

CHAPTER 1

Introducing *Experiencing Motivational Interviewing from the Inside Out*

Background and Context

In this chapter, we provide an overview of why we created this book and how it might add something to the learning process for motivational interviewing (MI) practitioners. Specifically, this chapter aims to help the reader understand why *self-practice and self-reflection* might add meaningfully to their learning process, beyond other approaches, and to offer them a general framework for understanding how this book is organized and written.

Key Questions Discussed in This Chapter

- Why was this book created?
- Why might it be valuable to me as a learner?
- What do I need to understand about how the book is organized?
- Why do I need to engage in work on a real challenge or growth area of my own?
- What language conventions do I need to be aware of?

Why write a book on self-practice and self-reflection for MI, and what is this book's goal?

We had a concern. MI is fundamentally an interpersonal enterprise. It requires us to engage in certain technical skills, as well as have and maintain specific *heart sets* and *mindsets* about this work. As practitioners in the field, we learned a great deal about what it takes to be technically proficient in MI—to recognize *change talk* and produce a high-quality *reflective listening statement* in response, for example—and we can teach and train those processes well. But what

we kept hearing from our trainees and mentees was their uncertainty even as their skills progressed: *Why am I doing this now and not that?*⁹ Those questions, along with our own research and observations, started us down this path.

There were other impetuses as well. William Miller, who along with Steve Rollnick articulated the elements of MI (Miller & Rollnick, 2023), likes to quip that before we begin training people in MI, we should seek their informed consent, as they are likely to emerge from the training with a fundamentally different perspective. MI can and does change the people we are, the way we view and work with people. Why does this happen? We knew from many years of training, supervising, and mentoring people in MI that when they *get* MI, it somehow connects on a more fundamental, personal, and human level. Each of us remembers our own personal MI epiphany in this way—whether that be as clinical psychologists, supervisors, trainers, and researchers (D. B. R./L. H. J.) or as a psychologist working in an academic, health and high-performance, research, or training contexts (C. E. H.). What happens when people understand and experience MI at a deeper, personal, and more fundamental level? To us, it seemed there was a *felt sense of experiencing MI from the inside out* that was important.

As a field, MI grew more proficient in training MI skills, and in training MI trainers, and with this coding instruments began to appear and to be used regularly. We understood that practitioners within a research intervention trial needed to reach a point of *competency* in MI. We could appreciate the benefit of coding tools developed for this purpose. We also saw benefit in receiving feedback on skill development. However, we were also acutely aware of the potential *unintended consequences* of using coding tools as a sole, or primary, method of ongoing practitioner skill development and the risks associated with training a learner to one specific coding instrument. That is, the trainee may simply learn how to *jump through the hoops* of a specific coding tool to demonstrate fidelity to a method, and/or simply become better at scoring more favorably, rather than engaging and reflecting in a meaningful way with the experiential aspects of the learning. We saw limitations associated with this approach to learning MI both from a client (treatment receipt) perspective and as a practitioner (delivery and enactment of treatment skills) perspective. Others identified similar concerns in the use of checklists and coding instruments across areas when complex interpersonal dynamics were at play (e.g., assessment of the quality of qualitative research, Barbour, 2001; cognitive-behavioral therapy, Blackburn et al., 2001). As we got better at measuring and quantifying perhaps, we were focusing on what we could measure and not what was most important—*the tail was wagging the dog*. At the same time, increasing attention was paid to other methods, such as reflective questions, as an alternative to checklist and coding approaches in other treatment approaches (e.g., Bennett-Levy et al., 2015) that intrigued us.

We were also interested in deliberate practice as a method to deepen knowledge and skills (Rousmaniere, 2017). It was clear to us that this type of practice had value in improving skills. It also became evident that a practitioner's reflection on their deliberate practice is, by definition, viewing the experience through only the lens of the practitioner. In our experience as trainers, we have spent many years engaging people in *deliberate practice, real play* exercises (i.e., participants discuss real matters from their lives rather than role-playing a client) whereby trainees work in dyads or triads to experience the various skills associated with an MI-consistent conversation. Crucially, we observed that trainees who engage in the role of a *client*, as well as the practitioner role, connect with, experience, and learn MI in a deeper and more comprehensive way. Our further reflection and discussion with trainees over many years taught us there was

significant added value in experiencing MI as a real client in that it enables a deeper *interoceptive* level of awareness and appreciation, a *felt sense* of understanding, and learning that was different than the learning in the MI practitioner role. Interoceptive refers to “the process of how the nervous system senses, interprets, and integrates signals originating from within the body” (Quigley et al., 2021, p. 29). We wondered why? What was going on? In what way might this be important? How do we enhance that experience?

