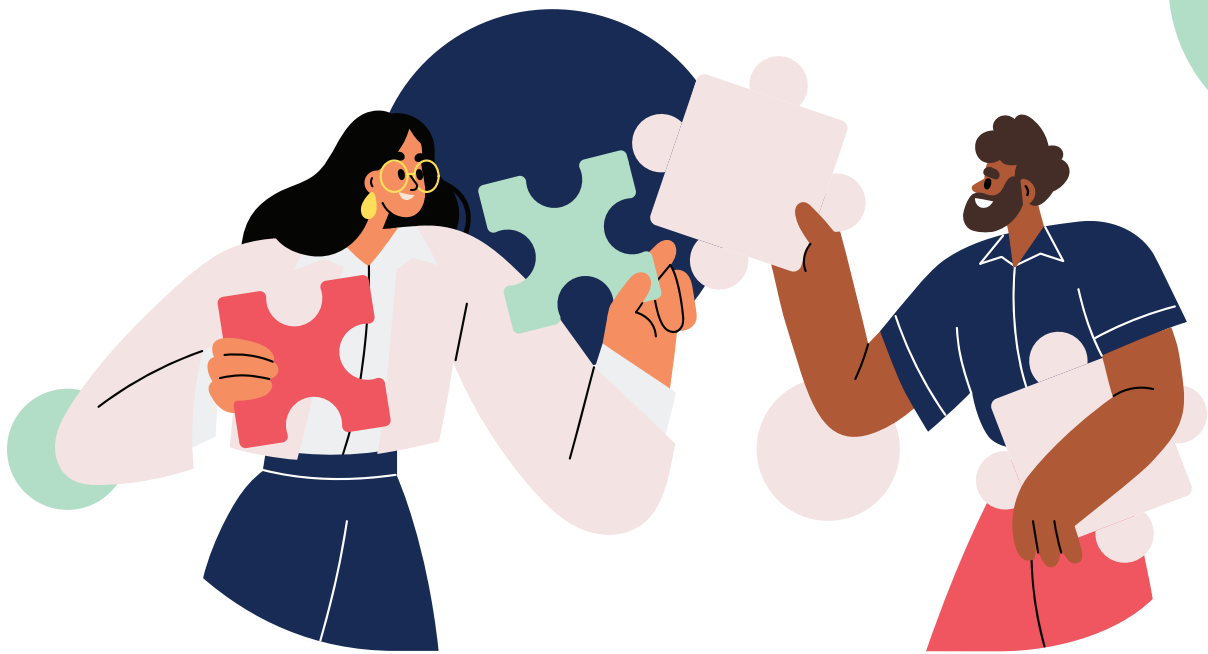


Motivational Interviewing Workshop *Facilitation Guide*



EM CONSULTING



Relationship-Based Sessions

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Relationship-Based Learning



RELATIONSHIP-BASED LEARNING

Relationship-based learning is a dynamic approach that highlights the essential role of connections—between facilitators and participants, among participants and with the broader learning environment—in fostering meaningful growth. At its heart, this approach recognizes that true learning transcends the mere transfer of knowledge; it is built on trust, empathy, and mutual respect, forming a foundation for deeper engagement, meaningful self-reflection, authentic motivation, and sustained curiosity. By enabling transformational learning experiences—where the learner is fundamentally changed by the process—relationship-based learning ensures that the connections within the learning environment are as impactful as the content itself.

BEFORE THE COURSE:



The relationship with the participants begins in the first communication, usually weeks before the course begins. Ensure course invites, flyers, reminder emails and other pre-course communication are empathic, respectful and warm. Avoid the term 'mandatory', or the term 'training' when possible.

Alternatives for the noun 'training': **course**.

Alternatives for the verb 'train': **resourcing, learning**.



Create a friendly environment, before the course begins.

Many people arrive to courses nervous, fearful about being in a group of people they may not know well, to engage in something they aren't sure about. Connecting with participants can help lower this nervousness. Arrive early, or be on the video platform early in order to connect with each participant as they arrive to welcome them, modeling smiling, eye contact and connecting statements. This 'warm start' is essential for an effective learning experience.



Have refreshments set up before people come into the room (in-person workshops): Regardless of what time of day it is, it is important to have high-quality food and beverages. This shows respect and empathy for participants.



AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COURSE:



Let participants know at the beginning of the course what the agenda is, and when breaks will be and stick as closely as possible to this. Assure participants that they are free to take breaks when they need to. This models care and attentiveness to their needs, communicating empathy.



Dedicate time to introductions or check ins (if everyone knows each other). The specifics of this will vary, depending on how many participants are in the session. For smaller sessions, there may be time to go around and have each person check in; for larger sessions, using a Mentimeter, or chat check in, or dividing people into small groups to introduce or connect with each other are useful strategies.

