

Talking to Change: An MI Podcast

Glenn Hinds and Sebastian Kaplan



Episode 11: Teaching and Learning MI, with David Rosengren, PhD

Sebastian:

Hello everybody and welcome to a very special episode of The Talking To Change, A Motivational Interviewing Podcast. The reason why this is a special episode is this is the first time that Glenn and I are face-to-face, in the same room, as opposed to across the Atlantic Ocean from each other. So Glenn, hello.

Glenn:

Hi, Seb. Hi, everybody.

Sebastian:

And another reason why it's such a special episode is that we are recording this in New Orleans, Louisiana, which is the site of the 2018 Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers annual forum. It's the 21st annual forum, and it's basically the annual conference that we put on as trainers and clinicians and researchers. We're just so thrilled that it's in such a magical place.

Sebastian:

Well, before we introduce our guest, Glenn, maybe you could share with the audience about how they can reach us.

Glenn:

So by email, for questions, comments, you can email us at podcast@GlennHinds.com. Facebook is Talking To Change. And on Twitter it's @ChangeTalking.

Sebastian:

Okay, great. Thank you. So we are very pleased to have David Rosengren on our podcast. He is the president and CEO of the Prevention Research Institute, a private non-profit in Lexington, Kentucky, which integrates MI into its drug and alcohol prevention and treatment curricula. He's also been a research scientist and consultant at the University of Washington's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute, an independent MI consultant and trainer and a practicing psychologist. And David is best known as MINTies Stephanie Ballasiotes's husband, Kriston's Straight Man, and writing a book that injures if dropped. Here's our conversation with David Rosengren.

Glenn:

So you're very welcome, David. It's fantastic. As we say, we're here at the MINT Forum, a gathering of newly trained trainers and existing trainers from over the years. We're delighted that you're here because of your own history. The fact that you were here at the



very beginning and you were just telling us before we went on air that the T'n'T that you were part of yourself doesn't exist in any forum in the records because it was so early in the development of Motivational Interviewing training as a process, but also MINT as an organization.

Glenn:

So maybe you could offer some insight into the journey that has taken place over the last 20 odd years towards the development of MINT Forum and what it is that we're experiencing here in New Orleans

David Rosengren:

Yeah, back when the earth was still hot, or maybe it was when it was, maybe it's still hot. I don't know. Back in 1993, I saw this little flyer to come to Albuquerque to do training to become a trainer in Motivational Interviewing. And prior to that, I'd worked on this large research project called Project Match, where we were using a form of Motivational Interviewing called Motivational Enhancement Therapy; a standardized approach to it.

David Rosengren:

And I thought, well, this could be really interesting. And I really wasn't very good at Motivational Interviewing when I went to do that. So I really went there to learn MI more than to become a trainer. So just began with that sort of statement that since we're going to talk about learning a little bit today, that that was really a big step in my learning process, was going there.

David Rosengren:

And it was 40 folks getting together with Bill Miller and Steve Rollnick, names that I'm assuming are familiar to your listeners. And they weren't very good as T'n'T trainers, I'll say that too, because they were new at it. And sort of figuring out exactly what they were going to do and how they were going to do it. And so like all of us, they've evolved, we've evolved, we've gotten better as time has gone on.

David Rosengren:

So we did that very first meeting and we had this great time together, everybody learning and sort of being together. And at the end of that time, folks said, "So what happens now? Now that we're done?" And no one really knew. And I sort of stuck up my hand and said, "Well, I'll do a newsletter." And so we started out by doing a little newsletter and it became the forerunner of all these things that then have happened since the very first meeting or forum where old MINTies or experienced MINTies, maybe I should put it that way, come together as well as the training for new trainers in MI.

Sebastian:

So it started very much like other things in MI, at least the stories that we've heard about it. It wasn't a highly structured, heavily planned, heavily theorized process, it was a group



of people interested in MI getting together, and then it was, "Well, where do we go from here?"

David Rosengren:

Yeah, well it's interesting. I have to say it was Bill Miller's. So, the training itself was well organized. We got three ring binders and exercises and all the rest of that. But in terms of the evolution of this group that you're a part of, that I'm a part of, that the new trainers become a part of, that was more organic and started with seven folks around a pool and then the following year, 21 folks in Newport, Rhode Island. So it sort of has grown over time since then.

Glenn:

To the point where I understand that we have, I think, it's 80 or 120 new trainers coming out of the T'n'T, and 350 previously trained MINTies coming back to the forum to share their wisdom, share their knowledge, and to build on the essence of what it is you're describing, which is that organic development, which is using the awareness and the skills and the thoughts of each individual and moving in direction that arises from that conversation. What struck me was, what do we do next? Itself a very positive and very familiar Motivational Interviewing type question at the end of any process. So what next? And here we are 22 years later at this gathering.

Glenn:

So part of what we're really keen to talk as well in relation to yourself, David, is that whole idea of the learning of Motivational Interviewing or the teaching of Motivational Interviewing, both from a learner's and a trainer's perspective. And I'm wondering, can you speak about that? Because you've literally written the book, Training Motivational Interviewing. So can you talk to us a bit about that.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. Well that's another sort of interesting story around this. So Terri Moyers and I were going to write this workbook together. And she and I have different stories about this, so you probably ought to get her story on record too, because it will be a little bit different than mine, but I know mine is the accurate story. So just so you know.

Sebastian:

Sure.

David Rosengren:

She and I were going to write this workbook together, and we wrote a draft chapter. And I know you've done this, so you know how that works. And we wrote it in. Terri got done and said, "I don't think we can do this." And I said, "Yeah, I think we can. I think we can. I think we've got something here that's going to work." And she sort of said, "Okay, you go. You go do it." And so I did it. And I had no expectation of ever doing that, but it sort of happened, again, organically. A door opened and I just said, "Well, it might be interesting to walk through and see what's on the other side."



