

# Talking to Change: An MI Podcast

## Glenn Hinds and Sebastian Kaplan



### Episode 37: MI in Puerto Rico, with Gabrielle Ruiz Tudó, MA

#### **Sebastian Kaplan:**

Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of Talking to Change, a Motivational Interviewing podcast. My name is Sebastian Kaplan, and I am based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in USA. As always, I'm joined by my good friend, Glenn Hinds, from Derry, Northern Ireland. Hello there, Glenn.

#### **Glenn Hinds:**

Hello, Seb. Hello, everybody.

#### **Sebastian Kaplan:**

We have more of an international flavor today, as we do from time to time. We'll introduce our guest shortly. We're excited to hear about goings on in the Caribbean today. Before we do that, Glenn, why don't you help our audience know where they can contact us and find our podcast?

#### **Glenn Hinds:**

On Twitter, we're @changetalking. On Instagram, it's @talkingtochangeodcast. On Facebook, it's Talking to Change. For questions or inquiries in relation to the training we offer, it's [podcast@glennhinds.com](mailto:podcast@glennhinds.com).

#### **Sebastian Kaplan:**

Yes. Rates and reviews and suggestions for episodes are always welcome. We continue to get some of those and always excited to receive them. Before we introduce our guest, it probably makes sense to give a little bit of context. Each year, the MI trainers, a group called MINT, Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers, we have a conference or what we call a forum. This year the forum was supposed to be last week actually in Puerto Rico. We were pretty excited to have a site like Puerto Rico. Historically, our forums have been either in the United States, in the geographic United States of America, or in Europe and this was the first opportunity to have the main forum in a location that is pretty different from where we've had the forums before. We thought it would be a great idea to invite a guest from Puerto Rico in advance of the forum to talk about what MI is like in Puerto Rico and the cultural ramifications of adapting MI in Spanish and things like that.

#### **Sebastian Kaplan:**

Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, the Puerto Rico forum was canceled. Not sure about the plans to return to Puerto Rico. Hopefully, we will, but we decided to continue with our plan to have our guest from the island of Puerto Rico on to discuss Motivational Interviewing. We welcome Gabrielle Ruiz. Gabrielle, welcome to the podcast.



**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Hi. Thank you. I appreciate the invitation and I hope to ... Just to have fun with you guys here.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Yeah. We are looking forward to it. Very often, we ask people from the start just to share a little bit about yourself, what you do now, but also talk a little bit about how you first came to learn about MI. Your early MI story.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

I started learning MI when I was working in a smoking cessation quit line. I started in 2006 with my training from actually people from MD Anderson in Houston. I was using MI in the quit line and in 2010, I moved to Texas because I was invited by MD Anderson to be part of their team of counselors. So, I started using MI also with other projects, with other behavior changes. From there, I also participated at one point in the training that's provided from Bill and Theresa Moyers in Albuquerque. I think it was in 2011 or maybe early 2012. I'm not 100% sure.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Then at some point, I also received a training for coding with HETI, which is Health Education and Training Institute, in May. Actually, that training was provided by ... Specifically by Allie Hall, I remember. Then in 2012, I participated in the TNT in Fort Wayne, Indiana, with MINT. So, I became a MINT member from 2012. I've been always fascinated by the efficacy of using MI with participants with any behavior change. Also, I wanted to mention I've also been working on training in Spanish because I noticed that my implementation was in Spanish and I would always have to translate all these terms and also even in the training that I was provided was in English, so I would have to translate my application of MI. I felt like it was kind of complicated because I would always have to ... My mind was always translating, going back and forth. I became involved with other people that were interested in turning MI into Spanish or translating MI into Spanish and having our own tools so that it would be easier for our application in Spanish.

