

## MI PROCESSES IN PROBLEM GAMBLING

In MI, PG counsellors guide clients through the processes of engaging, developing a clear focus, evoking change talk for meaningful change and developing a plan to move toward change. The four processes are as much a guide for the counsellor as they are for the client – a road map for creating change in a meaningful way. How these concretely translate in problem gambling counselling are explored in some detail below. Suggestions of ways that drawings, images and metaphors can be used by PG counsellors are interwoven in each MI process as optional tools.

### MI Process 1: Engaging

Engaging is about building a strong therapeutic alliance with each of our clients at Gambler's Help, whether this be the client with gambling problem or their partners or families. Defined by Rollnick and Miller (2013) as “establishing a mutually trusting and respectful helping relationship,” (p 40), this first process invites a counsellor to take interest in the individual, couple, or the family, whilst seeking to understand the journey that has led them to seek help. Individuals who have a gambling problem may feel shame and embarrassment about their actions, and may attend anxious and stressed. Many could also be ambivalent and unsure if they want to continue with therapy. As such, helping them engage in their therapy by forming a collaborative partnership is critical.

Engagement can happen within seconds or it can take longer. It is not a linear process, and counsellors need to regularly monitor client's engagement.

Questions a counsellor might ask themselves to monitor engagement:

- Am I showing respect to my client?
- Am I listening and do I understand my client?
- Am I making my client feel welcome and cared for?
- Does this feel like a collaborative partnership?

### Skills of Engaging

We are not trying to bring about change here; we are simply listening, validating, building trust and respect and looking for common ground. This entails exercising active listening skills and interviewing skills (OARS, discussed in Part 1) consistently throughout therapy.

It is also about framing questions in a way that communicates our curiosity and interest as counsellors which can further open opportunities for exploration;

- What brings you to counselling today?
- How do you feel about being here?
- Tell me about your gambling. What role does it play in your life?
- What benefits do you get from gambling? What are the things you don't like about gambling?
- What have you noticed about your gambling? How has it changed over time?
- What have others told you about your gambling?
- What would you like to get from coming here?

It may also mean capturing the essence of a client's story and reflecting it back to them, often with a deeper meaning for their consideration.

**Counsellor:** What brings you to counselling?

**Client:** I am concerned about my gambling, but I do not know if I can stop. I have tried so many times to stop but I have failed. I enjoy it too much I think

**Counsellor:** You wonder if you can give up your gambling and at the same time it worries you.

**Client:** For my own good, I guess. I mean it's really serious. I am gambling a lot, spending most of my pay. Sometimes when I wake up in the morning I feel really awful, and I can't think straight.

**Counsellor:** You have a strong sense it is harming you.

In essence we are not just asking questions of the individual who is gambling or their family, we are letting them know that we have heard what they said and we reflect to them a deeper meaning for consideration. When we reflect and it strikes a chord with the client, engagement occurs and the possibility for change begins.

### OPPORTUNITY FOR INTEGRATION—USE OF IMAGE OR METAPHOR IN ENGAGING

We can listen here for metaphors that clients/families use to describe how they are or the role of gambling in their lives (e.g., feels like an albatross, roller coaster ride, and slug). If we can pick it up and reflect them back to the client, we show that we are listening. We can further ask clients to describe their metaphors in detail or draw it, then be curious about its meaning to the client. When reflecting about the meaning of client's metaphors, we can explore a client's perspective of what it may mean for them to change.

