

# Talking to Change: An MI Podcast

## Glenn Hinds and Sebastian Kaplan



### Episode 28: Beyond MI: Helping Young People Change, with Michael Arterberry

#### **Glenn Hinds:**

Hello again, everybody, and welcome to another episode of Talking to Change: A Motivational Interviewing Podcast. My name is Glenn Hinds, and I'm based in Derry, Northern Ireland. As always, I'm joined by my very good friend Sebastian Kaplan in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Hey, Seb.

#### **Sebastian Kaplan:**

Hello, Glenn. Good to see you.

#### **Glenn Hinds:**

Yeah, and you too, man. We're meeting on a Sunday. Today, the sun is shining in Derry. We're still in lockdown. There's talk coming out of the UK government that some restrictions will be lifted in the near future. The Republic of Ireland, which is just about four or five miles from where I live, already scheduled a four-phase return starting on the 18th of May. So it seems like we are seeing the beginning of the end of what we've been through for the last six or seven weeks. How's things with you over there?

#### **Sebastian Kaplan:**

Yeah, well, it's... Obviously, the U.S. is a very, very large country and each state, in some ways, operates semi-independently. So some places are reopening already. Beaches are packed and restaurants are having customers come. In North Carolina, we are not quite reopened, but the data, as far as cases and fatalities and things, have been quite positive overall and as much as you could say that, relatively speaking. So I suspect we'll be opening up or reopening sometime this month. It's May 3rd today. So we're looking at a reopening, I imagine, gradually, but certainly starting this month. But other places, of course much harder hit... New York City in particular. So it will be a longer road for them I'm sure.

#### **Glenn Hinds:**

Sure. I suppose, even just noticing that the fact that we're talking about change and our podcast is focused on change, we're going a little off piste today in our the conversation in that our guest, Michael, contacted us and asked if we would be willing to have a yarn with them. We spoke to him a few weeks ago, and we felt that what he's got to talk about, while it's not Motivational Interviewing perse, it is about his journey to helping other people change. We were, curious given the fact that we've spoken about CBT, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and his relationship to MI. We've explored self-determination theory and Motivational Interviewing we thought, "Let's have a chat with someone who doesn't necessarily practice what we would consider Motivational Interviewing but has seen people change and just be curious and see if Michael can teach us stuff about what it is



doing and examine why it's working." So that's the conversation we're going to have today. We're off-piste, and we're free forming as we go along, so we're really excited about that. But before we do, Seb, if you could just remind the audience of how they can contact us on social media and our email.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Absolutely. So have Twitter page is @ChangeTalking, Facebook is Talking to Change. Instagram is TalkingToChangePodcast... or direct email communication with, it is podcast@glennhinds.com, and just a real, open invitation for feedback, comments, rates, reviews and all the like.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Fantastic. So on with the show. Like I say, we're delighted to welcome our guest, Michael Arterberry. Hi, Michael. How you doing?

**Michael Arterberry:**

I'm good. I'm good. I'm really happy to be able to join you guys. Like you said, I may not be right there on the target, but I think I'll be able to give something to your audience, hopefully some jewels that they can take them.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Fantastic. Yeah, like I say, we're excited about that. Normally at this point the podcast, we would be inviting our guests to describe their journey towards Motivational Interviewing. So consistent with where we are at, maybe we can just say, can you introduce yourself to the audience and give us insight to how you got to a place where you are now helping other people change?

**Michael Arterberry:**

Definitely. But I'm going to start with a story, guys. It's about a donkey and a farmer. And this donkey is one of the farmer's favorite farm animals, because once he finishes working on the farm with the donkey, he brings the donkey back to his home and he allows the donkey to play with his kids. So the kids come running out the house. They come out. They play with the donkey. They wash him. They ride him. Then when the evening is over, the farmer releases the donkey back out to the farm. They go inside. They eat. They go to sleep. This is the general routine that they follow.

**Michael Arterberry:**

One day he comes home. He brings the donkey home. He releases him back out to the farm. But then the next morning when he comes out, the donkey doesn't come when he calls him. So of course, he's concerned. He starts walking around the farm that he's trying to find this donkey. Can't find them, but finally, heard them making noises at the bottom of an empty water well. So he walks over to the well. He looks down. He decides he wants to pull him out of the well. So he's like, "What am I going to do?" He gets six of his friends. They come over. They look in well. Then they decide that they're going to use some rope to pull this donkey out of the well. So they all get some rope. They start to lasso the



donkey down in the well. They throw it. They miss him. They throw it. They miss him. They finally throw it by his hind legs. He steps into the rope. They shimmy it up his body. All six of them brace themselves, and they start pulling. They pull. The donkey moves. They pull. The donkey moves. Then halfway up the well, they realize that the donkey's too heavy. So when they realize that the donkey's too heavy, they lower him back to the bottom of the well.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Now this farmer has to make a grim decision. He can't feed this donkey food at the bottom of the well for his family, because that doesn't make any sense. He can't starve him, because starving him, he's more like his pet. He couldn't really peace with that, so he couldn't starve him. One of his hot-headed friends say, "Hey, listen. Just shoot him." He's like, "Nah. That's too violent." So one of his more reasonable friends says, "Listen. You don't want your kids to fall into the well. So what we're going to do is we're going to shovel dirt into the well so your kids don't fall in. But you're going to have to sacrifice your donkey." The farmer was able to deal with that. They call get their shovels, and they start shovelling. Every time that dirt would hit the donkey, he would scream. Every time he screamed, it would give the farmer some distress. Dirt. Scream. Dirt. Scream. Dirt. Scream. All of a sudden, the scream stopped. When the scream stopped, they gave the donkey a moment of silence, but they keep working. Dirt. Dirt. Dirt.

