Glossary of Motivational Interviewing Terms

Ability—A form of client *preparatory change talk* that reflects perceived personal capability of making a change; typical words include *can*, *could*, and *able*.

Absolute Worth—One of four aspects of *acceptance* as a component of MI *spirit*, prizing the inherent value and potential of every human being.

Acceptance—One of four central components of the underlying *spirit* of MI by which the interviewer communicates *absolute worth*, *accurate empathy*, *affirmation*, and *autonomy support*.

Accurate Empathy—The skill of perceiving and reflecting back another person's meaning; one of four aspects of *acceptance* as a component of MI *spirit*.

Activation Language—A form of client *mobilizing change talk* that expresses disposition toward action, but falls short of *commitment language*; typical words include *ready*, *willing*, *considering*.

Affirmation—One of four aspects of *acceptance* as a component of MI *spirit*, by which the counselor accentuates the positive, seeking and acknowledging a person's strengths and efforts.

Affirming—An interviewer statement valuing a positive client attribute or behavior.

Agenda Mapping—A short *focusing* metaconversation in which you step back with the client to choose a *direction* from among several options.

Agreement with a Twist—A *reflection*, *affirmation*, or accord followed by a reframe.

Ambivalence—The simultaneous presence of competing motivations for and against change.

Amplified Reflection—A response in which the interviewer reflects back the client's content with greater intensity than the client had expressed; one form of response to client *sustain talk* or *discord*.

Apologizing—A way of responding to *discord* by taking partial responsibility.

Assessment Feedback—Providing a client with personal feedback of findings from an evaluation, often in relation to normative ranges; see *Motivational Enhancement Therapy*.

Assessment Trap—The clinical error of beginning consultation with expert information gathering at the cost of not listening to the client's concerns. See also *Question–Answer Trap*.

Autonomy Support—One of four aspects of *acceptance* as a component of MI *spirit*, by which the interviewer accepts and confirms the client's irrevocable right to self-determination and choice.

Blaming Trap—The clinical error of focusing on blame or fault-finding rather than change.

Bouquet—A particular kind of *summary* that collects and emphasizes the client's *change talk*.

Brainstorming—Generating options without initially critiquing them.

CATs—An acronym for three subtypes of client *mobilizing change talk*: *Commitment*, *Activation*, and *Taking Steps*.

Change Goal—A specific target for change in *motivational interviewing*; typically a particular behavior change, although it may also be a broader goal (e.g., glycemic control) toward which there are multiple avenues of approach.

Change Plan—A specific scheme to implement a *change goal*.

Change Ruler—A rating scale, usually 0–10, used to assess a client's motivation for a particular change; see *Confidence Ruler* and *Importance Ruler*.

Change Talk—Any client speech that favors movement toward a particular *change goal*.

Chat Trap—The clinical error of engaging in excessive small talk and informal chat that does not further the processes *of engaging*, *focusing*, *evoking*, and *planning*.

Client-centered Counseling—See *Person-centered Counseling*.

Closed Question—A question that asks for yes/no, a short answer, or specific information.

Coaching—The process of helping someone to acquire skill.

Collaboration—See *Partnership*.

Collecting Summary—A special form of *reflection* that pulls together a series of interrelated items that the person has offered. See also *Summary*.

Coming Alongside—A response to persistent *sustain talk* or *discord* in which the interviewer accepts and reflects the client's theme.

Commitment Language—A form of client *mobilizing change talk* that reflects intention or disposition to carry out change; common verbs include *will*, *do*, *going to*.

Compassion—One of four central components of the underlying *spirit* of MI by which the interviewer acts benevolently to promote the client's welfare, giving priority to the client's needs.

Complex Reflection—An interviewer *reflection* that adds additional or different meaning beyond what the client has just said; a guess as to what the client may have meant.

Confidence Ruler—A scale (typically 0–10) on which clients are asked to rate their level of confidence in their ability to make a particular change.

