

# Talking to Change: An MI Podcast

## Glenn Hinds and Sebastian Kaplan



### Episode 46: Reducing Burnout and Compassion Fatigue with Kristin Dempsey, EdD, and Ali Hall, JD

#### **Glenn Hinds:**

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

#### **Sebastian Kaplan:**

Glenn. Good to see you.

#### **Glenn Hinds:**

And you, and hello everybody. Today, we're going to be exploring the really important issue of burnout and compassion fatigue, but before we get into that, Seb, maybe you could remind people about how they can contact us.

#### **Sebastian Kaplan:**

On Twitter, our handle is @changetalking. On Facebook, you can reach us at Talking To Change, and on Instagram, you can reach us at @talkingtochangeodcast. Any email correspondence for us, any ideas for new episodes, any questions that you might have, you can contact us at [podcast@Glennhinds.com](mailto:podcast@Glennhinds.com). Just a brief note about our audience ship. We're very excited recently to discover that we had crossed the 200,000-download threshold, so that was wonderful. Based on our database, we've been downloaded or accessed in 142 countries around the world, so really excited that this has become a worldwide project.

#### **Glenn Hinds:**

Yeah, this is very exciting. So again, thank you for everybody who's been part of that journey with us. Today's journey is exploring, as we say, the burnout and compassion fatigue. Having spoken with Kristin and Ali, what were the standout points for you then, Seb?

#### **Sebastian Kaplan:**

We were thrilled to have Kristin and Ali join us, both friends and colleagues within the MI Network of Trainers. I think as our podcast often unfolds in this way that the topic that we can go outside the bounds of MI to discuss our topic, and that's certainly what we did. We addressed even just clarifying all the different terms that are used to describe and to capture the experiences of burnout or compassion fatigue, and then some others. We got a bit into MI itself and some of, for instance, the elements of the MI spirit and how those might contribute to a reduction in burnout amongst practitioners. Then, we even got into some bigger picture organizational ideas, how managers and leadership can use MI



specifically, but even just some of the main spirit elements to help with workplace culture and that sort of thing. So those are the things that really stood out to me. What about you, Glenn?

**Glenn Hinds:**

Yeah, alongside of that it was just the opportunity to spend that hour with two heart-centered people, helping helpers stay well while helping was really what struck me there. It was just how considerate and kind and thoughtful and wise Kristin Dempsey and Ali Hall are and how well they work together in this search. Like you say that willingness to explore, not just the needs of the individual, but to take into account the needs of organizations, particularly given the 16 months of the pandemic and how do you respond to that? So, we really hope you enjoy the episode. We normally start the episode with a conversation exploring the practitioner's journey into Motivational Interviewing. I wonder if that would be okay for us to start with you today is just bit about yourself and your journey in Motivational Interviewing.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

I'm Kristin. My journey came, I think I first started to do Motivational Interviewing probably over 20 years ago. I was working in a program that was a family therapy organization, but we had as our specialization working with individuals who also had substance use challenges of all sorts, and many people were mandated to our agency, and we worked all along the developmental of lifespan, fantastic training. Only one thing was missing, which was really how to engage people, because so many people came in who didn't necessarily really want to be there. So that's when I happened to come across this Motivational Interviewing thing and it was immediately love at first try like, "This is exactly what I need."

**Kristin Dempsey:**

There's an article I'm going to refer to later by Annie Fahy about this idea of being a substance use counselor and finding Motivational Interviewing and realizing, "This is what I need," so it was important for preventing my burnout and allowing me to work in this field for over 25 years. I was fortunate enough to be involved in the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers starting in 2008.

**Ali Hall:**

For me, really, maybe it's that I just do everything the hard way, but I was immersed in a treatment center that really specialized in a confrontational approach, made it quite an art in fact, and prides itself on its great success rates.

**Ali Hall:**

With the most difficult to serve people, we had a 10% success rate, and it wasn't that great with these really difficult people, not worried at all about the 90% that we were driving away and how to be more effective with them. So being introduced to MI was a



little bit like stumbling across a full canteen in the middle of the desert and just everything made sense after that, so the contrast couldn't have been more clear, ways to engage people successfully and helping them move towards their cherished goals and dreams rather than an imposing or installing approach. So never looked back, I didn't.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

So, both of you came to it, it sounds like, in slightly different ways. Kristin, maybe for you, it was, you had a lot of the critical components of an agency and perhaps some good methodology, and there was the missing piece, this last element, which really sparked your interest, certainly and it provided you something that you were looking for without maybe even knowing you were looking for it. Ali, it sounds like you used the desert image to describe how things were for your agency and for your clients and really a desperate need to find something to meet the needs of so many that the agency were missing.

**Ali Hall:**

That's really true. I can speak to the fact that way I was trained in family systems work and also, in this program, the agency I worked in was doing a lot of very early work around understanding neurobiology of addiction, for instance. That work was just so important and was so critical and it answered so many questions, I think, that certainly many people in our community were looking for and many families so greatly needed. This engagement link with MI, it is so profound, and it was so important. It's like we know what to do when people are on board, but man, how do we get them there, especially when we have a large family and this idea of identified patients and all the challenges that come with someone struggling with various addictions, right? There's different ways to engage and MI helps us explore where to get started. So, it was such an important, missing for me, critical link. Yeah.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

At the same time, the way I came to it, and then for the organization, as an implementation concern, it became really a transformation from the inside out, which there are many right ways to do this stuff. That ended up being a really profound transformation for an agency to undertake and required some pretty deep soul searching.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Quite a significant process that you're describing there that idea, that internal change and I guess that that, in many ways, we've explored in other episodes that the work that the individual practitioner does or experiences as they learn and develop and practice Interviewing. But what you're describing is it's not just the individual practitioner, it's the whole organization going through a transition and just looking at the experience of being curious about, "Why are we being successful with 10%?" And equally curious, "Why are we missing out on 90%?" I guess a lot of the listeners will recognize that there's variations of those numbers, but there's lots of times where people could do with our help but choose not to engage with us. It was almost like you were describing it, Kristin, that what Motivational Interviewing being offered was it's almost like an onboarding.