**Glenn Hinds:**

There's so much from what you've already said for us to be curious about, in particular the relationship and your translation and the experience of using Motivational Interviewing in another language different from what it was written in. I guess part of what I'm really curious about is what is it that you needed to be done in that journey for, I suppose to be as effective in Spanish as we know that it is in English? But before we delve into that, I am curious about that journey that you took, that you started off as a smoking cessation telephone practitioner and you were interested in Motivational Interviewing. It sounds like there was something about that because you kept going and you deepened your relationship with Motivational Interviewing. I'm just curious. What was it about MI that made you so interested, that led you to continue to learn and develop? Because you've covered quite a range of the aspects of Motivational Interviewing. Integrity, coding, which



is quite a specialist tool to have trained in. What was it about MI that took you down that path?

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Well, thank you for asking that because I'm actually very excited to talk about it for me because I felt like it was very gratifying that people were finding out that they have their own tools to achieve their goals. Imagine people trying to quit smoking. Maybe they would call you after three attempts, maybe four, maybe five, even more attempts. Then figuring out on their own, because obviously MI, we guide them or we facilitate for them to reach their goal, but we don't tell them what to do and all that. As we all know, I would find it enjoyable or gratifying I think is the best word to listen to them be so excited or being able to even take even those small steps on their own and have them acknowledge that it's because of their strength and their capabilities. I definitely saw a difference from using MI and not using it before, and I fell in love with MI in a sort of sense because I thought that it was very effective, at least with smokers that wanted to quit smoking.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

In particular, something that struck you was the experience of somebody who has made multiple attempts in the past to quit smoking that are coming to you now, it sounds like over the phone, the appreciation that they have to interact with someone who is giving them ... Well, not really giving them autonomy but recognizing the autonomy that they still have, even as somebody who has not succeeded. Maybe even framing it rather than someone who has failed a bunch of times. It's more of, "Here they are, ready again to face the challenge." That was something that was really important for them experientially and also it sounds like important for you experientially as the provider.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

You don't feel like you're carrying the person. Like before, you were trying, "Oh my gosh. I'm telling this person all these things that they could do and they're not doing it," and you would try to figure out ... Even some people might think, "Well, this person doesn't want to quit because I'm telling them all that they can do but it's not happening," even for the practitioner or the interviewer or counselor. It takes the responsibility out of their hands and makes the person, the participant responsible. Even for the practitioner or the counselor, it's even better in that sense. That's how I feel.

**Glenn Hinds:**

I guess a lot of the people we've spoken to, and I guess a lot of the people listening to this will be on that journey. Some people will be relieved to hear yourself say, "I discovered that. I desired to help this person. It doesn't mean that I had to find the answer for them and take responsibility." Very importantly, therefore not get disappointed if they came back and they were still smoking. That pressure perhaps from the agency or from the practitioner themselves is, "I'm supposed to help this person stop smoking? That means I'm only helping when they stop."

**Glenn Hinds:**



It sounds like you discovered that. As Seb was describing there, them coming back and continuing to smoke. Was that this is where they're at on their journey to make a decision about their smoking and I can join with them wherever that is, whether it's the 1st, the 5th the 12th, the 15th time of stopping? You protect them in a way that unburdens you from responsibility. It sounds like that in itself was very helpful for the clients that you were speaking to. When you then went to Houston and started working on a more ... A wider range of health behavior changes, did you notice a similar interaction when you were working with people? Did you see the efficacy of the approach translate into other behaviors?

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

I did see that it was effective with other behaviors as well. What I also want to say is that as I was saying the other day to another person is that it doesn't only take the responsibility out of the counselor or the person that's interviewing, but it also takes the responsibility even from the participant's perspective, so they feel like they own their process. If something doesn't work, it's not going to be this doctor or this counselor or this social worker told me this. That doesn't work and it makes it also easier for the participant ... Using MI makes it easier for the participant to be honest because we're also using empathy and active listening and being compassionate. The client or the participant also feeds off of that, if we want to call it that way.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

