is something. If you really wanna do this, keep your eyes open. Always eyes and ears.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, I'm with you Laura. That I think mostly the last several years want to remind people that after whatever hours or days of training you're receiving that practice is important and practice with a coach is even more powerful. So I could be practicing the skills. Maybe I'm doing a little bit. Okay. But without that feedback or without that observer coaching and I was thinking back to one of my mentors who would invite me to come and train advanced level trainings with him and I was nervous about that because I Didn't want to do that yet. I didn't feel credible. I didn't feel like I was proficient. And when I started to feel comfortable in my proficiency was only when I had the data that you're talking about from the coded instruments that I had some consistency in my practice. But he gave me hope back then, before I felt confident in that proficiency level, that I did know some things more than the audience, and that helped me dip my toes in the water to do even more. And I think my practice evolved that way. trying practicing sometimes with a coach, sometimes not with a coach, and a lot of times with my colleagues like you all, you know, just being there and being nice and giving me feedback about what I did. Well, mostly, there's some things that we'll unwrap as we go through these six episodes about what it takes and what it looks like. And, you know, I've had colleagues that were too nervous to give critical feedback. And some of that opportunity for growth is helpful, too.

Laura Saunders: Yeah. Amy, you bring up such an important point that, you know, so much of as somebody who gets to do coaching fairly often. So much of what I get to do



is tell people all the things they're doing fantastically well, you know, and you'll have, send the feedback right before I talk to them. Oftentimes I don't want to send it much before that. Sometimes the feedback, especially the first time, doesn't make a lot of sense. You see something there, like 40%, you know, which is a fabulous number of complex reflections, right? Like, we think you're pretty darn good if you got 40% complex reflections, but you see 40%, you think like 40%. 40% of a hundred. That sounds like an F, right? So I don't like to send things to people too far in advance, and they'll be'll. They'll zero in on that one thing that isn't exactly where they thought it should be. And I will gently invite them to not. Could we. Let's, if it's okay with you, can we start by all the things that went well? Because there's always something that goes well. There's always something. Maybe you didn't do enough complex reflections, but you did complex reflections. You know how to do them. You know what a complex reflection is. You know what that is? And one or two or 10 came out of your mouth. And next time, 15 are gonna come out of your mouth. Cause you know how to do them. And just really, inviting them to sit in that success prior to doing any kind of fixing of anything else that needs a little boost in skill is celebrating.

Paul Warren: It's so interesting that you're putting it that way because I too have experienced that dynamic, especially when coaching folks that they immediately want to go to, well, what did I do wrong? They don'tn toa look at their strength. And yet the irony of that is, is when you're in ah, an MI training and you say to people, oh, who hears practicing motivational interviewing? Everybody says I'm doing it already. Exactly. Me, me, me. So, you know, it's so interesting that, that there's kind of this reversal when

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Paul Warren: somebody gets into the opportunity to be with a strengths based,

supportive coach that kind of counters this. I'm doing it already. And I'm reminded, Laura, of something that you said to me once, a long, long time ago. You were telling me something about the outcomes of some of your trainings and you said that sometimes it's a really, really powerful thing if the trainees conclude the training realizing, oh, I'm actually not doing motivational interviewing and I'm curious about what I can do to actually do it.

Laura Saunders: Yes. if I can get people to conscious incompetence, I feel like I've done my job.

Laura Saunders: I feel like I'm consciously incompetent half the time in motivational interviewing. Right. Maybe consciously competent. I don't know. I have to think about it sometimes. Right. Like, so that's a good outcome. Right. It's better than unconscious incompetence where you don't know that there's even this thing out there that you could be doing. Right. So if I can raise your awareness and put this in front of you in a way that you're aware of and want and you can't yet do it. Okay. Right. That's what, that's where the coaching and the feedback and the practicing and the practicing and getting some feedback from peers and getting, you know, is such a great thing. Right.

Amy Shanahan: We asked some folks in a project that we are doing, to rate their confidence in their practice of MI before and after. And it went down to the point it went down after they were.

Laura Saunders: I think that's a outcome. I think that is. I know and it sounds terrible, but I think it's a really good outcome because as Paul was saying. Right. Then you don't. If you have people who think they're already doing it, they shut their eyes and ears.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Laura Saunders: Shut their eyes and ears. And I just, I just want to keep those eyes and ears open. Because there's, there's so much of this artful science to keep practicing, that, you know, like, if you keep your eyes and ears open, there's lots of new things to think about and learn.