**Glenn Hinds:**

It's a bit of that, "How do I connect with this individual to begin to offer them the other aspects of what it is we offer, whether it be Family Systemic Therapy, or CBT, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, that it's working with in conjunction?" So, I guess maybe that's the theme of what we're exploring so far is just the act of working together, working together with other approaches, working together with each other, and working together with our clients, so really quite interesting. We're really looking forward to explore that with these in a bit more detail, but one of the things we're also curious about is, how did you two get together? How did you come to this place where you are working together?

**Kristin Dempsey:**

We had to talk about this because we've been working together for a while. When did we actually get to know each other? I think we started to connect probably at a Motivational Interviewing trainers forum about 11, 10 years ago. I've really been benefited from Ali's incredible ability to reach out and collaborate and get things started, so Ali has this wonderful characteristic of really bringing people in. It's a great example of how she uses her leadership, which I'm so grateful for and many are. Probably more recently, in the last five years ago, I was able to work with Ali on bringing some fidelity tools for working with Motivational Interviewing.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Some you might know, the Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity tool and the Motivational Interviewing Clinical Assessment tool, which Ali's helped develop. We brought it to some places in Northern California to help train providers in those tools, which was absolutely terrific because it really upped our game in terms of training in California. Then more recently, especially in the last year, we've been doing some collaboration around doing some Motivational Interviewing and Dialectical Behavior Therapy integration on, basically, well webcasts like this and providing them free to the community. So those are just a couple things. I think there's probably a couple more. Ali, I might have missed some.

**Ali Hall:**

Well, no, and I was deeply grateful to meet Kristin and actively brainstorm any opportunity to reach out to her and find ways for us to work together. Excellent collaborator, creative, insightful, just the heart set and mindset that she brings to our collaborations I routinely make excuses to pitch more ideas to her so we can continue working together.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Well, like with many of the friendships that we share meeting at a Motivational Interviewing forum is certainly something that we can all relate to. It's basically our version of a conference and it is a really stimulating event, both intellectually, but many lifelong friendships are born in that setting. So, it sounds like that's certainly the case for the two of you. It's a collaboration that's certainly centered around MI, but you've expanded that to some of the other clinical specialty areas like Dialectical Behavior Therapy that you mentioned, Kristin. Maybe you can start to tell us a bit about your interest in burnout and



compassion fatigue and the work or at least the thinking that you all have been doing around this topic.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Thank you, Sebastian. I think I'll get started by first of all, telling you a little bit about my immediate interest in this. So that, of course, brings in this last 15 months that we've been going through all of this. As we talk about the pandemic in particular, you'll hear people saying things like problems, challenges, inequities, concerns that have been in our communities and our cultures all along are really starting to surface, really starting to surface in some of this environment. I think what we became interested in is some of the culture, some of the structural issues that many behavioral health providers have been working in that have already created fatigue and stress really got kicked into high gear in this last year where everyone, all of a sudden really needs our support.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

I know for the first, maybe month, six weeks of the pandemic in March, things got real quiet, both in my private practice and in my training, and then things just exploded just with all kinds of needs. Much of the training I did last year was for agencies wanting me to talk with their staff, not just about Motivational Interviewing, but also just about working online and just dealing with the incredible amounts of stress that the folks were dealing with. So, I also noticed that 2020 was one thing. People were getting through the year, and they were challenged and in California, had another layer of stress because our fire season started early and so we're in a middle of absolute climate crisis in California, as you might know. So that's another level of stress among providers, because they're often doing emergency response.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

So, I found 2020 people were very stressed, of course, but pulling through. For me, I know personally, that when we turned the corner into 2021, that's when a lot of folks really started to get really raw in terms of clients, as well as clinicians. It's harder to see the long term and when is this going to end and what's the plan here? So, the compassion fatigue, the burnout, these things, they're starting to bubble up more. So, I'll just say this and then kind of let Ali speak her thoughts about this, but just to define some terms, because we know this becomes very confusing, right? What's secondary traumatic stress, like compassion fatigue versus burnout? What are we talking about here? So, we're thinking of the secondary traumatic stress compassion fatigue, sometimes called vicarious traumatization. It's kind of the state of exhaustion or dysfunction.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

It can happen biologically, physiologically, socially, spiritually, that happens as a result of a lot of exposure to compassion stress, to hearing people's stories. That's certainly an occupational hazard for folks we're working with; bit different from burnout in general, which is really more about anybody can have burnout and it certainly crosses occupation. It can be, and whenever you feel unsatisfied, powerless, overwhelmed at work and certainly, compassion fatigue can lead to burnout, so that's a concern we have. One last



thing I'll say that just added a little tougher to this year was this idea of shared trauma, that it's not just we're working with folks in the community who are really stressed, we have that stress too. We're worried about our families. We're worried about our safety. We're dealing with, in this case, fires and smoke as well, so it becomes another layer of difficulty for providers.

**Ali Hall:**

Thanks for clarifying those terms, Kristin, and excellent question, Glenn. It's hard to follow the thread all the way back, like where did this whole thing start? In my career before behavioral health and before MI is an organizational behavior, organization design, work motivation, all of that stuff. So, I was very familiar with organizational responses to stress and burnout and so on, from that perspective. I guess it was interesting to me that when I'm moved into behavioral health that the responsibility for resolving secondary trauma burnout and other things was really placed at the feet of the individual. It was curious to me that there weren't more organizational responses, because it really is a both/and thing.

