



NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Early Childhood Health and Wellness



## Facilitating Change: Conversations That Help

**26<sup>th</sup> NIHSDA Management Training Conference**  
Amy Hunter, LICSW,  
Georgetown University  
June 9, 2016

*School readiness begins with health!*



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Amy Hunter, LICSW, Georgetown University  
[ah1122@georgetown.edu](mailto:ah1122@georgetown.edu)  
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## Facilitating Change: Conversations That Help




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## Learning Objectives

Participants will

- Gain increased understanding of factors that make it difficult for families to engage in Early Head Start/Head Start
- Gain strategies for improving their ability to develop positive relationships with families
- Gain strategies for having more-helpful conversations that facilitate growth



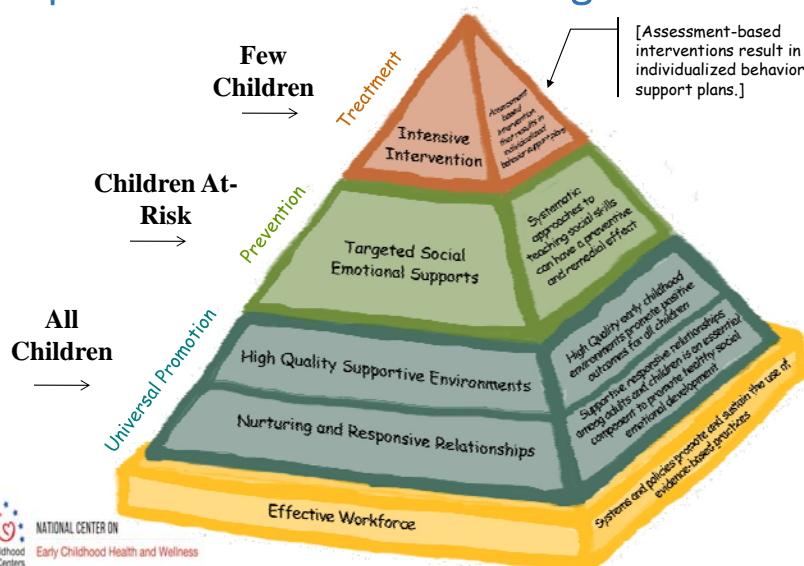
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## Agenda

- When conversation works well
- Family engagement and barriers to engagement
- Perspective taking
- Partnering with families
- Exploring change
- Summary-wrap-up



## The Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children

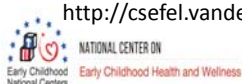


## Toughest Conversation: Pair Discussion

- Reflect on the toughest successful conversation you ever had with a family.
- What did you do to contribute to the success of the conversation?
- What did the family do after the conversation that let you know that it was successful?



## When a Conversation Works Well



[http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training\\_infant.html](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_infant.html)

## Discussion

- How did this caregiver engage the family?
- What was the experience like for the family?
- What was the experience like for the child?
- How might this interaction help to build the relationship with the family?



## Family Involvement and Family Engagement

### Family Involvement

- A necessary first step to engagement: families have to show up to have interactions that lead to engagement

### Family Engagement

- Can lead to more involvement (that is, more showing up)
- With engagement, the quality of involvement changes, which in turn creates the potential for change, for new behaviors beyond just showing up



<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family>

## Engagement Is a Relational Process

- Engagement is relational.
- Engagement includes specific qualities of the relationship—safety, trust, encouragement, mutual respect and caring, and hope.
- The experience of engagement leads to changes in attitude and motivation and to a sense of positive possibility.
- The experience of engagement leads to changes that promote positive family and child outcomes.



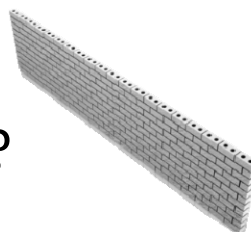
## When We Actively Engage Families, All Will Benefit

- **Children** will be healthier and more ready for kindergarten.
- **Families** will be more engaged in your program and in the public school.
- **Programs** will achieve higher levels of quality.
- **Communities** will provide stronger support to the next generation.



## Family Involvement and Family Engagement

What are the barriers?



## Barriers to Involvement and Engagement Are Different

### Barriers to Involvement

- Lack of transportation
- Lack of child care
- Work obligations
- Scheduling conflicts
- Bad weather

### Barriers to Engagement

- Fear
- Distrust
- Feelings of being unwelcome, disrespected, or at risk of being overpowered
- Misunderstandings
- Cultural beliefs about parent and teacher roles
- Power imbalance



## Other Barriers for Families

- Poverty
- No maternal or paternal leave
- Little support from other family members or neighbors
- Challenging relationships with their own families
- Domestic violence
- Mental health concerns
- Substance abuse



## Depression: A Major Barrier

- More than half (52 percent) of Early Head Start mothers reported enough symptoms to be considered depressed.
- A substantial percentage (18 percent) of Early Head Start fathers also reported enough symptoms to be considered depressed.
- More than 20 percent of Americans will experience a depressive episode in their lifetime.

