

Notes From Motivational Interviewing in Groups (2013 Wagner & Ingersoll)

MI Group General Concepts

Guiding Principles of MI Group Leaders

Participation: Maximize group members' participation

Ownership: Encourage members to take ownership of change

Double Sided: Explore both positive and negative experiences

Collaboration: Facilitate group cohesion and collaboration

Relevant: Tailor the content to broadly address clients' experiences and interests

Empathetic Directional: Focus on potential solutions

Strategies

Eliciting: member participation

Linking themes: of members experiences and statements

Limiting: leader's talking

Emphasizing autonomy: collaborative and avoiding expert approach

Communication: Coaching participants & Modeling the use of OARS

Expectations: Respect others' choices and responsibility for my own, group norms

Focus on Change: Developing discrepancy, building self efficacy, eliciting change talk

Empathic & Directive Approach of Guiding

"... using MI in groups is more like conducting a symphony. Each member plays an individual instrument and contributes to the collective melody of the group, and at the same times responds to the conductor. The conductor, in turn, gently guides the instrumental interactions, as well as the overall orchestral composition."

Principles of MI Groups

Focus on Positives: building confidence and momentum. Goals and values.

Bring Group Members into the moment: present with other members – "out there" vs. "in here"

Explore perspectives and focus on present: opens possibilities, future and lowers defenses. Builds cohesion.

Hear complaints but do not elicit grievances: "roll with it," embrace defensiveness. Channel discord into productivity.

Broaden perspectives and focus on future: avoid getting bogged down in past and limitations.

Reflect and explore a positive focus: on desires, needs, plans and self: focus on DARN CATS, reframe negative motivators, and focus on positives.

Support self efficacy: self efficacy can be natural in groups as members support each other.

Counteract negative: reactions before and after session.

Spirit of MI

Language: avoid labels and pathologizing language. Use simple and common terms.

Emphasizing autonomy: Redirecting members in cases of excessive advice giving. Guide members to ask permission to give advice, work this into ground rules.

OARS

Affirmations: keep them low key. Feeling as a cheerleader or clever should be avoided. Judicious, genuine and specific.

Reflections: Keep them short- one to two words. Create impact, punctuation and crystallization of commitment, change or focus.

Summaries: Link topics, focus conversation, process summaries.

Shaping Group Conversation (*Directing conversational traffic*)

Depth *Deepening:* reflections of values, emotions; affirmations

Lightening: closing summary, shifting focus, linking reflections, humor

Breadth specificity of focus

Broadening Focus: Linking summaries, open ended Qs, Double Sided, analogy and metaphor, E-P-E

Narrowing Focus: selective reflection, closed question.

Momentum pace of conversation towards commitment, rate of new ideas.

Accelerating: Open Ended questions, complex reflections, affirmations, group brainstorming strategies.

Decelerating: suggest to slow down, explore secondary theme, incorporate structured activity or information, use of linking reflections, and explore barriers.

Phase 1 – Engaging

Creating a safe environment and foundation for positive change.

Member Personalities

Negative Perspective	Strengths Perspective	Strategies
Domineering: problems with controlling, dominating, and trying to change others.	Ambitions, determined, decisive, persuasive, assertive	- Elicit/reflect intention to help - guide to focus on self - ask members to invite others reactions - affirm determination
Vindictive: distrustful and suspicious of others, unable to be empathetic when needs clash.	Clever, Skeptical, watchful, witty	- Emphasize autonomy and personal choice - elicit that intent is to protect self from criticism and judgment - Affirm for “keeping it real”
Cold: unable to express affection, feel love for others. Unable to be generous, get along with or forgive others.	Thick skinned, straightforward, focused, tough minded	- Emphasize pragmatic solution finding - invite sharing of “hard truths” - affirm independence
Socially Avoidant: anxious and embarrassed around others, difficulty initiating social interactions, expressing feelings, and socializing with others.	Private, soft spoken, solitary, sparing	- invite participation and discussion of strengths - use rounds, invite to speak early on to avoid anxiety - Give permission to observe and invite participation later - Affirm virtues and strengths
Nonassertive: difficulty making needs known, discomfort in authoritative roles, unable to be firm and assertive.	Content, contributor, avoids getting in others way, able to avoid arguments	- encourage sharing of understanding and reactions - ask to comment on processes and group dynamics - emphasize personal choice - affirm for being team player
Exploitable: difficulty feeling/expressing anger, is gullible and readily taken advantage of	Modest, humble, forgiving, gentle	- evoke perceptions - invite to share perspective - emphasize personal choice - affirm gentle, forgiving nature
Overly nurturing: overly pleases and is too generous, trusting, caring and permissive.	Considerate, warm, welcoming, likeable, helpful, soothing, understanding	- guide back to focus on self - ask to help others - emphasize personal choice - affirm attempts to understand others
Intrusive: inappropriately self disclosing, attention seeking, difficulty being alone.	Sociable, approachable, energetic, expressive	- reflect themes and emotions to guide away from story telling - put at beginning of rounds - ask person to quietly observe others and summarize - affirm energy and exuberance

Member Roles

Expert Role: redirect or restate in MI way: closed Qs restated as open, interpretations restated as complex reflections, challenge statements restated as personal choice/autonomy.