**Ali Hall:**

The top five causes of secondary trauma and burnout are really organizationally placed and yet, we rely on the individual to solve all of their own problems. It is something that's a both/and, I think, but interestingly, I give much credit to child welfare and some criminal justice organizations that try to figure out how can we help our clinicians best? So, they took a little bit more of an organizational approach to this, so very appreciative of that, and developing some programs early on, even before I met Kristin, interestingly or around implementing solutions for resolving and addressing secondary trauma, particularly in high stress workplaces like prisons, like child welfare agencies, what it takes to do that. I guess I've just been an eager student of secondary trauma ever since that time.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Again, what's interesting is that what you're identifying is that before the two of you met, before the two of you got into this type of line, what you identified was these issues you were around, trauma was around, secondary trauma was around, burnout was around, and as well as that people's efforts to respond to it were around. What you've been doing is exploring what is it that people need, and that idea that as we turned into 2021, the world just went, "Enough already," and are clamoring for support. So, what we're curious about then, is where does Motivational Interviewing fit into this response for you?

**Kristin Dempsey:**

I'll talk generally at first, and then I think you can get more specific examples. For me, the thing I'd like to really speak about in terms of Motivational Interviewing is about the spirit. So, whether or not we'll work with Motivational Interviewing at the level of individual practitioner, certainly at the level of someone receiving services, but also in terms of organization. So you've had folks here speaking about Motivational Interviewing for leadership and organization, that the thread that goes through all of them and certainly interventions as well, but more importantly, the global thread about the values and attitudes, that Motivational Interviewing standard MI, that Motivational Interviewing for



leadership and organizations, the thing that really glues it all together, values wise, is about having the spirit, the spirit of working in collaboration, the spirit in giving people voice, the evocation, helping people be evocative, which is incredibly empowering.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

I believe so much of burnout is about being disempowered. The idea of having compassion and we'll speak to this a bit later of about this idea of compassion, stress being a real cause of burnout, but how can we have more compassion, satisfaction, and being able to orient towards that? Also, of course, just having acceptance strategies and being aware of what we can and can't control. Again, I think what Ali is saying so critical that this is not just an individual solution. Individuals need to be powered and these tools can really help empower them, in terms of finding their voice, but also on the organizational level. How much are we allowing people to be organized to collectively determine what they can benefit from and how much are we willing to collaborate?

**Ali Hall:**

Thanks for that, Kristin. I agree with you that MI has a vital role in strengthening, not only individual effectiveness, but also strengthening work relations, the quality of supervision, leadership, implementation really pays off.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

So, Kristin, you're introducing the notion of the MI spirit and the four components of it as it relates to burnout. Maybe we could explore in a bit more detail about how is it that if a clinician, certainly, if an organization is operating in a manner consistent with the MI spirit, how would that lead to lowered rates or reduced rates of burnout, compassion fatigue, and some of these things that we're talking about? How does that actually work?

**Kristin Dempsey:**

How does that actually work? Right. Exactly. So, it sounds great, but how do we do this or what does this look like? There's actually one article I'd like to refer to that I'll have on the show notes, that is one of the best I found that spoke to this. It was an article called Care Coordinators in Integrated Care: Burnout Risk, Perceived Supports, and Job Satisfaction and the primary author is Al Au. It came out in 2018 and they were looking at burnout risk and job satisfaction reported among care coordinators. I was particularly interested in this article because these folks are doing work that are typical of the work I certainly have done, but the people I trained do so many folks working in crisis support services, homelessness services, I'll just say unhoused folks, working with people with co-occurring conditions.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

They were looking at when people feel job satisfaction, and they found actually, a lot of people in the study actually were feeling pretty satisfied with what was going on for them looking at these factors. Some of the factors that they thought that contributed to lower risk of burnout included appropriate training, especially on the particular coordinator's role and the complex conditions and diverse needs. I found that to be so true when teaching



and training Motivational Interviewing like the spiritually important and how to actually use the skills that how to actually put it the context of what this person is doing in their job. How does this show up for **you, the** person?

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Actually, I was talking about this yesterday in a coaching group, how empowering that is to have a sense of a skill, to be able to practice it and feel like you have such access to it in your toolbox when you need it. That right there just reduces so much stress. My trainees were talking about just feeling so much more comfortable just knowing, "Oh, wait. I just made that link with this concept and how I'm really going to try it out." That's so powerful. They also found what was really important was having supportive supervisors and managers, probably no surprise there, but managers that can hear stress, that have a willingness. There's a lot, systemically, that supervisors and managers may not be able to immediately change in their environment, especially in public health services, speaking again, here in the U.S., but maybe "elsewhere as well. But there's things managers and supervisors can definitely do in terms of culture.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

There's ways we can still help people feel empowered in their culture. Even allowing people to have a certain voice, being able to share about difficulties, being able to help shift conversations on, things we can versus things we cannot do in our work, there's ways of being able to enhance that. Also, another factor that was helping with burnout was just having support among colleagues and not working in a way that seems isolated, being able to have a sense of community. So I think Motivational Interviewing, this idea of being able to be transparent and to be willing to hear things, even the things that are really uncomfortable is part of that spirit, is a really powerful way of helping folks who are out there just be so genuine and be able to have access to the skills they need when they need them.

**Ali Hall:**

Yeah. Thanks for that, Kristin. We certainly know that there's an inverse relationship between compassion and burnout and it may be that our compassionate nature is what draws us into this work in the first place and may or may not make us more vulnerable to secondary trauma. Yet without that, we don't have as many protective factors as we might be able to access. Some other things that we know about work motivation generally are that the causes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction that work tend to be independent from one another. What we know leads to a meaningful experience at work, that the work itself is meaningful, that we have others who believe in our autonomy, that there's a sense of importance to the work that we do as well as that we are important to the organization, that individuals matter, that people matter.