David Rosengren:

That's kind of how that piece all evolved. In figuring that out, I did have some things that I wanted to say as time went on, and figuring that piece out. In terms of the training and learning and all that stuff, let me start with the trainer side and then I'm going to move to the student side, the learner side of things.

David Rosengren:

So from the trainers side, as I mentioned before, Bill and Steve came with this well laid out notebook with exercises and a sequence and a reasons for doing things because that's how Bill works. He's a very organized person, and he thinks and presents his thoughts in a way that are really accessible to people.

David Rosengren:

It's interesting because I was just having a conversation with someone about this, saying that I think part of the reason why MI has grown is because Bill has written in such a clear and accessible manner. And the other things around this are clear and accessible in terms of the things that have been given to MINTies over the years, the trainers.

David Rosengren:

So Bill had laid this out and I was using his stuff and doing it faithfully. And of course I wasn't doing nearly as well as Bill because I'm not Bill. And then at some point I decided, well, if I'm ever going to get better at this, I got to stop doing David Rosengren being Bill Miller, I got to do David Rosengren training MI. And so it was really sort of that freedom to step out beyond myself and to start looking at things and saying, "Is there another way to do this? Is there a better way? What else do we know about this that might be helpful?" And it was through that that I began developing some of my own exercises, my own ideas about how do we train some different things and figuring out what the best method is for doing that. And then that led to well, creating a kind of stockpile of training exercise, which eventually led to the book.

David Rosengren:

And it's kind of interesting. So I have these memories about different things that developed over the years. So like the batting practice exercises one that gets used a lot, that was one that I came up with, with my wife Stephanie Ballasiotes, who's also an MI trainer. We were out working on our backyard; it was a new yard in a terrible soil and it required a pickaxe to break the earth up. So I was out there in the hot August sun swinging an axe, a pickaxe, breaking up the earth, telling Stephanie, "I don't know how I'm going to do this." And we were having this conversation then it suddenly hit me, "Well, we could do batting practice." And just do some things.

David Rosengren:

But the first time I used it, it didn't work as well as I really thought it might. And so I had to tweak it and change some things. And once that happened, and the tweaking in this case was have people write things down, which then they could... And for those of you who don't know the exercise, it is having people say a discordant or resistance statement to a



learner and they have to practice like batting practice, just hitting the ball, just getting used to responding to it before the game begins, before the client says this in the heat of the moment and you've never had a chance to respond.

David Rosengren:

That was the idea behind it. And having people write these things down really helped them produce some in that moment. So the specifics of that don't really matter as much as it is sort of there's this process of taking a chance, thinking it through, be willing to accept less than perfect results, and then continuing to refine and perfect.

Sebastian:

Yeah. Actually, I just have the idea, I don't know how we would feel about it, but I wonder if we might do a few rounds of batting practice so the listeners could hear what it's like. Would that be all right?

Glenn:

Yeah. Yeah.

David Rosengren:

That could be fun.

Sebastian:

Would you be the batter, maybe?

David Rosengren:

Sure. I'd be happy to do that.

Sebastian:

Okay. I guess I'll throw a pitch.

David Rosengren:

Okay. Can we make it really even more interesting?

Sebastian:

Okay.

David Rosengren:

So I'll do my response, and Glenn, I want you to tell the group what kind of response it was.

Glenn:

Nice.



David Rosengren:

Oh, you like it. Okay. This is getting fun.

Sebastian:

Right. And just so the audience knows what my role will be, is to offer a client statement that it would be like you just described, a discordant or resistant type statement and David, you'll respond to it. And I'll try to make it very consistent with where we are.

Sebastian:

Gosh, here we are. We're in New Orleans, it's Bourbon Street for God's sakes, what do you think, I'm not going to drink?

David Rosengren:

Yeah. It's hard for you to imagine being able to be here and not drink excessively.

Glenn:

So I'm going to call it a simple reflection.

David Rosengren:

I'm going to call it amplified.

Glenn:

Okay.

Sebastian:

So say a bit about that. Because we maybe not covered an amplified reflection. (?)

David Rosengren:

Yes. So here's an interesting thing. So simple reflection pretty much stays at the level that the person has just given it to you at. An amplified will take what the person has said, usually the element that's discordant, and press on it a little bit to see if you can get the person to back away from an absolute position. And to my mind, what made that an amplified was when I indicated that it's hard to imagine being here without drinking excessively. So I gave it back with a little bit of press.

Glenn:

So you attitude a little?

David Rosengren:

Yeah.

Sebastian:



Right. And then the idea of being, well you're not trying to trick the client in doing that, but a client might say yes to that. And now, well that's information that would be useful to you.

David Rosengren:

Right. And then it'd be exactly what you called it Glenn, a simple reflection. That's how they heard it. And that's really the beauty of that response of when you do it and you do it well, that even if it doesn't work in the manner you want it, it works.

Sebastian:

Right. Because working in this context would be, if I heard that reflection as the client, then I might back away from that and say, "Well, excessive, I know I can control how I drink. Even here in Bourbon Street, I might be able to just pace myself or not drink as much as I usually do, or I have in the past."

David Rosengren:

Yeah.

Sebastian:

Okay, cool. That was fun.

Glenn:

So it sounds like in some ways as a consequence that what we hear the client then use would be considered change talk.

David Rosengren:

It might be. That's what we're hoping for. Or at least backing away from an absolute position, in this that I'm at Bourbon Street and I have no other option than to drink heavily.

Sebastian:

Right. And for a practitioner in that context, there may be a sense of pressure or increased stress around, "What do I say now? Or do I have to start arguing against that?" And this is such a nice kind of creative and freeing way of responding that takes that kind of absolute sort of extreme position and tests to see how close to that the client might be, right?

David Rosengren:

Yeah.

Sebastian:

And then oftentimes clients aren't as extreme, or maybe they didn't realize they were, and in hearing that reflection, they'll kind of back away from it. And now you have some more flexibility to maybe work with.

David Rosengren:



Yeah. Yeah. And I do think there is an important element. Of course, you guys are well aware of that, but your listeners may not be as much, and that is, if you do that amplified, you can't be sarcastic.

