

Strengths-Based Coaching: Transforming Conversations with MI

CASAT: CASAT Podcast Network.

CASAT: Lions and Tigers and Bears MI is brought to you through a collaboration between The Mountain Plains ATTC and NFARtec In episode 32, Paul and Amy welcome a guest to discuss MI consistent and strengths based coaching. For episode resources, links to episodes, contact us and other information, please visit the Lions and Tigers and bears, MI website at <https://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 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: You know, we're back,

Paul Warren: we're back in the studio.

Amy Shanahan: I'm surprised you said it.

Paul Warren: Well, it's our inside joke and you set me up for it that we're actually not in a studio, we're in our own offices. And we are thrilled, thrilled, thrilled, thrilled. I'm only going to speak for myself. I am thrilled that Susan Dopart has agreed to join us at the roundtable of Lions and Tigers and Bears MI today, a colleague whom I respect, who I have learned so much from And I'm just so delighted, Susan, that you took us up on our invitation. And again, I can't thank you enough for making the time to be here. And I'm going to turn it over to you to let you introduce yourself to our listeners. And then we'll dive into our conversation furthering our thoughts about coaching.

Susan Dopart: Thank you so much, Paul and Amy. I greatly, greatly appreciate being here and I consider it a wonderful honor. MI is just, I feel like it's rocked my world over the past, 25 years. And originally I'm a dietitian, actually. And years ago I worked at UCLA and I remember a scenario, something that happened, where a physician had written a diet order that said, no cholesterol, no salt, no potassium, no fat. And underneath that diet order, the diet tech wrote no fun. And I thought to myself in that young moment, that's what patients think of us. We're no fun. We're just telling them what to do, especially dietitians, you know, Nobody wants to be told what to eat. Right?

It's such an intimate thing. And so I said to myself at that time, I have to find a way to communicate with people to really get them on board with behavior change. So a couple years later, I'm in private practice and a social worker, actually she was a, teacher professor at USC She handed me the first book on motivational interviewing and said, Susan, you should read this book. It might help you with your patients. But as you know, you can't really read a book and learn a language. And so I tried my best and you know, didn't do all that well. And you know, this was 1996 or seven. Right. So shortly after the first MI book came out and a couple years later I thought I really need to get serious about this. And I always wanted to travel. So I saved up for a while, saw there was a bunch of trainings in Australia, went to Australia, did my first training and a, couple years later finally got serious and became an MI trainer. And I've been a trainer for I guess close to 15, 20 years now. And I just love it. I think it's a beautiful way of being in the world and I just love being able to introduce people to the wonderful language that we have. And so that's how I got into being a part of MI and being a mentee.

Paul Warren: Thank you, Susan. I didn't know some of those details about your journey with motivational

00:05:00

Paul Warren: interviewing. And again Amy and I can't thank you enough for making the time to be here today.

Susan Dopart: Thank you so much.

Amy Shanahan: And what a beautiful story from your experience working as a dietitian.

I had to laugh. Yeah. I don't want you to tell me what to eat. Just tell me how can I eat those Doritos and still be healthy. But I wanted to say how excited I was when Paul brought up your name as a person to interview because of our journey together. That when I entered the network of trainers in motivational interviewing, you were one of the code trainers, which really ties into our topic today. I think a little from my perspective, the topic of being motivational interviewing, consistent and strength based coaching and how does it tie in is not just your strength based approach. The way you walk, the spirit and the way you are with people really stood out to me. And as you know, but others maybe listeners don't know, there's four trainers in the room and your spirited heart stood out to me. And that really impacted me from a modeling perspective. And I think that those things are important as we get into our conversation about MI consistent and strength based coaching.

Susan Dopart: Thank you so much, Amy. I greatly appreciate that.

Paul Warren: So Amy, you're saying that you're really confirming for me yet again that Susan was absolutely the right person to choose for this particular episode. Which really actually leads us into our first kind of element of consideration in regard to this. because this is a continuation, this series of episodes are all focusing on aspects of coaching. And what we really wanted to focus on in this particular episode was the idea of coaching that is MI consistent coaching and especially strengths based focused, which of course would be an MI consistent in and of its own being strength based. So the idea that we as the coach begin to lay the foundation for what the environment is, the coaching environment is maybe we could spend a little bit of time talking about how as coaches we would set the foundation of safety, inclusion, MI consistency, strengths based focus, and how we kind of co we model it. But we also set, as the coach, we set that foundation. Wondering what your thoughts are about that and how you approach

that when you're actually coaching someone.