#### What might this look like? Using metaphors and images in MI

*George, age 63—"my gambling, my prison"*



#### Other metaphors used by clients to describe their problem gambling

|               |                            |                                |
|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Dark hole     | Jumble of stuff            | Safe haven, where no one cares |
| Zone          | Stormy clouds              | Boxed in                       |
| Dark tunnel   | Pushing my buttons         | Escape                         |
| Quicksand     | Nothing to look forward to | Mess                           |
| Sisyphus rock | Trapped                    | Hand on my ears                |
| Charade       | Being used to "crap"       | Prison                         |
| Walking dead  | Child                      |                                |
| Façade        |                            |                                |

**Example of MI interventions around engaging with imagery:**

- George:** I usually try not to think about how I feel, I cannot describe it
- Counsellor:** Would it help to put it on paper? Draw what you feel about your gambling.
- George:** Well, it feels dark, it feels like a prison (draws)—Yes, that's right my gambling-my prison
- Counsellor:** So you do know how it feels, It's a dark prison—that must be tough. What is that like?
- George:** It's really dark, smelly, ugly. I am alone inside, I am afraid. No one knows I am in here, people have forgotten me.
- Counsellor:** It's frightening, you feel out of your depth, you think nobody cares or understands. You want to be free from gambling
- George:** Yes I want to be free, been wanting freedom for a long time; I know some people care, my daughter does but I do not know how to ask for help. But I cannot do it myself, free myself from the prison. I need help. That is why I am here

## MI Process 2: Focusing

Focusing is the process where we assist the client – whether the individual who is gambling or their partners or families – to seek and maintain a clear sense of direction in therapy. It means helping clients navigate their circumstances and the many issues they bring to therapy to decide on a focus or direction along with deciding on specific achievable goals. Miller and Rollnick (2013) use 'agenda-setting' as a way of defining the process of focusing—where both client and counsellor can outline key concerns and define a way forward. The process is rarely straightforward, especially when counsellor and client have differing agenda or when clients have many conflicting but equally urgent priorities. Even when a focus has been identified, it may still constantly require review, adjustment, alignment and alteration.

When done well, focusing eases ambivalence, as well as assists clients to feel that they have a direction or a focus, especially when they have multiple problems, conflicting aspirations and a range of priorities. Focusing can also put a client's ambivalence in perspective – that it is something to understand and acknowledge so the client can move to change talk, rather than as an obstacle in therapy.

### Adopting a guiding style when focusing

A skilful MI counsellor usually adopts a guiding style when helping clients focus or gain a sense of direction. Using a guiding style, a client can be asked to talk about their reasons for coming to therapy, and then assisted to decide what they want to focus on. It can also be about having a conversation about why and how the client may want to address their key concerns. Focusing allows both counsellor and client to stay on track, with the client deciding what they want to do and the counsellor helping them remain on course.

Focusing can be related to assisting clients identify what they want to work on in each session, or more generally, what they want to have achieved within a specific timeframe.

Guiding as a focusing style may happen early in problem gambling counselling, and is particularly helpful in assisting clients move from ambivalence to possibility. Most of the time, most clients attend therapy to curb their gambling behaviours. However, many will be ambivalent or doubtful about their ability to change their gambling. A guiding style then provides clients an opportunity to explore and understand their ambivalence and then identify how they want to deal with their gambling behaviours or related concerns. Having clients feel they have a focus or a direction enhances self-efficacy and moves them more easily through the stages of change. A focus may also be less threatening than a specific goal, where the client feels they are moving in a meaningful direction without feeling pressured to take specific steps before they are ready.

## Focus partly defined for problem gambling counsellors

According to Miller and Rollnick (2013), focus can be defined by a client, a setting and a counsellor's clinical expertise. As problem gambling counsellors who are employed at Gambler's Help services, our focus is already partly defined by the kind of clients we see and our setting. In a way, we all expect to see clients affected by problem gambling and clients who wish to create an agenda around curbing or managing their problematic gambling behaviours. Whilst these provide a very specific focus, more work needs to be done to help clients clarify why and how they want to work on their gambling behaviours given their unique circumstances, including the adverse consequences they are suffering because of their gambling. Focusing may also mean ensuring that the conversations we have with clients in therapy have a direction and help them have a growing understanding of their unique circumstances and the options they have and what they want to work towards. Focusing is at its strongest when the client not only agrees for PG to be the topic of conversation, but also connects with a belief that looking at their gambling is also relevant or meaningful for them.