**Michael Arterberry:**

The next thing you know, you see the donkey's right ear. They start shovelling cartoon style. Next thing you know, you see half his body. They keep shovelling. The next thing you know, guy, that donkey walks right out of the well. Now every time that dirt came across the wall, it would fall on the donkey's back. He would shake it off, and he would step on it. He used the dirt that was meant to kill him to save his life.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Now I tell you that story when you ask me to explain who I am. I am, in a way, the donkey in the story, because what I've been able to do in my life is I've been able to shake the dirt in my life, step on it and walk out of my own personal water well. I grew up in a house with a raging alcoholic dad. Raging with a capital R. I grew up in poverty. Both my parents worked full-time. My mother was a housekeeper, and she had a very low wage. My dad used his money to drink in the streets. So she raised four kids with just one salary of a maid. Dysfunction in my neighbourhood and in my family. In my neighbourhood, people were going to prison. They were getting hooked on drugs. So I didn't really have positive influences pushing me to be a successful person. Like I said, I grew up in poverty.

**Michael Arterberry:**

But the bottom line is this: What motivates me, what pushes me and what makes me on fire to help other people is if you look at my life on paper, there is no reason I should be doing what I do today. And that's what gives me the passion. The fact that I did it, I'd like to be able to put people in the position to go after some of the things that may have fallen



through their hands and through their grip because of some of the dirt, like I referenced in the donkey story, that they went through in their life.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

The story there really marks the process of responding to threats and responding to challenges and climbing, shaking them off literally as in the story with the donkey, and taking each of those experiences as more of a foundation from which you elevate yourself. It's something that you realize in yourself. Then somehow it led you to think that this is an experience that others are having, and perhaps, my experience can help others who haven't yet discovered how they might do it themselves.

**Michael Arterberry:**

I can expand on that. Yes, that's exactly what happened. What happens is the passion has that foundation on change. See, a lot of people don't feel that they can change, and so they become paralyzed. Fear makes you paralyzed. So where you have people... I talk about the dirt in the story and shaking it off. I think part of the process is you have to figure out first what you were able to overcome before you can start your journey. A lot of people are in fear of going back to touch what they've gone through, because what they've gone through has caused so much pain that it's easier for them to bury it, like the dirt, then to unravel it and start to touch it.

**Michael Arterberry:**

I'll tell you real quickly, my sister's around 60. I just told you we went through the craziness in my house. So she started going to therapy, and she starts to unravel some of the things that went on in my house. Some of the stories I could tell you guys were like lifetime stories. We could make full... movies from the things that I endured as a child. So my sister's playing this off her therapist. Her therapist is breaking it down. They're starting to get to some of the foundations of the things she does in present day. She calls me up, and she says, "I'm not going back." I'm like, "Why aren't you going back?" "It was too tough." And she said, "I'm 60 years old. I've lived this much of my life. Why would I want to cause myself that much pain?" So I had to give it to her, but I didn't really want to, because my firm belief is that 60... If she can live another quality 20 years, it will trump the 60 that she lived in that freaking chaos. So that's part of my motivation as well... living a quality, peaceful life. I think we all deserve that as human beings.

**Glenn Hinds:**

So your desire is to assist people achieve whatever's possible for their future. What you're describing is one of the ways that you feel that that can be achieved, is help them to examine what it is they've endured, but to examine it in a different way and to try to understand that yes, it was painful, yes, it was threatening, but it also was the foundations of who you became. Your sister made it to 60, which would seem to suggest, like yourself, having gone through what you've gone through, you are proof of something quite significant in relation to strengths and talents and abilities within you that allowed you to shake that dirt off and to grow into adulthood and now to want to give something back. That's something that maybe we could tease out a little later on.



**Glenn Hinds:**

What is it about the qualities of who you are and your sister? But also to recognize, it sounds like you're saying that when you're working with individuals, they don't yet recognize themselves the fact that they've survived this long says something significant about them, something significant and positive about them. It sounds like part of what you do is help them to almost reframe the experience in a way that allows them to consider, "How can I use this to help me live a different life in my future, having already been through the dreadfulness of my past?"

**Michael Arterberry:**

Proper perspective. No matter how horrific the situation may be, you can look at it... I feel that you can, and I try to teach it... is that you can pull something from it that's positive. I'll tell you one thing about my dad. God rest his soul. I'm not going to bash him over the podcast, but it wasn't a great relationship and my house was, like I said, in really, really a crazy way. But there's something that he'd left for me. He didn't leave me how to be a father. But if you push me and you start to back me in the corner, that man that used to come through that door and used to terrorize my home will show up.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Now, I don't like to be that person, but if you don't have a little bit of that in you, then you put yourself in the position for people to take advantage. I know when he's coming, so when I'm getting into a confrontation, and I'm feeling like I'm get pressed. It's almost like I'm a boxer. I'm backpedalling. I'm backpedalling. And I finally say to somebody, I'll say, "Listen. I just want to tell you something. I'm a peaceful person, but I bite." And that bite is my dad, and that silver lining is the fact that he did leave me something, that people can push and press, but I do have a limit. When you go through things, and they can be dark, I think that things grow in dark places. In the dark places, things grow, almost like a seed being planted in the soil. We water it. We nurture it. And as it sprouts and it grows, it can become something a lot better than what it was in its original form.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

The experience you had growing up has led to certainly a growth in a direction away from that kind of day-to-day life experience, both for yourself and your family, in a very intentional way, like, "I want something different for myself and the people I care about." And you've also managed to develop this, not just awareness, but almost an embracing of the parts of you that are still connected in a very powerful way, in an undeniable way, with those experiences and even with this person whom you had this really complicated relationship with. So there's this balancing you struck of, "I want to distance from that and create a different life, and I'm bringing with me, inside of me, two situations I feel will be helpful for me to tap into that." There's quite a balance there of how you managed to respond and grow from the challenges from your early life.