Susan Dopart: Well, I did a three day training, just last week, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. And I really thought about this very specifically. how do I set the tone ahead of time when I get to that room, when I get to that space. So to create the best possible MI experience for those that are coming. And so one of the things I say is, you all are doing such a wonderful thing in the world. You are trying to help people to be their best selves. So MI is a language to add to all the good you're already doing. Right. And this is your training. And I have certain things planned, but I never really quite know where we're going because I don't know what all you need to help be the best you can with the people that you work with. So part of making this, your training is telling me what you need, what comes up, what kinds of conversations you're having that feel difficult. and so that we can match whatever we're working on to those things that you're doing to make it the best conversations you can. And so part of that is you telling me that you making mistakes, you know, and giving them grace to themselves to make mistakes. Because MI is a challenging language. And I think that's an important thing to point out to people, so that hopefully the perfectionism goes aside and they can realize that it's okay to make mistakes. And Part of the learning process is making

00:10:00

Susan Dopart: mistakes.

Amy Shanahan: I love that. Starting off affirming that they're already coming to the room with strengths and skills. And I noticed that you also invite them to be partnering with you. So a lot of spirit aspects right out of the gate. What do you need? I might shift my gears based on what you need. That's really powerful stuff. I can already imagine being

in the room with you, already settling in, wanting to learn more, being open to it. Paul, what do you do? Oh, go ahead.

Paul Warren: No, I was just going to say that. The other thing that really stood out to me in terms of what Susan just said was that safety is a process. And as people start to feel more comfortable, they then can open up about what it is they really need. And through that journey, and I'm thinking of the coaching journey, through that journey, the coach as well as the person who's the collaborative partner in the coaching, what they need becomes apparent to them as well. And the fact that that safety is established, that the person can actually sort of be in a process of revelation of what it is they may need. And part of what's revealed is when they practice. And you know, again, practicing takes risk. And you know, I love the fact Susan, that you're normalizing for folks that like, you know, there's a lot of missteps in this and you'll find out more about what you need, you'll learn from your missteps. And that, that really, and I'm thinking of word, it begins with a V. Vulnerability. It really the person really we want to build an environment where the person can be vulnerable and also grow at the same time.

Susan Dopart: And you just made me think of something Paul, where that parallel process where you're sitting safety for the group. But ah, you're also realizing that in order for people to tell us what they need in my conversation, they need to feel safe as well. And so how do we create that environment wherever we're at so people want to tell us what they need and then all we have to do is reflect that. Right. It's such an important piece of the puzzle. and the vulnerability part is I think so many times we as helping professionals expect people to tell us intimate things about themselves and we don't give much thought to it. Whereas when they experience that, that they have to be vulnerable in a training, they're like, oh, okay, well this is why people hold back or don't tell us things because it is such a vulnerable space to be in.

Amy Shanahan: It's interesting when you talk about, the vulnerability piece. And I'm tying it into a practice and a training that I saw where someone was actually talking about their relationship with their diet. So apropos, Susan For you to be here. And when that person was talking about their eating and their diet, they were talking about how vulnerable they felt because the listener was listening well. And they got very emotional about it. They had an emotional connection to their food, to the values around their diet and felt very emotional. So creating that safe environment is really.

Susan Dopart: Important, essential.

Paul Warren: And certainly essential to any kind of effective coaching relationship. Because if the person who has chosen to collaborate with a coach can't feel safe, if they can't feel like they can fail, quote unquote, whatever that may mean really, or that they can't take risk in front of their coach, how will they really ever get the opportunity to grow into. And I love the way you frame it, Susan. Grow into an effective use of this language, this way of talking with somebody that helps that person to move toward their goal.