Confidence Talk—Change talk that particularly bespeaks *ability* to change.

Confront—(1) as a goal: to come face to face with one's current situation and experience; (2) as a practice: an MI-inconsistent interviewer response such as warning, disagreeing, or arguing.

Continuing the Paragraph—A method of *reflective listening* in which the counselor offers what might be the next (as yet unspoken) sentence in the client's paragraph.

DARN—An acronym for four subtypes of client preparatory change talk: *Desire*, *Ability*, *Reason*, and *Need*.

Decisional Balance—A choice-focused technique that can be used when counseling with neutrality, devoting equal exploration to the pros and cons of change or of a specific plan.

Depth of Reflection—The extent to which a *reflection* contains more than the literal content of what a person has already said. See also *Complex Reflection*.

Desire—A form of client *preparatory change talk* that reflects a preference for change; typical verbs include *want*, *wish*, and *like*.

Directing—A natural communication style that involves telling, leading, providing advice, information, or instruction.

Direction—The extent to which an interviewer maintains in-session momentum toward a *change goal*.

Discord—Interpersonal behavior that reflects dissonance in the working relationship; *sustain talk* does not in itself constitute *discord*; examples include arguing, interrupting, discounting, or ignoring.

Discrepancy—The distance between the *status quo* and one or more client *change goals*.

Docere—(Latin verb infinitive) To inform, in the sense of installing knowledge, wisdom, insight; etymologic root of *doctrine*, *indoctrinate*, *docent*, and *doctor*.

Double-Sided Reflection—An interviewer *reflection* that includes both client *sustain talk* and *change talk*, usually with the conjunction "and."

Ducere—(Latin verb infinitive) To elicit or draw out; a Socratic approach; etymologic root of education (*e ducere*); compare with *Docere*.

Elaboration—An interviewer response to client *change talk*, asking for additional detail, clarification, or example.

Elicit–provide–elicit—An information exchange process that begins and ends with exploring the client's own experience to frame whatever information is being provided to the client.

Empathy—The extent to which an interviewer communicates accurate understanding of the client's perspectives and experience; most commonly manifested as *reflection*.

Emphasizing Personal Control—An interviewer statement directly expressing *autonomy support*, acknowledging the client's ability for choice and self-determination.

Engaging—The first of four fundamental processes in MI, the process of establishing a mutually trusting and respectful helping relationship.

Envisioning—Client speech that reflects the client imagining having made a change.

Equipoise—The clinician's decision to counsel with neutrality in a way that consciously avoids guiding a client toward one particular choice or change and instead explores the available options equally.

Evocation—One of four central components of the underlying *spirit* of MI by which the interviewer elicits the client's own perspectives and motivation. See also *Ducere*.

Evocative Questions—Strategic open questions the natural answer to which is *change talk*.

Evoking—The third of four fundamental processes of MI, which involves eliciting the person's own motivation for a particular change.

Expert Trap—The clinical error of assuming and communicating that the counselor has the best answers to the client's problems.

Exploring Goals and Values—A strategy for evoking *change talk* by having people describe their most important life goals or values.

Focusing—The second of four fundamental processes of MI, which involves clarifying a particular goal or direction for change.

Following—A natural communication style that involves listening to and following along with the other's experience without inserting one's own material.

Formulation —Developing a shared picture or hypothesis regarding the client's situation and how it might be addressed.

FRAMES—An acronym summarizing six components commonly found in effective brief interventions for alcohol problems: *Feedback*, *Responsibility*, *Advice*, *Menu of options*, *Empathy*, and *Self-efficacy.*

Goal Attainment Scaling—A method originally developed by Thomas Kiresuk for evaluating treatment outcomes across a range of problem areas.

Goldilocks Principle—In order to be motivating, a discrepancy should be not too large or too small.

Guiding—A natural communication style for helping others find their way, combining some elements of both directing and following.

Implementation Intention—A stated intention or commitment to take a specific action.