Amy Shanahan: And you know, there's an artful practice of giving and receiving feedback and coaching people as well. And what you said, Laura and Paul, you piggybacked on it. And it reminds me of when, in hindsight, when Christine Higgins was coaching us and we did a whole session on feedback and at the end of our sessions she would invite us all to give each other affirmations on what we noticed. And it was nerve wracking. It was a vulnerable thing to do and it was really powerful. I was thinking about my style of coaching. I, use asko offer ask as my framework when I'm coaching folks. And the first thing I'll ask is what did you like about what you did in that practice session or whatever they were doing. And a lot of times folks will go to the negative. What I didn't do was this. But time and time again it underscores and reminds me that we know, we know what we did well, we know what we didn't do well. And I trust that the people that we're coaching pretty much know that as well. So we are validating what they already know or what they've already done. And I think that that's really powerful for me when a coach offers me that opportunity to do a meta analysis or a reflection on my practice and what I did so that I could be a consistent, reflective practitioner.

Laura Saunders: M. Right. So that you can practice and improve when you're not getting feedback. Right. You can start and showing them that oftentimes helping them so that their intuition and the feedback start to line up better and better and better,

right? So if we can kind of get those two things to meld better so that you're not just only noticing what you do. Like the hardest thing to notice is what you don't do that. That's why we can't self assess very well because if you know what you didn't do, you would have done it, right? If you, if you, if it's hard to. It's hard to ascertain our own missed opportunities because if it was, if we knew it was a missed opportunity, maybe in retrospect we can think about it, but it's pretty hard, right? Like, oh, I missed that change talk. Well, who remembers 15 times, you know, 15 volleys ago in the conversation? That's really hard. And so if we can get people closer and closer to the feedback, aligning with their initial impressions, their own sense, their introspective reflective reflection on their own practice. I think that's really, really

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Laura Saunders: key.

Paul Warren: And I'll add an element to that, Laura, based on a coaching session that I actually had this past weekend. And I wanna underline this because I think it's so relevant to the practice of motivational interviewing. It's a practice that requires practice in order to refine it and become more skilled at it. And the idea that you can intellectually understand something, you can know, oh, I'm doing this, and you can intellectually tell yourself, I'm not going to do that, I'm going to do something different. And yet, until you put it into practice, it doesn't become something that you're actually doing. And I'll give this concrete example. A gentleman that I had the opportunity to be coaching. His standardized patient interview was mighty coded. And the feedback that he got was that he was consistently starting with a reflection and then turning it into a question. He understood it. He understands the difference between a reflection and a question. And we did a practice session where I was the standardized patient, we

recorded the session and he fell into the same pattern again. He would start with sort of the kernel of a reflection and then turn it into. So in the coaching, what we agreed upon was that we would go through the audio recording together so that he could actually hear himself. And it was. It was such an interesting light bulb moment because he identified, oh, my God. I started with the reflection and I just turned it. Now, he'd read that he'd been told that, but he needed to do it, reflect on what he had done and then kind of give himself his own insight about that. So then we followed that with simply taking turns offering reflections. And it's ironic because the other insight that he got from it was if I listen more attentively to what you're saying, it'll be easier for me to reflect. He came up with that, not me.

Laura Saunders: Sometimes you just want to say, wow, that's a. That's wow. Yeah, yeah, well. And I think that, you know, like, that's brilliant, Paul, that you know that when you have the opportunity to do the listen back, right? And people can hear themselves and hear how different it sounds when you say you're confused about the next step. You know, you're confused. You're confused about the next step. Right.

Laura Saunders: I mean, it just sounds like

Paul Warren: I am.

Laura Saunders: You know, and being able to have that and it's that Kind of stuff that then. Yes. And that my guess is that that person will continue to work on that high rising terminal. That's what the official term of that is. That bumping up the end of a sentence is a thing that is more of an issue for some people than other issue. And it has nothing to do with anything that matters. It's just some people do it and some people don't do it and we don't know who does it and we don't know who doesn't do it and it just happens.

Right. So he'll keep working on that. But he has you showed him why it really matters and that came because of coaching. Yeah.

Paul Warren: And it's interesting because I would almost frame that is he showed himself and it did come out of our coaching collaboration. Yeah, it really did. And it kind of goes back to what you were saying earlier. Although you did push back on it a little bit that a coach does need to have certain capacities in order to effectively engage and support somebody in their journey of becoming more aware of what they're doing.

