

## Navigating Conversations About Cannabis:

Shifting from confrontation to collaboration using MI

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It's Your Journey!

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**Please use Your CHAT function for exercises!**

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## Motivational Interviewing

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What is it?

Why it matters?

What's it made of?

How do you do it?

Gently shake the snow globe!

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### Ambivalence is normal

"It's not so much that we are afraid of change or so in love with old ways, but it is that place between that we fear..."

We often will try to hold onto something that isn't working rather than confront the unknown or risk the possibility of failure.

It's like being between trapezes...

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### Ambivalence can sound like:

- "I am not sure if I want to."
- "I know my health is important, but I don't think it's a big deal."
- "I know I should, but what would my friends think."
- "I want my parents off my back, but I am nervous."
- "Yeah, its easy for you to say, but it's hard to do."
- "It would be nice to cut down, but how could I relax"

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### Deconstructing Resistance...

#### Discord and Sustain Talk

Discord & Sustain talk are an Opportunity!  
To break out of your expected role and the "lines" they've heard before...

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Why do we react (*not are best*) when we hear discord?



"I know what's best, JUST LISTEN TO ME!"

- Confronting
- Persuading
- Nagging
- Interrupting
- Ordering
- Judging
- Showing the way
- Taking charge
- Directing
- Talking down to
- Pulling the stroke
- Exerting authority
- Criticizing
- Scaring
- Rescuing
- Shaming
- Scolding

The "righting reflex"  
 The need to...  
 • Fix things  
 • Set someone right  
 • Get someone to face up to reality

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Righting Reflex can create discord

**Youth:** "I guess I use too much sometimes, but I don't think I have a problem with weed."

**Youth:** "If I quit using, what will my friends think?"

**Confrontation:** "Yes you do! How can you sit there and tell me you don't have a problem when your grades say otherwise!"

**Question:** "Why do you think you *don't* have a problem?"

**Advice:** "You'll need to get new friends who don't smoke."

**Suggestion:** "Well you could tell your friends you don't smoke anymore but would like to still be friends."

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The nature of the conversation is critical

What we say - and how we say it- how we listen largely determines what the client says and what happens next...

*What we say matters!*

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Softening Sustain Talk

-Facilitate the conversation towards more change talk and less sustain talk.

"I really need to cut back, but it's so hard to do"

*-You will get more of whatever you reflect!*

**Responding to Sustain Talk:**

- Simple Reflection
- Overstate or understate it
- Double-sided Reflection
- Emphasizing Autonomy
- Coming alongside (acknowledgment that its difficult)
- Reframing (suggest a different meaning or perspective)
- Shift Attention
- Agree with a twist (reflection & reframe)
- Offer Choices

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Collaborative Conversation

**Youth:** "I guess I use too much sometimes, but I don't think I have a problem with weed."

**Youth:** "If I quit using, what will my friends think?"

**Reflection:** "So on one hand you can see some reasons for concern, and on the other you really don't want to be labeled as having a problem."  
**OpenQ:** "What are your thoughts on how to approach this?"

**Reflection:** "You don't want to lose your friends, and you want to do better in school."  
**OpenQ:** "If you decided to cut down, how do you think you'd handle that with your friend group?"

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MI Spirit creates a collaborative conversation.



Spirit in dialog form:

I'd like to help you (*Compassion*) and talk this through with you; (*Partnership*) you are a valuable person, and I will refrain from judging you (*Acceptance*) instead, I'd like to listen and find out what **you think** will work well for you to make this change. (*Evocation*)




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**Examples of conveying the MI Spirit:**

Even with all the negative consequences of vaping, a lot of young people still do it. If you decided to delay using what would be the benefits for you? (*compassion, acceptance*)

I'd like to take a few minutes to have a conversation about cannabis, if that's OK with you? (*evocation, acceptance*)


You're insights and input are valuable and if I have some ideas - I'll ask you if you want to hear them, and together we will come up with a plan. (*compassion, partnership*)



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**Softening Sustain Talk and Dancing with Discord**


Use MI skills to reflect and probe rather than react



- Open questions
- Affirmations
- Reflections
- Summaries

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**Guiding Style: Ask – Offer - Ask**  
*Listen – Collaborate - Elicit - Encourage - Motivate - Draw out*



<p><b>1 Elicit/Ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask permission</li> <li>• What do they already know?</li> <li>• What is going well?</li> <li>• What would they like to get better at?</li> </ul>	<p><b>2 Provide/Offer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask permission</li> <li>• Be clear</li> <li>• Share information</li> <li>• Provide feedback or advice (MI way)</li> </ul>	<p><b>3 Elicit/Ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask for clarification, interpretation, or response</li> <li>• Any concerns</li> <li>• What else</li> <li>• What is next</li> </ul>
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**Examples of Ask-Offer-Ask**

1: Getting the conversation started some examples...  
ASK permission first:

"Would you be open to talking a few minutes about cannabis?"  
 "What have you heard about cannabis? What do you know about it?"  
 "What are your thoughts about people your age using cannabis?"  
 "What is your understanding of how cannabis affects your [memory/mood/school/work]?"  
 "Would it be okay if we talked about how your cannabis use might relate to your anxiety?"  
 "What have you heard about how modern cannabis affects concentration?"  
 "Would it be okay if I shared some information with you about how cannabinoids might be affecting your sleep?"

