

Motivational Interviewing

Interview Transcripts

Deb

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 I’m trying to learn or accomplish,” and Bill’s task was to demonstrate the new empowerment component of MI spirit and the skills of simple and complex affirmations, exploring strengths and past successes, and emphasizing personal choice/ autonomy. Bill’s notes in the right-hand column focus on these specific MI skills, not every MI-consistent response. Deb spoke about a children’s book she is writing and her uncertainty about drawing the illustrations for it.

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:00:11] Deb, you said there’s something that you’re wanting to learn or get better at. Tell me about that.</p> <p>Deb [00:00:16] Yeah, well, I’m currently writing a seven-book children’s series for young kids. But it’s actually about my son who’s autistic and his stuffed dog. But it’s from the perspective of his stuffed dog. So the reason why it’s seven books is — it’s one a day for seven days. And it’s from the time he gets up to the time he goes to bed, the adventures that he goes on, like going to school, you know, having meltdowns in the store. But from the perspective of the dog, who thinks he’s just going on adventures and has a different — or a more lighthearted perspective — of his day.</p>	
<p>Bill [00:01:03] How clever — you’re already doing this.</p> <p>Deb [00:01:06] Yeah. So I’ve written them. The part that I’ve been a little challenged with is I have no artistic ability. So drawing and making it very kid-friendly is not something — I’m not really sure what direction to go in.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Simple Affirmation</p>

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:01:24] You can imagine yourself doing that.</p> <p>Deb [00:01:28] I can picture the book and I can picture what I want the pictures to look like. But I'm very challenged when it comes to like drawing or art in that fashion. I'm more of a writer person than artistic in that way, so I'm kind of stumped as to... do I bring somebody in? I thought about having my daughter do it because she likes to paint, so maybe have her create something. But I can visualize it. I know what it's going to look like. I just need somebody to take the vision out of my brain and put it on paper and haven't really figured out how to do that yet.</p>	<p>Empowering, Complex Reflection, Lending Change Talk – Envisioning</p>
<p>Bill [00:02:10] Or you might do it yourself, but that would involve some learning for you.</p> <p>Deb [00:02:14] Possibly. Something else I've considered is learning and maybe even doing some of those community art classes where you can learn how to sketch because I want it to be more of a simple sketch, you know, I don't want it to have a lot of details because it is for young kids and they just like color. So I want it to be colorful and I want it to somewhat mimic the look of my son and his dog.</p>	<p>Empowering</p>
<p>Bill [00:02:47] Yes. And you want to draw the readers in.</p> <p>Deb [00:02:52] Yes. Well, I want it to be entertaining for kids, but a little educational and just kind of a lighthearted perspective of people that have autism.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:03:05] So tell me about the heart behind this. What is it that is a passion for you in doing this?</p> <p>Deb [00:03:13] Well, obviously, with my son being autistic, he's 23 years old now so it's been a long journey.</p> <p>Bill [00:03:23] Wow.</p>	<p>Open Question</p>
<p>Deb [00:03:24] I've had a lot of learning because I didn't even know what it was. So learning what it is and how to deal with the day-to-day challenges has been rewarding but challenging. Like, I don't wish it, but I wouldn't change it.</p> <p>Bill [00:03:44] Yes, yes. Long journey.</p> <p>Deb [00:03:48] Yes. Very long.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection</p>