Sebastian:

Right.

David Rosengren:

Because if you're sarcastic, then it's going to be heard entirely differently. In that case, if you've got a discordant statement, think of it like a fire and you've just thrown gasoline on it, it's going to go boom.

Glenn:

Right. Yeah. So it's that authenticity and connection that's really important throughout whatever we do.

David Rosengren:

Yeah, exactly.

Glenn:

You know what, I'm fed up with you social workers coming here and telling me how to run my life. How me and my wife bring our kids up is our responsibility.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. You really want to be in control of what happens to your kids and what happens here.

Sebastian:

So the word control was used there in the reflection. So I might say that it's simple, perhaps a bit of a complex reflection even, because control is something that could go in lots of directions or it might really take it to a place like Glenn didn't quite get to.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. Yeah. And it's an interesting word there, because control can be a hot word. It might not have worked the way that I wanted it to, and of course, Glenn would, in the follow up response, tell me if I missed around that. But yeah, I would say it's kind of in that simple, maybe a little bit, what I like to say is below the surface, a little kind of further down, but not much. Not much. And that's a really important one when you're sort of... Especially for new learners, when you're learning how to respond to these things. Think of it as like, there's a lot of pressure. And when there's a lot of pressure sometimes just being able to give it back to the client so they understand you're listening and you're not doing anything to add to what's going on, it buys you a little bit of time to then think about something that might help move the conversation another way.



David Rosengren:

I think the other thing to think about with all this is it's rare that a single response, no matter how good it is, is going to change the conversation entirely. It's more sequence of things that happened, but the batting practice allows us to get better at doing that.

Sebastian:

So in a real clinical context, it's not that any singular reflection is going to change the world or anything, it's how it layered and sequenced and how the client responds and how you're responding to how the client responds. But yeah, this batting practice exercises is quite excellent at just getting people warmed up in thinking about how they would respond to things.

David Rosengren:

Yeah.

Glenn:

Yeah. Hand to eye coordination.

David Rosengren:

Exactly.

Glenn:

Right.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. That same sort of idea of, I'm going to take some practice swings at this thing before I have to do it in the real situation.

Glenn:

Heart to Mouth, perhaps, I'm just trying to extend the metaphor

Sebastian:

of hand, eye, heart, mouth. Yeah. There's a hearing to it too. But yeah, maybe we'll come back to that.

Glenn:

Yeah. So batting practice was one of the first of your own personal modes of translating an exercise.

David Rosengren:

I think it was, one of the early ones. Now that you ask that. I had never really thought about it. But yeah, it seems like it was a pretty early one. And it sort of seared into my memory just because I'm swinging that pickaxe in the backyard.



David Rosengren:

Yeah. But it is an interesting sort of idea about how do we develop as trainers, because this is about sort of learning as trainers and all the rest of that, that this idea that we may have some formal training that goes on. And we can talk about best practices around some of those things. But then there's also the point at which we really take ownership of what it is we're doing, and that oftentimes requires us to start making modifications that fit our personalities. Not that we're going to scrap everything we've learned, but rather we've got to make it fit our context, our training audiences, those kinds of things.

Glenn:

I can imagine that would be very reassuring to people who maybe are new to MI or developing their practices. It sounds like what you're encouraging us to do is to make it our own version, staying true to the core elements of and in the spirit of MI, but for it to be you, to be the David Rosengren version of Motivational Interviewing, or the Glenn Hinds's version or the Seb Kaplan version. It's yours, let the client, let the students meet your version of you. The truth of you as you introduce them to the material of MI.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. And that's just really good clinical practice in general, I think. I remember as a graduate student, and this was back when the dinosaurs roamed. One of my co-students was in and we were watching a video of her, and our supervisors stopped and said, "Who's that person? I don't know that person. I've never seen that person before." And we all went, "Well, what do you mean? That's so-and-so?" And he said, "None of your personality is there. When you're in there, you're the instrument. And all your knowledge you're bringing to bear on this, but you got to be yourself in that circumstance." And so as whether it's a trainer or as a practitioner or whatever, we got to bring ourselves into it. And so if you're someone who's playful and has a sense of humour, that ought to show up in your training.

Sebastian:

It strikes me too that, both what you were saying now and what you said earlier, about realizing that what you really needed to do was be David Rosengren not a version of Bill Miller that you tried to embody. It's a real testament to Bill actually as one of the co-founders. You talked about the clarity of his writing, which is one of the wonderful things about it, but also this sort of humility and willingness and eagerness to just give away what he knows and to allow others to take MI in their own directions and not trying to micromanage it or sort of keep it the same.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. And we should say that Steve Rollnick has been a full partner in that. And so everything that you've just said about Bill applies to Steve as well. Now they're really interesting because they're two sort of different people. That Bill tends to be the more serious, well organized. Steve would describe himself as an old hippie, who's kind of moved on in his life, but he likes things more organic, and all the rest. But there's such a nice blend there that they've brought to that. I would say that the creation of MI and what



it's become since then is both the common attitudes they bring as well as the differences that they both have. Have helped it to flourish.

Glenn:

And certainly people who listen to this, there is a conversation we've had with Steve, exploring the history and the development of Motivational Interviewing. And said that that fluidity and freedom that you're describing about Steve is very evident in the way he talks, and his efforts now to simplify the language to make it available to the widest audience possible. And his determination and focus is very obvious in how he describes what he's doing with Motivational Interviewing now. And again, that recognition that his contribution is going to be continued by others and he's so keen to allow people say, to offer them ideas and say, "Look, take this and make off of what you can. It doesn't belong to Steve Rollnick, it doesn't belong to Bill Miller, it belongs to... You know."

David Rosengren:

And that's a really interesting process. So right before I came in to talk with you guys, I was talking with Bill. We were upstairs at a coffee break in the training thing. We were talking about information exchange, and I'm not going to steal his thunder around that, but there's changes that are going to come around, all of that.