Susan Dopart: And for them to really think about it in a forward moving way. Right. And so how do we be as directional as we can? Like this is something you'd really like to change or you came here today to talk

00:15:00

Susan Dopart: to me because you're really thinking about what this would look like for the future. Right. And I think a lot of times when people are learning am I there? They want to be empathetic, but they don't add the hope piece at the end to make people

think about a more hopeful place to be and to do that with coaching as well. You're meeting with me today because you really want to make an impact in your and my skills when you work with people. So it's that modeling, that parallel process that we're doing. if we are in that coaching space.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And the coach really does become the representation of an mi. Spirited interaction. Because is it And tell me if I've gone too far out on a limb saying this, but isn't it fair to say that the person who has chosen to work with a coach in some way may replicate the kind of conversations that they and the coach are having with their clients?

Susan Dopart: Right. Because they borrow it. Right? It kind of washes over them like I had this beautiful experience and now I want to share that. And I truly believe people in a training need to experience. Am I to be able to believe in it and to use it? And if they don't experience it, it's Very hard to really believe in it and excel in it.

Amy Shanahan: I love the way you both define the phrasing of parallel process. That of course how we experience it hopefully is the way that will express it as well. And I completely have seen that in trainings a lot in in coaching that if you invite the person to experience it by modeling it, I love it washes over them. Your words, Susan.

Paul Warren: It also makes me think in a very concrete way that coaching, the process of coaching is also about behavior change. And I'll just throw out this very concrete example because let's say you have the opportunity as a coach to be working with someone and you review a sample and you're noticing as you review the sample that this person is using a lot of open ended questions and they're doing fewer reflections. So you know, there are a lot of ways a coach could go about bringing that to

somebody's attention and then supporting that person to consider if they want to change the way they're interacting. So I'm wondering what your thoughts are about how practically a coach could address something as concrete or technical in an inspired and consistent way.

Susan Dopart: And what you're describing, Paul, is so common and you know, and when people come to trainings or coaching sessions, they'll say I just wish I knew the questions to ask. Right. And a lot of times when I'm coaching or I'm doing a write up, I'll say, you know, these are wonderful strengths that you're bringing to the conversation to start off with that sandwich. Right. And here's some stretches and how do we make your questions even more impactful towards change? How do we make them evoking? Right. And then if we even want to add more to it, how do we intersperse some reflections in there to add meaning, to start to unwind that ambivalence so that someone goes, I call it going deeper to the well. So they go deeper to the well the more you reflect.

Amy Shanahan: What a beautiful way example of strength based coaching right there. I didn't hear anything like you should use less questions and more reflections and very technically driven, which at times can be appropriate. And the way that you described it was really building on what they're already doing and inviting them to think about it. Are there other ways that you can build it up? And then why? Which ties in the what is it? And why are you inviting them to do it? Not just because you think it's a good idea.

Susan Dopart: And sometimes asking permission

00:20:00

Susan Dopart: to do a little role play on the spot. you know, so they get to experience if you ask a lot of questions in a row, you know, and what that felt like versus asking a great open ended, evoking question, letting them talk and then just giving them two reflections and what did they notice what the difference was and then doing a little debrief around that.

Paul Warren: I'm glad you said that because it brought me back to something that I wanted to mention when we were talking about parallel process. Because what you described is, I think it's related to what you had said about the ability to experience MI is a powerful way to help somebody carry it forward so somebody else can experience it. And it made me think of empathy because if through the parallel process you're feeling more empathy or you're feeling empathic, you can bring that empathy to the conversation or hopefully you're going to be using this way of communicating and notice I said it that way instead of these skills that you'll be using because there's so much emphasis on the skills and not focusing using the relational components with the technical components.

Susan Dopart: Well. And as Bill Miller says, without the spirit, all the skills are lost. You know, so if we don't have the spirit as our foundation.

Paul Warren: Yeah.

Susan Dopart: You know, then we're not really doing ami.

Paul Warren: Yeah. Essential to coaching as well. Especially if the goal is to coach that person to be able to effectively and I'll put this in air quotes. Do motivational interviewing.