**Michael Arterberry:**

I call it breaking cycles, all right? Breaking cycles. I want to do it in pieces for you. So breaking cycles... and I teach this to people is that we have a tendency to create



dysfunctional systems within dysfunctional programs. So if you come from a dysfunctional situation, rather than fixing it, you just create a system that works within that world. So when you talk about I use almost the polar opposites of both worlds... I had a situation when my house that I grew up in rarely had heat in the winter. I remember a winter night, I'm going bed, no heat. I'm crying underneath my covers, and as I'm crying, I made a promise to myself that when I got older, my kids would not have to live the life that I was living at that present moment. So, I'm about maybe between 8 or 10. I go to sleep, and when I wake up and I start going through my life... like you're saying, using the both lives... I'm realizing that, when I get to a point where I really am struggling, I think about that moment underneath my covers. Sometimes it would become the catalyst to push.

**Michael Arterberry:**

But also, what I'm thinking is any time that my life was consistent with my present life, it was an indicator that I wasn't on the right path. I knew that my ultimate goal life could be nothing like it. So that's what I use as a gauge. Now I'm saying this because I get older, and I have my own children. What's beautiful about it is that I graduated to a life that's better, because I made good decisions, but I broke the cycle. My kids don't have to graduate to the new situation. My kids only know the second half. So the cycle has been broken. My kids don't have to wake up in the house without heat. My kids don't have to wake up in the house with an alcoholic father. My kids don't have to wake up in a home in poverty.

**Michael Arterberry:**

So, what I believe is that you have to make your pain profitable, and I teach that. To go through something and not take some riches from what you went through is a catastrophe. You go through something that bad, and you don't have something that you've brought with you from that experience, I think you've done yourself a really, really... an injustice. So I used those two lives, but my big thing is about breaking cycles. I'll say my siblings broke it, but they didn't break it as quickly as I did. So my kids see their cousins, and they see, "Wow. Okay, this is what it looks like if a cycle's not broken." So we go to barbecues, their cousins are not all like them. But I love it, because they get to see both sides.

**Glenn Hinds:**

So again, it's back to that. It's almost like the diamonds in the muck. That you recognized that that decision you made as a child, that you were determined that your life would be better than... Your life as an adult would be better than your life as a child and very significantly, when you'd have children, they would have a better life from the beginning than you had at the beginning. So there was desire for you to move forward and grow and develop. Your hope, again, central to what it is you're describing is that you bring a message of hope to every situation... that no matter how dark things, even the idea that things grow in the dark and seeds begin in the darkness... that when you go to talk to and work with the people you work with, your hope is that they experience... to see that, first of all, the past life is over and the future life has not yet started.

**Glenn Hinds:**



And in this present moment, it's about those decisions that they can begin to be making now. And one of the decisions that you invite them to do is to think differently about how to have made sense of what happened to them and to examine what were the characteristics? Where were the innate those parts of themselves that made them keep going, then to use that for the future. That drive that you've had, you know you're actually celebrating the decision that that eight year old made. No doubt if we were to speak to that eight year old now and let him see where Michael's at now, he'd be a very proud boy at the work and the journey that he's completed at this point.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Every so often, we pow-wow. You know what I'm saying? I talk to him. You see, that's the part of my gift. That situation I just told you, I can pull that up in my memory, lay in that bed like it was yesterday. I have the ability to do that with many of my life situations. So part of my teaching... and I start most of my groups and my motivational talks with that donkey story, because what I want people to understand is I want them to grab the dirt and shaking it off, and I want them to use it, because when you can use something that powerful, people are able to associate. So when you say, "Take them back," what I want to do is take them back in their story. I want them to see the landmines that they may have stepped on in the process. But see, when we step on a landmine in the process of life, there's some damage that occurs, but you don't know it. So you stepped on a landmine. You didn't get killed, but you got damaged. And you keep moving, but you've now strategically set up your life around the damage that happened.

**Michael Arterberry:**

So, what I do is I take you back to when you stepped on the landmine, and you say to yourself, "Wow. I had no idea that situation really affected me that way." So now that you have an understanding that that happened... it could be 10 years old, 12 years old, 20 years old... now you stop and we say to ourselves, "If we knew at that time that the damage occurred, what would we have done differently from that point forward?" So you can't change what you've done up until that point that I meet you, but now it's time to restructure the rest of your life so that you have that quality life. See, that's why my sister didn't understand that at 60, if she continued to go to unpack that information, she could now, with work, create a different life that could be peaceful. It's a shame for her to be laid in her grave... and I'm not being morbid, but I'm being honest... and not being able to live in peace.

**Michael Arterberry:**

I don't have nightmares about the things that I went through as a child. She probably does. But see, one of the also, the gifts that I had is with working with people, it's therapeutic. I go to therapy every day I go to work to get paid. Come on, guys. You can't get nothing better than that. So when I go and I help others with their story and I share my own story, it's therapeutic and I just get to continue to do that. So yeah, we go back and we touch that dirt. I let them touch it, but what I also tell them, guys, is, "You can touch it. We going to stay her a little while, but I don't allow anyone to stay." So we do a lot of debriefing to make sure that you don't stay back in that past, but you go back and you experience it on a certain level.



