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Motivational Interviewing Skills
in **Action** for Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Teams**:**

A Technical Assistance Bulletin

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Table of Contents

Foreword

The NCJFCJ is pleased to provide this Technical Assistance Bulletin (TAB) to the juvenile drug treatment court (JDTC) field. Motivational Interviewing (MI) is an important method that can be used by all JDTC team members to help them communicate more effectively with youth and their families. This TAB not only discusses the philosophy of MI, the research behind it, and its strategies, but also provides practical examples of how to apply MI within the JDTC setting. Members of the JDTC team who have the most interaction with youth will find these materials invaluable in building rapport and being youth-centered. However, the spirit, skills, and strategies are not just for probation officers and clinicians. Judges, coordinators, and attorneys can all incorporate components such as open questions and affirmations into their own practice to create an atmosphere where the youth's voice and interest in change are front and center.

This document is divided into five sections. The first section introduces key features of MI, including the definition, spirit, and communication style. Section two briefly summarizes the theories and processes underpinning how MI works to guide people toward change using research-based principles. The third section introduces the core skills in MI, providing specific examples for how they are used in the JDTC setting. The fourth section describes a variety of strategies for navigating specific situations that are common in a JDTC setting, such as options for responding when a youth replies with "I don't know." Annotated sample dialogue illustrates how the spirit, skills, and strategies work together in a conversation with youth. The concluding section presents ideas and resources for JDTC team members who are interested in pursuing further learning in MI.

Team members may choose to read this TAB from cover to cover or to use the navigational tabs and color coding to move between particular topics of interest or from theory to practice. Practitioners may refer to the companion Cue Cards and Info Card that are provided as part of this package as in-the-moment reminders for applying the spirit, skills, and strategies to their individual and collective JDTC work.

This TAB has been designed to be a supplemental guide for practitioners who have already received MI training. If you need MI training, you can go to motivationalinterviewing.org for more information to request a training.

We hope JDTC team members find this TAB both useful and inspiring as a resource to support our efforts to engage JDTC youth and to help them achieve success in our program.

Jessica Pearce, Senior Site Manager,
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Introduction

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is an evidence-based practice recommended for use in juvenile drug treatment court (JDTC) settings (OJJDP, 2016). Specifically written with JDTC team members in mind, this technical assistance bulletin (TAB) on MI skills is intended to (a) illustrate the spirit, skills, and strategies of MI; (b) encourage the interest of team members in building proficiency in MI; and (c) guide team members in applying MI skills learned in training to the JDTC context.

People of all educational levels and backgrounds can learn and use the spirit, skills, and strategies associated with MI (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Most practitioners successfully develop skills with guided practice; that is, after learning the basic concepts, the person receives coaching and feedback as their practice is observed (Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Rosengren, 2018). Learning MI is similar to playing a musical instrument or a sport. Musicians and athletes improve with observed practice and feedback from coaches to shape their skill development. Beginning with an understanding of the theory and practice, JDTC team members may develop proficiency in the spirit, skills, and strategies through training, observed practice, and coaching.

Specific communication skills to guide youth toward change are illustrated through concrete examples and an effective method for sharing information is described. Core skills, known as the OARS,[1] and strategic methods for cultivating change talk and softening sustain talk are presented. Sample dialogue using common scenarios encountered in JDTC settings demonstrates how the skills and strategies work together to motivate adolescents toward change.

This TAB functions as a reference for applying MI skills and strategies within the context of JDTC work. Throughout the TAB, action tips suggest specific ways in which the JDTC team members may implement the skills and strategies right away. Similarly, the companion set of MI Info Card and Cue Cards serve as visual prompts and reminders for use in court, staffing, and in meetings with youth and their families. The Info Card covers MI in a Nutshell, Definition, Spirit, Four Processes, Core Skills, and Change Talk. Six cue cards make up the MI

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1   OARS is an acronym for the core skills of MI: Open questions, Affirmations, Reflections, and Summaries.

Cue Card Set and cover OARS in Action, Affirmations, Strategies for Cultivating Change Talk, Strategies for Softening Sustain Talk, Elicit – Provide – Elicit (EPE), and Rethinking Resistance & Dodging Discord.