**Ali Hall:**

So, this idea that people are dispensable and replaceable and all of that, MI holds a very different point of view, which is a highly protective factor about the absolute worth, that the whole person matters and makes a difference. So, what we know too, is beyond a





certain salary, beyond enough or beyond adequate conditions that when organizations put more into that, it doesn't necessarily make a difference or increase work satisfaction. The things that actually make a difference are things that are not as costly, that relate to the human being and the integrity and absolute worth of the individual. So, we know that MI brings that and if our interactions are infused with that in the workplace, both from top and down, all the way around, that MI is in the air and in the water of the organization, I think it makes a really big impact, not only to the bottom line, but to the quality of relationships and supporting protective factors.

**Glenn Hinds:**

So, something about the idea of our compassion maybe being a reflection of our sensitivity to other people's need, and our desire to be willing to go into situations perhaps other people don't, it's almost like we're willing to go into emotional fires to support other people. But the risk you're describing is, is what happens to us when we're in fighting that emotional fire for someone else or with somebody else? What you're suggesting is the importance of us not trying to do that by ourselves, that the more we're in relation as social creatures, the more we're in relation with other people in meaningful relationships, the more protected we are to go in and to come back out and recharge our batteries, to go back in again and come back out.

**Glenn Hinds:**

It's where we're going in and coming out and being on our own that potentially the risks are increased for us and that we're picking up that vicarious trauma, that secondary trauma, of someone else's pain. Just that whole shift in the culture, I guess a lot of people recognize the difference between the economic needs of an organization, which has to keep the lights on, with the desire of the practitioners, which is to be helpful in how those things can be almost like oil and water, that the organization's needs and individual practitioner's needs and clients' needs may not always be balanced, but it's about how do we explore? How do you support the organization? Now if you practice some of this, it will be financially better off.

**Glenn Hinds:**

You will benefit financially as a consequence because people will stay and work longer, stay more efficient and be more effective. Can we just continue to explore that a wee bit more in detail? How do you help organizations and practitioners do that, because one of the things many of us will recognize as we introduce motivation in trainings, people will say, "Yeah, this is lovely, but I don't have the time," or "I'm busy enough." So, the idea of introducing a new skill can sometimes be felt as an additional pressure itself because I'm already busy, and I'm just wondering how do you support training groups and organizations, begin to explore how to do this in a way that doesn't add to already busy lives?

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Right. There's almost a positioning here of, "I can't afford to do MI. I'm too busy. I can't afford it," and try to find a thoughtful way of saying, "You can't afford not to do MI," and



so how to help with this idea of not MI as being an add-on, but MI as being a bridge or a tool that actually is going to be able to help you get to what it is you want to do, because it's so much about, "How do I engage maybe clients, but also how do I help keep my staff engaged? How do I help create this warm, friendly, and welcoming environment where people are feeling they can support each other in times of need?" This is a recipe for that. This is what you're searching for. So, in your day-to-day work, how can this be the way you do your day-to-day work?

**Kristin Dempsey:**

So, when you do an interview, how can you start to include this? So sometimes what I'll do is in the training, I try to get really specific, like pull in your challenges. What work do you do? I really just try to get clear about what might your typical assessment or a typical conversation over here look like, and then how can we practice it in a way that's using these particular skills? I find folks need to have experiences, very concrete experiences. There's something else you said too, Glenn, I want to focus on because I think this is really important, which is just the importance of dialectical thinking of both/and so it's the folks get into this thing of, "I have to do this and Motivational Interviewing is going to be this something different," and how to bring in, yes, got to keep the doors open and we can do this in terms of having compassion and towards our staff and towards others.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

So how do we bring them both together with a certain amount of acceptance that there's always going to be discomfort? There's always going to be something we can improve. That's what continuous quality improvement's all about, too, and having that orientation around that. There's one thing I'll say just really quickly also about this, to continue to answer your question also thinking about this idea I got from Charles Figley, who's really well known in the leaders of thinking about and researching compassion fatigue. This is from an article wrote probably about well, about 14 years ago or so, but it's such an important article about this idea of how to increase compassion satisfaction, moving away from compassion stress to compassion satisfaction. In this conversation, there is this idea of it's not about, well, let's just try to only focus on the happy things at work, because that's not realistic and it's not sustainable and nobody's going to relate to that.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

But it's how do we take the real struggles we have and be honest about that and be genuine and be open, have a conversation while also spending time to really focus on our successes? So, I can be looking at places where people are not doing well in our program. How can we engage them? This is a real problem. People are feeling burned out. How do we start to address that, and where do we see the places where we've had clinicians who have supported so many people in the community and what kinds of stories do we have, helping people tell their stories of successes as well as those places of, "Where we need to change?" So, there can be a both/and so the more we can increase our positivity ratio of those things, of success, compassion, just successes in terms of great outcomes, right? To be able to focus on those, the more we can actually increase that ratio compared to the stressors, the more we're able to really flourish. That's an idea of being able to find ways to help staff flourish by shifting some of that focus.



**Ali Hall:**

I love that, Kristin, that it's this idea that some organizations or systems might be drawn to promote or strengthen flourishing. It's also the case that some organizations and systems might be more drawn to tangible bottom line things or, "What's going to be different if I do this? I may very well be the glue that holds everything together rather than something that we have to add, or it's going to break our backs," but this may be a little bit of a long response. But when we think about the bottom line, the implications of burnout and secondary trauma globally costs more than 1 trillion in lost productivity. With life and death consequences, suicide rates for caregivers are 40% higher for men and 130% higher for women. Then, in the general population and caregivers are most susceptible to these things. Then, it is the case that organizations without systems to support the well-being of their employees not only have higher turnover and lower productivity, but higher healthcare costs. Their employees are nearly three times as likely to seek a different job, more often to call in sick, and more often to visit emergency rooms.