David Rosengren:

And I started to laugh and I said, "So here's the thing, when you're the founder of something, you can make those changes and tweaks and that's fine. It's not a big issue for you. You've thought about it and you're okay." All the rest of us surround around, it's like we have the orthodoxy of MI. We go to the church of MI. You can't change that. What are you doing?

David Rosengren:

And it's not just about that our slides are no longer accurate, it's that this is what we've thought and thought about and believe and all the rest, and now I've got to rethink everything about this. And in some ways it's just we haven't had a chance to go through the same process yet, thinking it all through. But it's really interesting to me how the thought leaders can be way more flexible than those of us who follow behind.

Sebastian:

Right. We would then be forced to challenge ourselves and to maybe think back or things that we had said before to countless trainees, now is it wrong?

David Rosengren:

Yeah. We've led people astray.

Sebastian:

Right. Right. Right. So kind of looping back to the training of MI, and the learning of MI, maybe we can hear a little bit more about the David Rosengren approach to that. I guess,



what are some of the sort of the key nuggets that you could relay to the audience about that process?

David Rosengren:

Yeah. So my process around all of this, and I'll just sort of share mine around it, is that I try to constantly challenge myself to be thinking in some area new, in a way that might be informing what it is I'm doing.

David Rosengren:

I've been really reading in persuasion literature about what's going on there. I've been reading recently about cognition and learning, and some of the things going on in that field. And those have been informing what I've been thinking about. And I've also been reading about goal theory and implementation settings, and some of that stuff as well as implementation research. So I kind of challenged myself around all those things.

David Rosengren:

And so here's what I want to say about training and thinking about that, I've been doing it wrong. That's what my most recent stuff has to say. And this comes from, there are several articles and research articles that are a little dense, but there's a great book out there called Making it Stick. Which was written in 2014 and it's by cognitive psychologists, researchers, who are looking at learning, and how do people learn best. And there's some things that they've brought forward that have been challenging me.

David Rosengren:

We did a little workshop yesterday and we were sharing some of these ideas with folks in that workshop, that first of all, learning should be effortful. Learning needs to be effortful. That people have to work at it. If they don't work at it, then they develop something called fluency. And fluency is, I think I know the concepts because I can respond to them, or when the presenter says them out loud to me and say, "Oh yeah, I've heard those before." And we confuse that fluency with something called mastery, where we really understand what those concepts are and are able to use them at the time that we need to use them.

David Rosengren:

And the third thing I would say is that learning has to be effortful, that don't confuse fluency with mastery. And then that we really need to have people thinking about memory as a critical element of that learning process. And so there's some things that we do to help their memory. So if I can just, for a moment, sort of take a right turn here and I'll come back.

David Rosengren:

We can think about learning and memory as intertwined here, that memory, when we learn something new, if we begin by encoding it, we hear it, we have it in our head, it's stored in our memory system in something called working memory, which is relatively



short term, we hold things there. Somebody tells us a phone number, we hold it in our head long enough to do the phone number and then we forget it. We don't have to keep it any longer than that.

David Rosengren:

Then from there we move it if it's something we want to retain and we consolidate that memory. And this is happening at the neuronal level, that we get it in there and it has to move from short term storage into long term storage. And there's all kinds of processes going on there. That process has to be effortful, it takes some time, it's not a one trial thing.

David Rosengren:

But then it can't just be stored there, we have to retrieve it when we need it. And the thing that helps us retrieve it as having some kind of cues and we have to practice retrieving those things. In order for us to be able to use it when we need it. So what happens with fluency is, I say the word OARS, and somebody says, "Okay, I've been to a training before. Let me see, that's open questions and R I think is reflection." They're trying to remember what the other things. They're working on that memory trace. That's retrieval practice. Okay. It helps people, it strengthens their learning when they have to do that.

Glenn:

Right.

David Rosengren:

If instead I stand up in front of people and say, "Okay, let's just review. You guys have all done MI training before, here are the five core elements, are open questions, affirmations, reflections, summaries, and now we've added information exchange." And everybody nods their head and say, "Yep, that sounds familiar. That sounds right. I've learned that before." They haven't done that retrieval practice when they've done it.

David Rosengren:

So they confuse that then because they've remembered it, when I've told it to them, that they've learned it, but they haven't really. They become fluent with the concepts, but they haven't mastered them. So when it comes to training, I'm realizing I've done way too much helping people with fluency and I got to help them with mastery.

David Rosengren:

So what does that look like? Well, there are some other learning techniques that seem to really matter. One is something that the cognitive psychologists called Interrogative Elaboration. Big term. Basically it means you're asking yourself questions about things as you're learning it. So you read a passage and then you ask yourself, "So what do I know about this? How does this fit? What am I understanding right now as I'm doing all of this?" Okay?

David Rosengren:



And there are a variety of different ways that the researchers would say this helps us, we begin to build maps or cognitive structures to understand things. For this retrieval practice, we can pull those things forth, all that kind of stuff. But the bottom line is people are more engaged with the material. And when they're more engaged with it, they're working on those other memory processes and being able to pull those things forward.

David Rosengren:

So that's one technique that I'd say I need to do better with as a trainer. So the way I've modified my trainings now is instead of opening up with a definition of MI, I open up my groups and I say, "Okay, how many folks in here have had some kind of MI training before?" And they raise their hand, and some do and some don't. And I say, "Okay, at your table, I want you as a group to come up with a definition of what is MI. And I want you to do it at their table." And hopefully, we've got people intermixed with some people who've had it before versus not. But even with a totally naive audience, I would say, "So what do you think should be in a definition of Motivational Interviewing? What might you expect would be in there?"

David Rosengren:

So not even knowing what it is, it requires them to begin thinking about what do I know already? And part of what that then does with that retrieval practice is it starts connecting to other concepts, which helps us with that retrieval process when the time comes. Because the other thing that happens is every time we retrieve something, that memory becomes pliable and it can change and form more connections. So every time we do it, the stronger it becomes. And then when we need it, when we're with the client and we have to do a reflection or something like that, it's there. It comes up when we need it. We don't have to stop and think, "Okay, what am I supposed to do now?" And so let me stop. I've been talking way too long. You guys have things to say.