Amy Shanahan: And I noticed in your example Susan, you noticed the strengths first and it seemed very eloquent how you inserted the. It's almost like you were dancing with your feedback about, you know, and here, here are those really good questions you asked. And and then slide in, not within. It didn't feel manipulative. It felt very natural to then talk about opportunities to strengthen or make more effective. I think I was actually imagining hearing that if it were me being coached by you. And it made me think, it made me want to analyze my own practice or reflect back on what I did. which is coaching people to coach themselves in a sense that I'm going to continue to reflect on. Oh, that went really well. And. M. What could I do to boost it or make it stronger?

Susan Dopart: Yeah. Make it better. It's kind of like with affirmations when you make an affirmation, many times I think people don't believe it, but they leave your presence wanting to live up to it. Right. Wanting to do better, which increases self efficacy and movement towards change. And so if we really use MI spirit and point out any little thing someone's doing well, it makes them want to do better, and really live up to that.

Paul Warren: You know, I don't know if either of you have had this experience, but I'm gonna confess that I have. And that experience is this. Sometimes when I have had the. And I do believe it's a privilege to work collaboratively with somebody as a coach. I will encounter. And sometimes I'm a little flummoxed by this, but I will encounter. I want to start with the strengths that the person brought to the conversation and then move toward the growth opportunities. That's not where they want to start. Where they want. You know, where I'm going. Where they want to start is they want to start with tell me what I didn't do right. M. And I. Sometimes I. I feel a little. I have to really get myself to pause when the person is coming from that perspective, because that is not what I want the coaching to be. I don't want to take on the role of quote unquote, telling them what they're not quote, unquote doing. Right. So I'm just curious if either of you have

ever coached somebody who kind of want is very, anxious and insistent

00:25:00

Paul Warren: about, focusing on what they didn't do. And I'm putting that in quotes again, what they didn't do. Right.

Susan Dopart: And Paul, I think that's really common, especially if someone has received a coding sheet and they're feeling frustrated that they didn't pass. You know, according to the agency, and they come to the coaching session a little kicking and screaming, I didn't pass. And, it's kind of like normalizing things for them. How many days have MI training have you had? Maybe two. Right. And kind of giving them the background on MI and how difficult it is, given how difficult it is. Let's. If it'd be okay asking permission. Can we focus on the things you did really well first and then maybe again how we can add to what you did? And the beautiful thing is you did a tape. you did a tape. That's a hard thing to do. Many people aren't willing to do that. And you put yourself out there. So now we're just going to add, ah, you. We're going to take that tape and learn from it and use it so you can be the best version of MI that you can be.

Amy Shanahan: I had two reactions to that. have I ever coached anyone? Yes. That came with that stance. And I'll add to that Further, not that that's just where they say they want to start. When I say something like, what did you notice that went well, what did you like about what you did? The person sometimes comes in and says, well, I didn't do this, and I should have done that. And I'm so pleased that we're talking about the parallel process. Cause that phrasing and supervision and coaching is important to me. And I think that deficit model is so ingrained sometimes in some of our cultures. That when we're practicing MI we're looking at the strengths, we're looking at the

positives. We're not looking. So the deficit model would be looking at the problem and what's missing. And I think the parallel process in coaching people who are practicing MI, the same thing happens. They're expecting us to look at what they didn't do well, what they did wrong, or as we'd like to say, inconsistent with MI. It just seems so culturally ingrained in some of us from that deficit model. That something's wrong that needs to be fixed or improved. And the parallel process in coaching is MI flips it on the other side, keeps doing what you're doing.

Susan Dopart: Well, you know, Amy, you just reminded me of something, in the coding. The mighty 4.2.1 is we're sidestepping sustained talk. And so maybe in the coaching session, even though someone comes with all these things I did wrong, how do we sidestep that, you know, and focus on the change or the good that they did to have that start to wash over them before we get into the stretches?

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Paul Warren: I mean, I would add that I don't know why this is. And maybe it's because of, the really vast, knowledge about motivational interviewing or the broad kind of distribution of it. It seems to me that. That this is particularly this drive for. I have to say the right thing, I have to ask the right question, I have to get this right. Is particularly related to motivational interviewing. The practice of motivational interviewing. And, you know. Yeah, I agree with you, Amy. I do think it's like a cultural thing. And I also think somehow it's connected to MI M too. And maybe it's because maybe for a lot of people, M I still seems very mysterious. and, you know, am I actually doing it? And I think I'm doing it. But really what I'm doing is I'm just using the core skills. I'm not really evoking change talk and building motivation. And so, I don't know. It seems that, the practice of MI M is a little bit freighted with this, I got to get it perfect mentality.