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**Examples of Ask-Offer-Ask**

2: Ask permission to offer information. Keep it brief and focused on one or two relevant facts.

ASK permission to Offer info: "Would it be okay if I shared some information with you regarding [specific cannabinoid topic]?"

Regarding Brain/Memory: "Some of my clients have found that while cannabis helps them relax, it makes it harder for them to retain information for school"

Regarding Edibles: "Unlike smoking, edibles can take up to two hours to kick in, which makes it very easy to accidentally take too much"

Neutral Tone: "Research suggests that while some people use cannabis to fall asleep, it can actually reduce the amount of REM sleep you get, which might explain why you still feel tired in the morning."

*"I'm here to provide the data that research has shown; you're the expert on your own life and get to decide what you want to do with it."*

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**Examples of Ask-Offer-Ask**

3: Ask check for understanding-after providing information, ask the client for their reaction to ensure they are processing the information, rather than lecturing them.

ASK for their thoughts:

**Reaction:** "How does that information fit with your experience?"  
**Next Steps:** "Based on that, what do you think might be the next step for you?"  
**Reassessing Goals:** "Given how that works, where does that leave you regarding your goal to cut back?"  
**Impact:** "How does that fit (or not fit) with what you've been experiencing lately?"  
Support Autonomy: "Ultimately, you are the expert on your own life and get to decide what to do with this information." or "I am here to help; you get to decide what to do."

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**CASE STUDY ERIC – college student struggles with coursework and smokes daily**

**Step 1: Ask (Assess Knowledge & Ask Permission)**

Helper: "You've been working hard to adjust your study habits, yet the scores aren't showing it. I'm wondering what you already know about how smoking weed might be playing a role in this?"

ERIC: "I actually thought it helped me focus. It's hard for me to sit still and study without it."

Helper: "Up until now, you've always smoked before you studied."

ERIC: "I usually smoke weed after school with some friends, and before I go home to study."

Helper: "That's been your routine."

ERIC: "Yes."

Helper: "Would it be okay if I shared some information with you about how studying while high might actually be making it harder to remember things later?" (Ask Permission-Offer)

ERIC: "Sure, I guess."

**Step 2: Offer (Share Information Neutrally-show information)**

Helper: "Research suggests that THC interacts with the hippocampus – the part of your brain responsible for forming new memories. It can alter how information is processed, which might make it harder to recall what you studied when it's time for the actual test."

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**Step 3: ASK (Check Reaction)**

Helper: "What do you make of that?"

ERIC: "I always thought it helped, but maybe that's why I feel like I'm working so hard and getting nowhere."

Helper: "It could be. Studying while high could be making it more difficult for you to recall information when you need to. Like when you take tests, for example." (Reflect Reaction)

ERIC: "I haven't thought of it like that before."

Helper: "This is new information to you and you're not sure what to do with it."

ERIC: "Yeah, I wouldn't know how to stop. My friends and I always smoke after school. I like being able to hang out before I go home to study."

Helper: "On one hand, smoking weed is what you do with your friends, you enjoy hanging out before you hit the books, and on the other, you're feeling pressure to get better grades, and you'd like to see some payoff for your hard work." (Reflect both sides ending with change talk)

ERIC: "Right. I've got to do well in school so I can get a good job then I can move out of my parents' house and earn my own money."

Helper: "This is important to you. Let's talk more and see what we come up with."

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**Adding another ingredient to the MI Soup of AOA**

- After Asking "What this information means to you?"
- Listen
- Reflect their thoughts
- Listen for a **value!!!!**
- Reflect any values you hear
- **ADD a Story** that Relates to their experience!!!!

ERIC: "Right. I've got to do well in school so I can get a good job then I can move out of my parents' house and earn my own money."

**VALUE=Being Independent**

Helper: *It sounds like being independent is important to you. (listen for reaction – adds more info on what's important to them)*

Ask: *May I share a quick story with you? Two minutes – is that okay?*

Share a relatable story!!!!(Plant a Seed)

Facts fade – Stories Stick!!

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**What if no commitment to change is made?**

- Accept it
- Empathize that ambivalence can be difficult to resolve, especially in a single conversation.
- Ask if they can manage the consequences of *not* making a decision.
- Ask if there is anything else that will help with the decision (i.e. having more time or information. etc.)
- Ask if they are willing to schedule a time to revisit the issue (if they have a choice about meeting)

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**Gentle Reminder: Harm Reduction Is Good!**

- Teens are not going to walk out of the office and never use again.
- Cutting back to once-a-week versus every day is a great outcome.
- They might avoid using and driving or riding with a driver who is using.
- They might stop using during school hours, and get more homework done.
- They might still use with their friends on weekends and not during the weekdays.

Go with what your client thinks they can handle as a starting point.  
*You can be the positive influence!*

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# Thank you!

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