

Talking to Change: An MI Podcast

Glenn Hinds and Sebastian Kaplan



Episode 29: MI in College and University Settings, with Peter Rives

Sebastian Kaplan:

Hello everyone and welcome to Talking To Change: A Motivational Interviewing Podcast. My name is Sebastian Kaplan and I'm based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA. As always, I'm joined by my good friend from across the pond, Glenn Hinds from Derry, Northern Ireland. It is May the 11th, which is roughly the official two-month anniversary here in the states at least for the COVID-19 lockdown kind of situation. And I don't know if that's, that's probably roughly around the same time as you Glenn. How are things developing over on your side of the world?

Glenn Hinds:

Yeah, well it probably is about eight weeks here as well, that we have been furloughed from work and locked down in general. It was extended for a further three weeks on Sunday here in Northern Ireland. The UK is split up into four nations. So, England are getting announcements that they're softening the approach. They changed the guidance from stay at home to stay alert. Whereas the other three nations are saying stay at home.

Glenn Hinds:

That would follow the flow and the rise of the virus, it's arrival. Came to London first and then moved north. We're probably about two or three weeks behind what's happening in London. But, as I look out, the roads are getting busier, people are getting, I don't think it's complacent, but I think we're just going, you know what? I can't stay in all the time. I need to get out. So, there's more risk taking, as you would expect.

Sebastian Kaplan:

Yeah, people have reached their limits. In some ways it seems like, at least in some parts of the US anyway, it's been a successful effort with staying at home and social distancing. At least in North Carolina, our statistics have been pretty promising. Now we have a bunch of people that are going out into the world, in ways that they weren't before. And stores that are starting to open.

Sebastian Kaplan:

So yeah, I guess it remains to be seen whether this is the right time to do that or if we're making a potentially serious mistake with it all.

Glenn Hinds:

I suppose consistent with what, very often what we talk about here in the podcast, is about realizing there's an ambivalence that arises in us. We have choices. We've got this opportunity, stay at home. And most people have been doing it for six, eight weeks.



They're not seeing any difficulties arising in their life, so there's no threat to their own wellbeing. And they're going, well maybe it should be okay. And they see other people doing it. And then there's that momentum developing. Well, if they're doing it, I'm going to do it.

Glenn Hinds:

And now it's a case of we have to hope that figures don't change. Time will tell and I suppose we will adapt accordingly.

Sebastian Kaplan:

And one interesting thing about behavior change here, for us anyway and I imagine for you all as well, is wearing masks has become a much more common sight. And certainly, a new behavior for a lot of people. I know for me; I'm not used to wearing masks when I'm out in public. But for many, many years you would see pictures of Asian countries, well before the pandemic and it seemed, maybe not across the board, but it wasn't uncommon certainly to see that. And maybe having some public health strategies like that, where it's relatively harmless and not very challenging and difficult to adopt that kind of behavior change. Maybe that's also what's contributing to people's comfort and entering the world in ways that we haven't in two months.

Glenn Hinds:

Yeah. And interesting about that, just even what the Asian countries, my understanding is I used to think it was they were protecting themselves from us. But given the nature and the values of particularly the likes of Japan where I understand they wore masks if they were unwell, to protect everyone else. And it's that idea that the reason why you and I should wear masks is not to protect us from them, it's to protect everybody else from us.

Glenn Hinds:

I suppose it could fit with the spirit of what it is we talk about. It's about thinking about others, that unconditional positive regard. What impact am I having on other people and what can I do to share that their experience with me is positive? And it might be that discomfort of wearing a mask, but to do it for the wellbeing of other people.

Sebastian Kaplan:

And certainly, compassion too, actions towards the benefit and health of others. Okay. Well, we have an episode here. So, before we welcome and introduce our next guest, tell us about social media platforms and ways to rate and review us.

Glenn Hinds:

Thank you to everybody who's now following us on Twitter at Change Talking. We also have a Facebook page at Talking to Change. Our Instagram is Talking to Change Podcast. And for direct contact with myself or Seb, it's podcast@glennhinds.com.

Sebastian Kaplan:



Okay. Well let's move onto our guest. We are quite thrilled to have a good friend of ours and colleague and part of the MINT's network, the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers on. So, we're welcoming Peter Rives to the podcast today. Hello Peter, get us started with a bit of background and tell us a bit about who you are.

Peter Rives:

Sure. Hey Seb and Glenn. It's awesome to be on the podcast. I've really enjoyed it, listened to every episode I believe. And I just think you're doing a great job. I can't believe that I get to be a guest. I'm excited to be a part of it.

Peter Rives:

I went to school and studied psychology at Wake Forest University. Which is where I now work. But it's been sort of a circuitous route to get back to that university. I studied psychology, wasn't quite sure what I wanted to be when I grew up. I think that's typical for that developmental stage. But I knew that I liked school, really liked psychology. So, I went from my undergraduate work at Wake Forest to a PhD program in social psychology. And that was at the University of Delaware. There I studied social behavior and did a lot of work in a research lab.

Peter Rives:

I very much enjoyed it and one summer had an opportunity to take a part time job for a little extra cash, working in a one-on-one behavioral support position with kids in a community. Who are experiencing behavioral challenges of one sort or another. And I absolutely fell in love. And I sort of re-evaluated my direction. And although I loved my research trajectory, I found a passion in working with individuals in a more direct way and decided to follow that.

Peter Rives:

So, around 2000, 2001 I embarked on what ended up being around a 16-year career in public behavioral health, working with people who had needs related to substance use, mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities. Primarily around helping get them connected to services they needed to be supported in the community. It started as a direct service role and grew more into systems management, managed care, some training, helping to shape some policy.

