

# Motivational Interviewing

## Interview Transcripts

### Bill

*This is an unrehearsed candid conversation (not a clinical session or role-play) with Dr. William R. (Bill) Miller to demonstrate some specific aspects of motivational interviewing as described in the 2023 4th edition of Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change and Grow by Miller and Rollnick. Staff from The Change Companies volunteered to talk about specific topics in their own lives. The topic for this conversation was “Something that I want to change and haven’t done yet.” There were two men named Bill in this conversation, so the interviewer is identified as Miller, whose task was to demonstrate the evoking task in MI. Evoking involves the strategic directional use of OARS skills to cultivate change talk. Miller’s notes in the right-hand column focus on Open questions, Affirmations, Reflections and Summaries directed toward change talk, designated as O+, A+, R+, and S+. Bill spoke about his desire to get re-started in the discipline of martial arts.*

Interview	Skill
<p><b>Miller [00:00:11]</b> So you want to talk about something that you’re considering thinking about maybe wanting to do but haven’t done yet?</p> <p><b>Bill [00:00:17]</b> Yes. So I’ve been just beating it over in my head, which is getting back into martial arts again.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:00:27]</b> Oh, so you’ve done that before?</p> <p><b>Bill [00:00:28]</b> I have. It’s been a number of years. Probably close to 15.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:00:34]</b> Quite a while.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:00:35]</b> Yeah. So I would be basically starting all over again.</p>	<p><b>O+</b></p>
<p><b>Miller [00:00:38]</b> Yeah. But there’s something that draws you back.</p>	<p><b>R+</b></p>
<p><b>Bill [00:00:42]</b> There is. It’s a time in my life that I continue to try to work out at the gym, and I still have a trainer a couple of days a week. And so I try to stay physically active, but unless I’m super into something that I enjoy a lot, then it just becomes more like work and it’s not fun. And so I need to find something that I enjoy, that I get some kind of rewards both mentally and physically, more than just, you know, doing weights at the gym.</p>	<p><b>Change Talk</b></p>

Interview	Skill
<p><b>Miller [00:01:17]</b> And that was part of your experience before with martial arts?</p> <p><b>Bill [00:01:21]</b> Yeah, it was. I did it for four or five years.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:01:25]</b> Yeah.</p>	<p><b>R+</b></p>
<p><b>Bill [00:01:25]</b> And I progressed slowly as a grown-up. I didn't progress as much as I would have as a kid. But it's something that I had always wanted to do as a kid. And I took judo as a little kid at the YMCA. My parents bought it one time for me, but I never really got to stick with it to learn anything. And so later after I had a daughter and she got, you know, young, I thought, this is a good time to learn some skills. We're going for a walk in the park somewhere, and I want to be able to, you know, do what needs to be done.</p>	<p><b>Change Talk</b></p>
<p><b>Miller [00:02:04]</b> Yeah. And what did you enjoy about it?</p>	<p><b>O+</b></p>
<p><b>Bill [00:02:09]</b> I think it's about 50/50 for me as what I remember. Number one, I've probably never sweat so much in my life as when we did those workouts.</p>	<p><b>Past Tense</b></p>
<p><b>Miller [00:02:22]</b> It was a good workout.</p>	<p><b>R+</b></p>
<p><b>Bill [00:02:24]</b> We all had our gis on, and you're in your gear. And you're working, you know, you're running back and forth and you're doing punching exercises and you're hitting walls and you're doing 40 knuckle push-ups on the wooden floor. And so I was in much better physical shape than I'd remembered being in for a number of years. That was half of it. But the other half was that there was just this magic to the history and the culture. And I did a version of it that was very traditional. It wasn't like what the master of the dojo referred to as a "belt factory," you know, where everyone gets their colored belts. So we really studied under one of the founding originators that first came to the US back in post-World War II.</p>	<p><b>Past Tense</b></p>
<p><b>Miller [00:03:20]</b> So besides the notch up in terms of fitness, you're also connecting with a long tradition.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:03:30]</b> Yeah. And we stopped — my wife and I did it together for a while, and she kind of burned out on it before I did. So then it became me going solo with a young kid to take care of at home. Just the obligation of having to show up and to not break that commitment, because you don't want to break the commitment to the dojo master.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:03:57]</b> That's right.</p>	<p><b>R+</b></p>