While the judge and juvenile probation counselor might have more direct contact with youth, there is value in all JDTC team members learning and applying the concepts of MI. All team members may then operate from a shared understanding of the spirit, skills, and strategies that guide youth toward change.

There is potential for change in any interaction. How a youth feels one day may be different the next. In fact, moving along the stages of change is one indicator that MI is working. The most effective programs invite youth to consider how behavior change is connected to what is most important to them, starting with their individual goals, values, and culture. When all team members develop skills in MI, they will be equipped to capitalize on teachable moments that offer opportunities for youth engagement, whenever and wherever they arise in the JDTC program.

Key Features of Motivational Interviewing

Definition of MI

Two vital components make up effective MI practice: strategic and relational. The relational components refer to the nonjudgmental and empathic environment created by the JDTC team member for working with the adolescent. The strategic components refer to methods designed to reflect, affirm, and elicit change talk as the youth is engaged in the process of change. Notice both components in the definition below:

> Motivational Interviewing is a collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication with particular attention to the language of change. It is designed to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person's own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion (Miller & Rollnick, 2013, p. 29).

In the JDTC context, team members employ both relational and strategic components to invite the youth to verbalize his or her own reasons for change and connect motivation to the youth's goals, values, and culture. Both components are essential to effective MI practice. Throughout this TAB, specific methods for implementing the relational and strategic components of MI within the JDTC setting are described.

MI is a Style of Communication

MI is a **guiding** style of communication. With respect to the JDTC, team members can use MI to convey both support for the process of change and the endpoint of change. Their use of the guiding style of communication conveys the message: "The team will join you on your journey and use strategies to get you to your destination." The youth's role is to partner with the team member to get to their destination (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). A guiding style of communication is particularly effective when a person is ambivalent about the change in question; that is, they have reasons to stay the same and reasons to change, and the reasons seem equally compelling (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

The guiding style of communication contrasts with the **directing** style of communication. Directing refers to telling others what to do. In the court environment, judicial officers use the directing style of communication when they issue orders to do something or to abstain from doing something. Underlying the directing style of communication is the idea that professionals know what a youth needs and will tell the youth what to do. In this style, the youth's role is to comply, adhere, and obey.

As an alternative to the directing style of communication, the guiding style of MI is used by team members when they provide information to youth concerning JDTC requirements, legal conditions, and consequences. The MI strategy, Elicit – Provide – Elicit (EPE), is especially helpful for JDTC team members to share factual information in a way that respects a youth's existing knowledge and prioritizes the youth's interest. The EPE method for sharing information is described in detail in the Strategies section of this TAB where the structure and sample dialogue are presented. Additionally, EPE is featured on a Cue Card.

The Spirit of MI is Essential

The key concepts when combined with the spirit of MI are fundamental to effectively bringing about behavior change. The acronym PACE, as described, represents the spirit of MI: Partnership, Acceptance, Compassion, and Evocation.

In a **partnership**, conversations about change occur between two experts: the JDTC team member and the youth who is an expert on his or her own self. In a true partnership, the purpose is "…to see the world through the other's eyes rather than superimposing your own vision" (Miller & Rollnick, 2013, p. 16).

Acceptance is demonstrated by honoring the individual's absolute worth and potential as a human being. The JDTC team member acknowledges the adolescent's autonomy to make his or her own choices and affirms the adolescent's strengths, abilities, values, efforts, skills, and culture. Accurate empathy is a key component of acceptance and is practiced through reflective listening (Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Rogers, 1957).

There are many paths toward recovery. Young persons makes life choices according to what is most important to them, such as their goals, values, and culture. JDTC team members practicing **compassion** consider that the way a youth prefers to carry out his or her change plan and robustly supports it: "To be compassionate is to actively promote the other's welfare, to give priority to the other's needs" (Miller & Rollnick, 2013, p. 20).

Evocation is the last part of the MI spirit. Eliciting reasons for change from the person responsible for carrying out the change is a hallmark of MI practice. People are more likely to

follow through with a plan that came from them. The implicit message is "you have what you need, and together we will find it" (Miller & Rollnick, 2013, p. 21).