Glenn:

I imagine lots of people are reflecting now on their practice, going back to their training mind those things-

Sebastian:

I've done it all wrong too.

Glenn:

Yeah. And again, I suppose what that is, is consistent with the point that you were making about Bill and Steve was, you have internalized that flexibility, which is, this is what I currently know. Once you learn something new, that changes what you previously knew, you integrate it into your understanding without a criticism. So it's that ability to recognize, the way I was doing it isn't the way I'm going to start doing it, without having to feel guilty or judgmental towards how you've done it in the past. You just move forward with the awareness.

Glenn:



And what strikes me is the significance of relationship again to the nature of the practice that we're doing. But it's also the relationship that the individual has with the material that you're inviting us to... Thinking clearly, thinking about what it is we think and understand about the written word or the visuals that we've experienced. And that having that relationship or creating a connection is what then deepens our understanding and learning and opens the pathways to retrieve it in the future.

David Rosengren:

Yes.

Glenn:

Wow. Okay.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. And I think you hit on something really important there, and it's a real nugget. So I want to sort of just emphasize that. Something that Carol Dweck, a psychologist out at Stanford, I think is where she's at. Something that's really big in the educational field, and that is growth mindset. And the way this goes is there's sort of two mindsets that learners often have, a fixed mindset or growth mindset. And the fixed mindset is that I have a certain talent or ability and I'm born with that, it's innate. And if I'm good at something then I'm good at it. And if I'm not good, I can't grow.

David Rosengren:

The growth mindset is entirely different. It says that, "Talent is simply the rate of which you acquire a skill." There are some limitations about what we can and can't do, but seeing our efforts to learn in our failures when those happen as not failures, but part of the learning process that helps us grow and stretch. And that it's that willingness to persist and go on that really helps us succeed.

David Rosengren:

And what all the research suggests is that people who have fixed mindset are not nearly as good at problem solving and persisting when problems happen because they don't believe that they can change, that things are set. So let me give you an example of that. So for a long time we thought IQ was fixed, right? That some people were smart, some people weren't. Right? And if you were brilliant then everything was going to happen well for you in your life, and if you didn't fall in that category in school, you didn't get all A's or something like that, was as good as it was going to be.

David Rosengren:

And what would happen for kids like in math is if you're really good at math and you just did it pretty naturally, when you ran into a set of problems you couldn't do, you quit. And that's what would happen is because before this had been easy and they'd say, "I can't do that." Versus somebody who says, "You know, math doesn't come easily to me but I'm going to work at it, and the more work at it, the better I get." And so then when they



run into a problem, it's just what I've done before, I just keep working at it and I get better at it.

David Rosengren:

And I would say, this is how I ended up writing a book on MI. It wasn't because I was a brilliant trainer or anything like that, it's just I wasn't very good at doing Bill Miller's so I had to start doing David Rosengren and start building my own things and sort of growing. And I think that's what you were hitting on there, is that growth mindset.

David Rosengren:

And for your audience, I would really encourage them to take a growth mindset about their skills. Okay. Maybe reflective listening doesn't come naturally to you, maybe you're a, as my good friend Chris Dunn likes to say, "I'm a recovering confronter." Maybe you're a recovering confronter. It doesn't mean you have to stay that way. You can shift, you can learn, you can grow in that. But you've got to believe and to have a mindset that supports that.

Sebastian:

Just the parallel to how you would view a learner and to how you would view a client, it just seems really apparent here. That, for clients, of course, we view them as people with strengths that maybe are shadowed by all kinds of problems and symptoms and this and that, but as an MI practitioner, part of our job is to let their strengths come to light or shine a light on them, as Steve said in that episode. It seems very similar too with learners. We're going into the training, so as a lesson for a learner, or for a trainer, I'm sorry, to try to fuel the growth mindset from the learner, is that kind of what you'd be getting at?

David Rosengren:

Yes. Yeah. Exactly. And as a trainer in that circumstance, predicting for people that at times this may feel hard for you. And in fact should be hard. And if you feel like you're struggling, that's good, that's learning. That's not you not knowing anything or that you got to feel better. In fact, that's great. You're doing exactly what we want you to do.

David Rosengren:

So you hit on something really nice that I want to come back to, Seb, and that is, when you ask people to do that, that's uncomfortable. And so as for trainers in terms of doing that, and one of the things we talked about yesterday is, so before you go there, orient people to their strengths. So they kind of are aware of those things, they are connected to them. It seems to inoculate them to some degree before you get into the areas of struggle. It's like they've reminded themselves of, "Okay, yeah. I'm pretty good at this. I have this capacity." And the research suggests that in fact, this is exactly what happens when you orient people to their strengths before they have to take on something difficult. Even when they struggle, it's not as difficult for them. They're more accepting of that process.

David Rosengren:



So again, for the trainers in the group, and even for working with your clients, when they come in asking them, "So what do you do well? What are your strengths?" In the workshop we did yesterday, we began with, "Name three things that you already do well as a trainer." And once you write them down, then I want you to tell somebody about them and give them some examples. So you're really bringing those things fully in your mind.

David Rosengren:

And for a client, particularly mandated ones who come in and say, "So I know you're here because the court sent you here, or the Child Welfare Service says you got to come here, so we're focusing on this. But tell me what's going well right now in your life. What do you think you're handling pretty well?"

Sebastian:

This isn't just a way to kind of be nice or friendly or whatever. I mean there are actual, I would say, maybe neurological reasons why you would do this.

David Rosengren:

Yes.

Sebastian:

This promotes better learning, better functioning, right?

David Rosengren:

Yeah. It happens at the hormonal level, it happens at level that our brain is being stimulated, the regions of our brain. There's a whole literature out there about positive psychology that focuses on these things. And for your listeners, have you guys had a chance to talk with folks about Positive Psychology?