Susan Dopart: I've asked a lot of different people, why is it that people think they should be able to get it in a day or two or three. And I, think some people say, well, it's the name, you know, it's and motivational interviewing, that they should be able to conduct an interview, you know, and they should know how to do it within a day or two. And I've heard different people

00:30:00

Susan Dopart: say if it was, I don't know if this is true, but a different name like motivational listening or compassionate conversation, and these are the skills around that. If it would be different, I don't know. But, it's just something I've played around in my head about why is it that people think they should be able to get it? and we all know that MI is a language that just keeps getting layered and layered in your brain. And I think about even how I coach now compared to how I coached a year ago or two years ago. It's far different because the language has percolated and evolved in my brain over time in a different way.

Paul Warren: It's funny, Susan, because I think another level of why that expectation is so, common is that a lot of MI training, focuses specifically on the concrete skills. And folks feel like, I got this, I know how to ask an open ended question. I can do a reflection, I can affirm a strength or I can do a summary. And folks think. And again, those are all wonderful things. Those are all strengths that you can bring to the conversation. They, in and of themselves though, don't add up to the complexity of having a conversation with somebody about a change that they're considering and helping them to capitalize on their motivations to sort of move toward that change.

Amy Shanahan: Now what you said, Susan, really tied in your comment, Paul, about MI

culture and both phrasing, motivational interviewing. You know, it has, is long ingrained since the 90s. and it a, it has a meaning to it that people might come to the rooms or the coaching thinking they already do this or they wonder. I know I'm doing some of it. I hear that a lot. If that's one of the major phrases that I hear from folks being trained or maybe even being coached, I think I'm doing it. I'm just not sure. you know, says a lot to what they have interpreted it to be over the years. And also the expectation from an adult Learning perspective. Well, I should be doing this. And you know, I know when we, before we rolled tape we were talking about how we came up with the title Lions, Tigers and Bears MI And I remember having that fear, practicing with Paul and others in the room that there's this expectation that I should be listening well, that I should be expressing my empathy. All the things that I had translated in motivational interviewing to be. and I also love what you said that you know, over the years it's morphed, it's grown, it's changed, I've learned more. And I think it ties back into the beginning conversation that we had about creating a safe environment, that as a coach, as a trainer, as a guide, that I'm humbled that I might know what I know now and it may get better or change tomorrow, that there's some level of humility, in the coaching relationship, in the partnership.

Susan Dopart: You know, and the one thing that you both triggered in me to think about was, many times participants will say, well, what's the formula? You know, I really need the formula for how do I do this? And you know, addressing that and saying, you know, there is no formula. It's like what comes up in the moment. And can you trust that the person in front of you has the answers because they are the expert in themselves and they have lived with themselves their whole life. And how do you completely empty your mind of yourself, have absolutely no agenda and trust. And that's the piece, I think that people, they want to be in control. How do you trust that the conversation that mi will lead you to the place you need to go in that moment?

Paul Warren: And clearly there's a parallel to that in what happens in the coaching relationship as well. And it makes me think as we start to think about kind of the activities or the concrete things we do. And Susan, you mentioned earlier the idea of like doing a spontaneous role play because that's something that may illuminate what it is we're focusing on at that particular moment, but how

00:35:00

Paul Warren: we can collaboratively as coaches develop those activities that are unique for that particular person's growth, needs, refinement, needs.

Susan Dopart: Yeah, I'm being willing to do that in the moment. You know, like I was mentioning to before we started, I did a three day training last week and it was a lot of different people from homeless agencies and they finally one of their directors said well you know, this all sounds great but you know, we have these really challenged people that are like throwing all these curveballs at us and you know, how does MI fit in with that? And that is an opportunity for a trainer just to do on, on the spot. And I said, well, would you be willing to be, you know, one of your clients? And she said, sure. So she came up and a lot of smokec screens, you know, a lot of. And so I just sat, listened intently and I said, well it seems like you're really working on setting boundaries in your life and that's something that's, although challenging, it's something that you're really working on right now in multiple aspects of your life. And so the convers, she calmed down and the conversation went on and after we did the debrief she said, you hit it on the nail. You know, I was trying to really make you uncomfortable and fidget, just like I am with this person. And you just did a little summary. And I noticed even though I was enrolled, it really calmed me down and made me think about change. And I think that's so much more impactful for us as trainers to do rather than just telling people some

aspect of ami. Right?