To assess whether or not the MI spirit lives within various features of the JDTC program, such as the staffing, court hearings, incentives, sanctions, and celebrations, team members are encouraged to consider the questions below:

- **Partnership**: How does the JDTC use a guiding style of communication? How does the team collaborate with the adolescent and the adolescent's family on the case and treatment plans? Does the interaction look more like a dance than a wrestling match?

- **Acceptance**: How does the team recognize the adolescent's absolute worth (not just the behavior), and the dignity of the adolescent's autonomy? How does the team allow the adolescent to lead toward the change at hand?

- **Compassion**: How does the team actively promote the adolescent's wellbeing within the context of the youth's culture? How is this demonstrated in 1:1 conversation, staffing, and courtroom settings?

- **Evocation**: How does the team actively elicit strengths, goals, efforts, values, and unique aspects of each adolescent's culture in relation to the behavior change? How does the team avoid prescribing a change plan in favor of drawing out ideas from the adolescent?

Consideration of these questions will help the team keep the spirit of MI at the forefront of JDTC programming.

MI Recognizes Ambivalence, Cultivates Change Talk, and Softens Sustain Talk

The goal of MI is to strengthen an individual's motivation for and commitment to specific behavior change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). When considering behavioral health changes such as those involving substance use, individuals are often ambivalent about making a change; that is, they have reasons to change as well as reasons to stay the same. MI recognizes that ambivalence is a natural part of the change process and employs specific strategies for both.

Change talk is any statement in the direction of change, while **sustain talk** refers to statements in favor of staying the same (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). During conversations with youth, JDTC team members can use MI spirit, skills, and strategies to **cultivate change talk** and to **soften sustain talk** when talking with youth (Moyers, Manuel, & Ernst, 2015). Table 1 defines categories and examples of change talk: desire, ability, reason, need, commitment, activation,

and taking steps. The acronym DARNCATs is used in MI training to remember the types of change talk. Through MI training, JDTC team members learn to recognize, respond to, and evoke youth change talk.

Table 1: Types, Definitions, and Examples of Change Talk		
TYPE	*DEFINITION*	*EXAMPLE*
Desire	Desire to change	"I wish I could quit smoking."
Ability	Ability to change	"I stopped smoking weed before; I can probably do it again."
Reason	Reasons to change	"My mom would get off my back if I quit drinking."
Need	Urgency for change	"I need to keep my driver's license; without it, I can't work."
Commitment	Commitment to change	"I'm gonna take a different bus route home to avoid passing the park where my old friends hang out."
Activation	Leaning toward the direction of change	"I passed my first GED test!"
Taking steps	Specific actions toward change	"I'm starting to notice how hanging out with Alex is a high-risk situation for me."

MI Sidesteps the Righting Reflex

An impulse of a JDTC team member may be to fix problems and direct a youth toward a specific treatment or case plan. The practitioner may undertake such planning before understanding the youth's goals, values, and culture, or the context in which the behavior is occurring. What might seem like an obvious need for change to an adult may not appear as urgent or clear to an adolescent. Jumping to conclusions and writing case plans prematurely can lead to the adolescent pushing back against change, which is the opposite of the practitioner's intended outcome. This well-intentioned impulse to emphasize the importance of change and persuade an individual about how to carry out the change is known as the **righting reflex** (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

While the intention of JDTC team members is to be helpful, the approach of the righting reflex tends to elicit opposition, frustration, and disengagement on the part of the youth. Responses from youth, including "That won't work for me," "I tried that already," and "OK, I'll try that" followed by inaction are all indicators that the righting reflex may have entered the conversation. Another example occurs when team members find themselves telling the youth how to solve the problem or attempting to convince the youth why the change is important. The righting reflex tends to occur more frequently if team members perceive that the youth's

health and safety are in danger. These situations have the potential to evoke genuine feelings of fear, frustration, and anger in adults working with youth, which can inadvertently result in the team adult's communication style subtly switching from guiding to directing.

