

Episode 38: First MI Practitioner Forum with Lauren

Lauren Flunker: CASAT podcast network.

CASAT: Lines of Tigers and Bears MI is brought to you through a collaboration between The Mountain Plains ATTC and NFARtec In episode 38, Paul and Amy welcomed their first guest in the series of the MI Practitioners Forum. 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.

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

Amy Shanahan: I'm Amy Shanahan.

Paul Warren: And I'm Paul Warren.

Amy Shanahan: And we've worked together over the past 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 today?

Amy Shanahan: I'm doing well. It's nice. And, actually not even steamy anymore. Humid. It's comfortable at 80 degrees in the Northeast.

Paul Warren: Yes. When 80 degrees becomes comfortable, perhaps that's the time to ask some questions.

Amy Shanahan: You know, it was 100 degrees last week.

Paul Warren: I do, I do. I remember it well. It's burned into my memory.

Amy Shanahan: Oh, my God. That's a bad dad joke.

Paul Warren: That is the. I have never told a joke on lions and tigers and bears.

Amy Shanahan: You just did a very successful one.

Paul Warren: sort of. But anyway, we digress.

Amy Shanahan: I know. We always do. We're going to be in the studio again.

Paul Warren: Yes, that's it. we need to let our special guests know that that is an inside joke. We all. I've said several times it's great to be in the studio again. And of course, we're not in the studio. We're in our separate locations. But all that aside, we are thrilled to be kicking off our new season with our first guest practitioner. And we are delighted that she has chosen to join us in this conversation to talk about her MI practice and

maybe to practice some of her MI practice with us. and I'm going to turn it over to you, Amy, if there's anything you'd like to say about our special guest. Before we let her say whatever she wants to say about herself, I would

Amy Shanahan: like to say a few words because you might. I met this beautiful person at the MINT Forum in Minnesota and instantly felt connected. Instantly felt her passion and, and her curiosity and her joy and Laughter and playfulness. And I just have the pleasure that she said yes to our invitation to join us in a conversation. So that's what I wanted to say. Thank you for joining us and I'm going to give you the mic, Lauren, to say hello.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, thanks for having me. It's an honor. I texted you just to check in and now here I am on the podcast.

Paul Warren: Beware returning attacks.

Lauren Flunker: I'm Lauren Flunker, currently practicing as a mental health therapist with kids and families. but the last 15 years or so I've been in the youth justice child welfare arena doing case management. So a little bit of a change lately, but always been working with teenagers. And also I'm part of the motivational interviewing network of trainers. So I've been enjoying that and I get to meet people like you, Amy and Paul.

Amy Shanahan: Well, welcome to our Lions, Tires and Bears MI

Paul Warren: thank you for returning that test. Yeah, we're really glad you're here, Lauren. And again, thank you so much for making the time. And we're delighted that you are our first practitioner. We've had people who practiced, but we really wanted to

dedicate these

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Paul Warren: next four conversations to letting you as a practitioner identify which aspect or what aspect of motivational interviewing would you like to focus on. And I think the whole goal. And Amy, please jump in. But I think the whole goal of these next four conversations is just to provide a real time framework for folks who practice motivational interviewing to realize that refinement of the use of this method of conversation is an ongoing process and no one is born knowing how to practice motivational interviewing. And we just wanted to highlight and create a, respectful, safe space for practitioners to be able to be open about what it is they see as their strength, what they see as their growth opportunities, and then to provide real support in regard to working on a particular growth opportunity. So, Amy, I don't know if you want to add anything before Lauren jumps in in regard to that, but yeah,

Amy Shanahan: just along the lines of, something I heard recently from one of our friends and colleagues. Hillary. Hello, Hillary Logan, if you're listening, when folks say, well, I'm, I'm doing M.I. m, I'm, practicing M.I. and Hillary will kindly ask, well, what parts? You know, because there are parts of motivational interviewing that we might focus on. And now there's this phrasing of deliberate practice that's going on in our fields of practice, including in MI M. And there's actually a book written on deliberate practice in motivational interviewing. And we don't practice all of it all the time. It's like I always throw in the musical instrument. Like I might be practicing certain chords this week.

Paul Warren: Right.

Amy Shanahan: So it's not. Doesn't mean that this one thing I'm not good at, I'm just polishing up and making it even better. So that's just the one thing I wanted to add because Hillary just shared that recently that. What parts are you focusing in on your practice? So what do you think, Lauren?

Lauren Flunker: Well, if I could share like some of the things that I feel like I've been working on, that would be great.

Amy Shanahan: So one of my.

Lauren Flunker: I'm a big helper, right. I want to help everybody. I want to fix their problems, because that's why they're coming to me.

Amy Shanahan: Right.

Lauren Flunker: They have problems and they want them to be fixed. And I think one of the things that I struggle with is really intentionally using and placing reflections in the conversation and allowing space after the reflection to let it sink in so they can respond. I'm a big stacker of reflections and questions in my conversations. Right. So I don't. I think that sometimes my reflections lose their power because I add a question in the end. So that's an area that I've been really trying to focus on, is just sitting and allowing them to listen and respond.

Amy Shanahan: That's a common thing. Lauren, not only you, me, filled the space, thought I had to have some words in the conversation and sometimes words don't need to be used. And I also noticed when I'm coaching folks or working with other folks, they have a similar issue where there. And I love that term stack. Stacking the skills, and

giving some pause. And a lot of times we talk to folks, they're like, oh, I could try that. You know, giving some pause in between the skills. And then you also used one of our favorite words that we use a lot. Intentional. Intentional use.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah.

Paul Warren: Lauren, I'm really excited, to hear because that was the big reveal for me. I didn't know that that was going to be the focus of our conversation. And I just want to acknowledge I, I think I was hearing like three different things. And I think one of those things, and I think you led with this and I laughed. If you listen, if you rewind the tape and you listen, you will hear me laugh. When Lauren says this, she says, I like to help people, I like to fit, fix things. And that's when I laughed. And let me just acknowledge it was nervous laughter. It was laughter of identification.