If the client perceives the interviewer or the clinician as maybe just really focused on their own particular method or coming across as judgmental of a person, then you can imagine that the other person that the client would start to question how transparent they need to be or maybe how honest they need to be. Not that that's the only barrier to being transparent. Obviously, the client's histories before ever meeting the MI practitioner would influence that and their other relationships might, but yeah. Just the sort of empathic nature of MI would likely increase the chance that the client is more honest and forthcoming with how they're doing. How well they're doing, if they had any experiences of smoking again in the case of smoking cessation.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Right. So, you're really tapping into some of the important interpersonal or relational elements that make MI such a successful method. I wonder if we could start shifting gears a bit to talking about MI in Puerto Rico. Many people probably don't know how much MI is used in Puerto Rico or how widely known it is in the healthcare community. Granted, you are just one person in a place where there's lots of people that are providing healthcare, so maybe you don't know every single thing about it, but from your perspective, what do you know about how broadly MI is being used and adopted in the healthcare community?

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Well, I know that at least the Quit Line, they continue to use MI because they've been in the past and I know they also offer supervising ... Supervision, I'm sorry, to the counselors



in the process]. They probably still do that because they also are believers in that this is effective in using the Quit Line. Also, I know that there's a university here that provides certification in addictions and also master's degrees. A master's degree in addiction. I know they also provide MI to their students. Those are at least what I know for now. I have provided training in the past. That company that has a Quit Line, I've provided training in the past, and I've also provided supervision and coaching to those counselors on the project that I've worked on in the past.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

At least that's what I know for now about using MI in Puerto Rico. I don't provide training right now, but I do provide coding and feedback and coaching to some people in English and in Spanish out of Puerto Rico, but I'm also looking forward to ... I'm always looking for the opportunity to provide maybe training or information to anyone in Puerto Rico as well. I just have other responsibilities, but I do remotely provide what I've said before, the coding and feedback and coaching to other people.

**Glenn Hinds:**

It sounds like those that you're aware of are not just being introduced to Motivational Interviewing. It sounds like there's quite a commitment on the part of the agencies that are offering MI to support the practitioners to not just learn it, but also to maintain and deepen their experience and practice of MI and the offering of supervising, coding, and mentoring. It sounds like there is at least a cohort of very well-established MI practitioners and there's a culture within certain agencies to really promote and support the use of Motivational Interviewing in areas of Puerto Rico.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

I don't know if the people from the university received coding and feedback or maybe coaching, which I think is super, super important after you receive a training in MI because at least in my experience and other people that I've seen practicing and that I've provided coaching to, just receiving a training and a Motivational Interviewing is not enough because we know that applying it is not that easy because we're so used to something different. I don't know if they actually have someone coding, but at least the training and having the ... At least learn the spirit of MI. I hope they do, but I'm also a believer of really having that coding and coaching necessary to make sure that the proficiency of MI is actually there. Using the MI skills.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

How about we explore a bit of the cultural implications? For people who don't know, Puerto Rico ... I might be making an assumption here or I don't want to make assumptions here. Puerto Rico is an island in the Caribbean. It is a territory of the United States, although it's not considered formally a part of the United States of America. One of the 50 states, right? So, it is a rather unique location from a cultural perspective, given that it has influences from lots of places all over the world, Spanish is the primary language. Maybe you could talk a bit about Puerto Rico as a location and just maybe a bit about how MI fits really well from a cultural perspective. Maybe there's some things about MI



that are in the sort of traditional sense that don't maybe fit quite well with Puerto Rico from a cultural standpoint in how you adapt it when you are practicing MI or teaching MI.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Well, yes. We're a U.S. territory. For some things, we are almost considered one of the states. Some companies, you can get something mailed here like nothing, but some companies, they think it's international. So, it just varies, I guess. Our first language is definitely Spanish. Our roots are definitely Latin American, so our culture is very ... We have a lot of influence from when the Spaniards were here, and we first received our Europeans here. A lot of influences from the Spaniards, also from our indigenous. We can see it in the food, a lot of that, and some words also come from our Taínos, which are the native people that lived here before the Spaniards came.