Peter Rives:

And so, went really from a micro focus to more of a macro focus. Five years ago, I decided to do a little less traveling with my work and stick closer to home. And so, one day I sat at my computer and I Googled, "Motivational interviewing jobs Winston Salem, North Carolina." And up popped my alma mater and a job within the office of wellbeing. And there was a lot about that, that appealed to me. Number one, they knew what Motivational Interviewing was and valued it enough to put it in an ad. And at that point I'd developed quite a passionate interest around Motivational Interviewing.

Peter Rives:



Also, I didn't know what an office of wellbeing did, but it sounded really good to me. And it was at a place, Wake Forest University, where I had attended as an undergrad. And so, in many ways it felt like home to me. And ended up only being two miles from my home. So, lots of happy synergy there in that discovery.

Glenn Hinds:

It was made for you.

Peter Rives:

It felt that way. And the role was an interesting one to me. In addition to sort of a general focus on developing wellbeing within the university context, it was really focused on supporting students in making healthier decisions, in other words harm reduction, related to alcohol and other drugs. So, it was in an area with which I was familiar, but a little bit of a different target population than the public behavioral health work that I had done previously.

Glenn Hinds:

So, there's enough there to entice you to almost stretch your development, was part of your own ongoing journey. There was something familiar about it but something very new and exciting about it as well. And it sounds like from what you're saying is that your journey into psychology took you to a place where, in some ways, it was like you were exploring the patterns of people's behavior. But when you met the people, that's what lit you up. You thought yeah, I want to work directly with them.

Glenn Hinds:

And then over time it went out into not necessarily back out as far as the patterns, but the mechanics of how to influence groups of people and organizations. And here you are again working within that realm, working with individuals but also within the systems. So, you mentioned your relationship with Motivational Interviewing and the opportunity came up in Wake Forest to practice and use it. How did you discover MI? And what was it about it that attracted you so much?

Peter Rives:

Along that journey, in those 16 years of working in public behavioral health, I was doing a lot of work. And most of my tasks were based in this idea of general behavior change. Helping folks that were experiencing challenges in their life and helping connect them to resources and helping to support them in accessing the resources available to them, to get to where they wanted to get. Which is a theme that we're really familiar with in Motivational Interviewing.

Peter Rives:

At some point in my career and I can't tell you exactly when it was or where I was working, one of my employers sent me to a Motivational Interviewing training. And that's all I remember about it. I remember that I went to a training. And for whatever reason, it didn't stick with me, it didn't become part of my every day or my consciousness. Fast forward



towards the end of that period, I was working with this amazing organization based here in North Carolina in the states, that's called Community Care of North Carolina. If you're not familiar I really suggest the listeners check it out as a model of managed care in a public health setting.

Peter Rives:

My role there was integrating the behavioral health care for individuals into the physical health, public health realm. And this particular program and you can learn more about them at CommunityCareNC.org. They were able to reduce the state Medicaid budget to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars each year by using a really intelligent, strategic initiative that combines smart use of data, so knowing who needed help, with a very human and personal style of support. And that's where Motivational Interviewing came in.

Peter Rives:

So, every single individual who worked for Community Care of North Carolina, part of the onboarding process was they went through a two-day Motivational Interviewing training. And then there were ongoing skills refresher and development workshops that happened back at our local network. So, there's a state organization, then local networks. And each local network had what they called a Motivational Interviewing champion. So initially I was a trainee and then in doing my work there was a lot of exposure to it and it seemed really interesting to me. And at some point, the person who was the Motivational Interviewing champion within my network was moving onto a different role. And I immediately raised my hand and said I want to learn more about this.

Peter Rives:

And so, I got to explore more training and take on a leadership role, which really created some ownership for me around it. And I found a passion in it. So, I explored development as a practitioner, but also as a trainer so I could help the employees within the network really develop their skillset.

Sebastian Kaplan:

You mentioned Medicaid, which for people that are unfamiliar with the US system, Medicaid is the public insurance. Maybe similar to the NHS system, not exactly of course, but similar at least one way to think about it. And so, you had this experience of being a part of a system or an agency that had a great deal of success with healthcare delivery at an improved cost, I suppose. But also providing really good quality care.

Sebastian Kaplan:

Also, another example from your story about both the kind of micro parts of your work, as well as the macro parts of it. Both working with people and training people, but also taking, having an eye towards a larger system. Like a region in North Carolina or perhaps a whole entire states health outcome.

Peter Rives:



Yeah, that's exactly right. And just as Glenn noted earlier and you've continued to pick up on, that's really been a theme in my work. I really find that I have a passion around the individual relationships and supporting individuals. And my work as an MI practitioner really helps me in doing that work. Throughout my career I've also really loved the work that's taking a step back and thinking about how can we as a system or we as an organization work better or work smarter, work more effectively for people? And typically, that involves program development, program evaluation, policy work. That sort of macro lens.

Peter Rives:

And so that's a lot of what I do now at Wake Forest. Again, with a different population. But my work there around substance use is really divided into three categories. One is prevention and education work. So that's developing programs to help educate, primarily college students, about what makes drinking dangerous? What does dangerous drinking look like? What is dangerous about drug use? And how can you be safe?

Peter Rives:

The second tier of my work there is much more of this sort of individual support area. And that's doing intervention work and individual work around behavior change for people who have run into trouble with drugs or alcohol. And that can be trouble with the conduct system, it can be medical trouble. They had to go to the hospital for overuse of alcohol or drugs. Or they say, "Hey you know what? I've got some problems with this and I'd really like some help."