Consider carefully what the check in question is. One that is too vulnerable will scare people, one that is too light or funny won't advance connection.



Use participants' names whenever possible. If you won't know everyone, to assist with this, use name plates or name tags (when in person). On video platforms, ask people to name themselves what they prefer to be called with preferred pronouns.



Facilitate participants connection to us: Dedicate some time (2-3 minutes for a short 1-2 hour session, or 4-5 minutes for a 3 hour or longer session) to sharing what your *personal connection* to the content of the session is. This is where telling a story about yourself can be particularly effective. This is ideally connected to a picture you've included in the slide deck.

Stories should be short, genuine, and help others feel more connected to you. Avoid stories that are too deep or emotional, as well as stories that are overly flattering to you.



Name racial bias (and other discrimination-related processes) early in the course; this can be in an introduction around the importance of standardizing empathic communication (if not purposeful, we tend to be warmer and more empathic in our affinity groups, for example), through a self-disclosure of some kind, or just a direct statement that it needs to be named. This demonstrates the course is a space where participants can also name this, in their comments, questions or practice courses.



DURING THE COURSE:



Flatten the Hierarchy: Most people are conditioned from schooling to believe there is power differential between a teacher and students. Without mitigation, participants are likely to assume you are in an authority position, over them, which is antithetical to relationship-based learning. There are many ways to mitigate this perceived power differential.

1) Identify yourself as a fellow practitioner, not an expert. 2) Invite participants to share their **experience and perspectives**. 3) Pause frequently to ask for input. 4) When a participant asks a question, we can turn the question back to the larger group *'I wonder if others have thoughts on this?'*.

Ask *"what are your thoughts or experiences in this?"* as opposed to *"what are your questions?"*, which can reinforce 'expert/student' power dynamic.



Stay true to the 30% goal! Transformational learning only occurs when participants experience the skills. This means 1/3 of the session should be spent in practice pairs, giving each person a chance to experience the skills as a recipient. *When managing time, always prioritize practice.*

Participants are ideally active for closer to 40% of the course, including check-ins, eliciting questions and comments, and group discussions.



Model the Skills Being Taught. *Social learning* is learning through observation and imitation. Research suggests up to 70% of communication skills learning happens through social learning. This means participants are learning more about open-ended questions, for example, by observing us ask open-ended questions, than when we are just talking about open-ended questions. For this reason, we want to model the empathic communication techniques in the session with participants when possible, such as Home Stance and Ways of Being strategies.



Model Humility: If you catch yourself giving advice, asking closed questions or other less skillful means, engaging in transparent, narrated self-correction demonstrates humility as well as a growth mindset for the participants. *"Ah, I just asked a question starting with 'why'?! Let me try again!"*



Explicitly invite honest feedback at the end, and share a link or other way for participants to share their evaluation of the course. This models empathy and respect: we care what they think, and what their experience was. It also models a growth mindset - we want to evolve, change and grow, continually.



AVOID:

Contradicting, arguing, or criticizing any participant's comments, even in the most subtle ways. Avoid using the word 'but' after a participant share (as in 'yes, *but* we also need to...').

Using 'command' rules in the course (for example, 'no cell phones' or 'no late entry'). If limits are necessary, state the action you will take, not what others 'must' do, for example 'Unfortunately if a participant is more than 15 minutes late, the session won't be very useful to them, so we will reschedule for the participant to come to another session'.

Lowering the 30% practice time, in order to cram in more content. For most facilitators this is always tempting, especially if we are running behind. We can remind ourselves that just talking about information does not facilitate deep learning or real change.

Calling on people to share. This is anxiety producing for many people; even if the person you called on is not anxious, those that are in the group will find it difficult to relax knowing they could be called on next.

Evaluating questions or comments from participants with 'great question' or 'excellent point'. Other participants who were not the recipient of these comments may feel less-than; it also places the facilitator in an 'evaluator' position, which is a power differential not conducive to learning.



COMPONENTS OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE SESSIONS

Add some of your own strategies after each component!



Connection with Participants

- ✓ Humor
- ✓ Self-disclosure
- ✓ Chatting with participants before the session



Respect for Participants

- ✓ Start and end on time
- ✓ Acknowledge participant's knowledge



Credibility & Confidence in the Subject

- ✓ Share relevant examples of skills
- ✓ Avoid 'uptalk'



Fascination and Energy for the Subject

- ✓ Vary cadence of speech
- ✓ End with energy as high as the start





A Compelling 'Why' for Doing the Workshop

- ✓ Share personal 'why'
- ✓ Connect 'why' to values



Environmental Empathy

- ✓ Provide refreshments
- ✓ Avoid 'classroom' seating



Ratio of Presenting to Practice

- ✓ Ensure practice is at least 25%
- ✓ Elicit input from participants



Facilitation of Effective Practice

- ✓ Provide clear instructions
- ✓ Explain 'real-play' vs. 'role-play'



CONSIDERATIONS FOR IN-PERSON SESSIONS

The 'U' shaped format is one of the best session set-ups, as it allows everyone to see one another, which is essential to creating a shared experience in the session. It also allows you, as the facilitator, to walk closer to those who are talking. If the 'U' isn't possible, small groups at round tables is second-best.