## Skills to handle different focusing scenarios and weaving in the use of metaphors and imageries across scenarios

Miller and Rollnick (2013) describe three kinds of focusing scenarios, and very specific counsellor skills are recommended for each scenario (see Table below). It may often be the case that we will encounter all three scenarios in just one client, with the focusing process becoming even more complicated when we work with couples and families. Typically, most of our clients want to stop or manage their gambling so their focus seems clear (scenario 1). However, it can quickly become evident that things are not as straightforward as each client often faces usually complex circumstances. As such, most of the time, PG counsellors find they are working with clients in scenarios 2 & 3.

The table below lists some of the skills needed by counsellors and expounds on ways metaphors, drawings and images can be used to help clients find or enhance their sense of direction or focus in each scenario. Suggestions on how drawings, metaphors and images can be used to focus in each scenario are also listed.

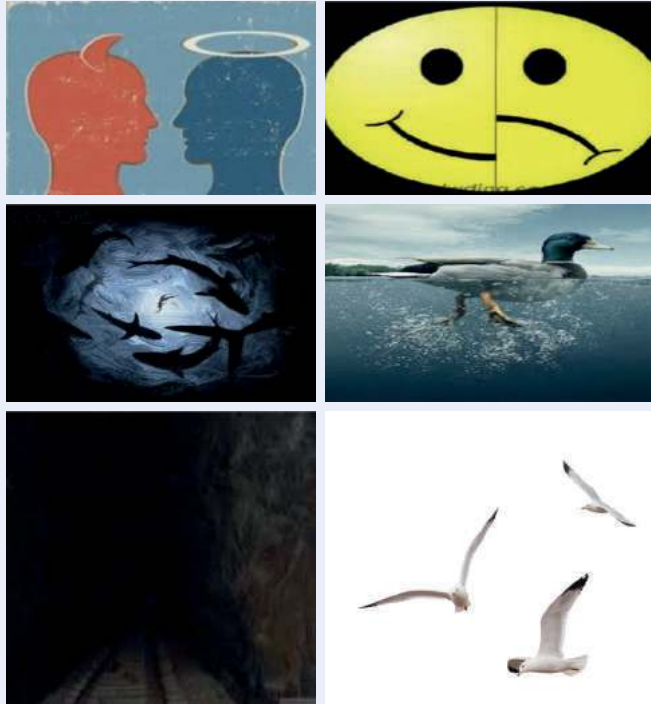
| Scenario  | Focusing skills to be used by counsellor  | Possible use of drawings, metaphors and images  |
|---|---|---|
| Scenario 1: Client knows where they want to go, the focus is clear<br><br>Context: no need to spend too much time on focusing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmation and acknowledgement</li> <li>• Listening for client's motivation to move in the chosen direction</li> </ul> * Can move to next MI process: evoking  | Client can be asked to draw an image/metaphor to capture where they want to go.   |
| Scenario 2: Client has several options and needs to decide  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structuring</li> <li>• Considering options</li> <li>• Zooming in</li> <li>• Using visual aids</li> <li>• Agenda mapping skills: choosing to change topic, changing direction, ask clients to prepare before session, getting unstuck, raising a difficult topic, fitting in an assessment, clarifying your roles in tough circumstances</li> </ul> | Clients can be asked to choose from a deck of images/metaphors created by PG clients in the past to capture the different directions and problems they face, and to rank these images from least to most important that they want addressed |
| Scenario 3: The focus is unclear and we need to explore   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orienting, listening for key themes, following various streams whilst trying to map the terrain</li> </ul>   | Counsellor can summarise all the themes identified by the client, then ask client to pick a metaphor/image that would capture these themes.<br><i>[see box on What this can look like in session]</i>                                       |

## OPPORTUNITY FOR INTEGRATION—USE OF IMAGES OR METAPHORS IN FOCUSING

Clients who find it difficult to identify goals or describe what they are hoping for can be asked to find objects or pictures in the internet or at work or at home to represent what they want to work on in therapy. They may also be provided a set of ambiguous pictures like those below, and asked to choose a picture that would best represent what they see to be what they want to work on in therapy.