Sebastian:

We have. Magella Green just recently on an episode to talk about Positive...

David Rosengren:

Oh, excellent.

Sebastian:

... psychology.

David Rosengren:

Excellent. Well great. And so I'm not going to repeat what Magella already said, but it's this idea of how do we help people thrive? And there are certainly ways to do that. And one of those is helping them have positive emotions.

Glenn:



And it's almost like when you were describing the internal self-talk, it was the difference between the limiting thoughts, which perhaps could be described as sustain talk, from an MI perspective, and where the Positive Psychology and the growth mindset is, is where the individual hears themselves use change talk, in relation to their own relationship with themselves. Or their circumstances that they find themselves in. They can maybe hear themselves using double sided reflexes. This is difficult and I'm still determined to work through it.

Glenn:

And again, coming back to the very important aspect of the use of affirmations, that Tim Apodaca spoke to use about, that that itself can be done both in a one-to-one with a client or with a student, but also with ourselves, that when we're having thoughts about ourselves, if we can be affirming to ourselves in the struggles that we're having. And that what you're saying is the research has shown that that in itself creates a flexibility, creates a fluidity, creates some space, lifts away some of the dirt for the new pathways to be developed. It is going to be hard work. And it's about having that acceptance of this is hard work leading towards a better outcome for ourselves, rather than it should be easy all the time.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. So can I talk about another cognitive practice while we're talking about it not being easy? Because here's one of the other things I did wrong. Okay. It's massed practice. It's the myth of massed practice, meaning you do all of something together or you do it all at the same time.

David Rosengren:

So the most common way people learn MI is they come in and they do a two day workshop. If it's not, because at work somebody came in for an hour to talk to them over lunch. Right? The most common way that we do that. And that's an example of massed practice. We're doing everything together. And what usually happens within that is we talk about these core skills, the open questions, affirmations, reflections, summaries, those OARS. And what we do is we practice open questions until people have them, right? And then we do affirmations until people, and then we spend a big chunk of time on reflective listening until they have that, and then maybe we spend a little bit of time on summaries, and then we move on to some other things. Is this sounding at all familiar?

David Rosengren:

So what the research would suggest is, you're not doing it right. And that's the part that I'm saying I've been doing it wrong. What it says is we should be doing something called interleaving. Okay. And what that means is, we practice something for a little while until we almost have it, and then we switch to something else. Okay. And then we move to something else and we do that almost to the point where we have it, and then we switch to maybe back to the one we were doing or something else. And then we come back to that other thing and we continue to practice that. And here's what happens, is that learners like it less.



Glenn:

Okay.

David Rosengren:

So your evaluations as a trainer are going to go down if you do that. Because they're not going to feel like I'm competent in this thing before you switch those things, and they're going to feel like you're constantly kind of pulling them back and forth. There's a whiplash effect going on, but here's what the research suggests around this, when you do that, people aren't necessarily as good when you get done, but down the road they're going to be better because you've been working on that retrieval practice stuff.

Glenn:

Wow.

David Rosengren:

And so that they're able to pull those things out and to do them. So let me tell you about how I've been shifting my training since leaving this. We do a little bit of listening, we do a few extra and then we move on to something else. And then we do a little more listening over here. And then we do something else. And then we come back and do a little more listening after that. And so it's intermixed, and we're doing things and practice.

David Rosengren:

Now the evaluations, I haven't had a chance to see my most recent ones to see how they turned out. But I'm expecting that they won't be quite as strong as they were because people will feel like it wasn't enough, I don't feel like I quite got it, and that we didn't get there, all the rest. And I'm just sort of prepared for that to be the thing at the same time knowing that I think I'm helping them to do better down the road.

David Rosengren:

Now there's also this thing about spreading out your training over time, that maybe it would be better to do a day of training or a half day of training and then have some timing laps and then do another half day of training. And the research around that, around this complex training skill, I don't think is out there yet. We did one of the studies on it at the University of Washington when I was there, and we found that that massed practice, two day training, worked just as well as that distributed practice, where it was done over time.

David Rosengren:

I'm arguing for something that my own research suggests might not have that big of an impact, but based on the bigger field that I'm seeing here, I think there's something there that we should be paying attention to. So for your trainers in the audience I'd say experiment with it, and know that when you experiment with it, it might not feel as good.

Sebastian:



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So it's like taking a skill to a point where just, the person may just feel comfortable with it, and then stop it before that comfort sets in. So there's still just some uncertainty about it, and then they have to come back to it later and they have to struggle to kind of find that again maybe.

David Rosengren:

So if we were to do this right now with your audience, I want you to ask yourselves, why might that be helpful to your audience? So we're doing a little one of those learning practice writing, why might that be helpful?

David Rosengren:

And here's my answer about why I think it's helpful. It forces people to do that retrieval practice because they don't quite have it yet, it's not there, we avoid the fluency thing, where I think I've got it, okay, now I don't have to think about it anymore. It's like I don't quite have it, now I've got to work on it, I've got to pull it forward.

David Rosengren:

But there's another thing that happens with interleaving leaving that's really important, and that is that it helps people discriminate between different categories of tasks and what needs to be done. And so they're able to tell the difference between questions and reflections. And as you guys know, with new trainees, new to the area, sometimes they confuse those two. You'll do a demonstration, do a reflection, you'll say, "Well, you were asking nothing but questions." And in your head, as a trainer, "No, I wasn't." I was doing reflections, but they're still hearing them as questions. And that's that fluency thing at work versus the interleaving that helps them discriminate between those different things. So you can think of coding, learning to code as a task that helps people to build discrimination, but you can also build it into your schedule of when you do stuff.

Glenn:

Again, what's popping up in my head is the notion that it's a form of delayed gratification, that the student doesn't really get what they came looking for until much later on. But when it arrives, it's much more meaningful and much more long lasting. And that what we as trainers need to do, is harden ourselves to the fact that people are going to believe in some things different than what they previously was in under evaluations. And that that in itself may be part of our growth as practitioners and as trainers to realize a five on your scale of one to 10 is now a good score because it's a good sign because they're leaving not just as happy as they would have liked to be. So they're going to continue to think about this and that's exactly what you want them to be doing.