“Depression in the Lives of Early Head Start Families.” Available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/depression-in-the-lives-of-early-head-start-families-research-to-practice>





## Impact of Depression

“Children of depressed parents are at increased risk for cognitive and language problems, insecure attachments, difficulties with emotional regulation, social competence, and behavioral problems.”

Gladstone & Beardslee,  
2002



## What Does Depression Look Like?

- Depressed or irritable mood
- Decreased interest, pleasure, or both
- Significant weight change
- Changes in activity level
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Concentration problems
- Suicidal thoughts



## How Depression Can Impact Family Engagement

Depressed parents may

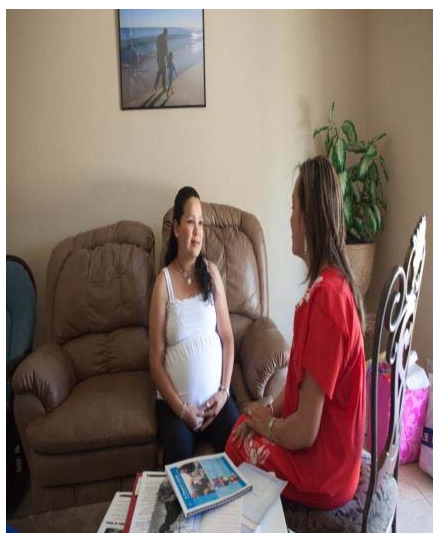
- Have low energy, feel tired
- Have low self-esteem
- Appear “checked out,” as if they do not care
- Isolate themselves—not attend meetings, socializations, or appointments
- Reject your attempts to engage



## Using Your Relationship

- You do not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic.
- Re-think the “expert role.” In order to teach someone, we must first learn from them.

Gerard Costa



## What Caregivers and Staff Can Do

- Learn to recognize the symptoms of depression.
- Know about the circumstances of the families in the program.
- Get support if you have concerns about a family or child.
- Provide a high-quality Early Head Start/Head Start program.



## Exploring Perspective



<http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Phoropter>



## Perspective Taking



What do **you**  
expect from  
parents?

What do  
**parents**  
expect from  
you?

## Digging Deeper into Relationships Is Central to Partnering with Parents

- All relationships involve intimacy.
- Our work relationships are often in some way “forced relationships”—that is, they involve forced intimacy.



## Digging Deeper into Relationships Is Central to Partnering with Parents for Change

- It is natural for people to feel ambivalent about relationships, even those they have chosen, but it is especially common to feel ambivalent about relationships that were not chosen.
- Our past experiences with helpers will effect our current experiences with helpers.
- Present experiences with helpers will, in turn, affect future experiences.



## Discussion

- Think of a time when you changed your behavior, attitude, or perspective.
  - What helped you make the change?
  - What did not?



## Principles for Partnering

- Collaborate
- Learn from parents
  - See them as the experts
  - Ask what they want to know or do
- Recognize their autonomy
  - Parents will make the decision



## Strengths-Based Attitudes

- Families are the first and most important teachers of their children.
- Families are our partners and have a critical role in supporting their child's development.
- Families have expertise about their child.
- Families have something valuable to contribute.

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family>.



## Digging Deeper into Change

Abandon your impulses to:

- Give advice
- Solve the problem
- Be the expert



## Stages of Change

- Precontemplation
- Contemplation
- Preparation
- Action
- Maintenance

Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992).



## Most People Are Wary about Change





## Roll with Resistance



## Digging Deeper into Change: Strategies That Help

### Empathic listening

- Is other-directed
- Is nondefensive
- Involves imagining others' perspectives
- Involves showing a desire to listen as a receiver and understand the other

Podsen, India; Denmark, Vicki. *Coaching and Mentoring First Year and Student Teachers*. 2nd edition. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013.

## Listening Exercise

- Spend 90 seconds talking about something important to you while your partner listens without responding.
- Then spend 90 seconds listening to your partner talk, without responding.



## Reflective Listening

- So you feel...
- It sounds like you...
- You're wondering if...