Peter Rives:

And then the third tier is during my time there at Wake Forest we've developed what's called a collegiate recovery community. And so that's an identity group on campus for students who identify as being in long-term recovery from addiction. And so, we provide sort of a home within the university context to help provide peer support and organizational support to students who identify that way.

Glenn Hinds:

So, you're covering the whole spectrum of the potential journey the individual may be on, what might bring them into a relationship or difficult relationships with alcohol. When they do, how can they get support themselves? If it becomes more complex, how can they get support from each other? While not always having to turn to 'professionals.' Quite a comprehensive approach to this.

Glenn Hinds:

In what was then does Motivational Interviewing inform how you do that? And where do you use it along that continuum?

Peter Rives:



The main place, the most obvious link there is in that second tier. The intervention phase. So, we use a model that's called BASICS. Which is an acronym, it stands for brief alcohol screening and intervention for college students. So, it's specifically designed for this university population. And actually, Bill Miller had a big part to play in the development of this particular model.

Peter Rives:

And for decades now it's proven to be an evidence-based practice in supporting behavior change around alcohol and drug use in the university setting. And it leans heavily on the use of Motivational Interviewing in brief sessions, where students will complete an assessment, a battery of survey tools. They'll receive a feedback report from that set of tools. And then they'll sit down with someone who's trained in MI and have a conversation about how's this working for you? Not working for you? What would you like to change and how would you like to change it? Which all should sound familiar to the folks in your audience that are familiar with Motivational Interviewing.

Peter Rives:

So that's sort of the primary way that Motivational Interviewing is used on a daily basis in my work.

Sebastian Kaplan:

Description reminds me a lot of the episode that we did with Denise Walker, not too long ago. Where her, well the whole episode was about use of feedback and how to provide feedback in a strategic way, in an empathic way, to help guide discussions around change. So maybe a little plug for that episode as well.

Sebastian Kaplan:

One of the things that, in our conversations leading up to this Pete, is you've shared quite a lot about your view about how well MI fits, not just in the world of supporting college students who might have gotten into some trouble around drugs and alcohol. But just across a university campus, when conversations occur with older adolescents and young adults, that MI is just a natural fit for any number of professionals. You can speak to that a bit.

Peter Rives:

That's exactly right. When I arrived at Wake Forest, one of the first things that I did as an employee, I work within an operational unit called the division of campus life. Which is all the non-academic student affairs support programs that you can imagine might take place at a university. Especially a residential university. So, everything from student health to university police, the counselling center, residence life and housing. There's just a huge broad and deep swath of professionals providing a bunch of different support roles, that are about supporting the development of these students, that are there to learn and develop academically. But also, as people and to keep them safe, to help them develop.



Peter Rives:

So, one of my first activities when I got to Wake Forest was, I did a presentation about Motivational Interviewing for the leadership of the division of campus life. Part of the case that I made was while it is good that I have this skillset so that I can deliver this very specific targeted intervention service that is needed on campus to help students make behavior change, this skillset is also relevant to anyone on campus that is working in a capacity that may serve to support a student. And especially a student at this sort of critical age, 18-25 is our typical college or university student age.

Peter Rives:

And that was really well received. So, I've also developed a training program at Wake Forest and offer trainings to individuals within the campus community. And frequently my trainings include students, graduate students, professional students, such as law students and medical students, faculty who are actually teaching courses and support staff and administrators, such as those people within my division. So that's been a really fun initiative to help people develop the skillset in supporting these young adults, late adolescent, young adults in exploring all the change that naturally happens at that period of life. But supporting them in a really helpful and supportive way, that's based in evidence.

Glenn Hinds:

So much of what you're describing is about the culture of caring within the college environment. That all of these individuals, even as I listened to you describe that, that it was almost like the village behind supporting these kids get on with learning their studies. That all of these support staff, who I guess in many ways are primarily driven by a desire to make the environment conducive to these kids' growth. And when they heard of Motivational Interviewing and the effectiveness of it, that they saw and identified the potential of that to help themselves to be as supportive as they could be.

Glenn Hinds:

And as a consequence of that, the layers of people you were describing and the width of that as well, again it's back to that culture that you've created. And that has been maintained and developed. Must be very conducive. If we think of the spirit, I imagine then there's a lot of compassionate thinking and compassionate interactions, not just with students but I imagine with each other, with colleagues and faculty staff and management and leadership.

Peter Rives:

I think that's absolutely right. I hadn't really thought much about the inherent connection to MI spirit and taking on a career in student affairs. But I think there's something there. I think you've tapped into something.

Peter Rives:



I was thinking about this episode and how ironic it is that we're talking about Motivational Interviewing, which sometimes downplays the offering of information. There's some subtlety to it. So, we don't discount giving information, but we're careful about how we do it. But what are universities? They're institutions built on bestowing information and knowledge on people. And the irony is not lost on me.

Peter Rives:

But I do think that you're right, that the people that find themselves working in these roles, like healthcare workers, are really compassionate and engaged, really invested in supporting these young adults. And continuing that exploration of who am I? What's important to me? And where am I headed? And a lot of that development work happens during that time that people are away at university.

Sebastian Kaplan:

In keeping with that thought about universities being institutions that bestow information and not just information about English literature or something, but information about what people is supposed to do in terms of job seeking and what people are supposed to do in terms of managing their relationships or dealing with their parents or whatever it might be. So, what has been your experience, or I guess what is, the people that you've shared MI with or taught MI to in the campus community that you're in, what's been their reaction and their feedback to you? And how have they managed to adopt something that might've been quite different since so much of their roles before having been to tell young people how to go about life and how to live their life?