David Rosengren:

Absolutely. And you can plow this field a bit with your participants and sort of say, "This is what we're doing, and here's why we're doing that." But it doesn't change their evaluation, it's what the science says. Okay, I understand it. I see how it fits, and I don't like it, even though I know that the learning might be better.



Sebastian:

Right. Actually, even that I wonder how providing the rationale for that style of training would affect one's learning if it gets them to really sort of dig in and appreciate and open themselves to the process more of that? I don't know. Just, I wonder about that.

David Rosengren:

I think it's a really good question, Seb. You need to do the research on that.

Sebastian:

Yeah, I guess. I'll go apply for a grant.

David Rosengren:

Okay.

Sebastian:

We're not out of time yet, but we have to start thinking about the rest of our time. Again, I'll just throw this out. We've been bouncing, I think, a bit from the focus on the trainer to the focus on the learner, and I think that's just fine. We've been spending some time thinking about training and how we might do that, or how you're doing it now differently and how we might do that in a more effective way. Maybe we can loop back to the learner side of things. We played around with the batting practice exercise, is something that you came up with and shared with us, and we played around with that. Maybe there's another really great exercise that one of your favorites or something that you think you could share with us today and perhaps practice a bit and try to demo a bit. But not to get too carried away with the demoing it, but just things for learners to be able to say, "Okay, I could try that or I could take that."

David Rosengren:

Yeah. So here's one of my favorite learning things that I like to do right now. And it's the one that started in research again. It's called the Branching Script. So there's a copy of it in the workbook and folks could get it there. But there's also a copy on where I work, our website, that if folks would like to get it and they don't have to buy the workbook. And so I encourage you to do that. In fact, I would encourage you to go there even if you have the workbook because the one on the website is in color and it's going to make it easier to do.

Glenn:

Maybe just reference that website before you introduce us to...

David Rosengren:

Yeah. So the website is www.primeforlife.org. All spelled out, one word .org. So primeforlife.org. And on there, you'll find a little tab that says, MI resources. And it's on there.



David Rosengren:

So here's what the branching script is. In the early 90s, when folks were writing computer programs, and they wanted to get them to simulate dialogues, they'd write what's called a branching script. And that is, if I do this, how might this conversation go. And the context in which this evolved is there was a group of undergraduates who were trying to write a program to do Motivational Interviewing.

David Rosengren:

And so as part of that, they had to write branching scripts. And they were never able to get the software to work properly. But they learned how to do Motivational Interviewing by doing these branching scripts. And so here's how it works. You start with a practitioner statement that you might make to a client in whatever setting you choose. Let's say it's in diabetes, and it's somebody who we're checking A1C's, which is blood glucose level over the last 90 days, looking at how they're doing with control of their blood glucose.

David Rosengren:

So the practitioner says, "I see your A1C has been a little higher here." So that would not be an uncommon comment for a diabetic, those things happen. And underneath that you'd have one of three response categories that the client could respond to here, one would be one that involves some change statements. Okay. And we code those on the color form, green. Okay.

David Rosengren:

And so the client might say something like, "Yeah, it's higher than it's usually been, and that's a problem." Okay. So the change element there would be that it's a problem, right? The middle one is a tan color because that's more neutral language. It's neither changed talk nor sustained talk. And the person might say, "Yeah, it's different than what it's been before." There's no real statement that that's a problem or not, it's just sort of a comment.

David Rosengren:

And then on the far side would be a red one. And you can of course guess what that is, sustain talk or discord. And that might be something like, "Yeah, I don't know. Something's wrong with that test. I think I've been doing really well. There's an issue there."

David Rosengren:

And then what folks do is they go down each of these different columns and they write down what they think the practitioner should say in response to that, predicting the kind of statement that would come next for a client. And I've put the color codes in there, so they have to think about, how would this go from a red to a tan back to a red and sort of think about what are the interactions that would lead to those kinds of things.

David Rosengren:

And the thing that I like about it is, first of all, it makes people think really clearly about what's change talk, what's sustain talk or discord, and what's neutral language, and what



makes it that? And so as I'm writing this statement, is this change talk? Is it not? What determines what that is? And then they have to think about, okay, if I did this, what's the client likely to do in response? It's not just producing the response, but predicting where the response is going to take me. Because part of what I think we do in Motivational Interviewing, it's not just responding to whatever the client gives us, but we're also trying to be intentional about what we do and directional. We're trying to respond in a thoughtful way and then we're trying to go in particular directions versus not. And that's the goal oriented nature of what it is we do. And I feel like that exercise really helps people at a very concrete level to kind of work through that stuff.

David Rosengren:

So on one side there's an example that they can sort of look and see how all that works, on the other side it's blank. And for either the MI learners or for trainers, I think it's a great exercise. And as a trainer, what I do is I put it out there and have folks work at a table because this is better if you have people talking about it because then they really get into, "Well I don't think that's change talk." Or, "Well, if you did that, I think this is going to happen instead." So it gets people to really think about these things and get some feedback about it.

Glenn:

The effortful element that you've been describing, whether they're doing it individually or in a group, they're having to work at it.

David Rosengren:

Yes.

Glenn:

Yeah. And to see it from different perspectives, in that moment that the learning's really taking place.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. And it is effortful, and at the same time it's slow motion. That they don't have to do it in real time like if we were to sit down and have a conversation, so they get some opportunity to practice before they have to do it.

Glenn:

Okay.

Sebastian:

Yeah. And it just made me think that, boy, I'm doing something that is different from that around change talk, but I can see how much more valuable that would be. I imagine sometimes trainers will have examples of statements on a slide or something, and where's the change talk? And people can say, "No, that's the change talk that's on the



slide." Those words that you put up there as the trainer. But this is happening in the other direction where they're thinking themselves, what change talk is and that is more effortful.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. And I like that way of doing things and I think it's a good sort of as we're getting people to sort of... Really breaking down the different elements of responding to change, like you have to recognize it first. And that's really a nice task in sort of recognizing what is the change element here. And once people have that, then really digging into it.