Laura Saunders: Yeah. when I'm teaching people to officially coach, I always tell them, you know, you only need to be about a lap ahead of them. You need to be a hundred yards ahead of the people you're training, the people you're coaching. Because they're gonna rise up to your level. Right. And then as you

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Laura Saunders: get better they'll rise up to you. But you can be co learning. Right. You just have to be a little tiny bit better. And I think that in like in our workshop situations where we allow people to give each other, we have a third person and have an observer who's essentially the coach. Right. That they know, they know a little bit more only because they're not in the hot seat. Right. So I think that instructing them, I want you to count reflections, and questions or make note of one reflection that this person does. There are a couple of open questions so you can tell them how great they were at, you know, or write down their affirmation that I think people are able to do that skillfully just because they're not. They recognize those things. We've taught them to recognize those things. And they're not the one in the hot seat. And then they can start by giving that kind of feedback and coaching. It's coaching.

Paul Warren: I'm wondering if it's okay if I could ask both of you a question.

Amy Shanahan: Sure.

Paul Warren: So for you, and I'm going to try and answer this for myself I think too, but for you, if there were qualifications or qualities that you needed or wanted from an MI practice coach. Because I'm thinking of somebody who maybe is kind of considering getting a coach. What are some of the things that you might consider in regard to who you might choose to work with as a coach?

Laura Saunders: I would want somebody to be using a well validated instrument that's kind of the researcher in me. And then again to do what we've been talking about, which is to be very strength based and to be forcefully strength based. That sounds funny, but like, you know, if I tried to. Oh no, look at how bad I did on this one thing. Right? Like I don't know that I would ask for that, but I would appreciate that, you know, that somebody who can help me really see what's going well and then offer me the amount of coaching feedback, role playing exercises, the right amount for me. I get a little bit itchy sometimes when I, when I hear a coach doing the same thing with everybody, the same every. Everybody getting the same kind of m. Coaching. Right. Like sometimes I think people just need the feedback. They need to know that they can do the skill, that they need to do more of that skill and that's enough. And they have 15 or 20 minutes to get that coaching. I don't think that everybody needs a really long coaching session where they like your exampleul, you had the guy go through the recording that worked for that person. I don't think that that's a, you know, ride or die for everybody. I do like them to listen to their own recording ahead of time and do a self reflection, but I can't force them. So I want people to. To that I want my. I would want my coach to be flexible in how they coach me, use an instrument, be flexible, focus on my

strengths and offer me another opportunity. Right? Offer me as many opportunities as I need to get to fidelity.

Amy Shanahan: Well, a lot of things are swimming around in my head when you first asked the question, I thought, well, it depends. So which leads me to your point, Laura. that I was thinking about earlier about the individuality of things that not just the way I coach, it's who to whom I'm coaching.

Amy Shanahan: I was thinking about a situation where a person was very new to motivational interviewing. I don't even think that this person chose to come to the training. It was a systemic, mandated thing. And asking this person to highlight the specifics of the skills was pretty tough. He wanted to focus on one thing and that's where we went. So what I coached was different for him versus other folks that say, hey, I just want you to let me know if I listened or missed any change talk. I wouldn't have had that conversation with the gentleman before. So for myself, my priority is certainly someone being a couple hundred yards ahead of me.

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Amy Shanahan: but I think my personal, preference is the style, the strength based at first. I mean, I don't want it to be deficit based, but, affirmative coaching is helpful to me. it doesn't help me when you tell me that I did something wrong or bad and it sounds and feels negative. and I don't want people to be dishonest with me or, and I don't mean it in a way that they'd intentionally be dishonest, but I'd want someone to give me straight up feedback that they're in a strength based way. So sometimes for me, the coach, it's the style of the coach that matters as well. And in addition to some of the things that you said about using an instrument and being skilled at that, that's important



too. But it depends on where I was in my journey. early on in my journey, I didn't care about being coded. That probably would have scared the Jesus out of me. so I'm not, I'm not surprised that I liked our journey when we gave each other feedback without being coded and then I was ready for the big game. I don't know. I'm curious what you think, Paul. I'm all over the map with that one.

