



HRSA
Health Resources & Services Administration

Turning Conversations into Action: Advanced Motivational Interviewing Skills for Healthcare Professionals

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Some slides contain URLs in the notes.

Vision: Healthy Communities, Healthy People





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Training Summary

This advanced Motivational Interviewing (MI) webinar is designed for clinicians and healthcare professionals who already understand foundational MI concepts and are ready to deepen their skills. Building on core principles such as Open Questions, Affirmations, Reflective Listening, and Summaries (OARS), stages of change, and the spirit of MI, participants will learn how to strategically recognize and amplify change talk, skillfully respond to sustain talk, and guide patients toward meaningful, self-directed action. Special emphasis is placed on using the Desire, Ability, Reason, and Need-Commitment, Activation, and Taking Steps (DARN-CAT) framework, advanced reflective listening techniques, importance and confidence scaling, and collaborative action planning to improve engagement and follow-through in brief clinical encounters. Participants will leave with practical strategies to transform difficult conversations into opportunities for lasting behavior change.

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate and strategically respond to change talk, sustain talk, and discord using advanced reflective listening techniques and the DARN-CAT framework.
- Apply evocative MI strategies—including importance/confidence scaling, values exploration, and double-sided reflections—to strengthen patient motivation and resolve ambivalence.
- Use advanced reinforcement techniques such as complex reflections, targeted affirmations, and strategic summaries to amplify commitment language and enhance self-efficacy.
- Facilitate patient-generated action planning by translating motivation into Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART) goals and realistic next steps that increase adherence and long-term behavior change.

Purpose & Focus

- Strengthen Motivational Interviewing skills
- Practice change talk
- Move from ambivalence to action

Which Part of Motivational Interviewing Do You Find Most Challenging?

- Eliciting Change Talk
- Responding to Sustain Talk
- Knowing what to say next
- Ending with an Action Plan

Recap of Building Foundations in MI

- Key takeaways from foundational MI concepts:
  - Stages of Change
    - ✓ Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, Maintenance
  - OARS Framework
    - ✓ Open-ended Questions, Affirmations, Reflective Listening, Summaries

Change Talk vs. Sustain Talk

- DARN-CAT framework
- Why language matters
- What predicts behavior change

Inviting Change Talk

- Evocative questions
- Importance & confidence scales
- Past successes

Let’s Talk About Change Talk

- Definition: Statements that indicate readiness or willingness to change.
- Recognizing the DARN-CAT Framework
- The DARN-CAT framework is a structured method within Motivational Interviewing that categorizes types of patient statements indicating motivation and commitment to change. It is divided into two parts: Preparatory Change Talk (DARN) and Mobilizing Change Talk (CAT).

DARN (Preparatory Change Talk)

- Desire (e.g., "I want to...")
- Ability (e.g., "I can...")
- Reason (e.g., "It's important because...")
- Need (e.g., "I have to...")

CAT (Mobilizing Change Talk)

- Commitment (e.g., "I will...")
- Activation (e.g., "I'm ready to...")
- Taking Steps (e.g., "I've started to...").

Sustain Talk

- Definition: Statements that resist change or highlight barriers.
- Examples: "I've tried quitting before and it never works."
- Strategies to Address Sustain Talk: Reflective listening, emphasizing autonomy, and exploring values.

Advanced Skill: Recognizing Discord

- Discord is a strain in the relationship—not resistance to change.
- Examples: 'You're not listening to me.' 'This isn't helping.'
- Respond by reflecting, affirming autonomy, and repairing collaboration.
- Avoid arguing, persuading, or correcting.

Responding to Sustain Talk

- Reflect before persuading
- Normalize ambivalence
- Support autonomy

Invite Change Talk

- Techniques:
  - Ask evocative questions (e.g., "What concerns you about delaying your treatment?")
  - Explore Pros and Cons (e.g., “What would be different if you completed the screening?”)
  - Explore past successes (e.g., "When have you successfully followed through with a health goal?")
  - Use importance and confidence scales.

Responding to Change Talk

- Methods:
  - Reflective statements to reinforce motivation.
  - Affirmations to highlight progress.
  - Summaries that tie key points together.

Advanced Reflections

- Simple Reflection
- Complex Reflection
- Double-Sided Reflection
- Strategic Reflection

Reflection Ladder

- Patient: “I know I should exercise, but I’m exhausted after work.”

Level	Reflection
Simple	"You're tired."
Complex	"You really value your health, but right now you're stretched thin."
Double-sided	"Part of you wants to get healthier, and another part can't imagine fitting one more thing into your day."
Strategic	"Finding a way to care for your health without adding more stress feels really important to you."

Interactive Poll

Which statement is Change Talk?