The Caribbean is known for receiving a lot of slaves, unfortunately, from Africa. So, we have a lot of influence also from Africans, like using plantains in our food. That's I think basically how I can describe our culture. It's very varied. Our culture is not going to be the same as other people from other Latin American countries because our history is very different, but we also have a lot of American influence because we're a U.S. territory. So, it's kind of very complex, I guess. With programs and projects and different situations that are going on, we relate a lot to Latin America, but then a lot to U.S. background.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Lots of different ingredients leading to the experience of being an individual in a community, living on the island of Puerto Rico. I guess leading on from what Seb was asking, in what ways do you think this particular unique blend of culture has received Motivational Interviewing? What if anything has it had to do with Motivational Interviewing? Add some ingredients, add some of the spice of Puerto Rico to the practice of MI for it to be useful and meaningful for the inhabitants of Puerto Rico.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

In a lot of aspects, Latin Americans are ... I'm sure you guys have heard about this before. We're used to going to someone, a doctor, a counselor, a social worker, and they're the expert. We're sitting there. We're listening to the expert tell us what to do, but as Puerto Ricans, we're very familiar. Sometimes we don't call the doctor "Dr. Something." Sometimes we call them by their first name because even the same doctor says, "Oh, no. Tell me Bob." In that aspect, I don't think it's too far ... Not that we aren't going to be working professionally, but what I mean is that when you use MI, if you let them know from the beginning that this is going to be a partner relationship, a collaboration relationship, I think it's very effective because of that. I think we're very open to that type of conversation. We have a little bit more openness to making that shift into that collaborative style.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

It sounds like it fits well with a culture and community that's already quite interpersonally rich and that sort of bases a lot of the social value on connection. MI fits quite naturally there. Even, I guess, what you described there, how it wouldn't be that uncommon to refer



to a doctor by their first name. One of the things we talk about in MI of course a lot is the partnership between the provider and the client, trying to consider the relationship as a conversation between two experts as opposed to there being just one expert. Maybe there's a fit there too, that again, if there's more of a casual ... Still a respectful relationship but more of a casual one, then there's already less of that hierarchy that you might find in traditional healthcare settings.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Yeah. I think more in relationships with psychologists. Not doctors too much. I think they're still going to be the experts and seen like they're the ones that know everything, but I think in other relationships like social workers and counselors and all that, I think it works very well because we're naturally sharers. You can go somewhere. It's like, "Oh, good morning. How are you? I'm doing fine." We are people that share very easily if you give us the trust and the environment to, but I do see now that I'm thinking about it, maybe doctors not that much. If you go to a neurologist or a general practitioner, it's not going to be that much. It would help a little bit maybe for people to share more about their symptoms and all that, so maybe they should consider it a little bit.

**Glenn Hinds:**

It seems like in many ways that community is a very important part of a shared identity. That friendliness, the connection, that exchanges, communication is part of what we're doing. What was interesting, even as you were endeavoring to describe this relationship, there was almost a dance move that you were almost doing some Latin dancing and it just struck me. That idea of having a relationship with another person is consistent with one of the metaphors of using Motivational Interviewing, of course, is that idea of dancing with the client.

**Glenn Hinds:**

It sounds like for an awful lot of people that part of the culture of being Puerto Rican is that you are open to that achievement, that you're actively seeking a connection with people that you meet. Not just your close family, but everyone you come into contact with. You are open to a relationship or relating to them. What Motivational Interviewing offers practitioners is that freedom to go back to that process, as you described it, which is to be there, to be helpful, but to be consistent with that fluidity in the conversation and the trust and the respect. That mutual respect from the practitioner and the client. What is it we're here to achieve? What is it that I can do for you that you will find helpful? Let us both discover what that is in a way that's going to work for you.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

I think we know this already. It would help the compliancy to treatment because the people would be comfortable saying, "I'm not taking this medication. It made me feel bad. I haven't been taking it consistently," but then if it's the other way around, it would be like, "Oh, yeah. I'm taking the medication. Yeah, every day," because you don't dare to tell a doctor that you're not taking it. Definitely it helps a lot.