**Ali Hall:**

So, if organizations take some of those things into account when they make decisions about what evidence-based practices should we employ, MI seems like an immediate solution to them. Some organizations may be, "I don't really care about all of that. I don't care about these aggregate statistics, but what I do care about is, 'Can I reduce missed appointments? Can we reduce positive UAs? Can we increase the number of people to whom we give resources that they actually follow through on those things? Can we increase the number of times that someone comes knocking on the door and the person being served is willing to let them in?'" What level really speaks to the organization? Does an office need to have a focus group that does this, and they implement and see how it goes and then roll it out to the entire organization? It doesn't have to be the whole apple at one time. There are many ways to enter this and many reasons that people might want to think about this.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Yeah. You're both really laying out global or more population-based rationale, I suppose, for strength-based MI like interventions, also systemic reasons or systemic ideas. If you have an intervention that works better, it would not be a huge leap to assume that the organization itself would do better from the business standpoint, which we don't do a whole lot of talking about, business and finances on this podcast. But I think everyone can understand the reality that organizations really aren't going to succeed if the business side it is at least okay, if not flourishing. So, using an approach like MI might keep people engaged in treatment in a more consistent way.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

There's evidence to suggest that there may be fewer missed appointments or late cancellations and things like that if the relationship between the provider and the clients are stronger, and these sorts of things. In my own work and in my own institution, I've thought about the interventions for burnout have seemed to be more at the systemic or departmental level and things that are, I would imagine, helpful and welcomed, but things



like wellness days, having a lot of language in terms of communication around being aware of one's own needs and so not risks of burnout, things like that. But I've often thought about the 'in the room' burnout interventions that we might have or burnout prevention interventions.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

If I could go back to those four elements of the MI spirit that you discussed, Kristin, it actually makes a lot of intuitive sense and hopefully, the research will support this as more research is done in this area. But if we were to take partnership, for instance, that's an important part of the MI spirit, one of the four elements. You can imagine if you are in partnership with a client that is a much different experience than certainly if you were in an adversarial relationship with a client. But even if you were in a positive relationship, but one where there was a great deal of burden on you for that person's outcomes, then that would be really hard.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

If you multiply that one interaction by 50, if that was your caseload size, boy, that would be quite a burnout risk if you now had to carry this responsibility for someone else's well-being in that way that it's not that we don't care about people's outcomes in MI, but we engage people in this partnership more egalitarian way, acceptance in the same way. If we can acknowledge and really understand that clients have the freedom to do what they like once they leave our offices and we really embrace that and use that as a way to engage with them, that's a much different way of being, a much different emotional experience on the provider, than if we felt like we had to control them and make sure that they never had another drink or never had another drug or whatever it might be. I just think that there's some really practical and intuitive links to the elements of the MI spirit that would help the practitioner. So just curious for what your thoughts are about that.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Absolutely, and because we talk all the different levels of being able to prevent burnout, like you said, systemically and organizationally and for individuals. I know for individual training, often there's this pressure, you can see, it comes up with people like, "I know I'm supposed to be evocative. I get this evocative." Then that becomes an issue, right? "I'm supposed to be a certain way, but I have productivity." But what if they don't talk, some people just don't talk and, "I'm supposed to be evocative," or "I try to partner with them and they won't say anything or they don't know." So that, in a way, weirdly, just even speaking about the spirit sometimes folks get worried about if they're doing MI right. There's that coming up. So sometimes I just, "Let's just stop. Let just breathe and let's just think about a way of coming at our work with just incredible curiosity and wonder." You just, almost even practicing that, just wondering with somebody or wondering about somebody or just, okay someone doesn't want to talk so much, but they're here in the room.

**Kristin Dempsey:**



Sometimes it's just about visualizing, sitting with folks, visualizing just sitting with the challenges and just continuing to breathe and continuing just to notice and to continue to think about, "What could I be curious about with this person? They're here for a reason and what are they saying non-verbally?" And just helping practitioners relax out of the fix-it mode of having to somehow problem solve and move into this place of curiosity and wonder. I also like to add a little piece here, too, for individual practitioners of being in touch with your own values, being in touch with your own values whenever you do this work and always being connected to at this point, regardless of what the organization wants, regardless of maybe a challenge I have engaging this person, "How am what I'm doing right now, how does it help?"

**Kristin Dempsey:**

How am I really working in a way that's consistent with who I want to be the practitioner?" Whether that's compassionate, whether that's effective, just so there's this sense of being able to, even when the time of great darkness or times of great struggle, being able to make decisions that are around, "Okay, I'm here with this person and I'm still in a place where I'm feeling I'm working at my level of compassion or I'm working at my level of helping," or whatever it is that someone finds important. Just because I think that's so protective for us to be able to always have our values as an anchor and be able to think about the words I say, the next intervention I do. How is that helping me be this? So that's sometimes the way I'll work with them, just almost having that visualization and imagining being in and giving permission just to slow it down and observe, maybe even take a step back so there isn't all this internal pressure to somehow be in the spirit that doesn't become, yet another stressor for someone.

**Ali Hall:**

Yeah. I like that, Kristin. I feel like MI is a way of helping us become even more effective, finding more avenues to be effective with others. If my only self-worth, if my only efficacy comes from making sure this person achieves a certain outcome or that I really carry that person and all 50 and everybody else on my shoulders at all times, that's not only an impossible burden, but it closes off many other opportunities for us to be effective with others. So, I guess I'm really feeling like MI is about bringing a sense of humility and right sizing our role in people's lives. Sometimes in training with me, we may do some self-reflective activities or other kinds of training activities around the expert trap and the righting reflex.