Paul Warren: that has not gone Away. I, I am better at managing it. It hasn't gone away. So I heard that. The other thing I heard is that,

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Paul Warren: and I love this imagery that you use, the stacking of reflections and questions. And, and Amy said it this way, sort of filling that space, because, I mean, that's what they came to you for. That's what you're supposed to be doing. And, and the fact that you're aware of it and you kind of want to back away from it, to let the reflections, and I'll put it this way, let the reflections kind of have their impact and then see where that impact then takes the conversation. And you, you also threw out the idea of what's referred to sometimes as the spoiled reflection, which is the reflection that is, you really want to polish your skills, right, by adding the question at the end. And

then the. The person's not free to kind of go forward with how they may have responded. I didn't leave space for them to respond. So am I. Is that kind of. Did I get that? Am I accurate in my understanding of sort of m. Those elements of focus?

Lauren Flunker: Yes, that is what I was thinking. And as you're talking, it's interesting because a friend of mine, Laura Saunders, once said, just let, just let it happen, Lauren, don't try to control it. And now you've got me wondering if me asking the question is me trying to control the direction of the conversation rather than letting it organically hold.

Amy Shanahan: A mutual friend and past guest of ours, she always has those beautiful pearls of wisdom. You know what I wondered, for each of you, I experienced this, so now I'm setting it up that sometimes, and I love that you said that, Paul, that you still experience that need to want to fix. I feel it even stronger when somebody deliberately asks me, hey, what do you think? And I'm like, oh, I got the encyclopedia of Amy out and I'm ready to give it. But, I also noticed that when I'm, I'm just going to use the word uncomfortable or feel not yet connected with someone, or maybe there's some level of a disconnect, I start to feel more nervous and I ask more questions or I do more skill stacking. Ah, now you know, and I don't mean, I don't mean that in the context of. I've been practicing reflections for 50 years. But, but just that, just that's what I pay attention to. My, what triggers me. My fixing reflex gets kicked in when somebody deliberately asks me a question. And I noticed lately that I Feel if I feel uncomfortable or not yet connected with someone, I may ask more questions or I may stack my skills, but I don't know, maybe, maybe you all have certain things that you noticed.

Lauren Flunker: I definitely notice the fixer in me coming out when I am with my teenagers and I get out of I don't know, I don't care, I don't know.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Lauren Flunker: So. Because I'm supposed to be there helping them and how am I helping them if all they're talking about is how they don't know.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Paul Warren: Lauren, can I ask you a follow up question? Yeah. So. So when the folks that you're working, the teenagers that you're working with, when they provide that I don't know, I don't care, that's their response. And I hear that that causes you to want to go into the fix it mode. My question to you is, is what comes out in terms of like, what is it that you're saying when they. I don't know, you know, I don't really care. And then like, how do you help in terms of what is that? You actually say that you're kind of questioning now, like, is there any way I could pull that back? But what is it that you actually do when you're triggered in that way?

Lauren Flunker: When I am in my best myself, I use a reflection, like it's hard to talk about or this isn't something that you thought we'd be talking through today or you know, something like that. But when I'm maybe having a stressful day, feeling rushed, then it's all the questions that come out. So the assessment trap let me figure out the problem so I can like fix it for you. And then I just start

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Lauren Flunker: asking lots of questions to figure out what, what's going on, why are you and I don't know, I don't care land today.

Paul Warren: And it's the questions that are triggered are so that you can then craft the fits.

Lauren Flunker: Correct? Yes.

Paul Warren: Understood. Understood. Thank you.

Amy Shanahan: You know, something just came to me as you were sharing that, Lauren. when another colleague friend of ours, Brittany Godin, who's also been a Godin. How do you say it in French? Paul Gaudin. Brittany said to me just in conversation that, you know, sometimes our questions are also our curiosity about what's going on with the person. And we could use that question as a reflection because sometimes for me, when I notice I use those types of questions, they almost sound persuasive in a way. but it was just an interesting thing for me to think about that. when we get into the. I love that the assessment questions, like, let me figure out what the problem is. she said we always have an opportunity to turn those into reflections, which is sometimes even more complex of a practice because I'm thinking in my head, oh, I want to ask you this. How can I turn that into reflection? I think it happens faster than what my brain is seemingly going slow, but it goes fast. faster than I think. But just there's something that Brittany said about our questions, our curiosity about what's making them tick.

Paul Warren: You know, I'm haunted by something that, Amy and I have the great opportunity to hear. And I'm going to put it this way, straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak, because what I feel like is coming up in this conversation is if. And I love the way that you said it, Lauren, like when I'm in my best MI cell. And, and I do want to acknowledge that, you know, you, you clearly stated that you use reflections and you

know how to use them. Inflection. And the thing that's haunting me is we had an opportunity to speak to Steve Rolnick once and he, he told us about these six Cs. And there are three things that begin with C that you want to leave outside. And there are three things that begin with C that you want to bring to the table.

Amy Shanahan: Lauren, have you ever heard of these? I just. Sorry to want to interject. Paul, did you ever hear of the six Cs?

Lauren Flunker: No, I don't think I have.

Amy Shanahan: We were hoping that they were going to write about it in the fourth edition, but we're publishing the six Cs for him.

Paul Warren: Verbally, constantly. I use it all the time.

Amy Shanahan: So do I.

Paul Warren: So, Steve, your quarter is in the mail. royalties. and I'm drawn to that. I guess it's the fourth C, the first thing you want to bring to the table, which is calm. And when I'm in fix it mode and I'm making an I statement here, when I'm in fix it mode, I'm not calm, I'm not regulated. Something is panic in me. Ah. And panic with a small P. It's not usually, you know, crisis panic. It's usually. It's usually I'm feeling some internal pain, push that there's something that I should be doing. And. And I found that that's actually me getting in the way.