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:03:49] And you've really hung in there. You really have stayed with him. And not only that, but want to share what you've learned with other people?</p> <p>Deb [00:03:58] Yeah, because a lot of people know the word, you know. When they say "Autism Awareness Month" everybody goes, "Oh yeah." But if you had kids standing in front of you, you wouldn't be able to pick which one was autistic and which one wasn't. So it's more of just making them understand sometimes what they're seeing that they think is a kid just having a tantrum or being, you know, a brat, if you will — it's a kid having an emotional meltdown because he can't process what's happening in front of him correctly, so it comes out in frustration.</p>	<p>Complex Affirmation</p>
<p>Bill [00:04:39] And not many people understand that.</p> <p>Deb [00:04:40] No.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:04:41] <i>You do.</i></p> <p>Deb [00:04:42] Yes.</p> <p>Bill [00:04:43] Very well.</p> <p>Deb [00:04:44] More so than I'd like to say. Yes.</p> <p>Bill [00:04:47] Yes.</p> <p>Deb [00:04:47] But it gave me compassion for other people. So I don't judge other people's characters or when I see behaviors that are maybe not appropriate out in public. I don't judge it because I don't know the context behind it.</p> <p>Bill [00:05:05] Yes.</p> <p>Deb [00:05:06] And I can't say that I would have been that way had I not had him.</p>	<p>Simple Affirmation</p>
<p>Bill [00:05:11] You know that you don't know the story behind what you're seeing.</p> <p>Deb [00:05:14] Correct, and we all have them.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:05:17] Oh, yes. So when you know that, it inspires you to be compassionate.</p>	<p>Complex Affirmation</p>

Interview	Skill
<p>Deb [00:05:25] Yeah. I don't judge. And I can't say that I didn't before, but I don't judge people by how they look. I don't judge them by acts that they have. I can choose to not participate in the act if I don't agree with it. But even with my son, who — we can go to the store and he'll have a meltdown — I don't even react to him. I'm very calm because it calms him down faster. So I don't react or get upset or, you know, get embarrassed. Because I know the calmer that I am, the faster he'll calm down. I just talk him through it, just telling them that he needs to, you know, take a deep breath and do all those things. But when he was younger, I would experience a lot of judgment, like people. I could see them, other people. And, you know, a mother's instinct is to go and defend. But the reality was that they were just uneducated in that perspective. So I learned to have a different approach and just gently say something about autism. Walk up to them and say something and then walk away just so that they're aware of what they're looking at.</p>	
<p>Bill [00:06:48] Now, coming back to the book, you have some choices here of, "How do I get the artwork done in a way that I like it done? I can almost see it."</p> <p>Deb [00:07:01] Yeah.</p>	<p>Refocusing, Emphasizing Choice</p>
<p>Bill [00:07:03] "Do I learn to do that myself? Do I hire somebody to do that? How's that going to work?" If you did decide to give it a go yourself, how would you do that?</p> <p>Deb [00:07:16] Well, again, I've thought about just kind of getting a sketchbook and starting to... I was going to start with using crayons. Because that's kind of the look that I'm looking for. Very simple, like a circle with, you know, hair that's just basically like lines. So again, I don't want a lot of details because it's for kids. I just want it to be very simple. But when I start thinking about the stuffed dog, which is the whole concept of the story, that freaks me out. It's like, I don't know if I could draw a dog.</p>	<p>Emphasizing Choice, Empowering Open Question</p>
<p>Bill [00:07:54] The dog is really important to the story.</p> <p>Deb [00:07:55] Well, he is because he's actually important to my son, because he's had the dog for almost 23 years. And his name is Max. And it was one of those dogs that are pre-named when you get it, it already has a little name tag.</p> <p>Bill [00:08:12] So he's Max.</p> <p>Deb [00:08:13] Yeah, but he clung to it from the first time he got it and he wasn't even a year old. He would just carry it around and he rubs the ears, like for comfort. He'll sit there and play with them. But he's been on all these adventures with him, so I thought it would just be a different perspective. Yeah.</p>	<p>Simple Reflection</p>