Peter Rives:

So, in addition to the trainings, one of the things that we do is anybody who's been through one of the trainings that we offer at Wake Forest is invited to come to a monthly informal drop in skills development and maintenance session. We just call it our brown bag lunch. So, you bring your lunch and I'll have an activity around MI skill development ready. But usually, we sit around a table and talk about what was your experience in using MI? How does it feel?

Peter Rives:

And for those who are newer to MI in the university setting, I don't think this is unique to the university setting, frequently the stories that I get back are how do I get them to know this? How do I get them to do this? How do I get them to...? And I think what we know from MI is that we're more successful when we're supporting someone in hearing what it is that they want from themselves. And shining a light on that through skilful use of reflections, through exploring with curious questions. And through cultivating true engagement through that being part of the Motivational Interviewing spirit.

Peter Rives:

When we're able to connect and reflect together, in the bigger trainings and in these sessions, I frequently hear this sigh of relief. That 'oh, it's not my responsibility to get someone to do something.' In other words, to coerce them or redirect them towards this



other behavior. It seems to be something that feels really good to people and fits with that sort of inherent desire to care for and support that you tapped into earlier.

Glenn Hinds:

As often is said when we speak to guests on the podcast and certainly in my own experience as well is that the Motivational Interviewing offers us the opportunity to be much more consistent with our own values that were well established before we were introduced to MI. But again, the Motivational Interviewing articulates it in a way that allows us to move forward. And again, that relief that you described, where people feel they can unburden themselves of feeling responsible for other people's decisions and other people's behavior.

Glenn Hinds:

It's wonderful that you've created that training environment, that then I suppose consistent with even the spirit of MI, which is you're not saying you have to come to this but it's here if you want it. And people have a choice to come along. I guess it's a reflection on what it is you're offering that people continue to do that Peter. That there's something that is nourishing them each time they come back. And it's that been washed over and over again with this gentle insight to human behavior and human psychology and relationship, why people change in certain relationships and not in others.

Glenn Hinds:

And the shift that's taken place there in the practitioner's mind and the practitioners skillset allows them to go out and try it. And I guess the reason why they're coming back is because they're already seeing it making a difference. And that's what's appealing to them.

Peter Rives:

I think that's right. And one of the things that I see frequently with university students is, and I think this is frustrating for these professionals that are in it to help, is there's a bit of a natural divide between students and the administration. I don't know about you, but I look back on my time as an 18-25-year-old, there was sort of a natural mistrust of the adults who had authority over me. And a suspicion, what is it that you're trying to do?

Peter Rives:

I jokingly say my unofficial title is captain buzzkill because the perception of the students is, I'm there to ruin the fun and ruin their parties and prevent them from having fun. But when I'm able to connect individually with a student and really explore what are their values, what are their priorities, what are their goals, what are my priorities, what are my goals, they're the same. So that's a big part of what we're teaching. It reminds me of Bill Miller's talk at the Tallinn MINT forum when he said, "Do be do be do is what MI is." And it's about that being part. I do teach people how to do MI and the skills and what is the spirit and that. But the spirit is about how to be with someone.

Peter Rives:



And I think that can be a really powerful vehicle when you're talking about adults who are well past the typical university student age. And then university students are in their late adolescents and maybe emerging adulthood. And have some of that mistrust. When you really connect with them on a human level, in a way that Motivational Interviewing allows us to do, it opens up a really human connection that then serves as fertile ground for a whole lot of behavior change work.

Sebastian Kaplan:

And I imagine that there must be some real intentional, to go on with the first process in MI, engaging, there's some really intentional work that you're doing early on, almost assuming, maybe that's not the case for everyone, but almost assuming that the young person that you are meeting for the first time has some suspicion about what your motives are. And just spend however much time it might take to really get to know the other person, to be curious about their life. But also, to I guess exude or demonstrate that being part that you're striving for is really critical. I wonder if you could talk a little bit more about how you go about doing that? Whether it's if you could describe the way of being and maybe even certain things that you find yourself saying kind of frequently. Knowing of course that this isn't going to be just a list of catchphrases that you use without the genuine heart of you coming forward also. But talk a little bit more about that engagement process with the young people.

Peter Rives:

Let me start with a little anecdote that actually came up today in our brown bag meeting with the MI trainees. And then I'll sort of describe some of that. One of the things I love about this is that we know from research that your effectiveness in Motivational Interviewing is actually unrelated to degree. So, this isn't something that's only accessible to clinicians, this is something that people can learn, and people can be effective with.

Peter Rives:

And so, I can teach a university police officer, who has no clinical training at all, how to deliver MI with fidelity. And apply that to their role. So that's a really great thing about it. But this anecdote that came up today that I think is relevant to your question, Seb, is there was a woman who was on the meeting and she said, "I've connected with this young man and it's strange how we got connected, but we've formed a bit of a bond. And I really used my learning from MI spirit to do that engagement piece." In other words, really meeting him with compassion, acceptance, partnership and in our conversations being curious and seeking to evoke from him his thoughts, his feelings, his hopes, his goals, his motivations.

Peter Rives:

And she said, "This young man is in a situation wherein he's sorts of off cycle actually related to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a number of his other peers. There's a small cohort that was studying abroad, they've now come back to the states. And so, they're several months I believe behind the rest of their cohort. But everyone else on campus who was left or who was studying virtually is finishing for the semester. And so, they're



feeling very disconnected and they're feeling a real loss of structure and any sort of routine." That I think a lot of us are experiencing during this pandemic, that's leaving him feeling directionless and disorganized. And so, he's staying up late at night and sleeping during the day. And really just sort of struggling.