Amy Shanahan: So that was one of six Cs.

Paul Warren: It was. And if you come back for the other episodes, we May share the others. Okay, well, we'll eventually touch on that. Okay. So Lauren, you mentioned sort of several different things, and I'm wondering, when you think about those things that you want to focus on or that you want to refine, is there any one of them in this particular moment that kind of rises to the top for you as a practitioner who wants to refine in a particular area?

Lauren Flunker: I would say, probably, managing the fixing reflex when I'm practicing.

Paul Warren: Yeah. Yeah.

Amy Shanahan: Okay, well, so I'm wondering just to, prime the conversation from a coaching perspective or a, curiosity perspective. Not that I'm. Not that I'm coaching you or Paul's coaching you, but if I were coaching someone, I often ask them, what do you notice when you're in your mi. Best self and you are managing

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Amy Shanahan: that fixing reflex? What's happening for you? What are you doing? Maybe it's that natural calmness, but I don't want to answer it for you.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, I definitely agree with call being calm impatient. typically when I'm doing my best work, it's with a patient that I already feel connected to. Like one of you had said, like feeling like that relationship was already there. And that that day, for whatever reason, I'm really putting less pressure on myself. I put a lot of pressure on myself to, you know, these people are paying me to help them and it's my job to help them. And if I'm not helping them, they're wasting their money. And I don't ever want

anyone to not get what they're paying for out of a service. Right. But that, that mentality really, takes away from the fact that it's really the patients that do the work and they're the ones who can make the change, not me.

Amy Shanahan: Right. So you almost have that same. And maybe panic is a big word, but that kind of sense of urgency that I have to do something because these folks are paying me to help them. And if something doesn't feel like it's happening. Yeah. That fixing stuff comes up for you.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. Yes.

Paul Warren: You are really committed to

Amy Shanahan: being,

Paul Warren: with that person, wherever they may be. And you're also committed to sort of a more hopeful future for them.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. I really want them to feel like the work they're putting in, they're actually getting something out of it, you know? Yeah.

Paul Warren: That they're not wasting their time.

Lauren Flunker: Right.

Amy Shanahan: Something you said reminded me of something that I work on still and had to work on in intentionally and deliberately was to remind myself that it's for them

and about them. Because for the longest time I've been around the block for some decades where I was really trained to solve problems and fix things. And I think we've shifted that focus with all the solution focused and strength based approaches, including motivational interviewing approaches, that I had this habit of looking for the problem M. and thinking that I had to solve it. So I really had to tell myself over and over and over again that I don't have the solution for other people. And that was hard for me. I had it in my head intellectually, but it didn't connect always with my heart or vice versa. and it took a lot of thought and reminding myself and I guess that calmness that I had this urgency that oh, I want to help you, Paul. I have to fix this. I have to find the answer for you today. And now I'm better at believing that you got this. You'll figure it out. It might not be today. It might not be even in my me witnessing it. But that reminded me that I really worked hard at that one. That was a tough one for me.

Paul Warren: You think I need help.

Amy Shanahan: Don't we all, Paul? But it's not about us today.

Paul Warren: I was just practicing my complex reflection there. So the goal is to resist the pull of or the pressure of the fixing.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, the self created pressure.

Amy Shanahan: That's some mad awareness right there.

Paul Warren: M m. Because they're paying you.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, yeah. And I want to be helpful. Yeah, y' all want to be helpful.

Paul Warren: You know, something that Amy said really jumped out at me and, and I want to link it to what you just said about I want to be helpful. and you know, we could, we could probably do a whole new season called Problem Hunter.

Amy Shanahan: Hint, hint.

Paul Warren: No, no, no, no, no. but, but the reason why I say that is because I love that Amy framed it that like, you know, I spent a lot of

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Paul Warren: time figuring out how to identify the problem and then coming up with the solution. And I think what I'm reminded of based on our conversation is that I have to look elsewhere. I have to avoid that because that gives me purpose. If I find the problem. A, I found the problem and I feel really good about me if I find the problem B, now I have a direction that I can go in and pursue. I feel really good about me. So I was patting myself on the back so I think I'm required. The problem will be there. I'm invited to look at something else. And I guess the, the opportunity here is Is what could we sort of play out or set up that we might know the problem, but we're choosing to look somewhere else. First thoughts about that, People are thinking.

Lauren Flunker: I mean the classic example comes to mind for me with addiction, right. When people are coming in to see you and they are addicted to substances, but maybe wanting to talk about something else.

Amy Shanahan: It reminds me of that it's not about the nail video that folks, if you haven't seen it, you could YouTube search it where, where it seems like the addiction, if

you will, the nail, is the obvious problem. And, and I hear this from a lot of practitioners that it's like, oh, I want to, I have to fix that problem or even go backwards in time and ask all those problem solving questions to figure out what's causing the addiction. And the person wants to talk about getting off of probation or not having their parents or mom or caretaker nag them for, I'm just smoking a little weed, no big deal. so I don't know if that resonates with what your introduction was, but that's what I hear from folks too. And certainly me too. Like, well, it seems really obvious if you just stop doing that, your life would be fine.

Paul Warren: Speaking of weed, I'm wondering. No, that's not what I'm wondering. I'm wondering. What I'm wondering is. And I, and I don't know if this is real more into your practice setting, so please, help me to construct appropriately. I'm wondering, would it be fair to say that somebody could connect with you, and they would be connecting with you because the overt reason is that it's been discovered they're underage, they're smoking weed, and it's causing them problems at home and at school. And that, that's kind of the, the you know, presenting quote unquote problem. and you're kind of put in the position of being in a conversation with them and they don't want to talk about that, they want to talk about something else. Is that, is that within the reality of what you might experience?