**Ali Hall:**

Even if well intended, where does that go? How can we take our good intentions and use them in a more effective way, in a right-sized way, from a position of humility of sharing expertise, sharing the table? The table's big enough for all the experts to come to it, whether it's us working with one person, with a group, with a family, we need all those voices to be heard, that the solutions that we're going to come up with together are going to be far more effective than the ones that I, on my own, will have available for that person. So, I think it's a way of expanding and enlarging our effectiveness with others, and I guess opening that door has been one of the most profound things I have seen people make shifts around as they come away from MI training.



**Glenn Hinds:**

I love that idea of becoming bigger as a consequence of learning and experiencing Motivational Interviewing, whether as a practitioner or whether as a client. It fits very much with, we had a conversation earlier in our journey with Stan Steindl talking about compassion, and Stan offered this beautiful insight to compassion. He talked about his dad who was a civil engineer and said, "My dad showed compassion differently from how I do it. His compassion as a civil engineer was ensuring that the buildings that he built were as safe as possible for other people." So, it sounds like there's this universal source called compassion. How each one of us individually may manifest that will depend on the roles we have within the human hive. For us helpers, it's the instinct to be helpful to people around an emotional level, around a behavioral level, whereas accountants their compassion is about making sure that the business stays in the black and that there's enough money to keep everything going.

**Glenn Hinds:**

So, when we're talking to accountants, we're not trying to turn them into a therapist, but what we're going to explore is how can you do what you do well, taking into account that these relational factors could actually save you money and help you to flourish as a practitioner of accountancy to make this business really, really profitable. Alongside of that is the whole consequence, I guess, of from a practitioner perspective, given the fact that in my experience, people who are in the helping game probably have what I describe as a higher sensitivity to other people's distress. As a consequence of that, we're not only coming into contact with, but we're experiencing their distress in a much more acute level within ourselves. I wonder what thoughts you have or ideas you have about how do you support people, begin to recognize the difference between themselves and maybe other people in the hive? How do you maintain where they've actually taking on board this secondary trauma? How do you help them differentiate, "Is this yours, or is this somebody else's?"

**Ali Hall:**

I love your question, Glenn. I'll offer that to Kristin, because I know she's got something to say about this. I'm not surprised. I know she has something to say about this, but I just wanted to make an observation about video conference fatigue. One of the things that I think we need to be a little kinder to ourselves about these days, especially as helpers, or more attuned to visual, verbal, other cues. If we're a foot-and-a-half away or a meter-and-a-half away, even at best, from a video screen all day long, we're taking in a lot of data and we're wearing down the precious resources that we have.

**Ali Hall:**

If we say yes to every single request and every meeting that comes up, "I've got time so I can fill it," all of a sudden, it's a schedule creep thing where we just say, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes," at the end of the day, we're absolutely worn out by everything that we're taking in and attending to in a way that's different than if we were in person or if we actually took breaks away from the video conference platform. Fantastic tool, I'm not going to let it go myself. I just think we have to bring a little bit more self-compassion and think about some



very practical strategies for helping ourselves in these moments of being able to step away and provide buffers, not only during video conferencing, but at the ends of our days to transition to the rest of our lives. Anyway, but I know Kristin is very eager to respond directly to your question.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Great. Thank you, Ali. Yes. I actually have an exercise. I do visualizations with folks about boundary creation and just imagining ourselves being in compassionate relationships, but also having boundaries. Again, it's about the both/and, like I can be in a relationship with you, but also be able to have some sense of bringing in what your energy is and being able to have some boundary, but I'm also sending out my own helping and there's all kinds of visualizations around this. There's one I can actually do right now if you like just to-

**Glenn Hinds:**

Yes, please.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

This is from Buddhist tradition, but it's been brought into a lot of different practices and secular practices, and it's called Kundalini meditation idea. It's just a beautiful way, I think, and I do it a lot and it's helpful to also have in terms of training our own staff. Great thing to do at the beginning of a staff meeting, even, helping people practice this and you can do it alone. You can just actually, even right now, just sit and notice your breath, not even feeling like you need to change your breath, but just noticing and focus on your breathing and just be present with breathing in and breathing out. If distracting thoughts come up, just go ahead and notice them and let them go, continuing to breathe. Now I'm going to invite you to link your attention to your breath and on your exhale, breathe out the light of basic goodness, your wish to help alleviate pain and suffering.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

On the inhale, invite the smokey darkness of negativity and suffering to enter your heart or it will be transformed into light and maybe bring to mind some pain that you've helped someone with, things that you've noticed and just noticing where that pain is and breathing it in and exchanging maybe that pain, that sadness, that loss, and just breathing out the light of freedom and peace. Imagine as you breathe in that pain and transform it into light and compassion, breathing it out, to maybe that person, to the universe, to yourself and just noticing the breathing in and the breathing out of compassion. I can just come back and just sit with whatever that brings up in the moment, just noticing what's coming up for you now.

**Glenn Hinds:**

I love the idea of an invitation to see ourselves as somehow a process of converting one energy to another through our intention.

**Kristin Dempsey:**



Yeah.

**Glenn Hinds:**

That we're willing to accept that there is pain, there is darkness, there is loss in the world and that by allowing ourselves to accept that, but also to celebrate the gift of our own creativity, of our own positivity, of our own internal light, that we can begin to help transform that, not just for ourselves, but for everyone through our intention of just paying attention.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

It really is. Just even with that simple couple of minutes of just doing that, I notice for myself, I started to feel so less stressed and so less exhausted and so much more like I have a superpower. I just visually and just what brings up for me emotionally and just physically, it's a powerful change. That was just a couple minutes of doing that. Again, that doesn't solve all our problems. There's other things we always have to work on, but it's all about putting all this into a toolbox and having access to it. I tell my students a lot, "We are our tool, so we have to keep our tool well-functioning and working and honor that fact and that this idea of self-care, sometimes it can feel so shallow, but that it's something that we have to do."