*“Reflective listening* is the key to this work... The best motivational advice we can give you is to listen carefully to your clients. They will tell you what has worked and what hasn't. What moved them forward and shifted them backward. Whenever you are in doubt about what to do, listen.”

Rosengren, D.B., & Wagner, C. (2001)



## Digging Deeper into Change: Strategies That Help

### Summarizing

- Let me see if I understand this so far...
- Here is what I heard. Tell me if I missed anything.
- On the one hand...On the other hand...



## Digging Deeper into Change: Strategies That Help

### Soliciting permission

- Would it be okay if we talked about [tooth brushing, follow-up dental visits, your child's nutrition, your child's attendance]?
- What have you heard about tooth brushing for 2 year olds?
- Would you like to hear more about tooth brushing and its benefits?



## What If Parents Say No?

- This does not happen very often.
- The parent may not be ready for advice (he or she may be in the precontemplation stage).
- Ask permission to check back.



## Examples of Open-Ended Questions

- What is most important to you right now?
- How would you like your life to be in the future?
- What might happen if you make this change?
- What might happen if you do not make this change?



## Examples of Open-Ended Questions

- Tell me about what has been happening since we last talked.
- Given all that you have been going through, how have you been able to \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., find strength)?
- What are the good things about \_\_\_\_\_ and the not so good things about \_\_\_\_\_?



## Examples of Open-Ended Questions

- How would you like things to be different?
- What if anything have you tried before related to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Tell us about your experience in the program?



## Activity

- Convert closed-ended questions to open-ended questions



## Practice

### Strategies

- Ask open-ended questions
- Listen reflectively
- Summarize



## How Conversations Help Make Connections

- No interaction is without consequences; all interactions have effects. Conversations can leave people feeling open, hopeful, and engaged or nervous, shut down, and defensive.
- All conversations are subject to unspoken rules about who can say what, who has power, who needs to be silent, and what is okay to say and what is not.

## How Conversations Help Make Connections

- Many conversations contain traps for the participants, moments when we can briefly get caught up in a negative interaction that moves us away from our hopes and from how we would like to be with others.
- We can do more to avoid these traps.



## Wrapping Up

- What stood out for you among the things you heard or experienced today?
- What excites you or concerns you about what you learned?
- Did you gain any insights from the session?
- How might you use what you heard today?







For More Information, Please Contact:

Deitra L. Nealy-Shane  
[dln39@georgetown.edu](mailto:dln39@georgetown.edu)

## National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness

Toll-Free: 888-227-5125

Email: [health@ecetta.info](mailto:health@ecetta.info)

Website: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center>



# Convert Closed-Ended Questions to Open-Ended Questions

Rewrite the following closed-ended questions as open-ended questions.

- Have you thought about looking for a new job?
- Are you hopeless about quitting smoking?
- Does your partner understand how significant this anxiety problem is for you?
- Don't you think your wife and kids have been hurt enough by your using?
- Last time, we talked about the problems you have been having with your daughter. Did you speak with her this past week?
- Did you exercise this past week?

# Viewers Guide

## Facilitating Relationships and Change: Using Motivational Interviewing Strategies



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**Head Start** has a fifty year history of supporting families to achieve their own goals and to enhance the lives of their children.

To support families, EHS/HS staff engage them in a variety of conversations from discussions about their own goals to discussions about their child's oral health, nutrition, weight, behavior, and developmental status.

Regardless of the topic, these conversations can have great influence on the relationships staff build with families. Through these relationships, staff have the ability to reinforce families' interests, enhance their motivation and support their ability to make progress towards their goals. Conversations with families can leave them feeling open and hopeful or nervous and defensive. When families feel hopeful and, supported they are much more likely to engage in personal conversations about their lives and discuss goals that they would like to progress toward.

At times staff feel unprepared to have sensitive discussions with families. Using Motivational Interviewing (MI) strategies and principles can help staff feel more confident when addressing tough issues. Staff who practice MI techniques may also find that it enhances their relationships with families—opening up a deeper dialogue. Supervisors, directors and consultants have also used these strategies to form more positive and effective relationships with their colleagues. Programs may find strategies other than MI similarly useful in building trusting relationships with families

## Using the Videos to Enhance your Relationship Building Skills

Use this viewing guide along with Handout 1: Using Motivational Interviewing Strategies to Facilitate

Relationships and Growth and Handout 2: Identifying MI Strategies to help you deepen your knowledge of the process, spirit, and skills of MI.