Paul Warren: I think, I was able to follow what you said really easily. so if I felt like you were painting a rich picture of who this coach for you would be and, you know, a coach isn't any one thing. Hopefully they have multiple dimensions and multiple layers. And I guess for myself, I would definitely want someone who would help me to identify my strengths. it can be very easy for me to focus on what I think I didn't do well. So someone that could help me focus on my strengths and definitely somebody who would help me to identify a refinement opportunity that I could actually get some traction on because it would. It's almost like having a professional development plan. Like, I would like a coach to help me to identify. Like, I'll give a concrete example. Like maybe you could say less, you know, like.

Laura Saunders: Ever say that to you, Paul?

Amy Shanahan: Never. Never.

Paul Warren: I detect a note of sarcasm in that. But anyway, I'm relating and I could imagine, like if I'm offering a reflection and my coach and I are looking at that. And, and if the coach is helping me to identify the strength of that and also the refinement of it. Because truly, sometimes less is more. And, you know, it makes me think of those six Cs, that Steven Rolnick. Yeah, Steven Rolnick is always talking about, or not, I guess, always talking about, but that he shared and clearly have lodged themselves. But the

idea of letting go of like, trying to be clever about what I'm saying, I want to focus. I want my coach to help me to focus on understanding, not being an MI genius, if there is such a thing. And I have to say, I have witnessed in other people's practice when they are succinct and they have a deep understanding of what somebody says, you can feel the power of what it is they're communicating to the person that they're reflecting. So somebody that would really help me identify a growth opportunity that I could really work toward, I think.

Laura Saunders: Oh, go ahead. I just think people are surprised sometimes when it's one skill that got them to places on, the, the scoring rubric that they wanted something better. Right. And when you can say, look, this, this and this are all gonna go up if you do this one thing, like complex reflections. Complex reflections increase the reflection to question ratio more complex reflections makes your empathy look better. Sometimes more complex reflections makes your partnership look better. Right. Depending on what you're reflecting, it can make your cultivating change talk and your softening sustain talk. Right? Like, so one skill that you are already doing some of in some cases, right? Like that you're already doing some of. If we tweak this one skill, you're gonna have six things are gonna all rise to the top, right? They're gonna all get better. It's not that you. These

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Laura Saunders: are not all. They're not all, they're related, right. They're not all singular things that every single one of these things you need to work on. It's that if you work on one thing, a whole bunch of stuff gets better. And silence. I'm not demonstrating it very well right now, but silence. What could sometimes be one of those things that could, ah, raise a whole bunch of scores?

Paul Warren: just that, you know, Laura, the word that I kept thinking of as you were describing that is the synergy of how those things are related and they have this, like, impact.

Amy Shanahan: Got it. I was just thinking when you were talking, Laura, what power is in that when you can tell someone, hey, you're using this skill, do more of that as an example of strength based use the phrase strength based. What does it sound like to people? Not hey, you're not using enough complex reflections... you're using complex reflection skillfully. And if you did more of that, these things would happen. So you hook it into how it would impact their practice. I think that really jazzed me up when you were talking about that. That's how I want to be coached. Not from the perspective of you're not doing this or you're not doing that.

Laura Saunders: Right. Just do more.

Amy Shanahan: Do more of that. You know. And the other thing that it was tying into what you were talking about earlier, Paul, when you mentioned the 6Cs and you mentioned one of them being clever, the other C in the kind of deficit side is the clutter. And I think, and I think you mentioned this. One of the most powerful pieces or chunks of feedback that I've gotten over my practice wasn't always about the MI skills, it was about my clutter. You know, hey, you use those idiosyncratic words. I wonder what you meant by them. Doesn't even relate to MI or You know, I'm wondering if you noticed that your voice went up and it went down when the person went up and went down, that your cadence matched them or what were you thinking when you offered that? So that I was being invited to think about what my intention was. So the coaching isn't always about the ores, it's about the other human interaction pieces that can make our practice stronger and is based on our individuality.

Paul Warren: And that really goes back to Amy, what both you and Laura said about how, and I identify with this as well, how an effective coach is somebody who's really trying to understand me and my experience of practicing MI And also tailoring what they're going to highlight, what they're going to invite me to practice based on their understanding at that particular moment. for me, I think the thing that I love about effective coaching is when the coach and I are really collaborating on my sort of learning journey. It's not just. It's a coach who would kind of feel removed and sort of observing from the top does not that something about that practicing is creates a vulnerability. I feel vulnerable when I practice motivational interviewing especially if I'm going to let somebody else listen to it.

Laura Saunders: Yeah.