Paul Warren: Yeah, yeah. You know, I'm so struck by that example Susan, because again the parallel between a training participant and somebody who is someone we're collaborating with in coaching, the idea that if we can communicate to that person that we understand them or we're trying to understand their unique situation, that does a lot in building trust, opening the person up, inviting them to be willing to think forward as opposed to.

Susan Dopart: And I think the thing that we haven't touched on yet, but I think is very important both in training and in coaching is the autonomy piece is how do you say to someone, you know, this may not work for you, you know, but part of our conversation is to do things that make the most sense to you moving forward.

Susan Dopart: You know, and I think autonomy is such an important piece of what we do as coaches, as trainers.

Amy Shanahan: And I was thinking, and that really resonates with I have a particular individual that I'm thinking of that ties in, thankfully that I had this strength based approach because I was thinking, gosh, this was an early MI practitioner, came from a different area of work, which I'll reveal in a little bit. And I was thinking as a coach, I was thinking, wow, where would I begin? What would I say? there were some strengths and there were some areas for opportunity. How do I sift through that? And when I invited the gentleman who received his feedback ahead of time, written feedback, I invited him to tell me so that collaborative partnership and I'm so glad for all of that because it helped me not have to worry about sifting through my clutter. Where would you like to begin? What would you like to focus on? What would you find helpful? And this

particular person honed in on a specific skill and maybe I had two or three different ideas than that. And it wasn't about what I wanted, it wasn't about what I thought as the expert of practicing. And I don't call myself an expert. I said that with air quotes. and he told me about his background, that he was trained in law enforcement as an interrogator. And he needed to start where he needed to start in not interrogating people. And that was a beautiful place to start. And I love again that notion of parallel process, that as the coach, I don't have to tell anybody where they need to

00:40:00

Amy Shanahan: go. I'm just walking alongside them wherever they say they want to go. And it was a really, really powerful to watch this person navigate a along ingrained training that they were in in their previous career and have the desire and want to use different skills to collaborate and have a different way to talk with people. It was a very powerful transition.

Susan Dopart: You giving him control and choice from the get go started to make shifts internally within him.

Amy Shanahan: M. Yeah.

Paul Warren: And you know, the coach also has to have faith and has to trust that the person that they're collaborating with has something that they're bringing to the table and see where they want to start, see what's most resonant for them and then see where that leads. And it's interesting because an mi consistent approach like that might feel contrary to the idea of coaching because coaching seems to imply somehow that I as the coach know something or can help shape you in a way and you've come to me

for that. And Susan, I love the look on your face when I said that. and it's tricky because I think the coach has to resist that sort of classic, quantification of what a coach is when. M. When you're coaching, when you're choosing to use an MI consistent approach to coaching, when you're choosing to be strength based, you're actually signing up for a different kind of coaching and you're coming.

Susan Dopart: From a place of humility.

Amy Shanahan: You. I feel compelled if you allow me to share an example of the opposite of what I experienced in one little snippet and how it shifts just from the perspective of. I know that the coaches had good intention and asked me to look at the practice what did you notice? And the, what I felt was less consistent in MI was then telling me why what I did was less effective. So the question that they asked was more about them setting up the stage to tell me. And I know their intention was, was good. They wanted to teach me why this was more MI consistent? and what I noticed even from your example, Susan, and from different styles of coaching, when someone invites me to say, well, how did, like you shared earlier, how did the person respond to the questions that you're asking or the series of questions that you're asking? Not to set them up for us to insert? Why invite them to figure out why? I think is that subtle difference in the way we can be more strength based than inviting people to look at what they did and then tell them what they did wrong? really is just one example of an experience that I had that I like to underscore only because I think some coaches, you know, have to teach too. And how we teach and how we coach might, have some subtle differences. What are your thoughts about that?