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, it is. I don't have a, substance use certificate, so they wouldn't be coming to see me because of that, but they could be coming to see me, because of, you know, substance use mixed with illegal activity. But then they want to talk about, you know, stuff that's going on with their friends or their girlfriend or stress at school or parent stuff, if that makes sense.

Amy Shanahan: So no matter what your focus is with Them as far as your role with

them, whatever the problems are, the compounding problems, they still want to talk about, you know, their emotional problems with their, their argument they had with their girlfriends or their paramours, their love interests or their friends.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, yeah.

Paul Warren: And it's so interesting because, you know, Amy, I don't, I don't. I was listening to you as you said that and I don't, I don't know if you would agree with this, but, but it almost seemed like the way you framed their substance use and then their emotional problems with their friends was that almost the emotional problems with their friends were almost like these are just like surface problems. We need to get to the big problem, which

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Paul Warren: is the criminal activity of this.

Paul Warren: Did I hear that right?

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, sure.

Paul Warren: Which is so interesting because their experience might be absolutely the opposite.

Amy Shanahan: Right? Yeah.

Paul Warren: So, so from a practitioner's perspective, what is, what's the message to

me there? Because there's definitely a message to me.

Amy Shanahan: Well, I know for me you outlining it is I have a perception about what the issues and concerns are and my mind, wants to go there and that's the, that's the calm that I could practice because I could assume that the substance use and, or the legal issue is the big problem when they're tell their, their issues are the relationship issues. And I could make, the wrong assumption. And I do, I do make a wrong assumption. I think with my MI skills and when I'm doing my best mi I'm listening well, and I'm quieting those misinterpretations of what's going on. It is my go to. When I see the nail, when I see the big problem or what I think is the problem, I can veer down that road, which I know we've talked over the term guiding in MI M. I am going to guide depending on what they're talking about, but I'm not going to direct and start going down the avenue that I think that we should go down. So, yeah, it's being very much aware that for me that's my concern. I don't know if you, if something triggered you to, you know, what are your thoughts about that? But for me it's, I, I'll look at something and go, oh, well, this is obvious. This is the X is the problem. And they don't see that at all. And I have, I have worked with people, going down an avenue where they may. They came alongside me in my, my assumption. And we discovered thankfully eventually that no, that wasn't what they wanted to talk about or work on. So I've gone down the wrong path with people and probably still do sometimes. I know that I'm aware, more aware of it now and hopefully build enough rapport that they'll let me know. Is that what you were getting at, Paul?

Paul Warren: Go ahead, Lauren.

Lauren Flunker: I was just going to say it's interesting because so one of the things that you know, we've talked about is like how you learn best or we're going to talk about how

you learn best.

Lauren Flunker: And I learned so much from listening to recordings and coding them because I'm like, I do this, I do exactly what they're doing. And here I'm at, here I am, you know, scoring them in like persuading or like close questions because of the way that, you know, they up talk at the end of a reflection, their tone and stuff like that. And it's so interesting to think about how it's so easy to pick out when you're listening, but it's not so easy to pick out when you're the one talking.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah.

Paul Warren: Yeah. Yeah. Yes. Which prompts me to throw out onto the table for consideration in terms of how you, you've identified how you best learn is by reviewing sort of an audio recording. And you know, I'm, I'm wondering and I'm just throwing this out as a practice opportunity because of course this is being recorded and you could listen to this and code yourself afterward if you wanted to. but I will throw it on the table as, as a possible practice opportunity. What if we, you know, rough out a scenario where you're having a conversation with a teenager and Amy or I will play the teenager and we just let that conversation go for a while and then when it's time appropriate, we can sort of call time out and then reflect on that and then you could potentially listen to that, and you know, experience it auditorily as if, because you'd be listening to it, you wouldn't be speaking it. That's just one thought that came into my mind. I'm just curious, Lauren, what your thoughts are about that or, or if you have other thoughts about a better way for us to get at this issue of not acting on the fixing reflops.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, I would be fine with that. I'm actually, I've developed a lot over the years. I

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Lauren Flunker: used to be the person that would avoid any recording or roleplay scenario with such great accuracy. I would. And then I realized, wow, I can't believe that we as practitioners don't have to do this at least a couple times a year to prove that what we're using in our sessions are things that are helpful to people. You know, doctors practice under doctors for years before they're with a patient. Therapists are never in a session with their supervisor. Typically you just kind of start out and debrief after. And so I love any opportunity to listen to myself, whether I do good or it's an off day.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, beautiful. Yeah, me too. I was avoider of recordings and feedback and know now and that it's the best way to learn. And even when I listen to my own self without somebody coding it for me, like, oh, there went that fixing reflex again. I didn't even pay attention to it. Or we did a practice with affirmations live on this podcast and we really were listening in that one of the affirmations that we offered in that episode was a, fixing reflex affirmation. Not, not a genuine. Well, it was genuine, but it was a fixing reflex. It was genuine fixing, genuine fixing.

Paul Warren: That was Paul, by the way, in case you couldn't recognize. So what we'd be hearing from both of you right now might be with, with a skills practice opportunity looming. We might be hearing from both of you is, I think my camera's cut, my mic is cutting out. I think the conversation.

Amy Shanahan: My Internet is cutting out and my

Lauren Flunker: dog needs to eat. So sorry.

Paul Warren: Is affecting my access.

Amy Shanahan: Well, speaking of genuineness, I would like to put in a plug that this is genuine. We feel nervous when we're practicing. We feel nervous when we're recording.

Paul Warren: Yeah, it's human.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, yeah.

Paul Warren: So guide us, Lauren. What, what, what is the construction? Who is this person and what's the construction of the scenario? Because you, you build it and we'll be it.

Lauren Flunker: Okay. so some of my practice is in the schools, so it could be a school based client, high schooler, lots of anxiety, perfectionism, wanting to do well, with parents who are separated, navigating, going back and forth. How's that?

Amy Shanahan: Good one.