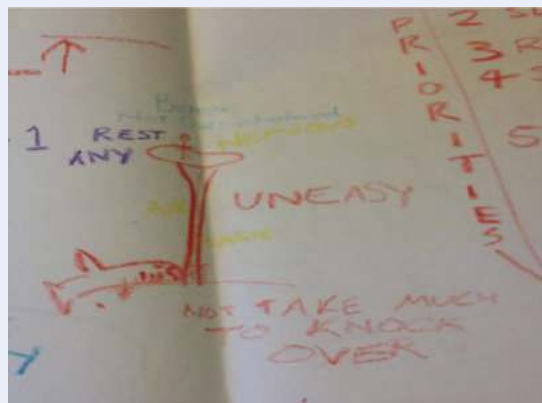
Some questions that can be asked:

- Why did you choose the picture? What about it resonates with you?
- What does it say about what you want to achieve in therapy?



### What might this look like? Using metaphors and images in MI

Steve, age 25—These are my priorities because I often feel fragile



### Metaphors used by clients that can indicate focusing

Baby step/First step

Getting off my arse

Doing it hard but its okay

Finding way to comfort

Building my nest egg

Focusing on the rainbow

## Strategy for information exchange

In focusing, sometimes counsellors are asked to provide information. For example, in problem gambling counselling, clients often ask the counsellor to outline concrete strategies that can help them curb their gambling behaviour. MI suggests that whilst counsellors provide the necessary information, they still leave it to the client to decide which options they would like to implement. More specifically, MI endorses the use of *Elicit-Provide-Elicit* when providing information or when clients require information:

|         | Tasks   | In practice   |
|---------|---|---|
| Elicit  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elicit what client knows, then asking permission to share information</li> <li>Clarify information needs and gaps</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"What do you know about...?"</li> <li>"May I...? or Would you like to know about...?"</li> <li>"What would you like to know about?"</li> <li>Is there any information I can help you with?</li> </ul>  |
| Provide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritise</li> <li>Be clear</li> <li>Support autonomy</li> <li>Don't prescribe the person's response</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What does the person most want/need to know?</li> <li>Avoid jargon; use everyday language</li> <li>Offer small amounts with time to reflect</li> <li>Acknowledge freedom to disagree or ignore</li> <li>Present what you know without interpreting its meaning for the client</li> </ul> |
| Elicit  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask for the client's interpretation, understanding or response; or what the client made of it</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask open questions</li> <li>Reflect reactions that you see</li> <li>Allow time to process and respond to the information</li> </ul>  |

## MI Process 3: Evoking – Preparation for change

Once the working relationship has been created and a focus established, the client is ready for Evoking. The skills involved in evoking include recognising change talk, knowing how to evoke and responding to change talk. The presence of change talk predicts subsequent change so one of the goals of MI is to strengthen change talk. It is also important to be able to recognise and respond to sustain talk and signs of discord in the working relationship

Other aspects involved in this third process include strengthening and evoking of hope. Hope is considered an important client attribute in change.

At times, a client may present with no apparent interest in change (no intention stage of change). Being able to evoke a client's motivation to change becomes an important task for counsellors in MI.

### OPPORTUNITY FOR INTEGRATION—USE OF IMAGES/METAPHORS IN EVOKING

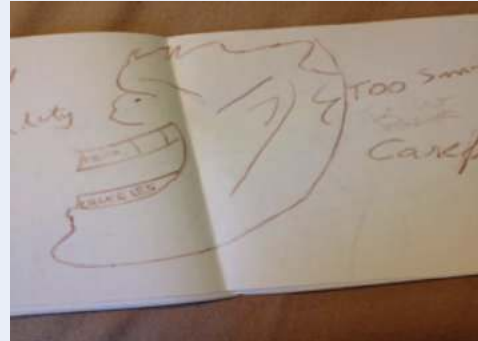
During the evoking process a client may express a verbal metaphor that portrays something about the client or specifically about their gambling behaviour. The counsellor can invite the client to use the metaphor in a therapeutic way.