Susan Dopart: Well, the one thing I always say, it's 0% about us, 100% about them, you know, and I think that's hard for some people because they do want to make it about

them and their agenda and you know, stressing that it's not our agenda, it's their agenda because it's just human nature. If we are trying to force a certain direction, they're going to, you know, put their heels in the ground and go the other way. And so how do we stay neutral, 100% neutral. And I mean, as you both know, the research shows when we stay neutral, the decision is usually towards change.

Amy Shanahan: Mm

Paul Warren: You know, I hadn't imagined that I would interject this into this conversation as I was preparing for it. And I can't help but resist, saying that, you know, this is also reminiscent, of course, of the fixing reflex. The coach can have a huge desire and again, coming from a caring, supportive place,

00:45:00

Paul Warren: and again, being aware of not acting on that impulse and inviting the person to exercise their autonomy. And again, if we want to offer something, if we want to make a suggestion, asking permission and then inviting the person to entertain it or decide not.

Susan Dopart: Right. Like Steven Rolnick says, skillful advice, giving, you know, how do you ask permission and offer information in a neutral way, you know, rather than, you know, I think you should be doing this or that. And I think one of the things that gets the most pushback is the stems and trainings where people are used to saying, I'm hearing it sounds like rather than being starting as a reflection with the word, you and I go back and forth with multiple scenarios. You're really wondering what this is going to look like for you versus I'm hearing you're wondering what this is going to look like. Right.

Because how do we put ourselves completely aside and trust that the method of MI M will take us where we need to go out?

Paul Warren: Ah, provoking.

Amy Shanahan: I know, I'm thinking.

Susan Dopart: And like I said, I get so much flack from pushback from, well, this is how I was taught. And I said, well, you know, if you think about it, do you use stems in normal conversations? You know, and usually they say, well, no. And you know, going back and forth about what the different scenarios look like, so that you can believe in the language and also realize that if you're wrong, that's okay because you'll get more information than if you were right. You know, so it's okay to be wrong. You know, I was talk about how people, you know, I'll see a new client and I'll make an assumption or a guess, make a reflection and immediately they'll tell me why it's wrong. And then I've got way more information. To start off, you know, what direction they want to go, where their focus is, what they'd like to do. And that's a really beautiful thing.

Amy Shanahan: Know I have one more example of a coaching situation that relates to the stems and autonomy that you're talking about. And it's going to be a quick one. I trust this woman that I was working with said, I am going to practice not using statement starters and stems like you called them. Susan. I'm going to stop using it sounds like what I hear you saying in this next week. So very specific focus, specific activities. And off she went and came back and said, I'm taking them back. Because she had, a person who was frustrated and she reflected back that person's feelings. You're really frustrated. And he responded, no, I'm really angry. I imagine I might have told this story somewhere beyond in our podcast episodes. But nonetheless she was

really intimidated by that. He came back with this boisterous, no, I'm angry. So she said, I'm going to take those statement starters back. I said, well, that's totally up to you if you don't feel comfortable, going without them. you're doing wonderfully by listening the way you listen. Right. You know, just the whole strength thing. And then in subsequent session she came back and said, hey, you'll never guess what happened. The gentleman came back and he apologized for being so angry with me. And he said he wasn't angry with me, that no one ever really listened to him. And he finally felt heard and he wasn't frustrated, he was really angry and he was really apologetic. So she actually took back then her wanting to practice again without using those stems. And I think it's a beautiful dance around how we plan what do we focus on together. And also dancing when they shift their focus because they tried something on and it didn't work for them. She figured it out herself. And not that it's am I inconsistent to use those stems? I hear them stronger when hear reflections stronger when they're without them. yeah, just a thought about story about a practice situation where someone intentionally wanted to get rid of them.

Susan Dopart: And well, and it's a beautiful way Amy, that you said, know you have to try this on and see if it makes the most sense to you. Right. And you emphasized her autonomy. And then she came back and had a beautiful result of her trying out, you know, not using stems

00:50:00

Susan Dopart: and then came back to her own conclusion that it was working for her.