**Sebastian Kaplan:**

A couple of these ways that you phrase concepts or patterns, I suppose, like breaking the cycle or noticing the landmines is you're taking either your own story and your own self or helping another person. It's not that they're not aware that things are happening to them. They experience those things very acutely on a day-to-day basis, and they're in it. It's like you're inviting them to step away a bit. Like the breaking the cycle, in order to do that, you have to notice that there is a cycle in the first place. A lot of times when you're in pain or difficult relationships or you're whatever it might be... addiction or abusive home situation... it can be hard to step out far enough, because you're so focused on survival or whatever it might be to notice that there's a pattern that's emerging and cycles there.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Perhaps, as the eight-year-old boy crying under the covers, there wasn't a whole lot of agency that you had to change that situation, but there was a decision that you made at that point. You chose to decide in that moment something that no one else could have decided for you, to say, "My life won't be like this when I'm able to take hold of it." It's a starting place for yourself and for a lot of people that you're working with is to just kids become more aware of the things that they're a part of and the cycle that's surrounding them.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Teenagers and adults, I work with both. But when a teenager, it's great, because when I catch them that young, I call it a rebirth. I'm a spiritual man, and they talking about being born again, but it's a rebirth. Like what you said, Sebastian, that's powerful when you have a new revelation of your life. When I watch it teenager get it... This is a teenager that's been carrying this weight and sometimes it's not even being able to fix it. When you say they go back, and they get to see the landmine, step outside of it for a moment to really get a grasp of it, it's a rebirth, because in the midst of the chaos, they saw no way out.

**Michael Arterberry:**

When you step out and you look in, now you get to see those points where, you know what? There's ways that I can really manoeuvre this. It's powerful for a person to go back and say to themselves, and then make the connection, to actually see a behavior being played out because of something that actually happened to you in your life. So that the next time the situation happens, not to say that you're going to do it perfectly, but you now have options. So there's some guilt with that, too. I've now figured out, "Wow. Me and Mike, we started fighting about this." What happened to me as a kid has set up.... I use a concept that I use be the driver of your car, rather than the passenger of your care.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Real quick, I'll just tell you this. It's real quick. I tell stories, and hopefully, I'm not moving up your time, but anyway... My wife brings my daughter down to my man cave... I'm watching football... to say goodnight. So when comes down to say good night, she comes over to me, I put on my lap. I hug her and I kiss her. Then I release her back to my wife,





and actually, my wife's about pick her up. She's 4 years old. I said, "Goodnight, beautiful. When I said, "Goodnight, beautiful," my daughter looks at my mom and she starts laughing. She says mommy, "Did you hear what he called me? He called me beautiful." I'm her dad, and I'm like, "Wow. That was a good one. That was good." But doing the work that I do, I said to myself, "What if I said, "Goodnight?" What if when she came downstairs, I said, "Hey, listen. Didn't I tell you about bringing her downstairs when I'm watching a game," and I start berating her with this aggressiveness? Four years old, guys... but then it's five. Then it's six. Then it's seven. Then it's eight.

**Michael Arterberry:**

And now, I'm talking to a high school group, right? So as I'm talking to them, I'm running them through these ages. Then I bring it to the age of whatever group work with, and I say to them, "Okay. She's 14. She's at so-and-so high school. She's sitting in your class. What does she look like?" Then the kids will start telling me, "She's dark. She has poor relationships. She has bad relationship with men, because I'm a man, and I represent a boy." So I had them look at all of this. Then I finally say to them, I say, "Yo, listen. Who's driving her car?" And they're like, "Wow. You driving her car." Then I explain to them, "I'll drive her car when she gets married. She'll get married, and I'll keep driving her car. She'll get married, have kids and I'll keep driving her car." I explain to them that, until she takes her keys back, guys, I will drive her car forever.

**Michael Arterberry:**

So, what I explained to them is that they have to take back the keys of their car and become the driver of the car, because if not, something else will control it. So when you think about that concept and we talked about landmines, there's people in this world that can be 40, 50, 20, 19, whatever the case may be, and they're not driving their car, because a situation or a person is driving their car. Until they realize it and don't take back their keys, they're not to controller of what they're going through.

**Glenn Hinds:**

What that seems to suggest then is that one of the things that you're doing is, first of all, letting people become conscious that these life events that are normal for them, at some level don't have to be normal and probably weren't fair or useful for them as children, but they did happen. Then you become the driving instructor, because I guess... I wondered when you told the story but your sister, was it that she felt that maybe she wasn't ready to learn to drive her own car, that she was content enough just to let the journey continue? She was happy enough that it was over and just ready. Let life freewheel without disturbing to many things.

**Glenn Hinds:**

But you seem to be suggesting that with the right support, you can move from the passenger seat into the driver seat and decide where you're going from there on. But there's a transition between the two places. I don't know if you're suggesting that it's like



a revelation, and all of a sudden you start driving. It sounds like you need... A lot of people going to need to be taught to change position and learn to drive.

**Michael Arterberry:**

People have to do is another thing that I teach is you want to set goals, but the goal is only placed so that you have an end. So you want to have the end, because if they don't have the end, you can wander just forever in the wilderness. So you want to have a stop point, but you don't want to overwhelm yourself with the goal. What you want to do is you want to learn to deal with the moments. See, what I want to teach people is that you have to learn to live in the moment rather than chasing after the destination. So in the moments... I call them the process and that's the journey. So when you say become the driver of your car, I tell them that you're not going to do it overnight. It now has to be part of that creating new systems.