There are two videos to highlight motivational interviewing strategies that can be used in staff's daily work. You will see two scenes and six "debriefs" for each scene. The scenes are:

**1. A teacher talking to a parent about having the mental health consultant observe her child**

**2. A home visitor talking to a parent about a positive depression screening**

**Handout 1:** Using Motivational Interviewing Strategies to Facilitate Relationships and Growth outlines the process, spirit and strategies of MI.

**Handout 2:** Identifying MI Strategies allows you to observe MI in action. Supervisors and trainers can incorporate these videos and Handouts 1 and 2 in one-on-one supervision or small group meetings. Staff can also view these videos on their own to replicate these strategies in your practice.

# Handout 1:

## Using Motivational Interviewing Strategies to Facilitate Relationships and Growth

### Process of Motivational Interviewing

- **Engaging:** Establishing a mutually trusting and respectful helping relationship
- **Focusing:** Seeking and maintaining a direction. Clarifying a particular goal or direction for change.
- **Evoking:** Eliciting the individual's own motivation for a particular change.
- **Planning:** Developing a specific change plan that the client is willing to implement.

### Spirit of Motivational Interviewing

- **Partnership/Collaboration:** The staff person serves as a partner or companion, working together alongside the parent and acknowledging the parent's own expertise.
- **Acceptance/Supporting Autonomy:** Communicates absolute worth, accurate empathy, affirmation, and autonomy support; interviewer accepts and confirms the client's irrevocable right to self-determination and choice.
- **Compassion:** Feeling another's suffering or distress and having a desire to help. The staff person exhibiting compassion feels for the other person and wants what is best for him or her.
- **Evocation:** Elicits the client's own perspectives and motivation. Evocative questions are often open ended questions that elicit an individual to take about their own reasons for possible change.

### Strategies in Motivational Interviewing

- **Open Ended Question:** Asking a question that leaves the parent a great deal of choice regarding how to respond to the question. Open ended questions can generally not be answered with brief one word answers or yes or no responses. Open ended questions allow the parent to do most of the talking.
- **Affirmations:** Accentuating the parent's efforts and acknowledging a person's strengths. Affirmations respect and honor the clients worth, their ability for growth and change as well as their right to choose whether or not to make change.
- **Reflective Listening:** The skill of "active" listening where the staff seeks to understand the parent's subjective experience, offering *reflections* as guesses about the person's meaning. The staff attempts to perceive and reflect back another person's meaning.
- **Summaries:** Summaries bring together a number of things that the parent has been saying. A summary ties together a number of different points.

# Handout 2

The chart below describes the processes, skills and spirit of motivational interviewing and offers some examples of each strategy. Review the chart below and as you watch a video scene. Jot down examples of each of the processes, skills, and spirit that you see. Use a separate chart for each scene. Watch the associated debriefs after each scene. Note if you did not see an example of one of processes or strategies and you might not have observed that skill.

Some topics covered in conversations lend themselves to certain strategies more than others. Jot down any ideas you have for how this EHS/HS staff could have used a process or skill more effectively.

## Identify Processes of Motivational Interviewing

Processes of Motivational Interviewing	Note where in the video you see the strategy	Note if you did not see this strategy. Jot down why this strategy may not have been present
<b>Engaging:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing a helpful <i>connection</i> and working relationship</li> <li>Building trust</li> <li>Empathic listening</li> </ul> <p>“Can you share with me what concerns/questions you might have today?”</p>		
<b>Focusing:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain a specific direction in the conversation about change</li> </ul> <p>“I wonder if there is one of these things you would like to talk about. Or maybe there is another topic you would like to discuss in our time together?”</p> <p>“What changes if any are you hoping will arise from our meeting today?”</p>		

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## Identify Processes of Motivational Interviewing *continued*

Processes of Motivational Interviewing	Note where in the video you see the strategy	Note if you did not see this strategy. Jot down why this strategy may not have been present
<b>Evoking:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking versus telling</li> <li>Instead of telling parents what to do, MI evokes the parent's own motivation and resources for change</li> <li>The parent's ideas</li> </ul> <p>"What concerns you most about...?"</p> <p>"What are the advantages of the behavior and the advantages of not changing?"</p>		
<b>Planning:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting to change</li> <li>Develop a plan that includes adequate structure, accountability, benchmarks and rewards</li> <li>Clarify when someone is willing, able and ready</li> <li>Forming a plan of action and commitment to change</li> </ul> <p>"What do you plan to do next?"</p> <p>"How will you respond to the obstacles that might get in the way?"</p> <p>"What is the next step?"</p>		