The JDTC team member can **sidestep the righting reflex** by using the MI spirit, skills, and strategies designed to help youth articulate and resolve their own ambivalence, verbalize their own motivation for change, and create their own change plan. The method of MI evokes feelings of empowerment, self-efficacy, engagement, respect, and hope (Miller & Rollnick, 2013), the presence of which increases the likelihood the youth will successfully enact the behavior change.

MI Embraces Cultural Humility

Four decades of MI research have involved people of diverse races and ethnicities, including people of Asian, African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, Native American, and multiracial descent (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Given the social, economic, and health disparities that disproportionally impact people of color, it is important to follow evidence-based practices that have been shown to be effective in and of benefit to diverse populations (Hettema, Steele, and Miller, 2005). MI is such a practice.

The concept of **cultural humility** is consistent with the Person-Centered Counseling approach upon which MI is based. Tervalon & Murray-Garcia (1998) originally described cultural humility as an alternative to cultural competence, the latter of which implies that a practitioner achieves an endpoint after amassing a certain level of knowledge about cultural groups. In contrast, the practice of cultural humility invites practitioners to engage in ongoing active self-reflection and self-critique. Such self-awareness is a lifelong process, where professionals recognize the "fluidity and subjectivity of culture" and question systems of inequities (Fisher-Borne, Cain, & Martin, 2015, p. 171). "Cultural humility requires an understanding of self on a deeper level and an analysis of power and privilege" (p. 175).

Part of the active self-reflection process is rooted in recognizing the difference between **intent and impact**. Briefly, intent refers to what a person means to say or do, and impact refers to how the message or action affects another person (JustLead Washington, 2020). Verbal and nonverbal communication provide hints if there may be a discrepancy between how a message was intended versus the impact it had on the person receiving it. Prioritizing impact over intention places responsibility on the speaker to thoughtfully reflect on how their communication affects others. The spirit, skills, and strategies of MI enhance this practice. Additionally, Blomquist (2019) offers considerations for promoting trauma-informed practices within the court environment and evaluating the potential impact on youth.

Recognizing each individual's experience with racism, discrimination, and inequity is critical to understanding that person's thoughts, behaviors, and goals in the context in which they live. MI gives JDTC team members communication skills to convey an authentic and respectful interest in learning about a youth's background and family tradition. In turn, youth from diverse backgrounds may feel safe and able to consider making changes consistent with goals and values of personal importance with team members who value establishing helping relationships.

Summary of Key Features

This section presented the following main points:

- The strategic and relational components of MI work together in conversations about change.

- MI is learnable by people from a variety of professional and educational backgrounds.

- There is value in all JDTC team members learning MI.

- The spirit of MI is exemplified through partnership, acceptance, compassion, and evocation.

- People considering change often feel ambivalent at first; that is, they see reasons to stay the same (sustain talk) and reasons to change (change talk).

- MI views ambivalence as a natural part of the change process.

- The righting reflex, however well-intentioned, is inconsistent with helping people change effectively.

- Cultural humility suggests ongoing active self-reflection in understanding the experience of youth from diverse cultures.

- Prioritizing impact over intent invites the speaker to thoughtfully reflect on how their communication affects others, regardless of how it was intended.

Figure 1 displays the concepts of MI in a nutshell. They are summarized in the companion Info Card and Cue Cards as well. Each of these concepts and their associated skills and strategies as applied to the JDTC setting will be described in this TAB.

Figure 1: Motivational Interviewing in a Nutshell

Spirit & Four Processes
- Partnership, Acceptance, Compassion, Evocation
- Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, Planning

Core Skills (OARS)
- Open Questions
- Affirmations
- Reflections
- Summaries

Change Talk (DARNCATs)
- Desire, Ability, Reason, Need
- Commitment, Activation, Taking steps

Strategies
- Elicit – Provide – Elicit
- Cultivate Change Talk
- Soften Sustain Talk

The next section describes the theories and four processes informing how the MI spirit, skills, and strategies work to motivate youth toward change.