Laura Saunders: I just reminded myself that oftentimes they start the session with setting this feedback aside. We'll talk about that in a moment. Right. And I think that that's sort of. I was just thinking, well, that's why the feedback is so good. Right. Ca becausee it's the observer. Right's just think yeah, that's observer over there. But let's set the observer aside. The thing that gave us these factoids, for better or worse. Right. But when you were having the conversation, how did you think it was going? Because again I think that building their own intuition and, and oftentimes what they say is like it matches right up with the feedback again showing them like well here's this feedback. You're not always gonna have feedback. You don't always need feedback. Let's start developing within yourself some sense of what you really want to have going well.

Amy Shanahan: And you know on the flip when you invite

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Amy Shanahan: people to explore where they may have felt uncomfortable or stuck or whatever words we use can depend on the person. I think if Mel we were listening. Mel is a gentleman that joins our MI on the spot practice and we have this inside joke that's now public about it depends. So it depends on the relationship. To your point Paul, about the collaboration, I've experienced that a lot when I've invited folks to share. Well what did you notice that didn't feel right or didn't feel comfortable? Whatever words again and again they'll come up with that very thing that maybe you considered giving them feedback on and you don't even have to do it. You just affirm yeah, okay, and what do you think you'll do now so that they're doing something adding that change talk. Because I think what's important to me too is not role modeling. Am I every utterance out of your mouth as a coach but modeling the skills too and modeling what you're preaching. Invariably you believe I have it in me, draw it out of me. You know and I've, I've had on the misfortune or whatever the word would be of having a coach that wasn't strength based at all. And it made me feel uncomfortable and I'm trying to think not to be judgmental of a person but to say for me it almost diminished their credibility. If you have to give me this kind of right between the eyes criticalness from your judgmental evaluative perspective. It's uncomfortable, it's judgmental. It goes against my practice. So I don't mean that up coach has to walk and talk through an MI approach all the time at the same time. Certainly come in with. With that intention in those shoes on if you will.

Paul Warren: You know Amy, I want to connect something that you just said with something that Laura said a moment ago because it made me think of maybe the legacy or the contribution that an effective coach can actually make. Because you're really describing somebody who their approach did not work for you. And ultimately coaching is not always a continuous process. We might experience a place where we

get some coaching and then we may be practicing and not getting coaching and then we may dip back into coaching again. Like you were saying, Laura, we're not always, benefiting from the presence of a coach. What I think can happen though is if we have an effective coach, we can internalize that effective strengths based coach so that when we're not sitting across from somebody, we can actually draw on that experience to self reflect and self validate to some degree. I mean, it's. You know, it's comparing an apple and an orange. Because having an outside person who maybe is using a validated instrument is one thing. And I would hope that the impression that I would leave as a coach is that this person would have some sort of internal resource to self evaluate and to self evaluate from a respectful, curious, strength based perspective.

Laura Saunders: Respectful, curious, strength based and increasingly accurate. Right. That we get better and better and better. we're never fabulous evaluators of ourselves in the moment, but we can listen to ourselves on audio recording and we can, I mean you can, you can code yourself, you can, you know, keep. I mean the instrument, I always say the instrument is so. Those instruments are so objective that they either did it or they didn't. And it's pretty hard to cheat. Right. Even if you're listening to yourself. Right. Even if you're reading into what you said, you either did it or you didn't. You either said you're confused or you're confused. I mean, it's what you did. And so as we can get people more and more accurate, and more and more introspective in the moment, I think you get better and better.

Amy Shanahan: Curious. One of the six Cs. So we got three out of six.

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Amy Shanahan: Clutter, clever, curiosity, calm, compassion and control. Letting go of

control.

Amy Shanahan: so there's three Cs. Clutter, clever. Letting go of control. That curiosity, compassion, calm. Being calm helps fix the. Well, not fix the first three, but helps the first three.

Laura Saunders: My ye.

Amy Shanahan: The listeners were wondering what the six Cs of Steve Rolick are.

Laura Saunders: I was, See, I learned this is exactly what we were talking about. There's never an end to learning about motivational interviewing. Never.

Laura Saunders: What the heck is Paul talking About? I have no idea. No idea.

Amy Shanahan: And if Steve is listening, maybe he'll confirm that we're accurate.

Laura Saunders: Bad.

Amy Shanahan: When we were chatting with him, he forgot one of the C's himself. So we're just.