**Michael Arterberry:**

But also what I let them know so that they don't get psyched out and think that once they finally get their keys that they're safe is that, "Yo, people will take our keys on a daily basis." Check this out. I'm the master of this. I called myself the master encourager. But let me tell you where my keys got taken. It's hilarious. So my brother-in-law is not an athlete, and he's not into athletics. I don't have anything against them for that, but I'm Joe Athlete. My kids are Joe Athletes. My daughter had a state soccer game, and my niece had a birthday party. We told them we weren't coming to the birthday party because of the state soccer game. My brother-in-law lost his freaking mind. He started going bananas now. He's not yelling at me. He's yelling at his sister. So I can hear her in the other room. She's on the phone.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Now what I want to do is grab the phone and just tell him, "Listen. You better back off," but I don't want to get into family business. So I'm walking around, and I'm allowing this situation to bother me. I'm going in and out of my groups with the teenagers, and I'll talk about it. It's not disrupting me for working, but it is on the top of my brain.

**Michael Arterberry:**

I finally go to a group. I teach the concept of being the driver of their car, not the passenger to a group of high school students. Once we get into the groove of the teaching, one of the students in the room says, "Hey...." In my groups, we go by adjective names. So my name is Mighty Mike. So the teenager says, "Hey, Mighty Mike. Guess what?" I said, "What?" He said, "Your brother-in-law is driving your car." When he said it to me, "Oh, my gosh." So that's just prime example, but the beauty of it... Here, see, this is the teaching point is when he said, "Your brother-in-law's driving your car," immediately, guys, immediately, I took my keys back, and I said to myself, "I'm not going to give him another moment of energy." So as soon as I realized where my keys were, I took them back, and the rest of that day, I was good. So, until that point, I would revisit it and get really angry sometimes, and nothing was even going on. But that's a firm way of the process, and how we have to slowly move into it.



**Sebastian Kaplan:**

A lot of your stories are making me think of some of the parallels to Motivational Interviewing and more so, the relationships that you develop with the people that work with, the quality of those relationships, some of the concepts that might fit in both worlds. There's certainly a belief that you have in other people and in their potential. It's an assumption that there is good in everyone, regardless of the stories that they bring in, regardless of the choices they have made that led them to your program or to your group or whatever it might have been.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

The whole concept of taking your keys back, there's quite a bit of autonomy in that. That's certainly a concept that's very important in Motivational Interviewing... supporting people's autonomy to choose their direction in life and an acknowledgement that ultimately it is the other person's choice to make decisions, for better or for worse, depending on the situation. Even that story where the kid in the group challenged you and said, "Hey, who's got your keys?" There's a safety that they must feel with you... a partnership, a collaboration, that they must feel with you that they can push you on something. That also feel very much consistent with some of the things that we might really strive for in Motivational Interviewing conversations.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Michael, I wonder if you could talk a little bit about in more detail the context of the conversations that you have. What's a typical day for you like? What's the work that you do that might help people have a better visual of here are these concepts and these cool stories and this really compelling backstory. How does it come out in practice?

**Michael Arterberry:**

Let me it's say one thing that you brought up that was really... I think it's important for all of us in the work we do is authenticity. Authenticity, it's powerful, and if you're not authentic, what you trying to sell is not going to sell. That's the bottom line. I'm going to get into the concepts, but that is, right there, the root, because I'm authentic to the point where my wife doesn't like to take me to parties, because I can't put that sucker away. I'm the type of guy if I'm sitting in the room and I sniff it out, I'm going after it. I'm not going to attack you, but I'm going to tolerate it for a certain amount of time. If it gets really bad... a bunch of room of fake people... I'm grabbing my coat. I'm getting in my car, and I'm leaving. So, authenticity is big.

**Michael Arterberry:**

But second to that, what I do is... To give you an example, my program that I do with high school students, it's two full days, and it's full with interactive activities. As I'm telling you these stories, these stories will come out in a process of the fact that I put together a series of activities that build off of each other that create this environment of comfort. For instance, one of the first activities I do when we come in, I call it Adjective Names. Like I said, they called me Mighty Mite. Before we even start the process, I have them detach themselves from their names and become an adjective name. So they have to think of an



adjective that starts with the first letter of their name that describes their personality. For the two days, they have to say the adjective name first, any time before they have to speak, and that's who we call them for the next two days... so Might Mike, Adorable Ashley, whatever the case may be. So, they have to start with their adjective names.

**Michael Arterberry:**

I run them through an activity which I call Affirmation in Twos. I'm just going to do a few so that you can see the building blocks. The Affirmation in Twos, I have them speak for one minute about all the good qualities about themselves to a partner. Then I have the partners speak to them about one minute of the positive things. I have them introduce each other of what they remembered, but then I debrief it. We start discussing, "What would it be like if I gave you one minute to list all the negative qualities about yourself?" They'll start the talk about the fact that it's easier to think of the negative things. I say that because what people have to understand is that we're products of our thought lives. We have to be careful of what we think.