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:08:36] Now, obviously you're somebody who can learn to do something hard that you don't know how to do. And that's what you're thinking about with the artwork.</p> <p>Deb [00:08:46] Yeah.</p>	<p>Complex Affirmation</p>
<p>Bill [00:08:46] You may choose not to do it yourself also and just have someone else do it. But again, it's possible for you to learn to do things you don't know how to do that are difficult.</p> <p>Deb [00:08:57] And I know I could hire somebody because —</p>	<p>Emphasizing Choice, Complex Affirmation</p>
<p>Bill [00:08:59] <i>That</i> you know you can do.</p> <p>Deb [00:09:01] I do know people. I mean, I work for a company that — we have a lot of very artistic people. But I am trying to make it really personal. So it's like, that's why I have kind of stumped myself because it's like — okay, then that requires me to totally go outside of a comfort zone for me, which is drawing. I mean, I was the person that would be in art class, erasing the stick person and redrawing it because I drew it so bad. So I've put that in my head that I can't draw. I can't do art. So this week I was looking at art classes to start maybe with painting or something, and even though I'd be copying something that's already been created, it might help with hand movement and things like that. Because I've always told myself I can't do it.</p>	<p>Simple Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:09:58] So you'd have to have a different story about yourself also.</p> <p>Deb [00:10:00] Yes. Maybe I'd have to write a story about that story. (Laughs) Just kidding.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:10:05] There you go. Yeah. Might be another book there somewhere.</p> <p>Deb [00:10:09] Right? So that's where I've kind of stopped for that reason of, I haven't progressed. Even though I have all the stories ready. And then even once I figure out the art, then it's the actual publishing part of it.</p> <p>Bill [00:10:29] Sure.</p> <p>Deb [00:10:29] Like how does that work? What does that entail? How much would that cost?</p>	<p>Empowering</p>
<p>Bill [00:10:34] That's another whole learning curve.</p> <p>Deb [00:10:36] That's a whole different thing. So I've been watching videos on it because you can do that now. You can watch videos on anything. So I watch videos on how you can self-publish and what's required to do it. But I've still been at a stalemate for probably about three months now.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection</p>

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:10:55] Okay. In your imagination, you see this.</p> <p>Deb [00:10:58] Oh, yeah.</p> <p>Bill [00:11:00] So what's missing is, "How do I turn my imagination into something that's on the page?"</p> <p>Deb [00:11:05] Right.</p>	<p>Empowering</p>
<p>Bill [00:11:05] There's so much heart in what you're doing. I think of <i>The Velveteen Rabbit</i>, which is a classic story like this, where over the years, the rabbit gets more and more raggedy and so on.</p> <p>Deb [00:11:18] Yeah.</p>	<p>Complex Affirmation</p>
<p>Bill [00:11:19] And it just touches a deep level in people. And I mean, I hope, well, you're going to do the book. With you, I can imagine the pictures also. And I just think it's such a powerful gift to give to the world.</p> <p>Deb [00:11:39] Well, I think it's needed.</p> <p>Bill [00:11:42] Yes.</p> <p>Deb [00:11:43] But at the simplest form, instead of it being, you know, a really thick book that the adult would read...</p> <p>Bill [00:11:49] Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>Deb [00:11:50] You know, why not educate the kids and give them a different perspective of what that is?</p> <p>Bill [00:11:57] Well, I look forward to reading it.</p> <p>Deb [00:11:58] Yes.</p>	<p>Simple Affirmation</p>
<p>Bill [00:11:59] And you have choices, obviously, about how you go with the artwork. I'd be curious also what you decide about that.</p> <p>Deb [00:12:07] Absolutely.</p>	<p>Emphasizing Choice</p>
<p>Bill [00:12:09] And it's possible either way.</p> <p>Deb [00:12:12] Yes. I know that I can easily default to having somebody else do it.</p>	<p>Empowering</p>
<p>Bill [00:12:16] It's easier.</p> <p>Deb [00:12:17] But it's not necessarily where my head is wanting to go.</p>	<p>Simple Reflection</p>

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:12:24] Something draws you into doing the harder thing.</p> <p>Deb [00:12:28] Yeah.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:12:29] And you've done hard things.</p> <p>Deb [00:12:30] Yeah, that's very true.</p> <p>Bill [00:12:32] Yeah.</p>	<p>Simple Affirmation</p>

“Another aspect of empowerment in this conversation is not rushing in to make suggestions and provide solutions, but trusting her ability to find them and to make her own choices.”

— Dr. William R. (Bill) Miller