Sebastian:

Yeah.

Glenn:

Yeah. We've really enjoyed having this conversation because this is the first of our live conversations. It's the first time myself and Seb have been sitting down directly opposite and not 6,000 miles apart.

David Rosengren:

Yeah. I really do think this is the North American tour start kick-off, right?

Glenn:

Yeah. It could well be.

Sebastian:

Yeah, I hope so. You are going to have to stay for a few more months, Glenn.

Glenn:

It would be fantastic. And we'll have to reciprocate by bringing you back over into Europe.

Sebastian:

I'm in.

Glenn:

Yeah. But one of the things we always do, David, as we come close to end, is really just invite people to not necessarily focus on MI, but where they're musing themselves, and you've been very clear that that's part of how you keep yourself fresh, that you're always questioning, and you're looking outside of the MI world to see what other people are discovering to help inform your practice as an MI trainer. I'm just wondering before we finish, is there anything else that's coming up for you that's the wetting your appetite that you want to share with us?

David Rosengren:



Yeah. Positive psychology things have been really... They kind of set my hair on fire a few years ago, and I'm continuing to read and learn about that stuff. I really liked that. And I feel like there's a really rich thing in there for MI that we need to know more and understand more about. So that's one that's really got me interested and feel like, yeah, I want to continue to dig into that there.

David Rosengren:

Second thing that I'm really interested in is this idea of grit. The Angela Duckworth concept of grit that she's worked on. It fits very much with some of the things we've been talking about already. And so I really liked that. And I really liked it in terms of thinking about our clients, helping them be grittier.

David Rosengren:

So my area, when I'm not talking with you guys, is working with drug and alcohol, high risk choices, both trying to prevent them and once folks have experienced some problems with them, doing treatment kinds of things. But I think to make changes in that really requires a lot of grit, and I think we ought to be thinking more about how do we bring that into the process and help our clients to be grittier. What are the things that we have to think about there? And so for me it's always sort of expanding my thinking about how do we get there?

Glenn:

It sounds like you're always looking for the horizon, seeing what's possibly coming down the line and thinking about what it is you could be doing in advance so that the journey is as exciting, as meaningful as it possibly can be for you?

David Rosengren:

Yeah. That and being receptive and looking for those open doors. Like if you guys said, "We're doing an MI training." I'd say, "Can I come and watch?" Because I want to see what you're doing, I want to learn from you. It's one of my favorite. That's why I keep coming back to the MINT, is I love going in watching other people work, seeing what they're doing and how they're thinking about things. It's like, "Oh, that's a really cool idea. Wow, I like how they do that. I think that I should think about how I might do that either using what they're using or expand myself." So it's that sense of trying to always remind myself that, "You don't know everything." In fact, the more the less you know, that beginner's mind, if you want to call it that.

Sebastian:

Wonderful. Well, and another thing we invite our guests to do, if they'd be willing, is to share contact information. Oftentimes people in our audience will reach out to us and we'll share our contact information again for sure. But if you'd be willing, how can people contact you with questions or comments?

David Rosengren:



Absolutely. So the easiest way is to go to that website because on that website it has all of my contact information. You got phone numbers, you have emails, you can get a hold of me that way.

Sebastian:

And that was Prime For Life?

David Rosengren:

Prime For Life. F-O-R, for the for.

Sebastian:

Okay. And we'll put that up maybe when we post the episode on iTunes and all the other places, maybe we can include-

Glenn:

Yeah, in a blurb.

Sebastian:

Yeah.

David Rosengren:

So can I just say one thing?

Sebastian:

Sure.

David Rosengren:

It is really interesting to be doing this podcast with Glenn in a frock, you know and with headphones. I'm just sort of seeing you guys at home have not gotten the full experience on this. Maybe you guys ought to post a picture of that.

Glenn:

Yes, on the website.

David Rosengren:

That's what I'm thinking.

Glenn:

Just to clarify, just to let people know that the reason why I'm wearing what would appear to be a skirt is that I'm dressed in a monk's habit, because the recording tonight is taking place on Halloween night. And I happened to be a brother with a different mother. It'll all sense, as everything does.



Sebastian:

That's right. That's right. We do find it to be quite special to be in of all places New Orleans on Halloween night, as we are ringing in the MINT Forum for this year. It's just starting tomorrow. Everyone's coming in tonight for the welcome reception in various costumes, which should be an interesting experience.

David Rosengren:

It should be an interesting evening. That's all I can say.

Sebastian:

Right. So the website, we'll put that up on the blurb. Did you share your email address

David Rosengren:

I'd say get it from there. It's on there. It'll be easiest for folks to find it that way.

Glenn:

And if there's anything else, again, just promoting how people can continue to stay in touch with ourselves and ask questions of us. And we're really delighted that the questions are coming in through the emails, which is podcast@GlennHinds.com, or the contact at our Facebook page which is Talking To Change. And our Twitter handle, which is ChangeTalking.

Glenn:

Guys, we're very keen to continue to hear from you, and any comments you have about what David has said today or anything else that have been in previous episodes, please feel free to pass comment and share with other people.

Sebastian:

Well, here we are, another great episode. David, we really want to thank you for this. This has been wonderful. As always, we just wish we could keep going, but of course we can't. But this, I know I'll speak for myself, there's definitely lots of things that I'm thinking about and I'm sure it will change how I teach MI. And so we thank you for that.

Glenn:

Yeah. I've actually just sent a text to a builder and asked them to get some scaffolding because there's going to be some restructuring going on when we get home. But yeah, which is interesting.

David Rosengren:

Well, thanks guys. This has been really fun. I appreciate the opportunity.

Glenn:

Thanks everybody.



Sebastian:

All right. Goodbye everybody, until next time.



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