**Sebastian Kaplan:**

You've shared various experiences, whether as a clinician or as a trainer, as a coder even, living both in the world of MI in English and MI in Spanish because I believe, if I'm not mistaken, we've now done close to 40 of these episodes, but I don't believe we've had anyone from a primary Spanish speaking country or region. I wonder if you could share anything about how you adapt MI in Spanish or particular things that MI practitioners in Spanish have to keep in mind that those of us who use it in English may not have to.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

From the beginning, I felt like I was ... Being trained in English made it hard for me to translate that knowledge into Spanish. Also, you know how MI uses a lot of metaphors and it uses the strength and emphasizing strength and the autonomy, but also even thinking about metaphors, these complex reflections, because when you start learning MI ... Maybe we don't remember very well because we're a little bit more advanced or we've been using MI for some time, but when we start using MI, sometimes it's only just trying to concentrate on how to make affirmations, how to reflect. Very simple skills.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

When I would learn the training in English, it was like, "Okay. Wow. Yeah. That's great." Then when I would practice it in Spanish, I was like, "Okay. Wait a second. This is different," because you would have to think of different words that were not given as examples in English. I remember making my own instruments of strength in Spanish or even writing emotions and trying to see what words I can use in complex reflections. Like sadness could be ... Well, I'm not going to say it in Spanish, but sadness could be frustrated or this and that. Trying to come up with these words.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

I would have cheat sheets because my brain was going in English and Spanish. I don't know if that makes sense, but that was definitely my brain working all over the place. I would make my cheat sheet so I could be more effective at the beginning, and I would explain that to my supervisor, that point. I was like, "I'm trying my best. It's very hard." Then she would provide her supervision in English, so I would explain to her, "This is hard. This is so hard."

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

I tried to see how I could help other people. Not help other people but join forces with other people that also did MI in Spanish. That's when I started meeting people like Carolina Yahne from New Mexico and Lucia Galleno from Peru. There was also another person from Columbia, France. Now we have more people like Guillard from Spain. We started to join forces and kind of share our experiences in Spanish. At the beginning, I started remembering with Lucia, we shared our difficulties. So, we started translating tools in Spanish that were already assisted in English to Spanish.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**



For example, we translated the manual that you use for coding sessions so we could also have the terms in Spanish. It would help us also kind of ... Our thought process be in Spanish, not in English. If I would explain what happens, it's like people that do translating, you can't just contract a translator. "Just translate whatever I'm saying in Spanish." You have to have a translator understand what you're talking about before you have that person translating. That's actually what happens that your brain is doing to process. The understanding plus the translation. Actually, we meet once a month now to continue our work and join forces and share our experiences in Spanish and the manual that we translated, and we shared with a lot of the MINTies that also speak Spanish.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Again, that commitment that you identified at the beginning of the process, which was, "I like them. I like what it did. That's what kept me being curious to continue developing my skills and my knowledge." That is evident again. That willingness to dedicate yourself to almost a parallel process of commitment of a difficult process, which is one you were learning in Motivational Interviewing. You're actually internalizing the concepts in English and then endeavoring to take it out of that English place and into that Spanish place. Rather than just going, 'you know what? I won't bother with that'. You've been endeavoring with the support of other people and supporting other people to go ... How do we say this in Spanish? How do we communicate this in Spanish? How do we feel this in Spanish so that when we're with other people, that they can get this experience when they're with us?

**Glenn Hinds:**

I guess again just out of continued curiosity about ... What have you noticed about how you translate those English feelings into Spanish feelings that then could be experienced by your clients? I'm just struck by the translation of the experience. The experiences are the same, I guess, but we translate them into English. We speak those experiences in English. You learned that in English and now you translate that. I'm just wondering what that bridge ... What was the process I guess for how you express Motivational Interviewing in Spanish?

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

I think it's the process of practicing that I noticed what was happening. It's very experiential. I just noticed it should be easier. It shouldn't have to be such a struggle. Plus, my training was so good from these people that were training me in English. I wanted also to have other people have that better opportunity of having a good trainer in Spanish as well. I think it's more experiential in wanting to share also with others to have a better experience.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Actually, it's very helpful to hear you say that because I guess no matter what language someone has practiced in MI, what it sounds like you're encouraging them to do is to get to a place where we have ourselves experienced whatever this thing MI is ... Or when you experience an open-ended question, what happens when you hear an affirmation?