Understanding How MI Works to Help People Change

Familiarity with principles of adolescent development and the **Stages of Change** is essential for any practitioner working with youth in treatment for substance use disorders. Through their training as probation officers, treatment providers, or legal advocates for youth, many JDTC team members receive training on these topics. Team members unfamiliar with adolescent development or substance use treatment are encouraged to seek materials and training. SAMHSA's 2019 edition of *Enhancing Motivation for Change in Substance Use Disorder Treatment: Treatment Improvement Protocol 35* is a free reference for reading about the Stages of Change, and *Principles of Adolescent Substance Use Disorder Treatment: A Research-Based Guide* is a free resource for learning about effective treatment for adolescents (NIDA, 2014).

The spirit, skills, and strategies of MI are informed by several theories. Understanding these theories and the mechanisms of action with which they are associated facilitates understanding of the why and the how underlying MI practice.

Self-Determination Theory

Described by Ryan & Deci (2000), **Self-Determination Theory** (SDT) suggests that humans pursue activities to meet three essential human needs: **competence**, **autonomy**, and **relatedness**. When individuals engage in activities that meet these needs, they experience self-motivation and psychological health.

SDT identifies two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Put simply, **intrinsic motivation** consists of factors relating to an individual's desires, goals, values, and culture that come from and reside within the individual. **Extrinsic motivation** refers to factors outside of the individual in the form of consequences, rewards, and social status that exert influence on the individual (SAMHSA, 2019). Behavior that is intrinsically motivated tends to be sustained as it generates reinforcing feelings of self-efficacy, competence, and excitement (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Both types motivate people to change in varying degrees and lengths of time, and both are useful in a JDTC setting. Once youth become engaged in treatment through the external influences of helping professionals and the use of incentives, praise, and encouragement, the task for

JDTC team members then shifts to evoking and enhancing the youth's intrinsic motivation for change (NIDA 2014; SAMHSA, 2019; Schiller, Pearce, & Jones, 2019).

Person-Centered Counseling

Person-Centered Counseling, and its underlying theory of human behavior, is an approach to therapy that seeks to nurture an individual's **self-actualizing tendency**. Such therapy is based on a belief that all people have an innate orientation toward growth and fulfillment (Rogers, 1980). The practitioner's ability to convey understanding of the youth's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors is referred to as **accurate empathy** (Moyers & Miller, 2013). According to Rogers (1957), accurate empathy is one of the critical conditions for change. It has endured over time as a vital part of the therapeutic alliance and contributes to better treatment outcomes.

Moyers & Miller (2013) note that "one of the largest determinants of client outcomes is the counselor who provides treatment" (p. 1). This is borne out by research. Studies have shown that even when treatment delivery was standardized and guided by manuals, differences in client outcomes appeared to be related to the counselor providing the services. Specifically, people who received SUD treatment from a counselor with high empathy tended to have better outcomes such as treatment retention and decreased alcohol use (Miller & Moyers, 2014). Those who received treatment from a counselor with low empathy tended to experience increased drop-out and relapse rates, and less behavior change (Moyers & Miller, 2013).

In MI, accurate empathy is demonstrated through the use of reflective listening. To reflect, the team member says aloud what they think the adolescent means. The team member strategically uses reflections to guide the adolescent in talking about change. Reflective listening to express accurate empathy is a hallmark of person-centered approaches such as MI and is discussed later in this TAB.

Self-Perception Theory

Self-Perception Theory (Bem, 1972) is based on the idea that people come to understand their own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs by observing their own behavior and the context in which their behavior occurs. This type of self-observation occurs in ambiguous situations, such as when people feel ambivalent and are sorting out their perspective. For example, when youth are considering changing their behavior, they see reasons to stay the same and reasons to change.

Rosengren (2018) notes, "…in situations where people are unsure, having them talk in favor of a position causes their attitudes to shift in line with their arguments. In short, we come to believe that for which we argue" (pp. 267-8). When a JDTC team member invites an adolescent

to talk about the desire, ability, reason, or need to change a target behavior, the youth becomes the one who is arguing for change, and convincing themselves.