Peter Rives:

And she asked him, she said, "Are you the only one in your cohort that's feeling this way?" I guess there are about 20-25 of them, I'm not sure. And he said, "No. No I think a lot of other people are feeling that way." And she said, "Well have you brought that up with the faculty members who are overseeing your program?" And he said, "No way. I'm afraid that might reflect poorly upon me as a student. And I don't feel comfortable doing that."

Peter Rives:

So, there's something in that power dynamic between the student and the faculty member and the faculty member has this ability to assign a grade and in some small way control outcomes for the student, that has sort of eliminated the potential for partnership. Absent maybe some other work that we could do. But with this staff person, who is a trainee, she had that connection with him. She was able to do that engagement work and really get to a place with him where they were well connected, despite their age difference and difference in life stages. He felt really comfortable not only confiding in her these struggles that he was having, but also asking for her assistance in sort of solving some of these issues.

Peter Rives:

And so that's part of what I'm hoping to get at in sowing the seeds of MI in a broad sense, throughout the university community. Creating a culture of engagement, so that when whatever decision or challenge a student might be wrestling with when they approach a professional on campus, that professional has the skillset to be able to engage with them in a meaningful way, cultivate that trust. And then has the skills to support that person and sort of exploring what change they might like to see in their life.

Glenn Hinds:

Sounds like you're describing that the first person that has to move to help these young people change is the practitioner. To move their attitude, to move their ideas, to move their sense of responsibility. That these young people are coming along and there's an intrinsic or an instinctive distrust of adults, for whatever reason. You have just identified that young people will trust adults under certain circumstances. And they know who they can trust by the way the adult behaves.

Glenn Hinds:

And it sounds like that's the invitation to the people you're working with. You can get on with doing what you're doing, and it'll continue to look like this. Now if that's the way you want it to be, knock yourself out. But if this isn't satisfying you, there are certain things that you can consider thinking of doing differently. Which is first of all understand these are kids between 18-25. They're still in a developmental process. They're here to learn,



but they're also here to party. They're away from home and they're doing all these things. And their age and stage is different from ours.

Glenn Hinds:

But they want relationship, they want guidance under the right circumstances. They're keen to learn. They're university students. They want to grow. But it's not just academically, they're here to learn about life too. And sometimes they need to lean on someone.

Peter Rives:

I think that's right. I think you hit something right on the head Glenn. It's something that we really work to include in our prevention and education work too. And that's a sense of authenticity. In MI we talk about accurate empathy, which requires compassion and this curious mindset. And really working to get into the mind of the person that's sitting across from us, to the degree possible.

Peter Rives:

And so, I think university students, that age group, really value authenticity. And some of that distrust comes when they sense that someone's being inauthentic or playing a role. That's a place where I spend a good bit of energy. When I meet someone for the first time, when a student comes to my office, and frequently when a student comes to my office they're being required to do so by a dean or someone in the conduct office that said, "You've broken some rules so go see Peter."

Peter Rives:

So, in some ways I'm starting already in a bit of a hole with regard to building engagement. They don't want to be there. I work very hard to ensure that I'm embodying that spirit of MI. And the first thing that I do is I seek to set the groundwork and set the ground rules for someone. And we talk about setting the agenda, so that there are no surprises. This is my role. I'd like to tell you a little bit about what's going to happen here, what we're going to do with our time. I'll tell you a little bit about the rules, with regard to privacy and confidentiality and that sort of thing. And assure you that this is a private space and what you tell me is between you and me. And I really do honor that.

Peter Rives:

And then the rest of the time I'd really like to get to know you and find out what's going on with you and what's important to you and who you are. And spending that time to really set the agenda and help them to understand what's happening here, goes a long way to relieving some of that anxiety that they walk in the room with. But then using my MI skillset to meet them where they are, to be their partner and not try to put my agenda on them but find out from them what is it that they hope for and how can we get there.

Sebastian Kaplan:

So, a mixture of things that you're doing and not doing. There's a genuine level of authenticity certainly but communicated first and foremost with transparency and being



very clear about the role that you have, what the conversations going to be about. Perhaps at times even acknowledging that they may not want to be there, or they're being forced to go in and talk to you. And maybe making the nods at that reality. Just really focusing the conversation on who this person is, perhaps over and above what they did or how they got into trouble.

Sebastian Kaplan:

And then the thing that you're not doing is you're not lecturing, you're not scolding, you're not threatening, you're not doing any of that sort of work. Although I imagine you do, you might at times provide some information about what might happen if they found themselves in a similar situation. But not in a threatening or kind of controlling sort of way.

Peter Rives:

And using a technique like elicit, provide elicit, to find out if they want that information. Would that be helpful for you? For a lot of the students, they're not interested in reducing their drinking. They're not interested in reducing the frequency with which they party or the intensity with which they party. So maybe our shared goal is not getting in trouble. Which might require some behavior change that does align with some harm reduction as well. It's about meeting them where they are, because the alternative is nobody gets anywhere.

Glenn Hinds:

So again, it's that willingness to shift the focus to where the client is willing to talk. So rather than talking about their drinking, you're exploring what is, how to not get into trouble or not get caught. Because it sounds like you're, to use a soccer term, you're on a yellow card here. If you're called again then potentially your university career is going to be ended or arrested.

Glenn Hinds:

And even just exploring that with them, just what would that mean to you? Rather than going you can't afford to do that. Again, it's that aspect of ourselves in Motivational Interviewing would describe it as righting reflex. Go look if you get caught again, you're going to get thrown out of college and you don't want that because your life's going to fall apart. There's none of that. It's just a case of going, no you got caught, what does that mean to you? What do you understand is going to happen? Here's some information if it's helpful. If we understand the processes within the university, what do you think about that? If you get caught again, the likelihood is that you might have to take a year out. What does that mean to you?