Aspects of the metaphor that hold potential for change could be attended to. The client for example can be invited to transform the metaphor either verbally or visually in the form of a drawing in order to evoke the experience of change. In order to maintain an MI approach the counsellor would not focus unnecessarily on aspects of the image that promote the experience of maintaining the status quo or sustain talk.

If the client is not able or willing to engage in this metaphor/image aspect of the work then the counsellor puts it to one side. In the spirit of MI the client's autonomy is fully respected. Having been prompted by the invitational style of the counsellor, the client may however bring an image or metaphor along to a later session.

**What might this look like: Using metaphors and images in MI***Jim, age 26, playing pokies*

**Evoking is about selectively choosing parts of the image that could assist client move towards change:**



Client: "I would rather not open the box"

"I feel like I am the joker. I can outsmart anyone. But no one trusts me."

Counsellor: "You have a sense that looking at the past will derail you, and this is about moving forward."  
"It is important for you to feel in charge."

"You think you are getting away with things, but it makes you feel dishonest and you want people to trust you."

**Evoking Change Talk**

Ambivalence is a normal part of the change process. It involves being simultaneously pushed or pulled in at least two opposite directions. A person can remain in an ambivalent state for a long time. A person may decide that nothing can be done and, given ambivalence can be very uncomfortable, it is best to stay with the status quo.

Evoking change talk helps people to keep moving through the natural process of resolving ambivalence in the direction of changing their gambling behaviour. People tend to become more committed to what they hear themselves saying. It has been shown that increase in change talk during a session is associated with successful change (Miller and Rollnick, 2013 pp 169 - 170). Sustain talk is not ignored – it is listened to, respected and reflected. However in MI the counselling conversation is arranged in order to evoke and explore change talk in particular.

**Ask Open Ended Questions**

The DARN-CAT acronym is useful when asking questions to elicit change talk.

It is best to develop a collection of preparatory change talk (**DARN**: Desire, Ability, Reason and Need, see page 17) from the client before entering into the mobilising change talk (CAT-Commitment, Activation and Taking steps, see page 18).

However if the client enters counselling already clear about wanting to change then it is possible to by-pass the evoking process and move straight into planning.

Desire – explore the appeal of making the change  
Tell me what you don't like about how things are now?  
How would you like things to change?

Ability – explore what a person can do, is able to do or could do and evoke feelings of confidence, competence and strengths.

What do you think you might be able to change about your gambling behaviour?

What ideas do you have about how you could change?

Knowing what you know about yourself, what gives you confidence that you could do this?

Reasons – explore specific reasons why and how the change connects to other aspects of their lives that matter.

What might be the good things about quitting gambling?

What are the three most important reasons for changing your gambling behaviour?

What else might improve?

Need – explore the sense of importance or priority to make the change

How important is it for you to change your gambling behaviour?

What needs to happen?

How urgent is this change?

### **The Importance Ruler**

On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘not at all important’ and 10 means ‘the most important thing for me right now’, how important is it for you to change your gambling behaviour?

The answer will be between 0 and 10. The follow-up question evokes the change talk – for example, if the answer was 5, ‘And why are you 5 and not 1?’

If the follow-up question has been ‘why are you a 5 and not a 9?’ the answer would be sustain talk, whereas asking ‘why are you a 5 and not a 1?’ is more likely to evoke change talk, that is, the reasons why change is important.

For example ‘I chose a 5 and not a one because I know if I don’t stop losing money on the pokies my rent is going to get further behind and I could get kicked out of the house.’