**Kristin Dempsey:**

I call it 'radical self-care.' We have to do something every day, even if it seems like the smallest thing like this daily maintenance. Talk about that wellness Recovery Action Planning, which is also an evidence-based practice that's used to help maintain wellness that came out of the mental health recovery movement about 25 years ago. RAP is a great connection here with MI and this whole idea of how do we have control of ourselves and our wellness and that we can actually have some ways of being able to put things together that we know we can do every day to keep us functioning, keep us happy, keep us vital?

**Ali Hall:**

Thank you, Kristin. That was really beautiful. Just to offer an additional option, this is from a new resource called Motivational Interviewing for Mental Health Practitioners: A Toolkit for Skills Enhancement. This is a practitioner tool called a Self-Compassion Break. So, I would invite you to think of a current life or work struggle that's causing you distress, and please place one or both hands over your heart while still holding the struggle in mind. Say to yourself, "This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is part of life. May I be kind to myself in this moment? May I give myself the compassion I need?"

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Thank you both, Kristin and Ali, for offering those meditations. Both, I could imagine people using them in the moment, listening to this episode as a break for themselves. We're also introducing concepts and ideas, idea of noticing and curiosity and the breathing in and breathing out, and it can be a fill in the blank. You can breathe in and breathe out anything that you like. Ali, your offering of suffering as something that we can





acknowledge, we don't necessarily have to fight against it. It's part of humanity and maybe in the accepting of that, there can be a reduction in the burden that we take on so often. So, we've done a bit of exploring. We've been discussing burnout reduction at an organizational level. We've talked a bit about things more recently here on the individual level, whether it's 'in the room' way of thinking about it and also some of these exercises that you both offered, what about some other organizational strategies that institutions or departments might be able to employ to help the culture or the practitioners that work in those settings?

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Yeah. Thank you, Seb. Looking, again, to some of the literature, including current, I think comments about what are we going to do about folks now that we're getting through this pandemic and people are really struggling? I think what's hard is where do we get started because there's so much? There's some things that are relatively low-hanging fruit, so to speak, or things that might be able to occur more quickly than others, and one thing that I think could be helpful is if there's any opportunity in meetings or in other settings, even some of the online things that we're doing now, to give practitioners an opportunity to share their successful experiences, to get a shift more towards places where people have been successful and have seen things that have really given them some satisfaction. That during times too, even in case sessions, a lot of times we're often talking about some of our challenges and things we need help with, always getting back to what's some of the positive meaning about any of this.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Even just the willingness sometimes to be engaged in the struggle is an aspect of positivity and the strength that any practitioner has to approach some very challenging situations. That, in and of itself, is amazing and to be able to really very intentionally reflect on that. Some other recommendations that have come out of some of the work I've been reading on compassion fatigue, again, some of these articles will be in the show notes, include to the extent that we can do this, is caseload variety and helping people even move around and have maybe point of view, get different perspective in agency, especially if can't give a lot of extra time off necessarily, but that might be a helpful thing, but really also very much trying to problem solve appropriate time off.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Ultimately, we do need breaks and time off and working so hard it just feels like it's a never-ending amount of work and yet when we have breaks, making sure we take breaks, making sure we're giving people breaks and that breaks are real breaks. A culture starts to develop, and reminders occur and out-of-office messaging around, "I'm going to be gone. I will not be checking my messages." Those kinds of boundaries right now are extremely critical. These are things that we can get started on relatively easily without a lot of investment and other types of resources, kind of what Ali was talking about earlier. There's a lot of solutions that don't require tons of extra resource or finance.

**Ali Hall:**



Thanks for that, Kristin. I agree with you that honoring and respecting restorative breaks that don't require a diagnosis to access are really helpful for increasing compassion in the workplace and it becomes to be part of the culture. We're not just prizing those who can humble brag about the most number of hours this and this and this, and where that is less prized, where there are self-care and self-compassion, and restorative breaks start to be prized in the culture. That's a bit of a shift and it's that both/and thing again, that individuals have to be encouraged to do this and organizations honor and respect and prize those kinds of things.

**Ali Hall:**

We can also think of some organizations are beginning to do self-reflective things or encouraging employees to do self-reflective things at the close of the day that really provides some sort of role clarification prospecting into transitioning from your day into the rest of your life. One of the things that's been true in the pandemic is that not only are we managing and coping and listening and often being immersed in the stresses of others, and those are the same stresses we are now going home to ourselves. There used to be this thing of, "Well, at least I can leave it at the office or something," not the case if we're experiencing the same thing; there's never really a respite from it. So just recognizing those kinds of strains may be also things that we're experiencing in our own lives. So, to really create a demarcation between work and life, harder to do when working from home.

**Ali Hall:**

There are all kinds of tools and strategies for helping people who work mainly by computer to even do rituals of closing down. Putting a blanket over the computer and putting it to bed so that you could move on to the rest of your life, all kinds of individual strategies. But I think organizations have to be part of encouraging people to honor and respect their own absolute worth and feel honored and respected for taking time, that it is actually a good thing, not only for the individual, but also for the ultimate health and well-being of the organization, and certainly for those that we serve, no question about that. A more refreshed and restored clinician is better for everyone in all directions, all the way around.

**Glenn Hinds:**

I guess one of the messages that have really rung home from me in this conversation is just the importance of acceptance that after 16 months of a global pandemic, there is a lot of stress. There is a lot of fear. There's a lot of confusion, alongside of the opportunities that have been presented and the invitation is, "Can I begin to witness that without judgment? Can I recognize, 'This is all true?'" It brings me back to something someone once said to me about the Ying and Yang symbol, which was, "The light in the Ying is not an attempt to turn the darkness into light, it's simply an invitation for those who are enlightened to stay enlightened during the darkest of times." It's almost like the invitation for us as practitioners, is don't try and change the world by rushing out into the world because that's where the trauma exists. One of the things that we can do for ourselves is first of all, recognize, "This is the way it is right now, that in itself is beyond my control.

