

Sample Motivational Interviewing Syllabus With Embedded Deliberate Practice Exercises

This appendix provides a sample one-semester, three-unit course dedicated to teaching motivational interviewing. This course is appropriate for graduate students (master's and doctoral) and medical students at all levels of training, including first-year students who have not yet worked with clients. We present it as a model that can be adopted to a specific program's contexts and needs. For example, instructors may borrow portions of it to use in other courses, in practica, in didactic training events at externships and internships, in workshops, and in continuing education for postgraduate therapists and other health care providers. Additionally, the content may be adapted to fit with different course lengths (e.g., quarter system, all-day courses of shorter duration).

Course Title: Motivational Interviewing: Theory and Deliberate Practice

Course Description

This course teaches theory, principles, and core skills of motivational interviewing (MI). As a course with both didactic and practicum elements, it will review key MI principles and foster the use of deliberate practice to enable students to acquire key MI skills.

Course Objectives

Students who complete this course will be able to

1. Describe the core theory, research, and skills of MI
2. Describe the ways in which MI is an evidenced-based practice
3. Apply the principles of deliberate practice for career-long clinical skill development
4. Demonstrate key MI skills including open-questions, affirmations, and reflections
5. Understand the role of client ambivalence in the change process
6. Differentiate client change and sustain talk
7. Use strategies to elicit and selectively reinforce client change talk
8. Employ MI with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds

Date	Lecture and Discussion	Skills Lab	Reading
Week 1	Introduction to MI theory, history, and research	Lecture on principles of deliberate practice; deliberate practice research	Miller and Rollnick (2013, Chapters 1–4); Miller and Moyers (2017); Miller and Rollnick (2009)
Week 2	MI foundations; simple reflections	Exercise 1: Simple Reflections	Miller and Rollnick (2013, Chapter 5); Miller and Moyers (2015)
Week 3	MI foundations: complex reflections, part 1	Exercise 2: Complex Reflections, Part 1: Guesses at What the Client Means	Miller and Moyers (2021, Chapter 3); Miller (2000)
Week 4	MI foundations: complex reflections, part 2	Exercise 3: Complex Reflections, Part 2: Guesses at Underlying Client Emotions or Values	Moyers and Miller (2013)
Week 5	Open-ended questions	Exercise 4: Reflections and Open-Ended Questions	Miller and Rollnick (2013, Chapters 6 and 7)
Week 6	Client language: change talk	Exercise 5: Eliciting Change Talk	Miller and Rollnick (2013, Chapters 12 and 13); Miller and Moyers (2021, Chapter 9)
Week 7	Responding to change talk	Exercise 6: Reflecting Change Talk	Miller and Rollnick (2013, Chapter 14)
Week 8	Reflecting client ambivalence: double-sided reflections	Exercise 7: Double-Sided Reflections	Miller and Rollnick (2013, Chapters 15–18)
Week 9	Midterm paper due; self-evaluation	Record mock session and transcribe	Self-evaluation: conduct mock session, record and transcribe
Week 10	Dancing with discord	Exercise 8: Dancing With Discord	Miller and Rose (2009)
Week 11	Affirmations	Exercise 9: Simple and Complex Affirmations	Miller and Moyers (2021, Chapters 5 and 6)
Week 12	Supporting client autonomy	Exercise 10: Autonomy Support	Miller and Moyers (2021, Chapters 4 and 8)
Week 13	Agenda mapping	Exercise 11: Agenda Mapping	Miller and Rollnick (2013, Chapters 8–10); Miller and Moyers (2021, Chapter 7)
Week 14	Information exchange; cultural adaptations of MI	Exercise 12: Elicit–Provide–Elicit	Lee et al. (2019); Miller and Rollnick (2013, Chapters 11 and 19–22); Miller and Moyers (2021, Chapter 10); Oh and Lee (2016)
Week 15	Final paper due; final exam; self-evaluation; skill coaching feedback	Exercises 13 and 14: transcript and mock sessions	Miller and Rollnick (2013, Chapters 23–25); Miller and Moyers (2021, Chapters 2 and 11–14); Moyers et al. (2014)

Format of Class

Lecture and Discussion Class: Each week, there will be one lecture and discussion class for 1.5 hours focusing on MI skills and practice.