In 2003, Bennett-Levy discussed *reflection* as a blind spot in clinical psychology training. By 2015, we questioned a similar blind spot within the MI training and skill development literature. Without self-reflection, it seemed practitioner development could be thwarted. We become technically proficient, but the deeper wisdom of how, what, and most importantly why we do things can elude us. We believed the growing literature, outside the MI world of research, writing, and training, could help us as practitioners, trainers, supervisors, and mentors to think more deeply at a conceptual and practical level, and eventually to develop a different type of approach for how best to gain proficiency in MI. Research on *self-practice and self-reflection (SP/SR)* (e.g., Bennett-Levy et al., 2015) demonstrated that when practitioners had a *felt experience* of the intervention from their *real-life* client role and then spent time thinking deeply about that experience, and applying their insights to their work systematically, it created a foundation for learners to develop skills at a more profound level. This led us to think practically about how we could bring these ideas to the world of MI.

We began discussing our concerns and ideas for a new form of book in 2015, in Berlin, at an international forum for the *Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT)*. L. H. J. and C. E. H. delivered a workshop presentation to explore the role of *reflection* in developing proficiency in both the conceptual (knowledge) development and implementation of the procedural skills of MI (Johnston et al., 2015). Further discussion with D. B. R. ignited deeper creative and conceptual sparks, and more questions emerged from our early musings:

- How can trainers help practitioners to move beyond an introductory level of knowledge and skill development in MI?
- Are deliberate practice, coding, and supervision enough to help people develop proficiency in MI skills?
- What role do self-coding and self-reflection play in the development of proficiency in MI?
- Where does reflection “in” (in the moment) and “on action” (after the moment) fit in when learning the complexities and nuances in MI, and how can we as trainers help to scaffold this?
- How much attention does a deliberate practice approach pay to reflection on interpersonal process skills in MI? Might a lack of sufficient attention thwart the development of skills in MI?
- How much attention has the MI literature given to the experiential aspects of receiving a good-quality MI-consistent consultation as a key learning method?
- How does feeling/experiencing an MI-consistent conversation impact on the receiver as a learner? What role does self-reflection have in this process?
- Does coding their *own* recordings of practice help a learner to reflect more fully on their practice? In what way?
- Do coding instruments shine a light on a particular corner of MI? What might be missed

if we look only in that direction? What happens to the aspects that remain uncoded, and are they important parts of the variance in practitioner skill development?

- Are coding instruments better at assessing the technical aspects of MI skills, perhaps at the expense of the relational and experiential aspects of MI? If “yes,” is this a problem?
- What do coding instruments miss in terms of the unobservable aspects of the interpersonal interaction, and are these aspects important?
- Does the experience of being in an MI-consistent quality conversation impact the recipient differently if it is done as a “real-play” versus a “role-play” and, if yes,” why?

Our discussions and reflections on these questions led us to write this book.

The current text is not designed as an introduction to MI or as a general book on MI for a specific context. There are already lots of good introductory texts on MI, and several books that have been written with a specific context in mind, which serve these needs well. The current text aims to help people who already have either a basic, intermediate, or even advanced understanding of MI to move beyond their current skill level to connect with a deeper understanding of MI and to further enhance their skill development as a practitioner in MI by working from the *inside out*. This book does presuppose knowledge of basic conceptual elements, as well as skills associated with MI. It is not the best book for someone completely new to MI. We recommend one of the other seminal texts in that case (e.g., Miller & Rollnick, 2023; Rosengren, 2017). Still, we intend this book for people across the career range, from new to the field to experienced mentor and trainer eager to understand the *why* of MI.

Similarly, we did not want to write another book on *deliberate practice* because there is already a good book published on this by experienced and well-respected MI trainers (Manuel et al., 2022). In addition, we knew that, as noted above, a deliberate MI practice approach focuses on the perspective of the *practitioner-self*, and this stance tends to miss the opportunity to experience the *felt interoceptive awareness* of being in receipt of an MI-consistent conversation from the perspective of the *personal-self*, which we also refer as the *client-self perspective*.

This book invites us to engage in targeted SP exercises that are designed to facilitate our own deeper level of understanding and appreciation of MI. SP does not involve role-play; it involves real-play. That is, the SP process asks us to engage with our real-life challenges to experience personally and deeply the MI approach. Each exercise is designed in a way that builds on our current understanding of and present skill level in MI. We then invite reflection on the experience, first from the perspective of *our self as a client*. That is, from the lens of the person on the receiving end of the MI skill or practice while working on a personal issue. The second set of reflective questions explore and probe further from the perspective of *our self as a practitioner*. It is this deliberate focus on self-practice as a *client* and then self-reflection (*first as a client, then as a practitioner*) that helps us move beyond deliberate practice and into developing our own unique practitioner relationship with MI. One of the functions of the current text is to move *reflection* as an experiential process to the front and center of discussions in practitioner training in MI.