Importance Ruler—A scale (typically 0–10) on which clients are asked to rate the importance of making a particular change.

Integrity—To behave in a manner that is consistent with and fulfills one's core values.

Intrinsic Motivation—The disposition and enactment of behavior for its consistency with personal goals and values.

Key Question—A particular form of question offered after a *recapitulation* at the transition from *evoking* to *planning*, that seeks to elicit *mobilizing change talk*.

Labeling Trap—The clinical error of engaging in unproductive struggles to persuade clients to accept a label or diagnosis.

Lagom—(Swedish) Just right; not too large, not too small. See also *Goldilocks Principle*.

Linking Summary—A special form of *reflection* that connects what the person has just said with something you remember from prior conversation. See also *Summary*.

Looking Back—A strategy for evoking client *change talk*, exploring a better time in the past.

Looking Forward—A strategy for evoking client *change talk*, exploring a possible better future that the client hopes for or imagines, or anticipating the future consequences of not changing.

Menschenbild (German)—One's fundamental view of human nature.

MET—An acronym for *Motivational Enhancement Therapy*.

MIA–STEP—A package of training materials for MI supervisors, produced by the U.S. Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.

MINT—The Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers, founded in 1997 and incorporated in 2008 (*www.motivationalinterviewing.org*).

MISC—The Motivational Interviewing Skill Code, introduced by Miller and Mount as the first system for coding client and interviewer utterances within *motivational interviewing*.

MITI—The Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity coding system, simplified from the *MISC* and focusing only on interviewer responses, to document fidelity in MI delivery.

Mobilizing Change Talk—A subtype of client *change talk* that expresses or implies action to change; examples are *commitment*, *activation language*, and *taking steps*.

Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET)—A combination of *motivational interviewing* with *assessment feedback*, originally developed and tested in Project MATCH.

Motivational Interviewing—
- Lay definition: A collaborative conversation style for strengthening a person's own motivation and commitment to change.
- Clinical definition: A person-centered counseling style for addressing the common problem of ambivalence about change.
- Technical definition: A collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication with particular attention to the language of change, designed to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person's own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion.

Need—A form of client *preparatory change talk* that expresses an imperative for change without specifying a particular reason. Common verbs include *need*, *have to*, *got to*, *must*.

OARS—An acronym for four basic client-centered communication skills: *Open question*, *Affirmation*, *Reflection*, and *Summary*.

Open Question—A question that offers the client broad latitude and choice in how to respond; compare with *Closed Question*.

Orienting—The process of finding a direction for change when the focus of consultation is unclear. See also *Focusing*.

Overshooting—A *reflection* that adds intensity to the content or emotion expressed by a client. See also *Amplified Reflection*.

Partnership—One of four central components of the underlying *spirit* of MI by which the interviewer functions as a partner or companion, collaborating with the client's own expertise.

Path Mapping—The process of choosing a *change plan* when there are several possible routes toward the goal.

Permission—Obtaining by the interviewer of client assent before providing advice or information.

Person-centered Counseling—A therapeutic approach introduced by psychologist Carl Rogers in which people explore their own experience within a supportive, empathic, and accepting relationship; also called *client-centered counseling*.

Phase 1—A term used in prior editions of *Motivational Interviewing* to describe the earlier "uphill" period of engaging, guiding, and evoking, in which the general goal is to elicit and strengthen client motivation for change.

Phase 2—A term used in prior editions of *Motivational Interviewing* to describe the latter "downhill" period of planning in which the general goal is to elicit and strengthen *commitment* to a *change goal* and to negotiate a specific *change plan*.

Planning—The fourth fundamental process of MI, which involves developing a specific *change plan* that the client is willing to implement.

Prefacing—A specific form of *permission* in which the interviewer does not directly ask the client's leave to provide information or advice, but instead precedes it with an *autonomy support* statement.

Premature Focus Trap—The clinical error of focusing before engaging, trying to direct before you have established a working collaboration and negotiated common goals.