Paul Warren: And has the, has the student come to you or been. Have they come of their own volition or have they been recommended to you or had their parents forced them to come to you? And if they have, what have, what has externally been framed as the problem?

Lauren Flunker: Let's say they had a panic attack in school and their counselor recommended they see someone.

Amy Shanahan: Okay.

Paul Warren: All right.

Amy Shanahan: And is this a male or a female or gender neutral person?

Lauren Flunker: Well, that depends. I mean, you guys can pick you're the actors.

Amy Shanahan: I was just, seeing if Lauren was going to pick which one of us was playing and we should give Lauren.

Paul Warren: I, I would like to give Lauren that flexibility of, who she would like to practice this with, because I'm confident Amy would do an Academy Award winning performance.

Amy Shanahan: I related to, like 90% of the area.

Paul Warren: I would do, I would do my absolute. and Lauren, you're, you're free because this is your opportunity for support and refinement. So you're, you're free to pick either of us.

Lauren Flunker: That's a lot of pressure.

Amy Shanahan: Under pressure.

Lauren Flunker: I think that Amy would make a great teenage girl.

Amy Shanahan: See, we did, we did connect, and I was playing teenage girlish when we were playing in Minneapolis. You know that about me and Lauren.

Paul Warren: If it's okay, could I ask one other clarifying question?

Lauren Flunker: Yeah.

Paul Warren: Is this a first meeting with Amy or have you met with her before?

Lauren Flunker: met before a few times, but not a lot.

Paul Warren: Okay, understood. Understood. at any point, Lauren, feel free to call timeout if there's something you want to comment

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Paul Warren: on, if there's something you want to focus on. but otherwise we'll, you know, you and Amy can keep going until I'll call time at a certain point, and then it'll give us an opportunity to, That sounds good. It'll give us an opportunity to then, you know, as, as a learning community, focus on what you thought you did well, what you thought you might do differently going forward.

Lauren Flunker: Sounds good.

Paul Warren: All right.

Amy Shanahan: Sweet. All right, I'm ready.

Lauren Flunker: Okay.

Amy Shanahan: I'm ready for you to fix me, Lauren. Great. I guess we could just call me Amy just for the sake of, it's, you know, easy.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. Hey, Amy, how's it going today?

Amy Shanahan: Oh, good. I got a lot going on. you know, I don't. It's nothing against you or anything, but taking time out for my classes and stuff to come and talk with you is, you know, got me a little nervous.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, it just feels like another thing on your plate.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. And I'm, you know, I, I, I mean, I've. The last couple conversations were helpful because you were listening and everything, but, you know, what are you gonna do? I mean, I wish you could fix the teachers and my parents because they're just adding pressure, so it would be great if you could talk to them.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. You're, you're wanting someone to kind of help you buffer your conversations with them. and at the same time, you're looking for a space to kind of de. Stress.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, I mean, I mean, it, it is nice to, to talk, but it would be, it would definitely relieve a lot of stress if you could let them know. You know, they're all like worried about my anxiety and worried about the panic attack that I had, but they don't realize that they are making this happen. So it, it, it's almost like you should be talking to them, not me.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. What might someone say to them?

Amy Shanahan: well, you could tell them that, you know, I know what I'm doing, I know what I need to do to study, I know what I need to do to get through this stuff. And the next thing that I would like you to tell them is that when they keep reminding me and nagging me and checking in, am I all right? It makes things worse.

Lauren Flunker: M. It's almost like they don't trust you to keep track of your own assignments and work, even though you're such a good student already.

Amy Shanahan: That, that, that's definitely it. I mean, and, and I am a good student. I am a good student. And now like, you know, this older generation, they just don't understand. You know, we, we have anxiety. We, we have a lot of pressure on our backs. We got to do this, we got to get that right. We gotta pass the test. I have to have an A. Oh, what college are you going to? It's like, can you let me live for a minute and breathe? I mean, I'm not old, as old as them, but I know what I need to do. You're right.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. You've always been really responsible. You always come in here to your appointments and sometimes it's just like, it'd be nice if life would slow down a little bit so you'd have more time.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. And you know, they don't. They must not think I'm responsible like you think, because they just notice what I'm not doing, or they just notice when my anxiety is getting in the way. Sometimes I have to take a break from all this stuff. You're right.

Lauren Flunker: They think they're being helpful, but it's actually doing the opposite for

you. And you're thinking about how you might communicate that to them.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, I, you know, I just. Because you're a professional and you know what you're doing. I just wish that you could tell them because they would hear it from you.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, you're thinking because I'm old like them, they might hear better from me.

Amy Shanahan: Well, you're not old like them, but you're older than me, so you're kind of in between the ages. So I hope I wasn't disrespectful. I didn't mean any disrespect because you know like my mom and dad, they're old school. You don't seem old school to me. So I was just thinking that you understand me and maybe you can because you know your stuff. You seem to know your stuff that you could because you're calm. Like they're not calm with me. Like maybe you could tell them like just chill out man. Maybe they need anti anxiety medication.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, it's a stressful, high paced world. And Amy, the best person that knows what you need is you though. So what do you think about that?

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, and I think the first thing that would be helpful for me, what I need is somebody to talk to them and that would be cool. M can't. Don't you do that. Do you like, don't you bring in the parents and you know, because like I hear the teachers talking. They're they always say that the

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Amy Shanahan: parents are worse than the damn kids and I think they're right. So maybe it's the parents that need to come to these sessions.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. There are a lot of parents who should be coming to sessions with their kids. You're right. You're nervous that you wouldn't be able to communicate what you need to them in a way that they would listen.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. You know I think that when I think about it like but when, when I think of telling them I'm already under their pressure so I get frustrated and then I lash out and then I get, I don't know what to say and my mind starts to shut down and I just get. And like they'll think I'm being combative or you know, that I'm just being a. Ah, typical teenager. Like I hate that term. What does that mean? Even a typical teenager? Like oh you don't you remember being a teenager, Ma? Were you just like this goody two shoe all throughout school? Come on.