### **Querying Extremes**

When it seems a client’s desire for change is low then another way to elicit change talk is to ask clients to describe the extremes of their concerns.

‘What concerns you the most about your gambling behaviour?’

‘Suppose you continue gambling as you have been, what do you imagine are the worst things that could happen?’

It may also be useful to ask about the best outcomes if change is made.

‘If you were successful in making the change how would things be different?’

### **Looking Back**

Change talk can be elicited by inviting the client to remember times before the gambling was a problem in their life. This can highlight the discrepancy with how things are at present and the possibility of life being better again.

‘What were things like before you started to gamble? What were you like back then?’

### **Looking Forward**

Encouraging a client to envision a changed future can also elicit change talk.

‘If you did decide to stop gambling, what do you hope would be different in the future?’

A client can also be asked to look forward and anticipate how things might be if no change is made.

‘Given what you have experienced as a result of gambling up to now, what do you expect might happen if you don’t change?’



## OPPORTUNITY FOR INTEGRATION—USE OF IMAGES/METAPHORS IN EVOKING

Inviting the client to represent 'looking back' or 'looking forward' in a drawing may assist the client to consolidate their change talk into a visual form. The resultant drawings can be reviewed later in the MI conversation as part of the counsellor's summary of change talk.

### What might this look like? Using metaphors and images in MI

Linda, 49



#### Other Metaphors used by clients in the Evoking Stage

Charade is over

Head above water

Momentum

Feeling life intensely

Not totally out of the woods but I am on the road

Counsellor: If you keep on track, what is it that you see in your future?

Linda: There is sunshine and there is a rainbow. I feel free. There is joy. I am supported.

## Responding to Change talk

How a counsellor responds to change talk can make a difference to the amount and quality of change talk. Open questions, Affirmations, Reflections and Summaries (OARS) are used to respond to change talk.

### Open Question

When an MI counsellor hears change talk, they ask more about it. They ask for elaboration or for examples. They use an open question.

Client: When I lose money I feel really bad about myself.

Elaboration question: In what ways do you feel bad?

Example question: Tell me about the last time that happened.

**Affirmation**

Here the counsellor recognises and values what the client has said about change. It can be a simple acknowledgement highlights something specific within the person.

**Client:** I have got to do something about paying off my gambling debts.

**Affirm:** Being debt free is important to you.

**Client:** I think I can stop gambling once I really decide to.

**Affirm:** Once you make up your mind about something you get it done.

**Reflection**

Reflective listening, a core skill of MI, also strengthens change talk. When a counsellor reflects change talk the client is likely to respond with more change talk.

**Counsellor:** What problems is gambling causing you?

**Client:** I have money problems.

**Counsellor:** What kind of money problems?

**Client:** I blew \$200 yesterday on some stupid American basketball game, then drew out another \$100 lost that then drew out another \$100 and lost that as well.

**Counsellor (reflection):** And that really starts to add up.

**Client:** I've lost \$30K in the last twelve months.

**Counsellor (reflection):** and that's a lot for you.

**Client:** I can't afford that amount of money. It is all debt on credit cards and loans.

**Counsellor:** Your gambling feels like a burden. How much?

(Reflections are best followed by silence, so the person can think about what was said. Sometimes we may follow up a reflection with a question, but less is more with reflections.)

**Summarising**

As defined earlier, a summary collects and links transitional change talk material and allows the client to hear their own self-motivational statements out loud. An MI summary is a 'bouquet' of the client's own change talk. Each bit of change talk is like a flower and the counsellor gathers these flowers into a bouquet and presents them to the client as a summary.

An example of a summary structure:

1. Indicate you are about to summarise -

"So let me try to pull together some of what we've talked about so far"

2. List a selection of change talk -

"You thought you had gambling under control but now you have started to wonder about that and you're not quite sure now. Things have been quite difficult for you over the past few months because your gambling has been causing financial stress. Your husband is getting angry with you because of the money you are spending and you are concerned about how this is affecting your marriage." *Then, finish with an open-ended question that evokes more change talk -*

"What else have you noticed?"