Paul Warren: You know, this is so relevant because it speaks to the evolution or the development of the practice of motivational interviewing which hopefully is happening

during coaching conversations. And perfection, the desire for perfection, or quote unquote getting it right somehow is very static. And growth and coaching is fostering growth where somebody maybe moves through. I try this, I step back, I go forward, I come back. And ultimately to me that's the kind of coaching where somebody is really going to find their way into being m. Am I consistent their way into being strengths based. And yes, we do know that there are certain things that are more effective than other things. And we all have our own journeys in terms of figuring out our way into the use of that language.

Susan Dopart: And I have this, you've probably both seen it, this wonderful schematic about success. You know that people think success looks like this and I'm bringing my hand up and just a a straight line where it's messy, you know, and it comes in many different forms and sometimes over many years. And I always use it at the end that just like with our clients, we never know how they're going to evolve and change over time. And the same thing with our MI practice is how do we give ourselves the dignity and the empathy of the learning process.

Paul Warren: So when we think about this particular, particular topic. You know, am I consistent and strengths based coaching. If, if in a few words we were going to tie up, which would be impossible and we've determined that at this point that it's an ongoing evolutionary process. But if we were going to tie up and maybe we can't in a nice. This moment, this, this. Beautifully said Amy. Thanks. Thank you for the rescue this moment. For folks who are listening and wanting to consider possibly these elements in the coaching environment, the coaching conversation, what would, I'm wondering what each of us would sort of emphasize in regard to that as a final thought at this moment to our conversation.

Susan Dopart: I'll let you started Amy.

Amy Shanahan: I can't believe I have a thought. I usually want to punt to somebody else first, but I do have a thought to keep in line with our parallel process and modeling. I would invite the listeners to consider at this time what do they experience that they're already doing well as coaching and mentoring others in whatever they do and what area of growth or area of an opportunity would you want to focus on? So I'm going to stick with not having an answer, sitting on my fixing reflex and inviting folks to think what are you already doing well and what is the opportunity or stretch growth that you would consider in your modeling and your coaching and guiding people?

Susan Dopart: Well Amy, that's exactly how I do it. You know what, tell me about your tape. What went well? What did you like about what you did? What do you think worked right? Asking those evoking questions and really centering the conversation around that with some rich reflections and then just saying, you know, if you weren't to do this again, let's say we rebound the tape, is there anything that you would have done differently?

Susan Dopart: This next time, you know, and just doing some reflections around that and evoking from them what that piece is.

Paul Warren: I think for me to answer my own question that I set up, and I didn't have this answer until I heard both you, Amy and Susan give your answers. And I don't even know if this is an answer but what I would underline is resist the coach trap and allow space for the person you have the opportunity to be collaborating with to guide you with what they offer in the conversation. That's what I'd underline.

Amy Shanahan: I'm underlining allow space.

00:55:00

Amy Shanahan: I love that.

Susan Dopart: M. Yeah. Space for people to really interject what they need.

Paul Warren: And to hear it, really take it in. Hear it. Yeah.

Amy Shanahan: It's really modeling the compassionate part of the person's nervous and sometimes or wondering what we think and just sitting with it. To me that's what I interpreted. Allowing the space from a coaching perspective.

Susan Dopart: And really exhibiting the partnership piece, you know, of equal. It's an equal playing field here and you know, how do we help you get to the place you want to be?

Paul Warren: Susan, thank you so much. And Amy, it's been a pleasure. Any final thoughts, Susan or Amy?

Susan Dopart: This was just an amazing, wonderful, beautiful conversation and I thoroughly enjoyed it. And I again greatly appreciate you having me on this beautiful podcast that is really, a wonderful thing to the world about all the beautiful aspects of MI and how do you be that partner in helping whoever it is that is in front of you. So thank you so much.

Amy Shanahan: Thanks for joining us in bringing your beautiful spirit to the space.
Appreciate you.

Paul Warren: Absolutely. Thank you, Susan.

Susan Dopart: You're welcome. Thank you.

Paul Warren: Take care everybody.

Amy Shanahan: Bye bye.

CASAT: Thanks for listening to episode 32 of Lions and Tigers and Bears MI Be on the
lookout for new episodes on coaching coming soon.

00:56:42