Paul Warren: Well, it s. It's so interesting because the reason that he offered those 6Cs was because Billy Joe Smith asked him, steve, what advice would you give to the newcomer who is practicing motivational interviewing? And he said, well, I have this, the 6Cs. And you know, letting go of being clever, letting go of the clutter that's in my mind. He couldn't remember control. And then he said, bringing a, calm sort of

presence to the conversation, being curious about what the person is saying, and also offering compassion. He said, if you can do that, you're well on the road. And I would say that those 6Cs also apply to the coach.

Amy Shanahan: Yes.

Paul Warren: As well.

Amy Shanahan: Well, you know, it also ties in to all of us as individuals and humans. And to your point, Laura, when you said, you know, we're not perfect, we don't. And I tell people your session today might feel like, man, I got all fours and fives on that instrument. And next week he might have some three reason fors. We're human beings. And Steve shared that in that interview, which can be found on YouTube, that he didn't feel like he was doing that well of ami practice of late. I think, quote, he might have said something up until these last five years because he was allowing cleverness, clutter, and feeling in control get in his way. And I was humbled by that or after my jaw was removed back to my face that he said such a thing. He's an individual too, and his stuff can get in the way, just like all of our stuff can get in the way. And I really think that that really points to something important, that when we stop playing the instrument and we stop getting feedback from the coaches in the audience, our skill can still drift no matter how long we've been practicing. M So I would just want folks to know that I'm not sitting up on any high horse saying, I have arrived. It's important to consistently have time to practice and have good feedback and coaches and mentors in our path throughout our.

Amy Shanahan: Practice and any practice portion that gets coached, I just tell people it's just a selfie of this moment. Sometime it's just that camera up and you take a selfie and you're like, oh, look at me in this one. Right? And other times you're like, e. right.



And selfies we can sort of quickly throw them away and this, you know, like. But nonetheless it's just you in that moment. It's just sometimes that moment is a three, four moment and sometimes that moment is a high moment. Right.

Laura Saunders: It just is.

Laura Saunders: It's not always. It's not. Yeah.

Paul Warren: Well, I think in some way what you're alluding to, Laura, is sort of what the purpose of coaching is. And the purpose of coaching is not perfection.

Paul Warren: The practice of MI is not about perfection. It fidelity is not about perfection. Fidelity simply means you've reached a particular practice standard in the moment of that sample and you demonstrated that in that moment. To me, the goal is for the person practicing motivational interviewing to bring their presence and their desire to try and understand what this

00:55:00

Paul Warren: person is communicating to them and then when and if appropriate, to help that person to verbalize their motivations for considering this particular change and effectively doing that, engaging in that conversation where the person's motivations become strengthened and then perhaps they might be ready to plan. There's nothing perfect in any of that.

Laura Saunders: No, not allowed. I have to tell them that perfection.

Paul Warren: Is not allowed or required.

Laura Saunders: Required or allowed or we just don't even have to. There's no such thing. You don't have to think about that.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, I love the concept, and the metaphor that we use in MI about practicing AM I is like practicing a musical instrument support or a ah, sport or anything that needs practice over time. And it, it highlights for me when I invite folks that I'm coaching to consider what are the few things that they want to practice this week or this month or whatever block of time. Just like someone playing a sport or playing an instrument. I'm just going to practice chords this week or I'm just going to practice you know, the key fingering on the piano this week or I'm going to practice my vibrato. So just pick a couple things because I think while we're practicing that can help some diminish the clutter and the cleverness of wanting to have that mic drop moment of the best reflection or I listen to all the change talk. Consider as we're coaching and when we're practicing that we can be deliberate in our practice and intentional in what skill we want to hone in on at this time. What do you think about that folks?

Laura Saunders: I think what I love about the one skill at a time thing is I think that it really encourages individuals to continue to be themselves. Yeah, we know genuineness is one of the things that influences people's outcomes. That it's important to be genuine. And it's so hard to be genuine when you have all of these inputs in your brain telling you, ask a question, affirm. Ah, Complex reflections. Simple, like, right. They've got all this stuff that they're feeling, all this pressure. They're not feeling calm. Right. They're feeling very cluttered. Right. And so all those. When you're trying to do all of those things, it's so easy to stop sounding or sounding like or being yourself. And I tell every person I ever teach motivational interviewing, share motivational interview