**Michael Arterberry:**

One more that I want to explain to you to get in the concept... and we can go to a little deeper, but I'm trying to give you just a vision of it... is one we do is call Concentric Circles. This one is powerful, guys. What I do is I put them on the inside circle and the outside circle, facing each other. I give them five subjects that they got to talk about. The first one is who you respect and why? What are the qualities you look for in a friend? If you had the power to change one thing in the world, what would it be? A time that someone that you love hurt you, violated your trust. A time that you lost someone you really cared about. I had them speak for one minute to a partner. I rotate them five times so they speak to five different people. Once they finish speaking to five different people, I bring them out into a circle... everything I do is done in a circle... and we debrief it.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Let me tell you something. Before I go into say anything, all I say to them is, "Do you feel it?" Guys, the whole room shifts. Five questions. They sound very simple, but these people... just like we said, authenticity... have just told things to people that they've never told before. So, the whole energy of room has shifted in a 15 or 20-minute period. But this is the magic. The magic is this: You walk into a room. You sit into a circle. You look around, and you see nothing but faces. You go through this activity, and you now look around and each one of the faces become people. It's magic. It's what humanity is missing, and it's terrible that we can't do it on a larger scale.

**Michael Arterberry:**

But those are just some of the... a few of the concepts. Now that's just two activities, and we not even through three or four hours of days one. I just keep taking them on this journey, and the further we go, the deeper we go. By the end of those two days, when you say, "Trust me," they don't trust me. We're family.

**Glenn Hinds:**



It's a very humanizing experience that you're describing and very strengths focused. The exercises you were describing there were about, "We can talk about either side of the spectrum, but we're going to focus over here." It sounds like the reason why you're doing that is your understanding the negativity or the criticism or the shaming thoughts that they have, they're very well-rehearsed. They don't need to practice that, and there's no benefit of going back over it again with somebody else. But the new piece is the idea of even having an affirming adjective in front of their name and for that to become who they are for the two days they're with you. Just to have that experience of reinforcement for themselves by giving themselves that name... Gregarious Glenn... and doing that over and over and over again. The idea is that some of that is likely to seep down into my experience of myself and therefore, dilute some of the negativity that's there.

**Glenn Hinds:**

But also, then, those affirming exercises, again, have the opportunity to talk about themselves. What strikes me about that is one of the important, underlying theories that informs Motivational Interviewing would be self-perception theory. It's that idea of, "I learn who I am as I hear myself speak." If I'm having an internal dialogue and it's negative, then that's being reinforced. If I'm having an internal dialogue and it's positive, that's being reinforced. What you're doing is inviting people to reinforce the positive and develop new foundations in which they can build a different perception of themselves.

**Glenn Hinds:**

But also, that beautiful idea where you describe the experience of being in a collective of people, so they're no longer isolated. These kids may be other kids from school, but all of a sudden their perception of who they're with has shifted, too, because these faces now have a human dimension to them, and on that relational level, that feeds the human need and your idea if we could all do this more often, then the world would be a better place.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Sometimes I'm called into schools where there's issues with the different groups. It sad for me to say this... 2020, guys... but I'm going to drop it on you. I get called into schools, man. I'm talking about it's like the '50s civil rights movement. You got suburban schools pushing out to some of these predominantly white neighborhoods, and they're not feeling it. So they don't want these people in their backyards. The tension in the buildings are tremendous.

**Michael Arterberry:**

So, when I go to a principal... So I got 25 to 30 people, kids, in my room, sitting in a circle. What I ask for is a cross-section. So I want black, white, Latino, struggling student, honor roll student... I want them all sitting in circle. When you start talking about that human side, what they find out is that not only are we human, but our definition other people comes from... So I'm black, African American. If all my friends are African American, black, I have no white friends, we have now defined the white race from black people. Now how the heck am I going to define you? I've never met you before. I don't know



nothing about you. So that's how stereotypes work. So we walk around this Earth with this definition that we put forth in our brain.

**Michael Arterberry:**

So, what I love in these groups is, not only do they realize that we're human, but you got the black kid looking at the white kid, and he saying, "Hey, wait a second. You're nothing like what I have down on my cheat sheet." So what it made such realize is, again, is that you have to dig a little deeper, and... one of you mention it... living conscious lives, man. I think there was a statistic, and I think it was like 90% of the world, live unconscious. That's crazy if we're walking around with people that are just floating. No, you got to really be in touch with the world, not only to be effective, but to be able to navigate it on a really, really special level.

**Michael Arterberry:**

I was watching a documentary on a guy that jumped off the San Francisco bridge, and he survived. When I saw this, I'm intrigued. So as a watching the documentary, they take him back to where his apartment was. Now to get to the bridge, he had to take a bus. He had to take a cab. I think he walked a little while. So I'm like, "Wow, dude. He really wanted to do this." But you know what? But some part in the interview, they asked him or he gave the information, and he said that if one person would have looked at him and said, "Hey buddy. It looks like you're not okay," he said he would have called it off. So living a conscious life and being connected, you have no idea the power. If not for yourself, but the power that you can have to help other people.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

You used the word connected. I was listening to what you're saying, while also connecting it with some of the other things you had said before. Correct me if I'm wrong, but just getting a sense of the work that you do and the change that you're inviting people to embark on, that it feels more global. It doesn't get narrow into someone who has a problem with alcohol or diabetes or those kinds of narrow... not that they're simple, of course. These are very complicated changes to make. But if it's like the change is about the building blocks that change could then occur from, whether it's a change in one's belief in oneself and what one is capable to go forth with... But also, these groups that you talked about... and there's the connection to the word connection... is that a lot of these exercises that you're talking about, while very strength based as Glenn highlighted, they're also very interpersonal. It's about creating, perhaps, a different climate or culture in these schools, where people aren't separated or segregated like schools can often naturally get into. It's trying to create a different climate in those schools, so that now, as individuals, they believe in themselves in a way that they perhaps didn't, but now they also believe in each other in ways that... and understanding each other in ways that they wouldn't have ever thought possible before becoming involved in your program.