Preparatory Change Talk—A subtype of client *change talk* that expresses motivations for change without stating or implying specific intent or commitment to do it; examples are *desire*, *ability*, *reason*, and *need*.

Q Sorting—A technique developed by William Stephenson, a colleague of Carl Rogers, in which a person sorts cards describing attributes into piles ranging from "not like me" to "very much like me."

Querying Extremes—A strategy for evoking *change talk* by asking clients to imagine best consequences of change or worst consequences of *status quo*.

Question–Answer Trap—The clinical error of asking too many questions, leaving the client in the passive role of answering them. See also *Assessment Trap*.

Reactance—The natural human tendency to reassert one's freedom when it appears to be threatened.

Readiness Ruler—See *Change Ruler*.

Reason—A form of client *preparatory change talk* that describes a specific if–then motive for change.

Recapitulation—A *bouquet* summary offered at the transition from *evoking* to *planning*, drawing together the client's *change talk*.

Reflective Listening—The skill of "active" listening whereby the counselor seeks to understand the client's subjective experience, offering *reflections* as guesses about the person's meaning. See also *Accurate Empathy*.

Reflection—An interviewer statement intended to mirror meaning (explicit or implicit) of preceding client speech. See also *Simple Reflection*, *Complex Reflection*.

Reframe—An interviewer statement that invites the client to consider a different interpretation of what has been said.

Resistance—A term previously used in MI, now deconstructed into its components: *sustain talk* and *discord*.

Righting Reflex—The natural desire of helpers to set things right, to prevent harm and promote client welfare.

Running Head Start—A strategy for eliciting client *change talk* in which the interviewer first explores perceived "good things" about the status quo, in order to then query the "not-so-good things."

Self-Actualization—The pursuit and realization of one's core values—becoming what one is meant to be. See also *Telos*.

Self-Disclosure—Sharing something of oneself that is true when there is good reason to expect that it will be helpful to the client.

Self-Efficacy—A client's perceived ability to successfully achieve a particular goal or perform a particular task; term introduced by Albert Bandura.

Self-Esteem—A client's general level of perceived worth.

Self-Motivational Statement—See *Change Talk*.

Self-Regulation—The ability to develop a plan of one's own and to implement behavior in order to carry it out.

Shifting Focus—A way of responding to *discord* by redirecting attention and discussion to a less contentious topic or perspective.

Simple Reflection—A *reflection* that contains little or no additional content beyond what the client has said.

Smoke Alarms—Interpersonal signals of *discord* in the working alliance.

Spirit—The underlying set of mind and heart within which MI is practiced, including *partnership*, *acceptance*, *compassion*, and *evocation*.

Stages of Change—Within the *transtheoretical model* of change, a sequence of steps through which people pass in the change process: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance.

Status Quo—The current state of affairs without change.

Summary—A *reflection* that draws together content from two or more prior client statements. See also *Collecting Summary, Linking Summary, Transitional Summary.*

Sustain Talk—Any client speech that favors *status quo* rather than movement toward a *change goal*.

Taking Steps—A form of client *mobilizing change talk* that describes an action or step already taken toward change.

Telos—(Greek) The natural, mature end state of an organism toward which it grows, given optimal conditions.

TNT—An acronym for a Training of New Trainers in *motivational interviewing*; begun in 1993.

Transitional Summary—A special form of *reflection* to wrap up a task or session by pulling together what seems important and signal a shift to something new.

Transtheoretical Model—A complex model of change developed by James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente, one part of which describes *stages of change*.

Undershooting—A *reflection* that diminishes or understates the intensity of the content or emotion expressed by a client.

Values—A person's core goals or standards that provide meaning and direction in life.

Values Sorting—A technique used by Milton Rokeach and others, in which a person gives priority rankings to various values, for example, by sorting cards into piles ranging from "not at all important" to "most important."

Working Alliance—The quality of the collaborative relationship between client and counselor, which tends to predict client retention and outcome.