Exploring intent: reflect back deeper intent or meaning behind challenge.

Elicit feedback from group

Other roles such as “guru” “class clown”: these can indicate lack of safety in group

Prejudicial or Insensitive comments

remind participant of guidelines, respect and that each person is individual; it is important to address but not let divert focus of group.

First session

Developing a safe environment: trust among members, participatory environment

Don't jump into the deep end: start with welcoming, some self disclosure, introductions of participants.

Brief explanation of MI group: focus on positives, looking forward toward change, autonomy,

OPEN: overview of purpose, Personal Choice & autonomy, Environment of respect and encouragement, non-confrontational nature of group.

Decontamination of referral process: clarify role of presenter, acknowledge paths to the group

Group guidelines: elicit norms from group. Seek broader guidelines, combining themes, if group cannot agree “try out” some for this session.

Suggested guidelines: confidentiality, respect, turn taking.

Elicit goals from participants: important that goals are personalized, reframe negative goals to the positive.

Closing the session: address any negativity, ensure safe environment, closing exercise.

Phase 2 exploring perspectives

Engage members in group process and build group cohesion. Focus on perspectives rather than situations.

Guiding participants

Participant centered: understanding of participant lives, perspectives, strengths and values

Focus on Positives: support strengths, hope, mutual support and determination.

Bring group into the moment: focus on here and now of the group, not outside.

Focus on the present: not looking back

acknowledge suffering while not eliciting grievances: focus on change talk but not dismissive of sustain talk or suffering.

Group Dynamics

Social Identities: emerge as interactions deepen. Acknowledging difference and broadening perspectives can be used here.

Positive social network: participants participate, attach, influence and are influenced. Group identity develops

Cohesion: important for leader to elicit from group as a whole and deemphasize individual. Constant clinking of participants. Use of “we” rather than “you.”

Therapeutic Factors

Universality: linking participants, commonality of challenges, set-backs, struggles

Acceptance: participants accept others in group through commonalities

Instillation of Hope: witnessing growth of others in group, leader stories and optimism, practice with others,

Learning from interpersonal interactions: practice with group members through formal structured activities and informal talk. Mutual feedback is important here. Sharing of vulnerabilities, empathy.

Leader Functions

Managing boundaries: time management, membership of group, participant commitment, shaping topic of focus.

Group Norms: revisit the norms, help participants follow guide lines and norms.

Managing emotions: use reflections to lighten intense emotions if needed. Leader acts as “safety manager of emotional expression.”

Fostering participant self awareness: Help participants focus on their own choices and areas of control. Avoid blaming.

MI Strategies

Exploring Lifestyles: used at beginning of group: lifestyles and habits, a typical day,

Exploring ambivalence: process that helps to organize thoughts and get at the big picture: introduce and normalize ambivalence, good and not so good things, circle of ambivalence, group four square.

Exploring values: focus on positives, future growth

Tips

Listen more than you talk: participants more likely to speak and learn from each other

Coach good listening skills: support participants in communicating with respect, autonomy and affirming.

Facilitate cohesion: note and support group autonomy

Language: use common language and avoid technical terms.

Presenting Information: use MI strategies EPE and ask permission

Traps

Avoid overwhelming information: present small bits of info to get conversation flowing.

Avoid expert role: becoming the information provider or expert takes away from learning from self and group.

Avoid jumping onto activities: be sure group understands and asks any questions about activities

Avoid over attachment to agenda: it is good to plan ahead, but pace needs to match the participant learning and process

Avoid fear: relaxed attitude and confidence is important in the leader

Don't allow confrontation or attacks: interpersonal tone needs to be of safety, leader can intervene with reflection, reframe or redirection.

Avoid interaction with only one participant: allowing a few participants to dominate conversation hurts the group. Affirm willingness to share, encourage other participant voices.

Progress Indicators

Now what?: group is asking for next steps, asking complex questions, shows openness to moving forward

50% : when half of the participants are showing openness to moving forward it may be time to go to phase 3

Phase 3 Broadening Perspectives

Looking towards the future, Evoking directional and momentum, enhancing investment in change

Guiding principles

Focus on positives: emphasis on DARN CATS, bigger picture, creativity

Focus on future: exploring potential paths, new goals and vision

Develop discrepancy: group can support in focus on positive slant with discrepancy,

Accept defensiveness: lean into discomfort

Group Dynamics

Group Identification: Deep bonds among members, we instead of me, increased cohesiveness.

Depersonalized trust: increased sharing in group, trust of processes, individuals and group.

Group homogeneity: commitment, goals, and commitment can be commonalities

Interdependence: mutual support towards goals, that which helps the group helps the individual, visa versa

Therapeutic Factors

Guidance: determines how information is perceived, accepted or rejected

Vicarious learning: affirming one group member can affirm all group members. Learning through imitation, discussion and observation.