Interview	Skill
<p><b>Bill [00:03:59]</b> So I think that's another part of it. It's a commitment that holds you accountable to doing something that you say is important to you. But sometimes the things I say are important aren't always the things I end up doing.</p>	<p><b>Change Talk</b></p>
<p><b>Miller [00:04:18]</b> So you're already doing things to stay healthy, with weights and some cardio and so forth. This has taken it up a notch. This is looking for something that you enjoyed before. And that also you're going to stick with because it is a commitment. You need to be there and do it.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:04:41]</b> Yeah. Part of what reinforces that is you pay your annual membership dues for the association and then you pay the fee. And when I looked into it, one of the things that — I was almost ready to register, and then I realized the classes are being held by a student of my original dojo master. So she's in the same lineage and she's the only one in this area. But she's holding the classes at the local community college. So I thought, "Oh, then I have to register for it like a college class." And that seemed a little odd.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:05:20]</b> It was an extra obstacle.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:05:21]</b> Yeah, it was the one obstacle that I needed to make me question myself again.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:05:28]</b> That's right. Yeah, "Maybe I can get out of it by saying, no, I don't want to register for the college."</p> <p><b>Bill [00:05:34]</b> But that was like a month ago and it's still eating at me, so I have to revisit it.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:05:39]</b> You're still thinking about it.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:05:40]</b> I am. It hasn't left me.</p>	<p><b>R+</b></p>
<p><b>Miller [00:05:42]</b> What are the most important reasons for you to be thinking about this? Because there's something still in your mind saying, "No, no, this is important."</p>	<p><b>O+</b></p>
<p><b>Bill [00:05:51]</b> Yeah. The most important reasons, I think, would be there's a spiritual connection to it.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:06:01]</b> Yeah, I understand.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:06:02]</b> And then there's also a physical. And I think those two balance so perfectly in this art form that also can cause a lot of pain. It's kind of the best of both worlds.</p>	<p><b>Change Talk</b></p>

Interview	Skill
<p><b>Miller [00:06:15]</b> Mmhmm.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:06:16]</b> I mean, it can cause pain to the person who's practicing it because it wears you out. But then also, it's designed to make you physically stronger and more capable of defending yourself if need be. Or a better runner, away from trouble.</p>	<p><b>Change Talk</b></p>
<p><b>Miller [00:06:36]</b> So there's a lot in there. There's the balance of physical and spiritual, which has really been appealing to you, that you're not finding in the gym, lifting weights, currently.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:06:47]</b> Right.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:06:47]</b> But then also there's being able to take care of yourself and either get yourself out of trouble or deal with what you have to deal with rather than just being a victim.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:07:00]</b> Yeah. I have an issue with victim-ness. I think my dad beat that into me.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:07:10]</b> He beat it into you?</p> <p><b>Bill [00:07:12]</b> Yeah. We will not be victims in our family. That's one way to learn.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:07:18]</b> Whether you like it or not.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:07:19]</b> That's right.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:07:21]</b> So there's a long history to that, too, of not being passive, not just letting happen what happens.</p>	<p><b>R+</b></p>
<p><b>Bill [00:07:30]</b> Yeah. And then, now that we've opened that door, it makes me wonder, am I carrying around some of that "need to prove" crap that I grew up with? Or is this now a grown-up man with a child in a house and a normal existence, not trying to make up for things he lacked as a kid, but just doing something that's beneficial for him.</p>	<p><b>Sustain Talk</b></p>
<p><b>Miller [00:08:02]</b> For the positives of it, you've named them — you've talked about being physically fit at a higher level, the spiritual and long tradition balance of this that enriches the fitness of it, safety. I mean, just being able to take care of yourself. And then part of you says, "But am I just doing that to prove myself to my dad, still?" What's your hunch?</p> <p><b>Bill [00:08:35]</b> I've talked to my dad in real life by phone three times in the last five years.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:08:42]</b> Yeah?</p> <p><b>Bill [00:08:43]</b> So I'm probably not really trying to prove anything to him anymore.</p>	<p><b>S+</b></p>