## Identify Spirit of Motivational Interviewing *continued*

Spirit of Motivational Interviewing	Note where in the video you see the strategy	Note if you did not see this strategy. Jot down why this strategy may not have been present
<p><b>Partnership/Collaboration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The staff person serves as a partner or companion, working together alongside the parent and acknowledging the parent's own expertise</li> </ul> <p>"What are your thoughts about the situation?"</p> <p>"How do you see this going?"</p>		
<p><b>Acceptance (supporting autonomy):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The parent must make their own decisions about their lives and any changes they wish to make</li> <li>Respect the parent's autonomy—whether or not they change or take action</li> </ul> <p>"It sounds like this idea might not fit with the way you see things. That is OK."</p> <p>"There is no one right way to do this. You know what is likely to work best for your family"</p>		



## Identify Spirit of Motivational Interviewing *continued*

Spirit of Motivational Interviewing	Note where in the video you see the strategy	Note if you did not see this strategy. Jot down why this strategy may not have been present
<p><b>Compassion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts kindly to promote the individual's welfare, giving priority to the client's needs</li> <li>• Genuine care and concern</li> <li>• Understand and validate the struggle</li> </ul> <p>"It sounds like you are exhausted from worrying so much about your son."</p> <p>"It can feel overwhelming to have so much on your plate."</p> <p>"It sounds like this is a really difficult decision."</p>		
<p><b>Evocation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore parent's motivation, goals and ideas</li> <li>• Help individuals come up with their own reasons for making a change</li> <li>• Identify and resolve ambivalence</li> <li>• Focus on past successes</li> <li>• Identify barriers to change</li> </ul> <p>"What do you plan to do next?"</p> <p>"Of the various options you've discussed what option seems most plausible?"</p> <p>"How serious is this for you right now?"</p> <p>"How would you like for things to change?"</p> <p>"If you decide to make this change, what might be different in the future?"</p>		

## Identify Communication Skills of Motivational Interviewing

Communication Skills in Motivational Interviewing	Note where in the video you see the strategy	Note if you did not see this strategy. Jot down why this strategy may not have been present
<p><b>Open Ended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question that cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no” answer</li> <li>• Elicits more communication</li> </ul> <p>“Tell me about...”</p> <p>“Say more about...”</p> <p>“How are you feeling about...”</p>		
<p><b>Affirmations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes and reinforces success</li> <li>• Expressed with genuineness</li> <li>• Offers perspective in face of difficulties</li> <li>• Expresses optimism</li> <li>• Sees any progress as progress</li> </ul> <p>“It takes a lot of strength to go through all you have been through.”</p> <p>“I’m so impressed with the way you...”</p> <p>“You are persevered despite some major obstacles that have been in the way”</p>		

## Identify Communication Skills of Motivational Interviewing *continued*

Communication Skills in Motivational Interviewing	Note where in the video you see the strategy	Note if you did not see this strategy. Jot down why this strategy may not have been present
<b>Reflective Listening:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mirrors what the individual is saying</li> <li>• Makes a guess about the meaning of what the individual is saying</li> <li>• Shows collaboration and equity</li> <li>• Should be done frequently — try to offer two reflections for every question you ask</li> </ul> <p>“It sounds like you...”</p> <p>“You’re saying that...”</p> <p>“You’re feeling like...”</p> <p>“You sound unsure...”</p>		
<b>Summaries:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps the parent to know you are listening and understanding</li> <li>• Pulls together and links relevant information</li> <li>• Helps parents to hear their own motivations and ambivalence</li> <li>• Helps to clarify thinking or communication</li> </ul> <p>“Let me see if understand this so far...”</p> <p>“You care for your son very much and you are concerned that we might not be meeting his needs...”</p>		

## Other considerations:

### Reflect on your own reactions:

- What thoughts and feelings were elicited as you watched this interaction?
- What would you do differently now that you know more about MI?

### Reflect on the quality of the relationship:

- What are your feelings and thoughts about the quality of the relationship between the staff person and the parent.
- Do you feel this staff person is genuine and is fostering a trusting relationship with the parent?
- In both of these scenes the staff and parents have established trusting relationships with each other. How does this foundation of trust and partnership impact these conversations?
- How can using some of these strategies help you support families to make progress towards their goals?

## Resources

CCNC Motivational Interviewing (MI) Resource Guide, retrieved 8/5/14 <https://www.communitycarenc.org/media/files/mi-guide.pdf>

Glossary of Motivational Interviewing Terms, William R. Miller & Stephen Rollnick, Updated July 2012, retrieved 8/5/14, [http://www.fead.org.uk/docs/Glossary\\_MI\\_Terms.pdf](http://www.fead.org.uk/docs/Glossary_MI_Terms.pdf)