A. 'I've always done it this way.'

B. 'Maybe I could try walking after dinner.'

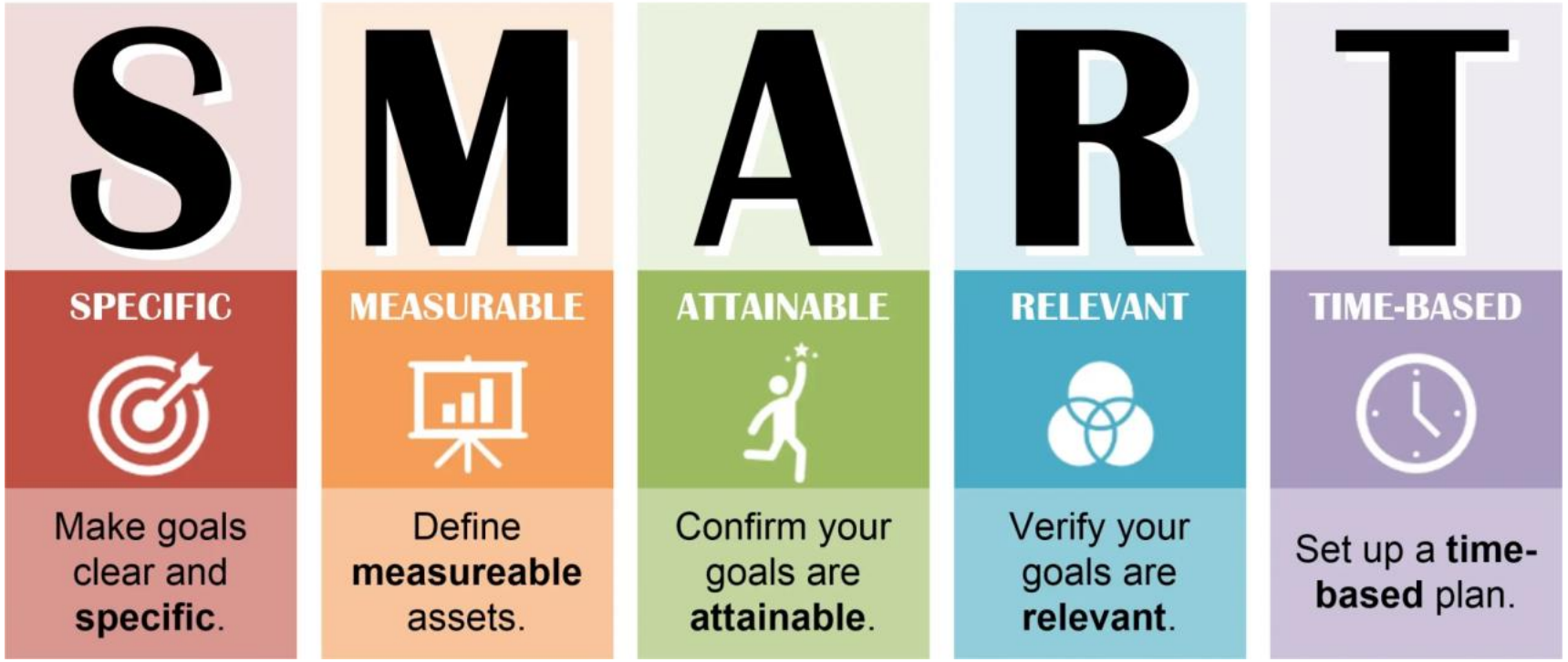
C. 'My doctor keeps nagging me.'

D. 'Nothing is going to change.'

Action Planning

- Patient-generated steps
- SMART goals
- Small wins

SMART Goals


S
M
A
R
T
SPECIFIC
MEASURABLE
ATTAINABLE
RELEVANT
TIME-BASED
Make goals clear and **specific**.
Define **measureable** assets.
Confirm your goals are **attainable**.
Verify your goals are **relevant**.
Set up a **time-based** plan.

Values Exploration

- Connect health behaviors to what matters most.
- Questions: 'What matters most to you?'
- 'How would making this change fit the life you want?'
- Reflect values before discussing goals.

Practice Activity

- Identify:
  - Change Talk
  - Sustain Talk
  - Discord

Documentation & Team Handoffs

- Document movement
- Share MI language across team

Clinical Pearls

- Resist the urge to fix.
- Reflect more than you ask.
- Strengthen commitment language.
- End every visit with one patient-owned next step.

Closing: Driving Change in Real Clinical Practice

What to Remember

- **Change talk predicts change**
  The more patients hear themselves articulate reasons for change, the more likely follow-through becomes.
- **Sustain talk is not a failure**
  It's a signal to slow down, reflect, and reinforce autonomy- not to push harder.
- **Action works best when it's patient-generated**
  Plans created *by* patients- not *for* patients- are more realistic and more likely to happen.

How This Shows Up in Real Visits

- When a patient hesitates, **reflect before you recommend again**
- When resistance shows up, **stay curious rather than persuasive**
- When motivation appears- even briefly- **pause and strengthen it**
- End visits with **one realistic, patient-owned next step**

The Take-Home Message

- You don’t need longer visits or perfect conversations.
  - You need **one well-timed question, one accurate reflection, and one achievable next step**.

That’s Motivational Interviewing in action.

Thank You!

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