Interview	Skill
<p><b>Miller [00:08:47]</b> It's not that big of a deal.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:08:49]</b> But there's just a little bug in there that kind of eats at me. I question that still. My brother and I both grew up with that dynamic. He was always the one to go out of his way to try to please my dad. And I was always the one to try to avoid my dad and not to try to, you know, learn to impress him, because I kind of felt like I never would anyway.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:09:15]</b> You had complementary roles in relation to him.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:09:19]</b> Yeah. I think my brother ended up getting the brunt of it because he was more physically present trying to please my dad and I was just like out in the backyard hiding under a tree or something.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:09:34]</b> So pleasing dad wasn't important to you then, or not much?</p> <p><b>Bill [00:09:38]</b> Yeah, you know, that's a good point. It actually wasn't then either.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:09:44]</b> So that's just doubt you had about it. Maybe even another reason not to do it.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:09:53]</b> Maybe just another easy excuse.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:09:59]</b> Yeah, I wondered if it's like the college enrollment thing.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:10:03]</b> It could fall into that category, I would think. Yeah. In fact, even less legitimate of an excuse. That second one.</p>	<b>S+</b>
<p><b>Miller [00:10:11]</b> Yeah. But you get some doubts or at least want to leave yourself an exit route. If you choose it.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:10:21]</b> It's funny — now I'm thinking of the two things that were in my head sort of making me question it, don't seem that important.</p>	<b>Emphasizing Autonomy</b>
<p><b>Miller [00:10:30]</b> It doesn't sound like a big deal as you reflect on it. Whereas the positives are much more engaging.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:10:39]</b> Yeah.</p>	<b>R+</b>
<p><b>Miller [00:10:40]</b> I want to stay fit. I need to go up a notch in that. I like the connection of the physicality of it with a spiritual tradition that means something, that just going to the gym doesn't do for you. "I want to feel confident to be able to take care of myself and others if the need is there." Those are some pretty good reasons right there.</p>	<b>S+</b>

Interview	Skill
<p><b>Bill [00:11:10]</b> Actually, I didn't bring this up. But the other thing that's been in my head, sort of keeping me from making a commitment of some kind is just the literal commitment of like three nights a week, four nights a week.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:11:24]</b> It's a significant commitment.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:11:26]</b> It's a big chunk. And so I would have to get my wife enthusiastic about it.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:11:34]</b> Because she's not going to do it herself.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:11:35]</b> She's not going to do it for sure.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:11:37]</b> It takes you away from her for significant time.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:11:41]</b> Good chunks of our evenings, which are usually our only time together. So maybe of the three, that's probably the more realistic of a potential issue.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:11:49]</b> That one sounds substantial.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:11:55]</b> When I first brought it up to her, she was very supportive of it. But I think that's a conceptual thing when it seems more distant. And then when I print out the schedule and bring it to her, you know, that may not be as exciting for her.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:12:17]</b> It gets real then.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:12:18]</b> Yeah, it becomes more of a tangible thing. Okay, well, who's going to do this on these nights? And I'm going to be home, you know, after 7 p.m. and logistics get in the way.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:12:31]</b> What is the commitment, actually? You said three nights. Four nights. I'm just not clear on what you would be expected to do.</p>	<p><b>Sustain Talk</b></p>
<p><b>Bill [00:12:39]</b> That's a good question. I'm not yet either. When I went on the website for the community college, I had a hard time finding what the actual breakdown of the schedule was. I remember when we did it before, it was three days a week, and then we usually did something on the weekend that was an outdoor sort of a practice. So three nights a week and then usually a fourth on the weekend.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:13:06]</b> So there might be a discussion with the master there too of just "what do you expect?"</p> <p><b>Bill [00:13:12]</b> Yeah. Is there any flexibility built into that calendar?</p> <p><b>Miller [00:13:16]</b> Exactly. Because you also have a family.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:13:19]</b> Yeah. And you know, if it's at a community college, that makes me think also that they're used to people working. You're not a full time student.</p> <p><b>Miller [00:13:31]</b> That's right. They probably have a job and have some other classes.</p>	<p>Contemplation</p>

Interview	Skill
<p><b>Bill [00:13:35]</b> Yeah. So I think what I for sure need to do is get all the details and make a better informed decision. That makes sense.</p>	<p><b>Change Talk</b></p>
<p><b>Miller [00:13:49]</b> Good. Okay. Makes sense to me.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:13:53]</b> Does that sound like a good next step?</p> <p><b>Miller [00:13:54]</b> Sounds like a good next step.</p> <p><b>Bill [00:13:55]</b> Okay, cool. Thank you.</p>	<p><b>A+</b></p>

*“Here’s a 14-minute conversation as Bill contemplates returning to martial arts that he once enjoyed. All four OARS responses are there, though I didn’t squeeze in simple affirmations until the end. Affirmation is the one easiest for me to neglect. Often a single MI session like this just leads to taking steps. The planning process focuses on a good next step.”*

— Dr. William R. (Bill) Miller