How do you experience that when you experience reflective listening? What's the experience rather than just what do you think, or it's written a book. You do it this way.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Again, I go back to the metaphor of the dance. You can follow the steps. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three, but it's getting to the place where you're actually feeling the music and you're moving in consort with the person that you're with. It takes time and it sounds like that's the effort that's getting to a place where it is a bit concrete to begin with. Eventually it becomes a bit more natural and at the end, you have an ability to express it with flare in a way that connects it to other people. So, it's not just, "Here's an idea." It's, "Here's an experience when you're with me as I talk to you about MI, or I use MI when I'm with you."

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

I think that's an excellent example, Glenn, because it's like putting in a book, "These are the steps to dance salsa," but then practicing it is very different. Definitely. That's an excellent example.

**Glenn Hinds:**

I guess it's about that search for the music that helps us begin to move more fluidly and to give ourselves time. As you said it yourself, I know myself as I ... When I was introduced to Motivational Interviewing. This idea of affirmations and I love the idea of cheat sheets. I remember when I was introduced to MI, I would sit on my laptop at the time below the desk to my left when my client was at my right and sometimes, I would just have a list of affirmations or a list of reflection stems that I was trying to practice.

**Glenn Hinds:**

I would just gently turn my head to one side, remind myself and then see if I could use them in the conversation just to begin to integrate the language into my conversations and before we came on air, we talked about, myself and Seb planning to go to South America in two years' time. I'm going to need to learn Spanish to go there. I guess when I first start learning Spanish, that's going to feel very strange and concrete for me, speaking ... Listening to myself speaking Spanish with a Derry accent.

**Glenn Hinds:**

I suppose what I will need to do is continue to feel the discomfort of it sounding wrong or effortful and trust that at some point it will become a little more fluid. That shift from fluency to master that David Rosengren talks about. Again, just offer that guidance and support to anybody who's started or just recently started their journey in Motivational Interviewing. That awkwardness that you're feeling is perfectly natural. As Gabrielle has identified, if you can get someone who has that experience to offer you some coaching and support, then that in itself will become a lot easier for you with time.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**



I have heard also experiences from other people that ... Recently, I'm starting to train someone that has been trained in English. I've heard her experience, telling me, "Wow. What you're explaining now makes sense. It wasn't making sense before because now I'm training her in Spanish. It took me back to how I started. It makes definitely more sense when you try to have that thought process in Spanish. I call it sometimes those micro ... I don't know if this makes sense, but it makes sense for me.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

When we start learning how to do the open questions and the OARS, which are Open questions, Affirmations, Reflections and Summaries. We start there. I call those micro skills because first we have to start those micro skills. Maybe simpler skills. Then we can start focusing on change talk because we're so concentrated on doing open questions and responding with affirmations. We can't even concentrate too much on focusing on change. I try to let them know, "Okay. Let's focus on the micro skills first and then we're ready for the macro skills," which is focusing on change talk and dancing with the client.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

It's like focusing on what is happening internal to the practitioner and how they're communicating to the client using these micro skills. Maybe once a practitioner or the learner becomes comfortable enough with using reflections and affirmations and these kinds of things and they can start to pay more attention to the language of change talk or sustain talk or whatever it might be and then they can more strategically use the skills that they are now becoming more comfortable with and furthering the conversation in a more strategic way.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

That's a process then that does go across the languages, English, and Spanish. That I guess strategy of teaching MI is one that would be familiar to English language teachers and learners, and it sounds like same for you teaching it in Spanish.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Most definitely. We're not leading behind. We're recognizing the person is ambivalent or not or if there is some change talk, but still, I know that at the beginning it's so ... I don't want to say hard, but we're so concentrated on using those skills that it's a little bit harder for them to concentrate if there's change talk or not and all that. I try to let them know that. Let's focus more on those and then we'll focus more on the other ones. Not leaving the other skills behind, but still going with the flow.