Lauren Flunker: Nobody was a goody two shoes. So it's almost like if you could stay calm you feel like you'd be able to articulate yourself and they would hear what you're saying but you just get really stressed because they stress you out.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. You know it's interesting that I could think through this stuff when I'm talking to you I feel less frustrated. I'm still frustrated, don't get me wrong. But I feel like I could talk about it like if they would just shut up and listen. Like you're listening, I could tell them, and if they don't react, because they don't just not listen, they also react and tell me I'm wrong or debate with me or. Yes, but you have to do this. And I'm like, well, there's no sense in me talking, so I either get mad or I shut down.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. Tell me about a time when you did, talk with somebody about

something that was bothering you and that went, well, maybe they heard you out.

Amy Shanahan: Well, I could think of times when I'm, like, talking to my friends and stuff or, or like, yeah, I noticed that I could talk to you a little bit about stuff, but I don't. I guess when I was little little, I was able to, like, just sit on the couch and have conversations with my mom about, oh, this girl was mean to me. Or, you know, when I told her the one time that I was getting felt, felt like my friends were, like, putting me in the corner and starting to bully me about how I looked. I, I, My mom would listen to me then, but now that I'm older and I'm supposed to be more responsible, they think I'm not responsible. And they don't seem to have that same level of patience.

Lauren Flunker: So lately, the last couple years, you've been really just taking everything on and trying to do it all on yourself. And it's just really, the pressure's building up, and it's like it might explode.

Amy Shanahan: That's exactly how it feels like. It does feel like I haven't had any support from them. I mean, yeah, I mean, when I, you know, you probably know how it is. You talk to your friends. You just kind of complain about your parents and say what pains in the butts they are. And yeah, they mean well. Who cares if they mean well? They should do better because they're not helping. And we just talk about it, but it doesn't really get me to any solution. So that's why I was, you know, hoping that you could talk to them and tell them, you know, lay off.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. And maybe because you're so responsible and you're getting straight A's in all of your classes, they don't actually know that you need any help. Maybe they think you've gotten it, you've got it. Like, you're good.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, well, I, I just wonder why then they, they're so, like, worried about me. Like, they think I'm falling apart or, you know, they use words like, she's having a. I heard, I heard them talking. You know, like, parents are really? You know, they're not that smart. They sit at the table thinking, I'm sleeping. I think your daughter's having a nervous breakdown. And I want to yell out from the room. I'm, listening. I can hear you. Like, what the hell? And then I feel even more mad, like they're worried about me. M. But they don't sound like they're worried about me unless they're talking about me when I'm not in the room.

Lauren Flunker: Well, they're talking about you instead of to you.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah. Yeah. And they don't say, oh, honey, I'm worried that you're having a nervous breakdown. They say, I think your daughter, like, one will say to the other, like, I'm owned by one and not the other. Your daughter's having a nervous. And they don't seem to know what to do with me. And then I feel like they think I'm. Maybe this. I need to go to some rehab or something. Like. Like, what are they up to now? So when the counselor said I had to come and talk with you, I was like, oh, here's the. Here's the path to. I have to go to way to some camp or something. Because my friend had to go away to camp because she was having anxiety

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Amy Shanahan: attacks, too, and her parents sent her across to, like, another town. I was like, where'd she go? Oh, she went to summer camp. It's like, we all know what's happening, and I'm thinking, like, my parents are going to want to do that because they can't handle me. That's why I think they need to come in. They need help more than I do. They should go to summer camp.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. Yeah. Let's bring them in. So what. What do you. What concerns you about how you manage your anxiety already? What are some things that you would like to be different?

Amy Shanahan: I guess that, like, we're talking about things now that I could talk about it, like, sometimes I get stuck in my head or I feel like my stomach is constantly tight. And, And now I can't talk through things. And I'm. I mean, my stomach is still tight now because I'm still worried about what's going to be happening and worried about getting through school and getting them off my back. but when I'm able to listen to music and be with my friends and just be myself and not have to live up to other people's expectations, that's what I'd want them to know. Like, if you only let me alone, you would see my potential. You would see what I'm about. But you don't even see what I'm about. You just think I'm, ready to break down. And I'm not. I'm not that fragile.

Lauren Flunker: No, you're strong and you like the person you are with your friends when you're relaxed. That's who you want to be more of the time.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, I'm actually funny and I'm helpful and I help them with their school and it helps me with my schooling. And we talk about, you know, the stuff that gets you, know, bothers us and yeah, we swap notes about how we manage our anxiety and look on TikTok and all the, you know, things to consider what, what we would do and our parents get worried about, you know. You know, my mother's accusing me of, It doesn't accuse me, but she asked me all kinds of questions. Are you smoking weed? Are you taking that stuff that the kids are taking in school? And I'm like, oh my God, you know? Really? That's your biggest worry?

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. Well, Amy, I really appreciate you being, so open and vulnerable

today. And it sounds like it might not be the worst thing to have your parents come in and see if we can practice some communication between the two of you so that you're on the same page, you know, when you're ready for something like that.

Amy Shanahan: Yeah, I have to think about that. I was hoping that you would talk to them, but maybe me not being by myself would be better than me being by myself. So I. Yeah, that would. Can we talk about that next time then?

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, we can talk about that next time.

Amy Shanahan: Okay. Because I'm already feeling nervous about even thinking about it, you know, because I just want to tell them to stop. Just stop. You know, and that wouldn't be helpful, would it?

Lauren Flunker: No. And you already have like two Spanish tests this week I know you're stressed about, so.

Paul Warren: Excellent. So we'll pause the role play there. We'll give a round of applause to our dramatis Persona. and Lauren, thoughts, reactions?

Lauren Flunker: I think that in real life I definitely would have emailed your teachers if we came up with some things that you thought might be helpful, or offered to navigate a conversation between you and a teacher.