In sum, this text is not designed as a replacement to other helpful practitioner skill development texts, but rather to complement them. As such, you may well find it useful to cross-refer to other texts as part of the iterative learning and ongoing knowledge and skill development process (e.g., Frey & Hall, 2021; Manuel et al., 2022; Rosengren, 2017). We will also highlight

at key points in this text some of the other helpful books in the *Inside Out* series that have been published by Guilford Press.

How are the chapters in this book organized and structured, and why?

This book is structured in two parts. Part I offers six chapters, including this one, that discuss the conceptual background and theory of this text. Part II offers 22 practical modules that walk the reader through the application of SP/SR to further their understanding of key concepts and skills within MI.

Part I: Chapters 2–6

In Chapter 2, we introduce the *conceptual framework*; this includes an overview of MI, with attention given to Miller and Rollnick's (2023) recent changes in terminology in the move from the third to fourth edition of *Motivational Interviewing*. We provide a brief overview of key theoretical perspectives on motivational theory and MI. A discussion follows of the ways in which learners have tended to develop their practice in MI, including a critical review of the role of coding tools in this process. The chapter concludes with a review of some theoretical influences in learning and an introduction to a structure used within the book to organize our thinking within each of the SP/SR modules in Part II: *Why, What, How, What If*.

In Chapter 3, we introduce the reader to self-practice and self-reflection, and discuss why an SP/SR approach deepens our understanding, and application, of key concepts and practitioner skills within a therapeutic approach. Next, we explore what is already known about how people learn MI and review the eight tasks that have been proposed in learning MI. We then explore the conceptual background to SP/SR and discuss an earlier model outlining declarative and procedural knowledge systems and the crucial role of reflection within it. We provide a rationale for the use of SP/SR in MI based on the existing application of SP/SR within other approaches (e.g., *cognitive-behavioral therapy* or *CBT*). Finally, the chapter concludes with the introduction of a proposed *personal practice model (PPM)* for MI specifically and a diagram to illustrate the PPM.

In Chapter 4, we introduce the reader to the practical elements of SP/SR and provide an overview of the *guiding principles*, including *how* to engage in the process of SP/SR. We do this by giving specific attention to process, content, and structure in SP/SR. We include a discussion on the importance of self-reflective writing and the various forms that SP/SR can take (e.g., self-study; in pairs [limited partner practice]; in small groups; and with a coach or supervisor).

Chapter 5 builds further on guidelines but does so from the perspective of the facilitator of an SP/SR approach. We discuss the importance of modeling the method and review important considerations in forming and maintaining an SP/SR group for follow-up discussion on reflections and experiences, as well as caring for the individual participants.

Chapter 6 introduces the *traveling companions*. These practitioners represent people across the spectrum of their careers and in their MI knowledge and skills; they reflect amalgams of our trainees and mentees across our training careers. They will help illustrate the self-practice and, at times, self-reflection process through the modules.

Part II: Modules 1–22

We designed the modules to walk learners through a process of experiencing the concepts and skills of MI. Module 1 guides selection of a focus for the self-practice work. Modules 2–6 introduce the *four tasks of MI* and the *MI spirit*, and provide self-practice experiences of the ideas articulated. Modules 7–22 integrate the four tasks, MI spirit, and skills and strategies across experiences of receiving MI. The modules do follow a sequence and are designed to be worked through in a logical order.

Within each module, we have built a learning structure to provide a repetitive pattern of Vygotskian scaffolding that we hope is both predictable and helpful. This has been influenced by learning theories that we discuss in Chapter 2 (e.g., Kolb, 1983; McCarthy & McCarthy, 2005). The generic sample outline below illustrates how these elements fit together in terms of form and function. However, greater detail is provided in Chapter 2

Module Outline

The *Why* (Meaning): Why am I doing this?

- This describes the main conceptual elements of the module.
- This is not meant to be a complete conceptual review.
- Rather, it addresses important ideas and why they're important.

The *What* (Skills): What is it that I am learning here?

- This section describes tools for enacting these important elements.
- It describes the skills.
- It provides scaffolding for some skills or links, including a companion website, for building MI skill proficiency.

The *How* (Experience of the Skills Using SP/SR): How do I do this?

- Overview of exercise.
- Traveling companion: An example.
- Self-practice.
- Self-reflections to personal-self/client-self.

The *What If* (Applying Skills to My Context): How might I adapt this to different situations, contexts, and possibilities in my professional practice?

- Bridging questions to practitioner-self.
- Applying these skills and ideas in broader applications, including my setting.
- Final ideas.