**Glenn Hinds:**

It sounds like the spirit of Motivational Interviewing, the thing that we call the spirit of Motivational Interviewing, is familiar to Spanish speaking individuals as well. It's just they describe it in Spanish in different ways. Again, what it is, is it's that ... This is not the spirit of Motivational Interviewing. In motivation, we describe this thing as the spirit of Motivational Interviewing itself and by itself. It sounds like you have it in Puerto Rico. We have it in Ireland. You have it in North Carolina. I guess whoever's listening to this,



whatever part of the world is ... You recognize this as the spirit of Motivational Interviewing existed before we put words to it. It's the benefit of understanding that we then tap into that relationship, that energy, that meaning, that human encounter and dance or sing or whatever way it is that you relate to each other in whatever part of the world you're in, but it has meaning and it's ... These words describe it this way.

**Glenn Hinds:**

When you think about your journey and your practice of MI and thinking about the ... People listen to this podcast from all around the world. What is it that you have recognized, and you notice about the use of Motivational Interviewing in Spanish or in Latin America that might be interesting to other people about the uniqueness of what it is you know or notice that's maybe interesting to other people from around the world?

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

I could say that sometimes what people worry about is that people expect you to be the expert. It doesn't sound familiar to use this type of approach, I want to say. My brain is going in Spanish. I'm thinking about the perfect word in Spanish, and it stays there. As they approach MI, for lack of a better word, they feel like, "Well, I don't know if the person is going to feel like I'm not really helping them or they're going to feel like I'm just letting them be. How am I supposed to help them if I'm not giving them suggestions or recommendations?" It takes time for people to adapt to this idea. Some people like it from the beginning but some people just take time to adapt to the idea.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

As I was explaining the other day, you don't have to not give this person recommendations or suggestions. You can just give it to them in a different way. You have them think of it as a choice. "These are things that might work. They might not work for you, but these are things that generally work for other people. So, if you like, I can give you these ideas. What do you think will work for you?" That's where I don't want to say contract, but maybe that's where the person will be holding themselves responsible about saying, "Well, I'm going to try this and that. Let me see if that ..." Then you can tell them, "Well, let's see if that works."

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

If it's something that you have to tell that they have to do, then tell them that, "This is part of the program, so I'm going to have to ... This is something that we have to do." It doesn't mean that you're going to not be the expert. You are the expert. You went to college, and you do know what they mean, but you're just having them be more responsible and having them think that they're the ones that are taking action, not you. Some people have struggled with that at the beginning, especially because here, at least near Puerto Rico, people focus more on CBT, which is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. That's just like, "This is what's happening. You're going to have to do this and that." It takes people time to make that shift from CBT to using MI or combining with MI some way.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**



You're citing a few things already that are relevant cross-culturally or at least consistent cross-culturally. One is as an MI learner, particularly a learner that has been more familiar with a more directive approach like CBT, it can feel a bit unnerving perhaps to use a method that doesn't involve a lot of advice giving and information giving. Maybe for some, it takes them a while to become more confident that providing the space where the patient or the client has more autonomy is actually effective.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Then from a client perspective, the important I guess human phenomenon of if we say ourselves that we are going to make a change, we're more likely to carry it out than somebody else outside of us telling us that we have to make the change. That's something that obviously is pretty well-known across our MI community, but it's interesting to hear that that is consistent across cultures.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

I sometimes tell them ... Help them recognize that they have their own tools. The participant has their own tools. Help them recognize it. That's part of our work because it's even easier that way. It's like telling someone, "Oh, it's better to do exercise in the morning." I'm not a morning person. You tell me to do exercise in the morning and I'm like, "No way. That's not going to work for me."

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

What works for me doesn't work for someone else. By having options, the participant can say, "Well, yeah. I'll do exercise but I'd rather do it in the afternoon before eating or before dinner. That way, I feel better because then I take a shower and I don't have to wake up so early in the morning." Definitely it's better for the client or the participant to discover their own tools because they'll be more compliant.