**Glenn Hinds:**



But what is within my control is how I look after myself as I begin to help looking after other people." So it's back to that both and And, it's including myself, how do I include myself in all of the people I take care of and how important that is for you as an individual practitioner, whether you're working in the accounts department or whether you're working with individuals who have trauma in their lives? I think it's such an important message for us to hear, and we really appreciate you coming along and sharing it. As always, the case, we would and could continue to talk longer and longer, but time has caught up with us. At this point, we usually ask our guests two questions. The first of which is, what else has happened perhaps in your life that may be Motivational Interviewing oriented it or something else? But just what else is going on for you that's catching your attention that you might want to share with us?

**Kristin Dempsey:**

I think a lot about this. There's a lot going on that I'm interested in, but in service of this idea of balance, I want to talk about something professional and something personal really quickly. Professionally, I'm a counselor educator and one of the things I'm working on is de-centering the dominant culture in all of our psychology work, which is really a powerful exercise, like trying to find how to make my curriculum anti-racist and less white-focused and heteronormative, all these pieces, really trying to bring in voices that have been minoritized, which means I'm basically in the process of rewriting everything. It's really challenging, but I'm excited about doing it and looking at all the different ways of really supporting that process and knowing that I'm very privileged to be in a place where I can do that, in a community where I can do that and knowing that I have of colleagues in this country that are really struggling with being able to bring in things like Critical Race Theory.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

So, I'm very much interested in all of that and looking forward to doing that very challenging task and recognizing that's going to be a hard process. Personally, also related to environmental pieces, I am just really benefiting from being outside and having been outside these last 16 months or so, and redoing my garden because I'm in a place right now where we don't have a lot of water, so trying to figure out how to continue to thrive, even though the world around us is changing and just loving and realizing how much I thrive in nature and carrying that forward. Now that we're able to go out a little bit more.

**Ali Hall:**

Well, thanks for that, Kristin. Glenn, I'm glad you brought up the, it keeps arising, isn't it? The both/and and it feels to me like the more accepting we are of the paradox in our life, the greater chance we have of transcending and being in a better place together. I appreciate everybody, Glenn and Seb and Kristin and everybody who's joining in on this. I do a little bit of swimming and I'm preparing for some longer swims these days, so that is an absolutely rewarding and never-ending challenge in my life, but more towards the MI or professional world, I am making every effort possible to collaborate with others. It is such an exciting time to be able to do that.



**Ali Hall:**

I may have been a little bit hard on video conferencing earlier in this episode, but I just want to give a great big shout out to the ability to collaborate across time zones and to be with others in doing good work, so I'm very appreciative of that. I'm also, working on supporting and generating diverse and inclusive materials in the MI world and beyond. Some things I've been thinking about specifically in the MI world are strengthening the bridge to planning as well as expanding and enlarging the conversation focused to the person's cherished directions and also to incorporate collective and individual intentions within the focusing process. There may be a way that the individual can solve things by themselves and there may be some things that require more of a collective orientation. These are just some things on my mind these days.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Well, some exciting essential additions and how we understand and practice MI, certainly, and also some really cool examples of self-care and just passions that you both have in terms of gardening and swimming. So, I hope to hear about that more as time goes on and hopefully, someday soon face-to-face, MI forum! Who knows when we'll have our next one, but soon enough, hopefully? Kristin and Ali, we also, as we're winding things down, we ask our guests if our audience had any questions and they wanted to reach out to you both, would you be interested in that, and if so, how can people contact you?

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Yes, and we'll attach on the show notes our email, also on Facebook and on Twitter and on LinkedIn.

**Glenn Hinds:**

If we go searching for you on Facebook or Twitter, what are your handles?

**Kristin Dempsey:**

It's Kristin Dempsey and Kristin with two I's. That's an important distinction and just some slightly different numbers there if I'm not actually the only Kristin Dempsey out there, but I was searching myself and I tended to pop to the top. So, it might be Kristin Dempsey, LMFT, or Kristin Dempsey, LPCC. Those are my licenses that might occur as well, but they will have the direct links.

**Ali Hall:**

I have a simple email address. That will be in the show notes. I'd love to hear from folks and LinkedIn would be the social media way to reach me.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Fantastic. We really appreciate that. Seb, if you could just remind people how people can stay in touch with us?

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Twitter, it's @changetalking; Facebook, it's Talking To Change; Instagram, @talkingtochangepodcast and direct communication via email would be with podcast@glennhinds.com.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Fantastic. Given the topic that we explored today, we're conscious that we have two colleagues working alongside of each other for just another webinar series, Professor Stephen Rollnick, who of course is one of the co-founders of Motivational Interviewing and a previous guest of ours, along with this colleague, Joel Porter, who is also a member of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Training. We know that they have recently produced an episode of their webinar series, Motivational Interviewing and Beyond. Looking at this topic as well, so that may be another resource people may want to tap into, Motivational Interviewing and Beyond. With that, then can I just say, thank you both, Kristin and Ali for your time and for sharing your wisdom and guiding us into an awakening and an awareness of what it is that we as individuals, as part of organizations and part of our global community, can be doing to reduce the burden of pain and trauma within ourselves and with each other, so we really appreciate your time. Thank you.

**Kristin Dempsey:**

Thanks, all of you. It's a joy to be here this morning and just wonderful conversation. I look forward to hearing from others out there who are also interested in furthering wellness in our community.

**Ali Hall:**

Thank you, Glenn, Seb, and Kristin and everyone who's joining us. It has been an absolute delight for me, and I look forward to hearing from y'all.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Thanks so much, Kristin and Ali. Glenn, as always, until next time.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Until next time.

**Sebastian Kaplan:**

Good to see you.

**Glenn Hinds:**

Thanks, everybody.