Glenn Hinds:

And the idea is just to give them the space to make a decision for themselves. Which is again, we spoke to Professor Ryan and the emphasis was on autonomy. You may have a desire and an idea of what could be best for this young person. But you're supporting their right to choose whatever path they feel for themselves, even if you disagree with those choices.



Peter Rives:

That's exactly right Glenn. And it's so refreshing for these young people in the office, because that's the opposite of what they expect. They walk in expecting to be punished, expecting to be lectured. And when they don't get that you can almost many times visibly see them exhale in relief. And I think there's another component to it. I think about Jean Twingey's work around the I gen and this hyper connected digital native environment that we're working in, that we're living in. And especially these students and I walk around campus and everybody's got their head down in a device.

Peter Rives:

And communication is so rarely sitting down face to face and engaging with someone at a level of depth beyond when are you going out? What'd you do last night? That sort of thing. So, I think there's another piece to this. And that is that people are craving that authentic human connection, that these types of conversations, these skilful communications rooted in empathy, rooted in compassion, afford us. And they didn't even know they wanted it so badly. But frequently we get students coming back voluntarily.

Peter Rives:

I have a wonderful staff person who works with me named Holly Heath. And I remember so clearly, we send out surveys to our students to ask what their experience was. And there's an open-ended period. One of the comments that we got back was 'I left that session feeling better about myself then I have in months.' Let's put that in context. This is an 18, 19, 20-year-old who got in trouble, had to go to the dean, was sanctioned by the conduct process and a hearing to go meet with Holly in a closed room. Probably had other things they'd rather be doing. Sleeping might be at the top of the list.

Peter Rives:

And came out of there saying, "I felt better about myself then I had in months." I love the power that having an authentic and engaged conversation with someone can have.

Sebastian Kaplan:

And you could see how that experience would branch out into so many other parts of this young person's life. Where it was a conversation about them getting into trouble with drugs or alcohol, maybe both, and they leave feeling better about themselves then they have in months. So then go forward and face their four or five challenging courses and maybe a relationship challenge or a friend group that they're wanting to be active with. Or maybe even some extracurricular activity that's been challenging.

Sebastian Kaplan:

You could just see how that conversation would have such ripples throughout a young person's life, beyond just the presenting problem.

Peter Rives:

Sure, and now imagine that they're sociology professor, where they're struggling to maintain their grade in that course, is also trained in Motivational Interviewing. That young person goes in to talk to that professor about I'm not sure if this is the right major for me. I'm thinking about changing my course of study. How is that conversation different when that professor is trained in MI? In a supportive way to have that conversation about what are your goals? How do you want to get there? Versus someone who's like, "Oh no, you just need to work harder." Or whatever that righting reflex type of conversation may be.

Peter Rives:

And similarly, you can apply that to they go to student health for some sort of health issue. I know you've had an episode about MI in healthcare. And how important the nature of those conversations can be. Or a university police officer, like we said, or they're having a conflict with their roommate and that staff and residence life and housing, how do you have that conversation in a way that helps that student to explore what's important to me and what do I really hope to get out of this decision point that I find myself in?

Glenn Hinds:

So, you're clearly very passionate about the wellbeing, not just of these young people, but also how to support and create an environment where the adults in that environment feel more purposeful in their relationships with these service users, the students. And what strikes me as a lesson to you is while it may be very clear in the short term, that kid left and just how significant that was is clear in the way you were describing it. That 40-minute, 50-minute conversation can change a young person's experience and turn it 180 degrees.

Glenn Hinds:

But my guess is that left an imprint in that young person that will last forever. That was a positive helping experience. Which proves first of all that there are adults out there who get it. There are adults out there who can listen. And in some ways, it opens the possibility that young person themselves can then take that experience with them into their own adulthood. And that trickle effect of the more people who begin to think, probably in what really is a more natural human way of relating, that perhaps we've forgotten.

Glenn Hinds:

But that willingness to be with other people because it helps them and that makes us bigger by helping other people. And that sounds really exciting about those steps that you're taking with people close to you and around you, about how you change that. And I'm just wondering what thoughts you have about, how do you see that developing? What's your plans? What are your ideas about how to maintain that? And how do you reach that sociology professor? And how do you create an environment where they would want to engage in that learning process for themselves and become students almost?

Peter Rives:

That's a great question. I shared with you the infrastructure around supporting students outside of just the academic realm. Wake Forest, just for context for those who aren't



familiar, is a fairly small university. We have 5,000 students in undergraduate, which is pretty small school. And yet we have 250 professionals employed within that division of campus life. And that's not even including all the graduate assistants and student employees that really make that machine go and support that work.

Peter Rives:

And then Seb knows this, we talked about there's a professional organization for student affairs administrators called NASPA. And that group has 15,000 members. And 1,500 member institutions. So that just gives you a sense of sort of the size and reach and scope across the US. Then there's universities and colleges all over the world.

Peter Rives:

And so, I think this has proven helpful for us. I know there are some other schools, University of Michigan is an example, Mary Joe Despra's got a great program there using Motivational Interviewing in their programming. And I think there's a lot of potential for schools to create formal Motivational Interviewing training programs, that's not necessarily aimed at the clinical intervention. But more around creating that culture of being with a student and then doing the supporting in a skilful way. In a way that aligns with an evidence base and an evidence base that feels great. That's the best thing about motivational interviewing. It's like a warm hug that has a P value of less than .05. It's so good. And it can really appeal to people who are really sort of research focused and then other people who are more heart and feeling focused.

Peter Rives:

Within our university, we're going to keep on doing this. I am averaging around four introductory trainings a year at Wake Forest. And that gives people access to the concepts of MI spirit and the skills and processes and the introductory concepts within Motivational Interviewing. And then again, they have then the ability to tap in on a monthly basis.