Avoid classroom set ups (rows of tables and chairs facing the facilitator). It is not conducive to relationship-based learning, as it can reinforce power differentials. Classroom set-ups discourage participants' connections with each other, and remind most people of school.

Having refreshments is important. Offering food and drinks is a way of demonstrating empathy, concern for participants' comfort, and an appreciation of their time.

Walking around and listening briefly to participants practicing allows you to ensure no one is role-playing, and instead everyone is using their real selves in practice.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR VIRTUAL SESSIONS

Having cameras on is an important part of relationship-based learning; it is difficult if not impossible for participants to feel connected to each other, or to us (and vice versa). However, we want to avoid rule-based authority, so do not want to 'mandate' cameras being on. We can, instead 1) indicate in the flyers, emails, and registration process that we ask for cameras to be on, to start setting expectations as early as possible 2) in the first part of the first session, say something about why this is important (because it is difficult to connect to each other without it) 3) share that we know it is not always possible, due to technical limitations or other life events.

Much of the stress of having a camera on, is looking at ourselves for hours. We know from research, it isn't good for any of us! We can share that using the 'hide self-view' option can be very helpful with this.

At least once every 12 minutes, take off 'screen share', and invite participants to share their thoughts. The cadence of these breaks from slides and the facilitator talking are deeply important to elicit engagement, mitigate power differentials, and allow participants to hear from each other.



IDENTIFYING OUR STORIES & BANKING EXAMPLES

1

Write at least 3 brief stories that you think might have some use in a session. Indicate what the goal of the story is (what are you trying to illustrate, convey, or create with the story).

2

Pick one of the above stories and flesh it out a bit more. Make sure to take out unnecessary details and keep it short enough to be under 2 minutes.



3

Practice with your small group; and if possible, practice again taking in the feedback you think is useful. Note feedback they have given you:



4

Write 2 examples you can share for each strategy (home or work related)

Warm Body Language



Affirming Strengths



Empathic Reflection



Acknowledging Feelings



Open Ended Questions



Countering Shame



TRAUMA INFORMED PARTICIPANT PRACTICE

Practice is one third of all sessions; the importance of this cannot be overestimated. Ensuring practice episodes are 1) safe 2) helpful and 3) impactful is one of a facilitator's most complex tasks.



Explain practice or discussion exercises clearly. Unclear directions can create nervousness, especially for those who had poor experiences in school.



When in person, split groups in pairs by walking around the room and grouping two people who are sitting next to each other. Avoid "counting off" to split groups, as it creates chaos and confusion. Additionally, people often sit next to those they know, making practicing feel safer for them.



Keep groups the same for at least the first few hours. People tend to feel safer knowing their pair won't change; additionally, it is more chaotic to try and change groups for each practice episode. Changing partners or group 1 or 2 times towards the end can integrate variety without causing anxiety.



Ensure participants do not "role play". This might be the most important guidance for successful practice episodes. Most people have been in trainings where they have role played and often automatically assume this is how they will practice skills - on a partner who is "pretending" to be a patient or client.



Discuss vulnerability decisions before starting practices. Because we are having real conversations during practice, let participants know that we want them to moderate their own vulnerability, to share only what they feel comfortable sharing with their partner. Let participants know the prompts for them to share will always allow for them to share less vulnerably if they prefer.

Recall that preserving participants' self-image and self-esteem is very important. No one is able to learn, or take in information if they feel criticized, or less-than.





Caution everyone explicitly to avoid giving

advice. The single most common thing participants do to render practice ineffective, is giving advice instead of practicing skills. Most importantly, interactions that involve fixing and advice rarely result in deep connection. We are all incredibly conditioned to give advice. The tendency is so strong, people tend to engage in it without even knowing they are doing it.

Before every practice episode, it is important to remind people not to give any advice, not even a smidgen! This includes “have you ever thought of...” and “do you think X might help...”



If possible, demonstrate the skills being practiced before each practice

episode. If you are facilitating alone, you can ask if one of the participants wouldn't mind demonstrating with you. This models equality with participants by modeling we too are just fellow practitioners. It also shows vulnerability. If there is a misstep or even something you wish had gone differently, openly talking about this demonstrates humility and can be as useful of a learning moment as 'ideal' demonstrations.