Note that the practice of engaging the youth in talking about their own reasons for change is the opposite of lecturing, giving advice, or telling people how to change behavior. When a team member is pushing for change, the adolescent is left with no choice but to take up the other side: reasons to stay the same. This is exactly backward (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

The Four Processes

Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change (2013) is structured around four processes detailing a road map for change (depicted in Figure 2 and in the companion Info Card). A team member's first stop is to **engage** and build trust with the youth. Once rapport is established, the team member and adolescent collaborate on one or more target behaviors that become the **focus** of change. Once the target behavior has been established, the team member **evokes** the youth's motivation toward the specific behavior change. Shifting into **planning** may occur when the balance of a youth's statements tilts away from sustain talk and toward change talk.

Figure 2: Four Processes of Motivational Interviewing

Engage → Focus → Evoke → Plan

The First Process: Engaging

Engaging is the first process in MI. Engagement is relational, occurring between two people; it sets the foundation for conversations about change. In the context of the JDTC, engagement involves multiple avenues and different practitioners on the team. The attorneys, probation officer, coordinator, treatment provider, and judge will all have initial and ongoing interactions with the youth. In turn, the youth will have varying degrees of engagement with each team member throughout the program.

In the JDTC, it is the team member's task to strategically promote engagement with the adolescent. This includes an understanding of the various external stressors and factors affecting both the team member and the youth. A team member can increase engagement with a youth by using a guiding style of communication with the core skills of MI. Known as OARS, the skills of Open Questions, Affirmations, Reflections, and Summaries will be addressed later in this TAB.

Action Tips for Engaging

- Express curiosity and compassion

- Understand the person's ambivalence or dilemma without judgment

- Sidestep the righting reflex and listen

- Listen for what is important to the youth with particular attention to the youth's goals, values, and culture

The Second Process: Focusing

Engagement prepares the foundation of trust, which allows the team member to guide the adolescent toward the second process of MI: **Focusing**. The focusing process connects conversations about change to a specific purpose and outcome. In the JDTC context, expectations of the youth to work toward abstinence or harm reduction are pre-determined through the JDTC contract, phase, and goal structure. Even with the JDTC framework of conditions and expectations, the team member can still bolster autonomy by having the youth choose what change to make first and how to go about it.

A case plan to address the youth's risk and treatment needs may feel overwhelming to a JDTC participant. It is the team member's job to partner with the youth to sharpen their focus on specific aspects of the plan to help make goals more achievable, more immediate, and less daunting. Team members such as the probation officer and treatment provider will more often work with a youth on the task of focusing, although focusing may be part of brief interactions between the youth and the judge, prosecutor, or coordinator. (For more information on focusing and case planning, see Individualizing Responses to Motivate Behavior Change in Youth: A Four-Pronged Approach by Schiller, Pearce, and Jones, 2019.)

Action Tips for Focusing

- Recognize that ambivalence about change is natural

- Consider goals that might build self-efficacy

- Help the youth identify a target behavior that has a sense of importance to them

The Third Process: Evoking

The process of **evoking** invites the youth to verbalize his or her own change talk; that is the youth's own desire, ability, reasons, or need to change. When youth verbalize their reasons

aloud, they talk themselves into changing. The process of evoking includes the skills of recognizing, evoking, and responding to change talk as well as softening sustain talk. Team members such as the probation officer and treatment provider are more likely to work with the youth in the evoking process; judges, prosecutors, and coordinators can also look for opportunities to elicit the youth's motivation to change during the brief interactions that they have with the youth. Specific strategies to cultivate change talk are presented later in this TAB.

Action Tips for Evoking

- Draw out the youth's reasons and importance for change

- Evoke their own ideas and what they already know

- Develop discrepancy between the youth's current behavior and their goals, values, and culture to amplify or create ambivalence

The Fourth Process: Planning

The fourth process is **planning**. In working with young people, many team members have a plan in mind for the youth after reading an assessment. The difference in planning within an MI framework is that a plan cannot be created without 1) building the foundation for engagement; 2) a series of focused conversations; and 3) evoking the goals, values, and culture from the adolescent. For JDTC team members, creating an initial, iterative, and collaborative case plan with the youth increases the youth's self-efficacy and assures the plan is truly individualized (Schiller, Pearce, and Jones, 2019). The planning process is likely to be used by the probation officer and treatment provider with other team members involved in regular reviews and information sharing.