Peter Rives:

I shared earlier we have diverse groups that take us up on those trainings. It's students and faculty and staff alike. And so, each of those individuals I hope will serve as an ambassador that goes out into the university community and says, "Hey I did this thing, and this is how that felt. And it's really helped me." Because like you said, it's also about reducing frustration and that helping professional or that professor who may have an expertise in biochemistry, but less so in how do I support this student who's crying in my office about the poor grades that they have? Or the stress of juggling this new adult life that they've inherited.

Peter Rives:

I just have a lot of hope for it, that it'll continue to grow and be seen as sort of an integral tool for student affairs professionals, that really look to support students in a meaningful way.



Sebastian Kaplan:

I feel like we're circling back to a theme from earlier in the conversation. This micro to macro journey I suppose that you keep finding yourself on. And these trainings, these small group trainings that you see kind of growing and branching out to other parts of the university community, create this culture, this really compassionate culture. I also have to say Pete, I think that definition of MI is perhaps the best one, certainly the most creative one. What was it? A warm hug with a P value of less than .05? That's pretty awesome.

Peter Rives:

I think that's what I said.

Sebastian Kaplan:

No, it's great.

Peter Rives:

Thank you.

Sebastian Kaplan:

So, in the interest of time, keep an eye on the clock here, just as we start getting to the end, we always like to ask our guests if there is something that they've been working on or that they see off in the horizon, it could be MI related, maybe not. Knowing you the way we do, there's plenty on your horizon that's not MI related. So just wanted to invite you to share a bit what you see coming up for you in this next little while.

Peter Rives:

I'm very excited about the Instagram account for this podcast. For those who haven't followed Talking to Change Podcast on Instagram, it is exceptional. And Glenn I believe it's your daughter who's doing a lot of the work around that. Is that right?

Glenn Hinds:

My daughter Maeve. She's doing it all.

Peter Rives:

Not only is it helpful and inspiring to me personally, but it's also something that we're looking at as an office of wellbeing. Because the content is just fantastic. And it's just been great.

Glenn Hinds:

So just to shout out, that's TalkingToChangePodcast on Instagram.

Peter Rives:

You know one of the things that, this isn't new but one of the things that's really been exciting to me, probably over the last year, year and a half in Motivational Interviewing is



really getting more familiar with affirmations and really doing some deep digging into that specific micro skill within ores. And I really want to credit the episode, I think it was episode four when you had Steve Rollnick on. And he was talking about wearing spectacle. And we sort of naturally go through assisted by reality TV and the evening news, with these sort of problem lenses on. Looking for problems everywhere and we can see them very clearly.

Peter Rives:

But he challenged us to put on this other set of lenses that looks for strengths. And when you see the strengths you call it out. And that's an affirmation. Pretty simple concept but we need to develop that muscle. Like so much in MI, it's a concept that's very reachable. It's something that we're familiar with. But you really got to develop that muscle of getting used to naming those strengths when you see them. And that's an affirmation.

Peter Rives:

So, then our good friend Mallorie DeSalle does this wonderful project where she creates this deck of l'affirmation cards. Tapping into her joy and laughter and magnetic smile. And I love using these l'affirmation cards, which are really just a deck of cards that you can order, and I use them in trainings. And people can pick up an affirmation card and secretly or very openly hand it to someone else and say, "You asked a great question today." Or whatever it may be and offer an affirmation.

Peter Rives:

Next step in this sort of re exploring affirmations for me, I went to a pre forum led by David Rosengren and Scott Caldwell, two amazing trainers. It was really great. And the focus was on developing as a trainer and really exploring Adult Learning Theory and designing trainings that were more effective for our trainees. One of the things that they really highlighted was this concept of elaboration. So that's building on what we already know. And that really aligns with the process of evoking. Of evocation and the MI spirit concept of evoking.

Peter Rives:

They started our training on training with this exercise where we focused on our strengths as trainees. So, we were asked to talk to each other very briefly and then introduce our partner with a strength that you heard from them. And it was really neat to start the training with this affirmation from a stranger and this focus on positive emotion, which really helps with engagement. Another part of the process. And then it also enabled us to circle back to the skill of affirming. Look how easy that was. You just met this person, you spoke to them very, very briefly and you were able to generate an affirmation. And how did that feel?

Peter Rives:

And so Seb and I then co trained together, which was a wonderful experience. I learned so much co training with Seb. And we tried that. So, we had our attendees speak briefly with each other, most of them had never met each other before. I think we gave them



about 30 seconds to speak with each other. And without telling them what we were going to ask them to do, we said, "Now we'd like you to just talk for 30 seconds and share what you like about your job and a hobby that you have." So that was all the guidance we gave.

Peter Rives:

And then we asked them to introduce their partner by their first name and a strength that you heard. We didn't ask them to discuss strengths, but they have to go in there and find it in what they heard. And I feel like the feedback that we got from that was really, really positive. And Seb and I were able to model it for them, sort of to ease them into it. And even though we were modeling it and we knew what we were doing, it felt really good to hear the nice things that Seb had to say about me.

Peter Rives:

And all of our learners started our training with these giant smiles on their face, feeling positive and feeling affirmed and sort of waking up to the process. I think that it's applicable in training, but I just don't think that the power of affirmations can be overstated. And we know that they need to be genuine and it's something beyond a compliment. It's really more about a strength. It's not I like your shoes, but like the example that Steve Rollnick gave in episode four, you're a dignified person. And we heard about the life change that generated for that person.