MI Skills Lab: Each week, there will be one MI Skills Lab for 1.5 hours. Skills Labs are for practicing MI skills using the exercises in this book. The exercises use therapy simulations (role-plays) with the following goals:

1. Build trainees' skill and confidence for using MI skills with real clients
2. Provide a safe space for experimenting with different MI strategies, without fear of making mistakes
3. Provide plenty of opportunity to explore and "try on" different MI strategies

Mock Sessions: Twice in the semester (Weeks 9 and 15), trainees will do a psychotherapy mock session in the MI Skills Lab. In contrast to highly structured and repetitive deliberate practice exercises, a mock MI session is an unstructured and improvised role-played therapy session. Trainees should record the mock session and transcribe it, paying attention to their use of MI skills throughout the session. Mock sessions let trainees

1. Practice using MI skills responsively
2. Experiment with new skills in an unscripted context
3. Build endurance for working with real clients

Homework

Homework will be assigned each week and will include reading, 1 hour of skills practice with an assigned practice partner, and occasional writing assignments. For the skills practice homework, trainees will repeat the exercise they did for that week's MI Skills Lab. Because the instructor will not be there to evaluate performance, trainees should instead complete the Deliberate Practice Reaction Form, as well as the Deliberate Practice Diary Form, for themselves as a self-evaluation.

Writing Assignments

Students are to write two papers: one due at midterm and one due at the last day of class. Two potential topics for the papers are as follows:

- Exploration of the role of ambivalence in behavior change
- A partial transcript of one of the trainees' therapy cases with a real client or role-play, with discussion from an MI perspective

Vulnerability, Privacy, Confidentiality, and Boundaries

This course is aimed at developing MI skills in an experiential framework and as relevant to clinical work. This course is not psychotherapy or a substitute for psychotherapy. Students should interact at a level of self-disclosure that is personally comfortable and helpful to their own learning. Although becoming aware of internal emotional and psychological processes is necessary for a therapist's development, it is not necessary to reveal all that information to the trainer. It is important for students to sense their own level of safety and privacy. Students are not evaluated on the level of material that they choose to reveal in the class.

Multicultural Orientation

This course is taught in a multicultural context, defined as "how the cultural world-views, values, and beliefs of the client and therapist interact and influence one another to co-create a relational experience that is in the spirit of healing" (Davis et al., 2018, p. 3). Core features of the multicultural orientation include cultural comfort, humility,

and responding to cultural opportunities (or previously missed opportunities). Throughout this course, students are encouraged to reflect on their own cultural identity and improve their ability to attune with their clients' cultural identities (Hook et al., 2017). For further guidance on this topic and deliberate practice exercises to improve multicultural skills, see the forthcoming book *Deliberate Practice in Multicultural Counseling* (Harris et al., 2022).

Confidentiality

Due to the nature of the material covered in this course, there are occasions when personal life experience may be relevant for the learning environment. You will not be required to share personal experiences (see the next section), but you might consider doing so when you are comfortable. Additionally, to create a safe learning environment that is respectful of client and therapist information and diversity and to foster open and vulnerable conversation in class, students are required to agree to strict confidentiality within and outside of the instruction setting.

Self-Revealing Information

In accordance with the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (American Psychological Association, 2017), students are **not required to disclose personal information**. Because this class is about developing both interpersonal and MI competence, following are some important points so that students are fully informed as they make choices to self-disclose:

- Students choose how much, when, and what to disclose. Students are not penalized for the choice not to share personal information.
- The learning environment is susceptible to group dynamics much like any other group space, and therefore students may be asked to share their observations and experiences of the class environment with the singular goal of fostering a more inclusive and productive learning environment.

Evaluation

Self-Evaluation: At the end of the semester (Week 15), trainees will perform a self-evaluation. This will help trainees track their progress and identify areas for further development. The Guidance for Trainees section in Chapter 3 of *Deliberate Practice in Motivational Interviewing* highlights potential areas of focus for self-evaluation.