Lauren Flunker: Which I don't know is the best thing. But, you didn't do that here though. Yeah, because I knew I wasn't supposed to.

Amy Shanahan: So that was part of maybe the fixing reflex, because that was what I was curious about. Was something coming up for you, like, oh, I want to do it this. I want to do that. That was one of them.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah. And school based therapy is a little more blended. We do communicate recommendations, to the teachers or staff members there if they ask for them.

Amy Shanahan: So.

Paul Warren: When you look at it overall, Lauren, what do you think you did? Well,

Lauren Flunker: I think that I pointed out some of her strengths that I witnessed and that I did some good reflections and I did not interrupt her.

Paul Warren: Yeah. Yeah. And. And I am confident that when you listen to this recording, each one of those strengths

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Paul Warren: will be in evidence in the recording.

Paul Warren: If there's anything you might have done differently or there's anything that you would like to refine, reflecting on doing it differently. What is there anything that came up in regard to that?

Lauren Flunker: I would say, guiding more towards how she's doing and feeling earlier

in the conversation. it can be hard sometimes for me to balance empathy, compassion and focus. So, and I think so a lot of times my reflections, often are like empathetic reflections. Like that's really hard. You know, teachers suck. I didn't say any of those, but you know what I mean? Like, or like a lot of time

Amy Shanahan: they're not movement reflections, not m. Change talk type reflections.

Paul Warren: Yeah. And I think, I think it would be fair to say, and I don't know if either of you would agree with this, but I think it would be fair to say at this point in the conversation there was nothing identified specifically as the change goal. So it was still about engagement and still possibly about focusing as well.

Amy Shanahan: Good point.

Paul Warren: Warren, any thought about that?

Lauren Flunker: Yeah, I agree with that. I also think I could have been more intentional with some of the reflections with what Amy was giving me to be faster, focused on what she could control versus what she can't because she wasn't. The right word is not resistant. She wasn't hesitant to talk about that stuff, if that makes sense. Like she wasn't pushing back on that. So I think I could have. Yeah. But who knows, Maybe she would have pushed back if I went faster than that.

Amy Shanahan: Well, I wonder from my perspective too, maybe it's a, an early focus, if you will, if there's ever such a thing. of my request of wanting to communicate with my parents because I wanted you to do it. I'm deflecting that. And I think that you guided, at least that's my feeling that you were coming alongside that and guiding towards that

because I think there was a double sided reflection that you offered up that ended with that like what? And then an open ended question, evocative question about what would it look like if somebody did talk to them? And I liked for me it felt really cool, like, oh, this makes me feel like maybe you will talk to them. Because I'm nervous about that. I'm afraid to talk to them. And maybe I'm not telling you the whole story, but you're saying, well, what would it look like if someone talked to them? That stands out to me just in hindsight I'm not absorbing all the details because I was in the role and no, Paul's watching, but I just wanted to point that out from a focus perspective that it felt like that's what I was offering up anyway at this time.

Paul Warren: M. Yeah. And just, just to quantify, slash, articulate Lauren, what you see as your preliminary growth opportunity. And again this is prior you hadn't listened to the recording. what you're preliminarily focusing on, is that you're thinking you could have guided toward focusing perhaps earlier in the conversation using the, using the content that Amy was giving you in the reflections you were doing. So you know, not so much emphasis on empathic reflections, more use of sort of movement focused reflections. Is. Am I understanding that correctly?

Lauren Flunker: Yes.

Paul Warren: Okay. Okay.

Amy Shanahan: I guess with hindsight being 20 20, what do you think now? Like is, is that so. I know for me when I'm practicing, and I'd be in the seat that you're in, I'd need time to, to let it marinate before I knew what I would consider. I don't know if you have a thought about what is it that you might have done to move the needle closer to focusing early. Is there anything specifically you would have done?

Lauren Flunker: I think there was just different things you were saying that I could have reflected. Nothing really stands out because I have the memory of a goldfish. But while it was like, while the reflections were coming out of my mouth, I kind of was like, okay, because I think what I. So there was a couple points where I noticed the fixing reflex come out and those were the points when I typically

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Lauren Flunker: reflected a feeling or like some sort of compassion instead of fixing it. Because I do understand all of the things you were talking about and like they are normal. Right. But like all the times that you were talking about, you know, I just want someone just take it off my plate and somebody talk to these people. So it's not another thing I have to do was it was like you were trying to reel me in and you could have got me, Amy.

Amy Shanahan: M. I was trying.

Paul Warren: Because I'm. I'm carried back to something you said earlier, Lauren, and. And I felt like this. And this may be too simplistic, but I'll throw it out there, is that you acknowledged that you felt at a couple of moments in this, the impulse to fix. And instead of acting on that, you offered an empathic reflection.

Lauren Flunker: Yeah.

Paul Warren: And it almost seems like the antidote to the fixing reflex, for you, at least in this little scenario, was to choose to center on an empathic reflection, which is an investment in the rapport in a lot of ways. and, you know, I think once you listen to the

recording, you'll probably hear yourself do that. And certainly if you were going to do, like, a hierarchy of effectiveness, My two cents, for what it's worth, I think you can never overinvest in the engagement with the person.

Lauren Flunker: So, yeah, it's. Sometime I think that's, though, where the fixing reflex for me comes in, because it's like, what is my purpose? Because I'm trying to help people, and helping them is not just telling them that I understand. And, you know, I get where they're coming from, but also I know that that is kind of what it is. It's environment in a space where they're comfortable processing out loud because they're going to solve their own problems or they'll ask advice or for a skill. Right. So, like, if Amy would have been like, you know, is there a way I can stop a panic attack? But when it's happening, you know, But I think it's, you know, with intakes and diagnoses and treatment plans, like, there's all these tasks that we're supposed to accomplish, and then we have to provide, evidence that we did so in our sessions. I think that's what gets hard as far as, like, the pressure to accomplish certain things and then feeling like being an empathetic, compassionate person is not enough in that space.