Peter Rives:

But I was thinking about this concept of affirmation and how if we wear those lenses and they pop up, those strengths pop up, we name them. And there's power in that. But I think that skilfully we can also go looking for them. And if I may, I'd just give a quick example with a student. I think it'll sort of bring us full circle.

Peter Rives:

I had a young woman in my office, and she came through the conduct process and was not happy to be there. And through our conversation it came out that her challenges included fairly regular cocaine use. She was a daily binge drinker and used cannabis nightly to help her fall asleep. I didn't tell her it doesn't work that way, but you know. So, as we were talking through it, I used one of our skills that we have in MI, which is scaling, which I love. And I asked her if you were going to make a decision, first I asked her to identify a target behavior. I said, "If you're going to make a change in one of those substances, which one do you think you might make a change in?" And she said, "Cocaine. I don't need it; I don't want it. I need to stop that. It's not something I want to do anymore."

Peter Rives:

I said, "So you're really motivated to change. So, on a scale of one to ten, with one being not at all motivated and ten being very motivated, how motivated are you to do this?" And she said, "I'm pretty motivated. I'm like a seven." I said, "Oh that's really good. You're really feeling like this is an important thing to change. Now in terms of confidence, on the same scale, with one being not at all confident and ten being as good as done, definitely



going to change this, how confident do you feel that you can make this change?" And she said, "Like an eight or a nine."

Peter Rives:

I said, "Wow, that's really confident. So, tell me what is it about you that makes you so confident that you can make that change and you're going to be successful with it?" So, I'm sort of trying to find out what is it in you, what is that trait about you, sort of digging for the affirmation. And she said, "Well I'll tell you, I'm the type of person who," now she's getting ready to affirm herself. I can't believe my luck. It's like gold. "I'm the type of person who when I set my mind to something, I achieve it."

Peter Rives:

And I said, "Wow. That's an incredible trait. Now I see why you're so confident. Could you give me an example of when you've been able to apply that?" And she said, "I will. So, I want to be a doctor. So, I'm pre-med and the notoriously hardest course is organic chemistry. And I signed up for organic chem and I messed up and I signed up with the wrong professor. And I found out after registration that I had signed up with the hardest professor. Everybody says he's the hardest professor. I don't understand the lectures. I'm really confused in class. And so that class meets on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. And so, I found out the other class, with the other professor for organic chemistry, meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Peter Rives:

So, what I do is I go to my class on Monday, Wednesday, Friday. I then go to the other class and just sit in the back on Tuesdays and Thursdays. And I go to all the office hours for the professor who teaches on Tuesdays and Thursdays. And I've convinced him to meet with me to help me because I'm stuck in the other course section. But I need to do well and I'm going to do well, and I brought my grade up from a C minus to an A."

Peter Rives:

The reflections and affirmations, it writes itself. Obviously, the lengths that this young woman went to assure that she achieved something that was important to her. And that example that she provided; it was profound. It was inspiring. And then to be able to link that back to her confidence that she could make this behavior change around a risky behavior, specifically cocaine use, it was really, really powerful. And she did end up kicking the cocaine habit and then circled back and we worked through reducing harm around binge drinking and around cannabis use as well.

Peter Rives:

I just, the power of affirmation but taking it one step beyond looking for opportunities for affirmation and actually exploring for affirmations I think is something that gets me really excited.

Glenn Hinds:



You clearly take a great reward in other people's successes in those situations. And the curiosity that you have for your own growth is so clear. And as you described the muscle, what struck me was again you mentioned David Rosengren, when we spoke to David, he described the difference between fluency, which is you've heard a concept, you've read about it, you know the name and you can say it. And then the shift, which is what you're describing, is the development of the muscle to a place of mastery. Where you can do it, you can be that way with someone.

Glenn Hinds:

And your willingness to allow yourself to be vulnerable during that process, to try new things, to have your thinking challenged by other people. All about your own development. And then seeing the reward. And we're really grateful for your description of the readiness rule and just how the tools used to illicit from the client their own reasons and their own efficacy for change. In a lovely description of how essentially that young person, that person talked themselves into a change that they needed to make. And you bore witness to it.

Glenn Hinds:

And in that witnessing, their growth took place. So, lovely example and very rewarding work for yourself, but I also imagine for that student as well. And we really appreciate you sharing it with us. One last thing we ask our guests is my guess is a lot of people who have listened to you today and you've offered some great examples and mentioned some wonderful organizations, that people may be curious about to find out more. If they were to want to have a conversation with you Peter, would you be willing for them to reach out to you? And if they were, would they be able to reach you?

Peter Rives:

I would love that Glenn. And probably the easiest way for people to contact me would be through email. That email address is P as in Peter, R-I-V as in Victor, E-S at Gmail.com.

Glenn Hinds:

Prives@Gmail.com.

Peter Rives:

That's correct.

Glenn Hinds:

And just on the contact, people can contact us on Twitter at Change Talking, Talking to Change on Facebook. Again, a great shout out and I really appreciate your feedback and I know Maeve will be delighted. She does put an awful lot of effort into it on our Instagram account, which is Talking to Change Podcast. And then direct contact with myself and Seb, our email is Podcast@glennhinds.com.

Sebastian Kaplan:



While you guys were talking I looked up that episode number, just to be sure, the Rollnick episode. That was episode seven. So if anybody wants to just go directly to that after listening to Peter, then that's where you go. Episode seven is a great episode with lots of information in there about affirmations and other things related to MI.

Sebastian Kaplan:

Peter, thanks so much for joining us. This has been a great journey through not just your own path, but really taking a focus as well as a really broad look at the use of MI with college and university students. So Peter thanks so much.

Peter Rives:

Thank you guys. It's been an honor, really appreciate it.