Catharsis: reduce risk of being stuck in negative emotions.

Self-understanding: requires comfort in being vulnerable in group. Transcendence of self limiting beliefs.

Instilling hope: increased possibilities, clear vision of better future, and vision of positives.

Leader Functions

Managing boundaries: differences in emotions and participant experiences, supporting participants through discomfort of discrepancies through reflections, humor, affirmations.

Group Norms: allow group to answer questions (not leader), support speaker in group in being heard, guide group to talk to each other, reflect on positive developments in group process, affirming autonomy of group.

Managing emotions: deepen emotions, manage anxieties and negative emotions.

Attention to meaning: focusing on general themes of ambivalence, struggle, importance, confidence, readiness. Reflect meaning, explore values.

Increased transparency: transparency about observations, group processes, interpersonal processes, self disclosure,

Fostering participant self awareness: Help participants focus on their own choices and areas of control. Avoid blaming.

MI Strategies

Heuristic Models: stage of change model and others to bring perspective. Focus on discussion not on materials.

Assessment Feedback: provide limited selected feedback using EPE

Looking forward: builds motivation and hope.

Reexamining expectations: ID and define expectations and assumptions about lives, identity, relationships, etc.

Decisional balance: helps to reinforce arguments for change, especially if there are stragglers

Explore importance and confidence: Identify importance and explore ways to increase confidence

Change success stories: connects members to past successes, boost confidence in making a change.

Exploring Strengths

“Just naming their strengths and explaining them to each other, and hearing one’s feedback about these observed strengths, can increase confidence, trust, perceived homogeneity and hope.”

Tips

Relax and enjoy the group: focusing on what you like about members and the group helps with empathetic modeling and presence.

Use tools to attend content and process: reevaluate the tools you use and solicit feedback and support if needed.

Step back from leadership: wean the group from your leadership to allow members to take lead and direction.

Traps

Moving too slowly or quickly: too slowly causes disengagement and boredom, too quickly ambivalence can turn to discord and sustain talk.

Progress Indicators

Critical mass: a critical mass is ready to move into action.

Phase 4 Moving into Action

Expanding vision of lives, opportunities, priorities and strengths. Members are open to new ideas and making small steps towards change.

Guiding principles

Focus on Actions: encourage small steps and movement towards change

Guide members to ask for what they need: help members bring concerns to the group

Encourage attention to group process: keep in mind that group will be ending soon.

Focus on the immediate future: prepare for next two weeks and discuss how group will end

Support self-efficacy: prepare for obstacles, build member confidence in plan for change.

Group Dynamics

Task interdependence: reflect on how working together and collaboration maximizes progress.

Therapeutic Factors

Guiding: members share experiences of successes, challenges, strengths and areas of growth.

Vicarious Learning: successive sharing, observing, discussion, modeling, etc.

Altruism: members give wisdom, support and sharing with peers.

Self-understanding: increased confidence, understanding of limiting beliefs, learning from small successes and risk talking, learning through relationships.

Expansion of hope: accomplishments and experiences of members provides hope directly or vicariously.

Leader Functions

Facilitating more than reading: Leader is primarily guiding and consulting. Step in to open new topics, build linkages, help members work together. Take a back seat as able.

Managing challenges and boundaries: as end of group approaches, establish boundaries as group comes to an end.

Normalizing group conflicts: normalizing ongoing ambivalence (some members may feel stuck while others are thriving), ask for group to support members who are stuck. Members can feel loss toward end of group, it is important to help define termination as a transition. Negative emotions can be normal when a group ends, "soldiers argue with loved ones before being sent for duty."

Preparing group for termination: conversation about termination should be ongoing throughout the group processes. Remind group about these conversations, normalize feelings as they come up, set boundaries, reframe as transition.

MI Strategies

Importance/confidence review: members must believe 1) there is a good plan, 2) they can enact that plan, 3) they can stick with the long term.

Hypothetical change: when members are showing a lot of sustain talk or reluctance, use hypothetical planning to lower the stakes.

Change planning: change plans can be created conversationally or in written form.

Strengthening commitment to change: use group activities to arrive at this commitment, avoid coercing for commitment.

Getting started: support members in small steps and slight movement toward change.

Learning by proxy: encourage opportunities for sharing of successes, challenges and other experiences.

Dealing With Setbacks and Challenges

"Success is accomplished not by developing the perfect plan but by persevering through challenges and creatively adapting to new developments."

Tips

Be on the lookout with ambivalence: members can slip back to ambivalence even if they have made changes, important to address this.

Give autonomy: it may feel as if the leader should take a more directive role when members are struggling, but it is important to take a back seat at this phase.

Termination

Closing activity: closing activities can be helpful in creating closure, sharing take aways, successes and next steps with the group.

Take back seat: leader only opens and closes group, very limited activity. This shows members that you are no longer in role of leader as they continue the work outside of the group.

Invite members to project: members can look back onto group processes but also share how their lives will be in 3 months with group.