Grading Criteria

As designed, students would be accountable for the level and quality of their performance in

- the Discussion classes
- the Skills Lab (exercises and mock sessions)
- homework
- midterm and final papers
- a final exam

Required Readings

- Lee, C. S., Colby, S. M., Rohsenow, D. J., Martin, R., Rosales, R., McCallum, T. T., Falcon, L., Almeida, J., & Cortés, D. E. (2019). A randomized controlled trial of motivational interviewing tailored for heavy drinking Latinxs. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 87*(9), 815–830. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000428>
- Miller, W. R. (2000). Rediscovering fire: Small interventions, large effects. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 14*(1), 6–18. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-164X.14.1.6>

- Miller, W. R., & Moyers, T. B. (2015). The forest and the trees: Relational and specific factors in addiction treatment. *Addiction*, 110(3), 401–413. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.12693>
- Miller, W. R., & Moyers, T. B. (2017). Motivational interviewing and the clinical science of Carl Rogers. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 85(8), 757–766. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000179>
- Miller, W. R., & Moyers, T. B. (2021). *Effective psychotherapists: Clinical skills that improve client outcomes*. Guilford Press.
- Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2009). Ten things that motivational interviewing is not. *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 37(2), 129–140. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1352465809005128>
- Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2013). *Motivational interviewing: Helping people change* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Miller, W. R., & Rose, G. S. (2009). Toward a theory of motivational interviewing. *American Psychologist*, 64(6), 527–537. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016830>
- Moyers, T. B., Manuel, J. K. & Ernst, D. (2014). *Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity coding manual 4.1* [Unpublished manual].
- Moyers, T. B., & Miller, W. R. (2013). Is low therapist empathy toxic? *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 27(3), 878–884. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030274>
- Oh, H., & Lee, C. (2016). Culture and motivational interviewing. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 99(11), 1914–1919. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2016.06.010>

Optional Readings

- Arkowitz, H., Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2017). *Motivational interviewing in the treatment of psychological problems* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Davis, D. E., DeBlaere, C., Owen, J., Hook, J. N., Rivera, D. P., Choe, E., Van Tongeren, D. R., Worthington, E. L., & Placeres, V. (2018). The multicultural orientation framework: A narrative review. *Psychotherapy*, 55(1), 89–100. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000160>
- Hook, J. N., Davis, D. D., Owen, J., & DeBlaere, C. (2017). *Cultural humility: Engaging diverse identities in therapy*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000037-000>
- Magill, M., Apodaca, T. R., Borsari, B., Gaume, J., Hoadley, A., Gordon, R. E. F., Tonigan, J. S., & Moyers, T. (2018). A meta-analysis of motivational interviewing process: Technical, relational, and conditional process models of change. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 86(2), 140–157. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000250>
- Miller, W. R. (2018). *The art of listening well*. Wipf & Stock.
- Moyers, T. B., Rowell, L. N., Manuel, J. K., Ernst, D., & Houck, J. M. (2016). The Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity code (MITI 4): Rationale, preliminary reliability and validity. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 65, 36–42. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsat.2016.01.001>
- Rollnick, S., Miller, W. R., & Butler, C. C. (2007). *Motivational interviewing in health care: Helping patients change behavior*. Guilford Press.
- Rosengren, D. B. (2017). *Building motivational interviewing skills: A practitioner workbook* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Wagner, C. C., & Ingersoll, K. S. (2009). Beyond behavior: Eliciting broader change with motivational interviewing. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 65(11), 1180–1194. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20639>
- Wagner, C. C., & Ingersoll, K. S. (2012). *Motivational interviewing in groups*. Guilford Press.

MI With Special Populations: Optional Reading

- Hohman, M. (2021). *Motivational interviewing in social work practice*. Guilford Press.
- Naar, S., & Suarez, M. (2021). *Motivational interviewing with adolescents and young adults* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Stinson, J. D., & Clark, M. D. (2017). *Motivational interviewing with offenders: Engagement, rehabilitation, and reentry*. Guilford Press.