Time the practice. It is reassuring for participants, to know that it is just a short period of time, and that the facilitator is managing this. 4 minutes per person is a good range for practicing single skills (6-8 minutes per practice episode), later in the session when practicing multiple skills, 5-8 minutes per person (15 minutes per practice episode in pairs) is a good range of time. To signal transitions in person, call out for people to switch roles. In virtual sessions, you can send a message to the breakout groups at the correct minute mark.

Ask for people to share out when practice episodes end and everyone comes back to the larger group. Asking something like “what were people's experiences when practicing?” and “how was it to be on the receiving end of these skills?” or “what did people notice?” Having 2-3 people share their experiences with the big group after coming back from practice episodes helps the larger group benefit from others' experiences and is a useful transition for people to get settled back into the larger conversation.

When virtual, asking people to chat in a few words about their experience is useful for them, and for us, to have a sense of how things went.



EMPATHIC FACILITATION QUESTIONS

1

What are some of the differences in facilitator skills and strategies, between virtual facilitation and in-person facilitation?

2

What are some strategies for modeling Home Stance and Ways of Being with participants during sessions?

3

What are some relationship-based learning techniques to invite participants to share (virtual and in-person)?



4

What are some relationship-based learning techniques for answering questions posed to you?

5

What can you do if you don't have an answer for a question during a session?



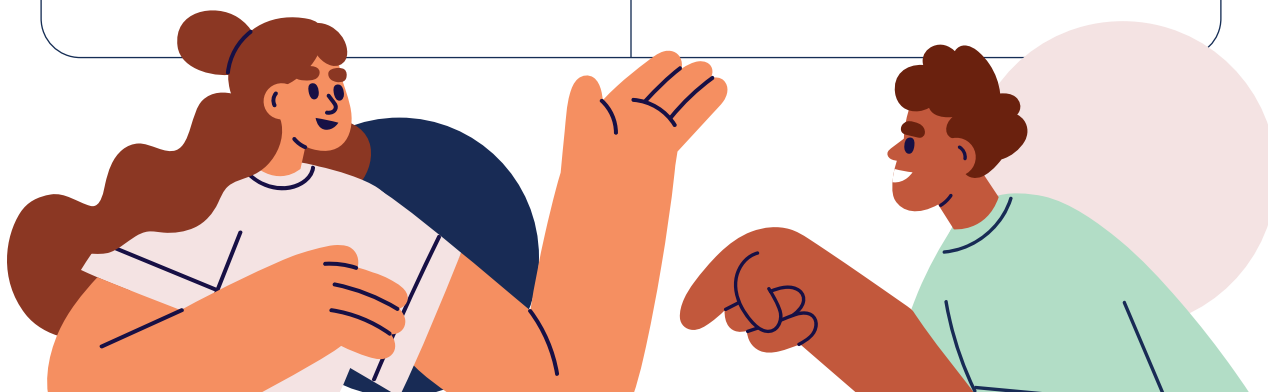
Motivational Interviewing Workshop Course Alterations

	Acceptable	Encouraged	Discouraged	Reason for Discouragement
Breaking up into shorter 'micro-trainings'	✓			
Changing words on slides to match your organization's language (for example, changing 'clients' to 'members')	✓			
Adding more practice time during the session	✓	✓		
Spending more time on introductions to enhance group cohesion	✓	✓		
	Acceptable	Encouraged	Discouraged	Reason for Discouragement
Delivering the session with less than 25% of time dedicated to practice			✗	Delivering content only sessions is discordant with the Motivational Interviewing Workshop course design.
Having participants role play (instead of using themselves)			✗	Role-playing rarely connects people to each other - a primary goal of practice sessions.
Diverging from relational session facilitation guidelines toward 'classroom training'			✗	The Motivational Interviewing Workshop is designed to be relational, empowering and trauma informed.



FACILITATING SESSIONS SOLO VS. IN PAIRS

PROS: SOLO	PROS: PAIRED
No need to practice or coordinate with a partner	Able to regularly get and give feedback to each other, facilitating improvement
Often easier to schedule sessions	Ability to share facilitation, allowing breaks from presenting
More cost effective for an organization	Allows one facilitator to manage break out groups, the chat, and other tech tasks when virtual
Able to train more people with facilitators working solo	Allows for participants to experience two different facilitation styles, hear things two different ways
Often easier to manage time (starting and ending on time, breaks, etc)	Allows the sharing of nervousness, excitement, successes, and mistakes with each other
Your thoughts:	Your thoughts:



Motivational Interviewing Workshop Session Agenda



<i>Timing</i>	<i>Focus</i>
10 min	Introductions or check in
2 min	Review the agenda, housekeeping, etc
8 min	Introduction of MI; story; mentimeter or similar
18 min	MI part 1
5 min	Practice instructions
10 min	Practice
18 min	MI part 2
5 min	Practice instruction
10 min	Practice
5 min	Close
90 min	



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