**Glenn Hinds:**

I suppose that person's commitment to moving forward or more specifically for us as practitioners to recognize ... Are we committed to a specific path to the outcome or are we willing to identify what the outcome is and explore how might you choose to get there? If you want to get fit, what path would you like to follow rather than going, "You must do this, this and this if you're going to get fit." It sounds like you're still trying to get to the same place. How you're getting there is a bit more back to that, as you describe it, process.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Most definitely. That's where it's gratifying to have the participant learn about themselves or learn what works for them, and maybe even it might work. That's where it's gratifying that you helped that person discover what works for them.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Well Gabrielle, as we start winding things down for our conversation today, which has really been wonderful, we always ask our guests if they would want to share something



that they have an interest that's percolating, something either professional or personal. Could be related to MI, but it might not that you'd like to share with our listeners.

**Glenn Hinds:**

If you weren't on our podcast now, if you were doing something that you really enjoyed, what would you be doing?

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Well right now because we're in quarantine, it's very limited. Usually, I like to walk with my daughter near the beach sometimes or go to the beach. I don't go that much as before, but we're not doing that lately. So, I think I would be walking near the beach. Sometimes my daughter and I like to cook different recipes. I figure out how to do Mofongo the other day, which is something that usually I eat at a restaurant but because I'm avoiding restaurants, I just looked it up and I made it. It wasn't bad. I think I've done it twice now. Things like French onion soup that I love to ask for in a restaurant, I've been making them. Now I've made it three or four times. Actually, it's kind of a stress reliever sometimes. I've made banana bread, which I've never made before and things like that. So, I've been doing that.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Having been to Puerto Rico maybe seven years ago, I can attest to Mofongo as something that really seems to be uniquely Puerto Rican and really quite delicious. I imagine most people listening have no idea what Mofongo is. Without a lengthy description, how would you describe it?

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Well, it's very savory. It has garlic in it. If you like garlic, you're going to like Mofongo. Some people think it's kind of dry because it's made out of plantains. Plantain is like a ... It's like a banana, but it's larger. I think it's harder sometimes. I think it's harder also. What you do is that you cut it in pieces. You fry it. Yes, this is fried. Then you mash it, and you add garlic in it, salt, olive oil and you mash it again all together. You can eat it as a side dish on its own. You put it in a little bowl, and you put it ... You form it, put it in your plate like a side dish or you can make a little bigger one. Make a hole in it and put meat in it or shrimp, chicken, cook it and put some ... Put it in it. It's very good.

**Glenn Hinds:**

You can clearly see the energy and the passion and excitement as you were describing what you've been learning. I guess a lot of other people will be down to find out how many new things that they have learned as a direct consequence of lockdown and quarantine all over the world and discovering hidden talents. Potentially one of the secondary consequences of this pandemic has been some of the light has come out from under our own vigil and we're starting to discover things about ourselves. We really appreciate you sharing that with us.

**Glenn Hinds:**



What we also do is, Gabrielle, is that if our audience are interested in anything that you've described or want to have a conversation with you, if they can contact you afterwards, how would they do that?

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Of course. You can contact me at my email, which is [gtudo96@gmail.com](mailto:gtudo96@gmail.com). I'll spell it out just in case. It's G as in Gabrielle, T as in Thomas, U as in ... I don't know. Uruguay. D as in David and O as in Oscar [96@gmail.com](mailto:96@gmail.com).

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Well, great. Gabrielle, thank you for joining us. It's been a real pleasure learning more certainly about you, but also about MI in Puerto Rico and just thinking about the process of applying MI in Spanish or learning or taking something that you've learned in English and changing it into the Spanish language. Really wonderful to have met you and to have this conversation today.

**Gabrielle Ruiz:**

Well, thank you for the invitation. It's been wonderful.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Glenn, before we sign off, maybe another rundown of social media in case people missed it at the beginning?

**Glenn Hinds:**

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