A summary like this can be offered periodically throughout the evoking process.

**Sustain Talk and Discord**

Sustain talk expresses the client's own motivations favouring the status quo, and is considered to be a normal part of the change process. It expresses one side of ambivalence.

Discord in MI includes disagreement, not being "on the same wavelength", talking at cross-purposes or a disturbance in the relationship. A counsellor can experience discord when a client is arguing with, interrupting, ignoring or discounting the counsellor.

Sustain talk concerns the target behaviour or change. Discord is about the relationship between the counsellor and the client.

The following are examples of sustain talk and discord and how we may respond to them. It should be emphasised however that responses are only examples and not prescribed scripts. It is important to remember that these MI techniques should aim to make the client feel they are heard. It should not deepen discord or sustain talk. Ideally, the counsellor communicates curiosity and gains a perspective of where the client is at. It is hoped that by responding appropriately, we maintain engagement and may also encourage change talk. However this is left to the client; and there is no attempt to trick or manipulate a client into moving to change talk, which sometimes can happen when using amplified reflections.

### **Responding to Sustain Talk**

One type of response to sustain talk involves reflective listening.

#### *Straight Reflection*

- Client:** I don't think gambling is really much of a problem for me.  
**Counsellor:** Your gambling hasn't caused any real difficulties.  
**Client:** At times it does. Any gambler can tell you that you have a run of bad luck.

#### *Amplified Reflection*

Another form of reflective response to sustain talk is to give an amplified reflection. It reflects what the person has said with added emphasis or intensity. This needs to be done thoughtfully, within a well-engaged relationship, or it can run the risk of sounding sarcastic.

- Client:** I don't think my gambling is affecting my marriage. I'm pretty happy.  
**Counsellor:** There is nothing that can be improved in your relationship it is as good as it can be.  
**Client:** I'm pretty satisfied but I guess my wife is not so happy.

#### *Double Sided Reflection*

A doubled-sided reflection acknowledges the sustain talk and includes change talk that has been expressed previously. Focusing on sustain talk only, generally does not lead in the direction of change.

It is usually better to state the sustain talk first, connect the two halves with 'and' instead of 'but', and then add the change talk at the end of the reflection. This structure reduces the risk of sounding critical and invites the client to respond to the change talk.

The conjunction 'and' highlights the ambivalence by giving equal emphasis to both the sustain talk and the change talk. Whereas the conjunction 'but' tends to wipe out what has just been said. For example, 'You really want to change but you think it is going to be difficult.' The use of 'but' tends to negate the change talk. However by putting the sustain talk first and using the conjunction 'and' causes the sentence to have a very different effect, 'You think it is going to be difficult and you really want to change'.

- Counsellor:** You think it is going to be hard work to change the gambling behaviour and you also know how important it is for you to make a change to improve your marriage.

#### *Emphasising Autonomy*

Telling people they must or have to change usually provokes a reactive stance and increases sustain talk. Emphasising that a person has a choice seems to make it more possible for them to change.

- Client:** I don't want to stop gambling.  
**Counsellor:** It is certainly your choice. No one can make you do it. OR It is up to you what you want to do. You could stop gambling, reduce the amount you gamble or keep gambling as you are.

### *Reframing*

Reframing is a method used in many counselling approaches. A reframe invites the client to view their situation from a different perspective.

**Client:** My wife is always nagging me about the gambling.

**Counsellor:** She must really care about you and the marriage.

### **Signs of Discord**

#### *Defending*

Defending occurs when the client feels the need to do so. It may take the form of minimising the problem, justifying their behaviour or blaming others. A person who defends feels the need to protect their integrity, autonomy or self-esteem. When defending occurs during a counselling session it probably means the client is feeling personally threatened.

#### *Oppositional Stance*

When a client takes an oppositional stance they probably perceive the counsellor as an adversary rather than an advocate.