Amy Shanahan: M. Something standing out to me full circle from our conversation before we did this role play, is that nail situation that, oh, we see the problem, we want to fix it. And you mentioned the panic attack. And. And I'm saying this because this was a role play. We didn't script it. We didn't plan this before we met. so whatever I was doing was organic, you know, from a. I'm not playing me, per se. and the panic attacks. The panic attack was not my issue. So when we said that earlier, like, for me, maybe as a practitioner, I would Be worried about this young woman, Girl, girl having panic attacks at school. And that's like the forefront of my mind. And my issue as the student was that I need people to get off my back. And I think your, Your compassion and your empathy and your calm to bring that back to the table calmed me because I played this

type of role before and I could go the very opposite way. And I get more amped up in my angst about whatever's going on because the fixing reflex is not being controlled. Because someone's asking me questions, because someone's focus is on the panic attack. And for me, I know those. I'm knowing maybe I'm wrong. But as a teenager, I'm. I'm thinking I wouldn't have had that panic attack if these people were off my back. So it kind of comes full circle to that whole calmness, compassion, and not leaning in to what we think is the big nail or issue in the story. I just wanted to share that from playing the client's perspective. So, perhaps it was your instinct to keep going with the empathy and compassion. Because I felt like. Because then you. Boy at the end when you suggested maybe we can bring your parents in, I was like, oh, that's not what I was thinking. But that's, that's

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Amy Shanahan: probably not a bad idea because I really want you to do so. You know, sometimes people are begging and I'm kind of begging you, could you go just fix this for me? Yeah.

Paul Warren: Yeah. So if it's okay, as we start to kind of wrap this up, I want to repeat a, phrase that you said, Lauren, that really resonated with me, partly because I feel like what you demonstrated in the conversation had such value. So the, the phrase that you said earlier, which I think is part of the pressure, it feels like it's not enough. And yet again, you'll listen to the recording yourself and make your own decision. And yet it felt like you were with the student where they were and clearly resisting the desire to fit. and I'm wondering, you mentioned that you have to justify or document what happened. And I'm wondering if you were going to document this conversation. What. What would you. How would you document the work you did?

Lauren Flunker: M. client identified recent stressors and processed and that I used, I usually say open questions, reflections and. And affirmations to maintain a therapeutic environment for processing. Client considered alternative ways to communicate her needs with others.

Amy Shanahan: M.

Lauren Flunker: And possible family session maybe.

Amy Shanahan: Beautiful. I love that you asked that, Paul. And thank you, Lauren, for like on the Fly. Just doing a case note because we get that a lot in trainings and in coaching. How do I document this? That was a beautiful example. We get a bonus.

Paul Warren: Definitely a place to rewind the tape and listen to what Lauren said again.

Amy Shanahan: Yes. Because people wonder and have been told, well, you got to write down, that you did motivational interviewing. Well, that would go in your intervention box. But what you did was what parts. Kind of quoting Hillary Logan again. Hillary, what parts of MI did you use? Because you didn't. You don't have to use all of mi. That's a great question, Paul. Thanks, Lauren, for giving us a case note example.

Paul Warren: So, Lauren, before we conclude and before Amy and I say thank you so much for joining us again, I'm wondering, any thoughts, any reactions, anything you'd like to comment on based on your experience of our time together in this opportunity to focus and practice and be in a learning community?

Lauren Flunker: Well, I really appreciate the relaxed environment you guys, offered

because I am a nervous speaker even though I'm a trainer, you know, but also I think that. Which I already know this about myself, but we put a lot of pressure on ourselves as people in the helping profession to help people and there's a lot of societal pressure. Right. Like you think I'm going to drop my daughter off here once a week and she's going to. And that's, you know, how it's gonna go for her. and I think I know the best way I'm helped is by having people listen and me feeling like they understand what I'm saying. And so it's just a good reminder that really the empowerment comes in when you can validate and make someone feel heard and understood, which is what all human beings want.

Paul Warren: Beautiful M.

Amy Shanahan: And I'd like to say just from the summary of playing the client and to your point of how powerful that is, without I'm not assessing your MI skills. I'm not worrying about how many reflections or questions or affirmations you are using. Playing the client, I felt heard, I felt affirmed. Even in my own anxious mind of self doubt. I may have doubted what you said about my strengths. It really left me feeling calm and my brain is still working. I'm powering in my frontal lobes thinking about what I want my next whatever to look like. So I think that that's what we don't always see as practitioners is the outcome of that beautiful listening and that, empathy and compassion. So I, I'd like to leave with that, that real time. That's how I'm feeling, walking away, playing this teenager. Like I feel calm, I feel

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Amy Shanahan: heard, and I feel like my brain is firing off some ideas.

Paul Warren: You know, it's funny if, if I could boil it all down into one word, I think the word that I would throw out is emphasis or emphasis. And it's all about what you look at and what you determine has value. And I just think that this was such a great example and great opportunity to kind of take that apart because there is pressure for us to. To value something that may not be of value to the person.

Paul Warren: So, Lauren, thank you so much. It's really, it's been an honor and a pleasure. And I can't wait to hear your thoughts about. After you listen to your recording.

Amy Shanahan: Woohoo. And thank. Yeah, thanks from me as well. And, and, and the affirmation for you from being vulnerable to play this live, not on TV but on podcast.

Lauren Flunker: Thank goodness I have a face for podcasts.

Amy Shanahan: So join the crowd that gives me that affirmation all the time.

Lauren Flunker: I do look forward to seeing you both in Portugal though.

Amy Shanahan: Yay. Absolutely looking forward to it. Thanks so much Lauren.

Lauren Flunker: Thank you.

CASAT: Thanks for listening to episode 38 of, Lions, Tigers and Bears MI Be on the lookout for new episodes coming soon.

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