The traveling companions (see Chapter 6) appear throughout the modules and act as an additional scaffold by modeling one way of working on a personal issue in self-practice, reflecting on personal-self or client-self, and then reflecting on professional-self. We want to emphasize that the companion responses are simply examples and are not meant as *right* or *wrong* ways to answer the reflective questions. We want to caution against being unduly influenced

by the demonstration responses. Again, we get more from this if we develop our own personal relationship with real-life self-practice exercises and personal–professional reflections. Further information and examples can be found on the companion website, www.guilford.com/rosengren2-materials.

What is the difference between this book on SP/SR and other titles in the series?

Several other books have now been published in the Inside Out series across a range of therapeutic approaches, including *acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)*, *CBT*, *compassion-focused therapy (CFT)*, and *schema therapy* (Bennett-Levy et al., 2015; Farrell & Shaw, 2018; Kolts et al., 2018; Tirsch et al., 2019). The current workbook is different in that the application of MI is broader than a therapeutic context per se. We therefore anticipate that the current text will have a broader appeal. In view of this difference, we have made some alterations to language use to reflect a broader application. One example of this is the predominant use of the term *practitioner* throughout rather than *therapist*. The language shifts on occasion to therapy/therapists because of the origins of the development of SP/SR. However, when we introduce SP/SR for MI specifically, you will notice a shift in language back to practitioner. Furthermore, in the final section within each module, we have included a brief section called “What If.” The aim of this section is to help practitioners consider a wider focus and application where change conversations take place beyond the therapeutic context alone. We thus include thoughts about extending and modifying these ideas into realms beyond therapy.

We are also aware the term *practitioner* is a protected title in some locations, where it denotes that certain educational and training requirements have been completed. We are not using this term in that respect. See Box 1.1 for information about use of the term *practitioners* in the United Kingdom, for example. Instead, we use this term to reflect that peer counselors, physical therapists, psychiatrists, pastors, personal trainers, probation officers, and psychologists—just to name a few ps—have very different educational and training backgrounds, but all use and endeavor to learn more about MI. It is to this broader application that we apply practitioner.

The word “reflection” is used in two main ways in this book, and we therefore want to provide clarity to avoid confusion. Within this text, we use reflection to both describe a *learning process* for the reader, as well as to refer to a *particular form of listening statement* made by the practitioner. While we try to be clear about the context, this is what we have done to help the reader. We use the term *self-reflection* when referring to reflection as a learning process and the term *reflective listening* instead of reflections in discussing practitioner techniques. However, the latter is more cumbersome and we’re aware that “reflections” may still sneak through on occasion.

Throughout the book, we opt for inclusive language, using either “I” or “we.” This is a writing style that acknowledges we are all learners on a journey in this method. On occasion, we use “you,” especially when giving instructions in the self-practice/self-reflection activities. However, we have worked to keep this practice to a minimum. We also use the third-person plural “they” rather than “he” or “she.”

BOX 1.1. Use of the Term *Practitioner* in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the term *practitioner status* is used to denote those *practitioners* who have the relevant training and qualifications to be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The HCPC maintains an online register (www.hcpc-uk.org/check-the-register) including ***all health and care professionals who meet their standards for their training, professional skills, behavior, and health***. Anyone can check this register to ensure individuals claiming to be practitioners are appropriately qualified and registered. The HCPC register covers a range of professions including arts therapists, biomedical scientists, chiropodists/podiatrists, clinical scientists, dietitians, practitioner psychologist, and the like. There are also specific protected titles within categories. For example, psychologists in the United Kingdom are categorized as practitioner psychologist, registered psychologist, clinical psychologist, forensic psychologist, counseling psychologist, health psychologist, educational psychologist, occupational psychologist, and sport and exercise psychologist. Anyone who claims to be working as a *practitioner psychologist* but who is not registered with HCPC is inappropriately using a restricted title and can be reported to the British Psychological Society (BPS). This approach offers public protection against people who do not hold the necessary qualifications to be working in practice as a psychologist (i.e., they are not working within a regulatory body). To be clear, ***MINT is not a regulatory body*** and therefore any UK readers should be mindful they cannot call themselves MI practitioners because of completion of this book or a MINT training course and should check against the HCPC register and with the BPS if they are uncertain about another individual's qualifications and fitness to practice.

You've undoubtedly noticed that some words have been bolded in the text. We apply this convention when we first introduce an important concept or term in a chapter or module. We use italics when we wish to emphasize a word or phrase.

Finally, as was mentioned earlier, there is a companion website. It is meant to complement the practice materials in this book. At times, there are transcripts of an interaction to provide models of how an interaction might look, including what a limited-practice partner might do in the practitioner role. Other completed forms are offered, as well as additional forms. We encourage the use of these as supplements to learning from this book.