For example, “You don’t know what you are talking about.” “You’re wrong about that.” Responses such as these could indicate the development of a power struggle.

#### *Interrupting*

When a client interrupts a counsellor and talks over them it could be indicating discord. It could mean that the client does not feel understood or that the client feels the counsellor is speaking too much and not listening to them.

#### *Disengagement*

Signs of disengagement include: when a client becomes inattentive, distracted, ignores the counsellor or changes the subject.

A counsellor can contribute to discord through their mood or approach. A counsellor can stop listening effectively when they are tired or stressed, or distracted by inner frustrations about the work with a particular client. A counsellor can begin arguing for change and start to provide solutions, which may illicit a polarised reaction from the client and sustain talk. A counsellor can become restless or impatient and push forward becoming out of ‘sync’ with the client and leave the client behind.

#### *Sources of Discord*

Discord can occur in all four processes of MI: Engaging, Focussing, Evoking and Planning. In the evoking process if the conversation is pushed to quickly into the change direction discord can emerge. Discord can also emerge if the process moves prematurely into the planning process.

#### *Responding to Discord*

When tension, discord or arguments arise in conversations about change it is helpful to respond in an MI consistent way. MI responses to discord are very similar to the responses to sustain talk. The key is to respond in a spirit of collaboration and curiosity that respects the client’s autonomy and does not invite defensiveness.

#### *Reflections*

**Client:** I see no reason why I should stop (sustain talk) and you aren’t going to make me (discord).

**Counsellor:** Its important you make decision that you feel right about

### *Apologising*

When discord arises then it is helpful to apologise in order to maintain the working relationship.

“Sorry, I must have misunderstood you.”

“I didn’t mean to criticise you.”

### *Affirming*

Sincere affirming reduces defensiveness and shows respect to the client.

**Client:** You don’t know what you are talking about.

**Counsellor:** You have thought this through, and your position is based on your experience.

### *Shifting Focus*

When discord emerges it can be helpful sometimes to shift focus away from the topic that has inflamed the discord rather than continuing that part of the conversation.

## Evoking Hope and Confidence

MI involves motivating change with a particular focus on confidence. MI can be used to strengthen hope when confidence is low. Increasing confidence talk is a way to strengthen hope. It involves drawing on resources that already exist within the client. The approach involves asking open questions that evoke confidence talk and then respond with reflective listening.

“How might you go about making this change?”

“What might be a good first step?”

“What obstacles might arise and how might you deal with them?”

### *The Confidence Ruler*

“On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all confident and 10 is extremely confident, where would you say you are?”

“Why are you at 5 and not at 0?” (When the answer given was 5)

“What would it take to go from 5 to a higher number?”

The answer to these questions will be confidence talk.

### *Identify and Affirm Strengths*

A counsellor will notice strengths and attributes of the client during the counselling process. These can be affirmed at the time and can also be referred to later in the process to strengthen hope and confidence when needed.

The client could be shown a list of adjectives that describe ‘successful changers’.

|               |             |                 |             |               |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| Accepting     | Committed   | Flexible        | Persevering | Stubborn      |
| Active        | Competent   | Focused         | Persistent  | Thankful      |
| Adaptable     | Concerned   | Forgiving       | Positive    | Thorough      |
| Adventuresome | Confident   | Forward-looking | Powerful    | Thoughtful    |
| Affectionate  | Considerate | Free            | Prayerful   | Tough         |
| Affirmative   | Courageous  | Happy           | Quick       | Trusting      |
| Alert         | Creative    | Healthy         | Reasonable  | Trustworthy   |
| Alive         | Decisive    | Hopeful         | Receptive   | Truthful      |
| Ambitious     | Dedicated   | Imaginative     | Relaxed     | Understanding |
| Anchored      | Determined  | Ingenious       | Reliable    | Unique        |
| Assertive     | Die-hard    | Intelligent     | Resourceful | Unstoppable   |