**Michael Arterberry:**

I'm in a community for the greatest impact when you talk about change. A school doesn't just have me come in and do 25 kids. They get a package of a minimum of 100, but we



can pump that number up to whatever they want. So I'm in a community. I'm embedded. So the culture of the school is changing. So I go out into the community and I do an adult workshop about my concepts in my program. We're going through the program, and a lady stops the group. She says, "Wow." She said, "I walked into that school, and I felt the change, and I didn't know where it was coming from. I got chills, because I saw the fruits of my labor. This woman felt that peace in the building... Because one of the greatest things you get from my group... there's multiple... but that empathy and the level of empathy is beyond.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Check this out. One of the activities I do, it's at the end of the two days. It's called Personal Share. The last activity after the two days, you have to bring in an item that means a lot to you. So you got to go home, sit in your living room, look around the room and item that you really think really speaks to you, you bring it in and you share it with these 25 people you spent the two days with. Everyone goes in deep. They bring back the item. At the end, we go around the circle and everyone shares. Always emotional. Very deep.

**Michael Arterberry:**

But to show you the level of empathy, I have a girl in the group. We're sitting in a circle. She pulls out a picture of her and her dad. So when you see the picture of her dad, immediately you're waiting for this story of all this beauty. Well, she tells us that called her two nights before to talk about how he should have aborted her, how much he hated her and wished she wasn't born. Now we couldn't believe she was sharing this. But remember, it's personal share. It doesn't have to be something that's beautiful. I require a minimum of two teachers in each group. There's a teacher, three people over, on his lap is a picture of him and his family in a portrait. He's crying so hard snot's running out of his nose, because he's looking at this girl who's going through this horrific time. He's about to show his family that eats from a silver spoon, and he can't even talk. I say that because now he has to go back into a classroom and teach students and look out into that audience of their students, and he will never look into that classroom audience again the same way after he went through that two days experience.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Again, it's deeper than he's going back to his students. I think what you are describing is you're humanizing those kids for the teachers. So they're not just students. These are people that have backstories and that they have lives, too. It's not he's going to teach the maths. It's that he is with these people and they happen to be talking about maths for a couple of hours every day. But if he can notice that, then chances are how he teaches, how he understands why their homework is late, why the homework isn't up to standard, will make much more sense, and I guess, soften his response and make his response much more meaningful and considered.

**Glenn Hinds:**

In that, people who are less then will recognize, as you described, that empathy, that ability to step into another person's world and see it from their perspective without judging



it from your own lifestyle... that, okay, he may have a really settled home life, but being able to go on that girl's world and recognize that there's a lot of disturbance going on her world at the moment, but there's something he can be doing for and with her in the context of that. He's not going to change what her father said there, but he can change what he as an adult male, how he speaks to her. That in itself can be very positive. That can be some of the light. That can be some of the nurture that exists in some of the dark places of kids or people.

**Michael Arterberry:**

It's not only humanizing the kids to the teachers, kids get to see the teachers as well. See when, they come in the group, the way the material is set up guys, it sneaks up on you and it bites you. So you get people comment, "Hey, listen. I'm not going to tell you anything. You see the students do it." I just laugh when they say it. Even teachers... You get teachers that will come and they're a little pissed off that they got picked to come to this program. You sit in that circle and, let me tell you, before you know it, you're sucked in.

**Michael Arterberry:**

I had a woman, on Personal Share, a female teacher, tell the group that she was molested by her father. Never told anyone in her life. She picked 25 students that she's only met for two days to unveil that. But the power in that... because I got a social work background... is I know how light that women felt when those words left her lips, because that was a weight that she had been carrying for years. Imagine a kid saying to themselves... Not only should the teacher treat the student differently, but the student has to give a different respect to the teacher that's in from the classroom as well.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

You talked about the lightness that teacher likely felt, like an outcome of this share, maybe a conclusion of this two-day experience for that teacher. Just wondering what you think are some of the outcomes that you seek to find or to have happened with the groups in the program that you've developed. I guess along those same lines, what happens after the two days, in terms of your connection and work with the schools, the groups that you've had and that sort of...

**Michael Arterberry:**

My goal is this is I want you to have an individual experience, so you get to self-reflect and do you. In the process of doing you, I want you to be able to build community with people that are not the same as ho you are. So you want to build a community within a community within the building. But I want to send them back out to the building to affect, like you mentioned, the culture of the entire building. So that's my ultimate goal. That's why you 25 at a time.

**Michael Arterberry:**

But what I also do is, before I start to knock him off 25 at of time, I do an assembly so that I plant the language of my program with the entire building. So I do a motivational talk to





each grade so that when they get the specifics in the group, you don't have to be in my group to know the language that we speak in my group. So what happens is it creates a culture in the building, and that's the goal that I would like to have overall. But my contact with them is, I continually come back to do the group. I do large gatherings with whoever gone through it by mid-year. I do a larger gathering with whoever went through throughout the year. The name of the program is called Power of Peace. So what we create is what I call Power of Peace Families. I actually call these students that go through the program my surrogate children. So I have two biological kids, but I have surrogate children all over the place, because these kids... You go in like we go in, this thing is really personal. So I'm in and out of the buildings. They have access to me.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Then with social media, you're only a direct message away. Anyone's able to follow me after the groups, and I get them. I get the message in my box. "Mighty Mikes, I'm having a hard time." If it's something I can walk them through, I will. If it gets too big, I'm always connected directly to the therapeutic staff in the buildings, because there's some groups where some of these kids don't even go home. They've dropped something so big in the group, that they have to be removed from their homes. So it's done. So I'm connected to everyone of importance, and I never let a kid leave my presence if I feel that they're not in a safe place.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Your description there of changing the culture within the system... I'm sure the audience will hear how infectious your own enthusiasm is and that belief in individuals whose lives, within their own experience, is quite negative or challenging or restricted. Then they meet a guy like you who comes along and focuses so much on the positive, focuses much on the strength, while recognizing the challenges. That by helping those individuals, both teachers and young people, shift their thinking to a new direction, it's almost like they're changing, their orientations of True North has shifted.