and guide them to use motivational interviewing. You already know how to help people. I'm gonna help you do it a little bit differently, maybe a little bit better, maybe a little bit. I don't know. I don't know where you're starting, But I can tell you that no matter what, you have helped a darn lot of people as yourself. And so even. And then I tell them that when they're doing their recordings, if you're doing your recording and you get all, like, tongue tied and you're not sure, and just be a human, because you know how to do that. You're so good at talking human. Just talk human for a while. Something will come back to you. You'll think of the complex reflection or you'll get back on that path. But in the meantime, just be on the human path because you're gonna. Right. And I think that, you know, well, there's a whole bunch I could say about that. But, yeah, just be a human. Be yourself. And so one skill at a time while you're being yourself. Another skill while you're being yourself. That's at. While you're being yourself. Don't be robot.

Paul Warren: And P's. You can be a really good skill robot and not be self and the person. There's no rapport. There's no engagement. So, again, M. I is very clear about what the foundational, most valuable aspects. And, you know, you brought me back, Lore. You reminded me of an old theater metaphor, which is that rehearsal, once it's opening night, is meant to be thrown away because you practice, you rehearse, you study, you do what you do. And when it's time to be in the conversation with the person, trust that you've done that work and just be in that moment. Just be human.

Amy Shanahan: I think Bill refers to you practice with the people that you're listening to. They give you feedback all the time.

Laura Saunders: They'll teach you. They'll teach you.

Paul Warren: Yeah, I can help teach you and pay attention.

Laura Saunders: Yeah, yeah. Once you know the things and you try them out, they will teach you. They'll give you constant feedback. Right?

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Paul Warren: Yeah. And the ability to flex and adjust with that feedback you're getting from the person that you're in the conversation with is part of the art of the practice as well.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Paul Warren: Not just knowing whether I should evoke change talk here.

Laura Saunders: Yeah.

Paul Warren: So as we start to bring this premiere first episode on coaching about yes. These six episodes on coaching, any thoughts, final words emphasis that we might want to bring as we start to draw this conversation to a close.

Laura Saunders: If you are a person who wants to be good at motivational learning, you really want to use it and you want all of its power to be something that you have because it is so it is such a wonderful powerful tool for helping people. And if you really want that, find someone who can coach you. And that's not hard to do. Like find someone who can coach you. And if you are afraid to get coached, find a coach who will coach you to get coached. Right. like think about like find someone who can help you get over the hump and take the coaching and you will be amazed at all the things you're doing right. And how a little tiny titration of little tweaks can make you just have

this super wonderful powerful tool just right there at the top of your tool chest. Just, it's just right there. And that comes from coaching. And it's the only way it's gonna come.

Amy Shanahan: I think I'll piggyback off of that. Oh yeah.

Laura Saunders: Only way you can be assured that you have it. It's. I think it's unlikely that people are have fidelity to the model with no Coling. But it's not impossible. I can't say it's impossible.

Amy Shanahan: I would just piggyback off of what you said, Laura, and invite folks to understand that sometimes you have multiple coaches and maybe unofficially, I mean Paul, I consider you a coach in my practice and I didn't ever reach out and say paul, would you be my coach? Laura, I have stuff in my back pocket from you and I have never invited you to be my coach. Although I would ask either of you to be my coach. So just know that you're taking things from people that you see that you find helpful and I'll share this from a mentor. That said, know you see in others what you possess in yourself. So pay attention to those folks that are already maybe even informally coaching you and know that you can have more than one.

Paul Warren: I'm so glad that we made the decision to focus these episodes on coaching because it seems there's so much emphasis on understanding. Am I? And so much emphasis on the core skills of MI that somehow coaching or the fact that practice is really required in order to put it all together, to me, somehow that gets lost or there's not enough understanding about it for people to really do what's necessary to get it. Because you have to actually make effort if you want to be more skilled and more effective. Using motivational interviewing and and coaching from colleagues, coaching from other folks has brought me to a place in my practice that I know I couldn't have

gotten to on my own if it wasn't for the interactions that I have with folks as yourselves and other people. my MI practice would have been at a particular level and probably not gone much further than that. So I just hope that this will support people in what they choose to do going forward. Laura, we can't thank you enough for joining us yet again on Lions and Tigers and Bears. Am I thanks Laura. It's

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Paul Warren: been a pleasure. Thanks so much.

CASAT: Thanks for listening to episode 31 of Lions and Tigers and Bears MI. Be on the lookout for new episodes on coaching coming soon.

01:05:19