**Glenn Hinds:**

It's like they experience the world slightly differently as a consequence of spending time with you. A rising tide lifts all boats, that everybody in that school gets it, because enough people got it, and that it's not an in and out, that you're encouraging people to become their own advocates. You're encouraging people to continue to develop and maintain the relationships that they have begun on the groups for their own well-being, but also potentially for the well-being of others. What strikes me is the type of love that you're describing is that agape love, that brotherly love. That will sing the same tune as anybody who's practiced Motivational Interviewing. How we manifest it is slightly different.

**Glenn Hinds:**

What's interesting is the story started with a well, and I think what you're saying is we're all drinking from the same well when we practice Motivational Interviewing, when you practice what you're doing, what CBT practitioners are doing. This all rises out of the same well, which is our desire to be together in this journey and our desire to love other



people so that they can become themselves and to be loved ourselves. As a community, we're stronger together and you want people as individuals to believe in themselves. The more people who believe in themselves, the stronger the community becomes. That then we can wrap our arms around those further out and more isolated. So it's almost like an exponential journey that the more people that get it, the more people who can get it, because of the magnetic nature of well-being and trust and hope and faith.

**Michael Arterberry:**

I'll tell you there's, not to over spiritualize it, I heard a woman speaker... I think I read it in a book... and she said when she left a room, she wanted a person to sniff and say, "God was here." That's part of my goal, guys. I'm not trying to be anybody's God, but when I leave the room, I want it to leave a certain aroma and I want to leave a certain essence. I heard a song and it said that if you're looking for him, I hope you find him and me. Being a spiritual man... I may be the only God that somebody will ever meet. I just say that because I was on a podcast, and I'm doing the podcast, and the woman at the end, me talking about spirituality, she says to me at the conclusion, looking at me with this big smile on her face, "I never met God..." and she didn't finish it. And I knew what she was saying, guys. I left a certain essence with her, and I was proud to do that. That's part of my goal.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Maybe the spiritual movement or experience of something is another outcome that, maybe if it's not explicitly a religious one, it certainly can be for some people, but that maybe hoping for some really significant, fundamental shift inside somebody that certainly could be religious or, in a broader sense, a spiritual experience.

**Glenn Hinds:**

So we've come to the point in the conversation, Michael, where we invite our guests to describe something that maybe isn't related to what we've been talking about today, but just something that's captured your attention recently or something that you're interested in that you might want to share with us.

**Michael Arterberry:**

What really interests me, first, the virtual world. Being locked down in COVID... My world was a little small, so podcast and things of this nature, I never thought about. During the podcasts, I'm really having a great time doing them. I also developed an online course. I call it the Shake the Dirt Experience. You know what's come over me the last few weeks is... of course, I put it together to make a little money... but I'm going to start my first group off free of charge. I just really feel that people are in need right now for something to give them some clarity and some peace. But it's an 11-week course. You meet with me for an hour each week, and we do just like I've talked about over this podcast... is I walk them back through their story. I allow them to look at their landmines, and let's start to customize a life that can bring you peace, prosperity and a really good quality life in there.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**



So another example of adapting to the current world that we're in, to bring the program that you've developed from an in-person model to a virtual model and perhaps something that will stick with you and the people that you work with beyond, once everyone's back to with at least the opportunities to engage in life the way they were before.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Definitely global. You said Global. I went to a branding conference right before COVID, and he talked about global awareness. So when you talk about global, my reach is very short here... I'm in the Northeast in Connecticut, but when you on the internet... Where you at again, Glenn?

**Glenn Hinds:**

In Derry in Northern Ireland.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Yeah. There, look at that. See how powerful that is? We're talking like you sitting at my kitchen. So when you talk about global, for me to be able to have those type of people are my course and being able to talk across the world, it's a vision coming into full circle.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Given the fact that reach is important for you, one of the other things we do then is we offer our guests... If people who listen to the episode, if they're interested in reaching out to you, Michael, how would they do that?

**Michael Arterberry:**

They can reach me at my motivational website, MichaelArterberry.com. They can go to my non-profit website, which is YouthVoicesCenter.org. If they're interested in that course, they can come to shakethedirtexperience.com. I'm taking the first 20 members that sign up, and we rocking and rolling. So they can find me at those three. Then my social media pages. Facebook is my name, Michael Arterberry. LinkedIn, my name, Michael Arterberry and so forth.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Just on the social media then, as we move close to the end then, Seb, do you want to just remind people of our social networks.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Absolutely. Facebook is Talking to Change. Twitter is @ChangeTalking. Instagram is TalkingToChangePodcast. Direct email communication would be podcast@GlennHinds.com.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Well, Michael, thank you very much for giving up your time today and just sharing your enthusiasm and insights and the journey that you've been on to where you are now and



your desire to be helpful to young people and adults alike and your enthusiasm and dedication to what it is you do. I wish you every success in this journey that you're describing about spreading the word globally. Perhaps, we'll talk to you again in the future.

**Michael Arterberry:**

Alright. Alright. Thank you very much, guys.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Thanks so much, Michael.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Thanks, Seb. Take care.