Action Tips for Planning

- Generate options for what the youth might do to be successful

- Elicit and affirm strengths, efforts, values, and culture connected to the change plan

- Share information using Elicit – Provide – Elicit (discussed later in this TAB) regarding strategies to increase commitment

- Identify specific people who will support the youth with their plan

Summary of How MI Works to Help People Change

Several main points on understanding the theories and processes of MI were covered in this section:

- Self-Determination Theory identifies three essential human needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

- There are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Behavior that is intrinsically motivated tends to be sustained and is found within the youth's individual goals, values, and culture.

- Accurate empathy is one of the critical conditions for change according to Person-Centered Counseling. In MI, accurate empathy is demonstrated by reflective listening.

- Self-Perception Theory recognizes the power of verbalizing aloud reasons to change in shifting a youth's thinking about changing.

- The road map for change follows four processes that build on each other: engaging, focusing, evoking, and planning.

The next section presents the core skills of MI, defining each in terms of function and mechanics while providing specific examples relevant to JDTC work.

Core Skills in MI: OARS

The acronym OARS refers to the core skills of MI: Open Questions, Affirmations, Reflections, and Summaries (presented in Table 2). The strategic goals of conversations about change are to cultivate change talk and soften sustain talk. Each skill is described with examples, and action tips provide options for using the skill right away. The examples and actions tips are intended to supplement training in MI, or they may serve as refreshers for team members who have received MI training.

Table 2: The Core Skills of Motivational Interviewing	
SKILL	**FUNCTION**
Open Questions	Elicit the youth's perspective and evoke change talk. They function differently in each of the four processes.
Affirmations	Reflect a youth's strength, ability, values, effort, culture, and skills. Affirmations add wind to a youth's sails, motivating forward movement. The intention is to inspire self-efficacy and state aloud qualities in the youth that contribute to success.
Reflections	State aloud what the JDTC team member thinks the youth means. Reflections convey accurate empathy, allow the team member to highlight change talk, and invite the youth to elaborate and clarify as they continue thinking and talking.
Summaries	Combine reflections and affirmations organized around themes from the conversation. Capitalizing on the momentum of the change conversation, summaries set the stage for a key question, the effect of which is to assess whether the youth has moved along to the next stage of change. JDTC team members are encouraged to close each topic with a summary plus key question.

Open Questions

Open Questions are queries that seek to evoke longer answers as opposed to yes/no or short answers. In MI, open questions are key to eliciting the youth's perspective and change talk, whereas closed questions tend to gather specific pieces of information. Open questions are

designed to empower the individual answering the questions to actively shape the agenda and direction of the conversation. It is an approach that encourages the youth to share what is on their minds rather than being responsive to what is on the mind of the person asking the question.

Open questions create the environment that MI seeks to cultivate: one that is person-centered and connected to the behavior change the individual is motivated to undertake. In the context of JDTCs, when team members use open questions they bring youth into collaborating on change. Open questions enable the youth to do the majority of the talking. They ensure that the youth has input into the topics and direction. Open questions invite the youth to answer according to the aspects of the topic that are of particular interest or importance to the youth.

Contrasting Closed and Open Questions

Closed questions are used to gather specific information. Such questions drill down on details and they have a particular effect on the conversation. The person asking the questions directs the conversation and generally gives few opportunities for the other person to influence what topics are covered. In the JDTC context, when a team member asks a youth a closed question, the youth will answer the question and wait for the JDTC team member to ask the next question. The youth answering a series of closed questions can feel like they are being interrogated even when that is not the intention. This cycle of questioning and answering is known as the **question and answer trap** (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). It is something practitioners avoid in MI.

Table 3 describes the differences between closed and open questions. Notice the contrast between what is elicited and the specific words that begin the questions.

Table 3: Contrasting Closed and Open Questions	
CLOSED QUESTIONS	*OPEN QUESTIONS*
Used often in the directing style	Used often in the guiding style
Answered with yes, no, or a short response	Answered with longer responses
Gathers narrowly defined information	Elicits broad information, potentially introducing new aspects of the topic
Starts with have, do, are, and can	Starts with what, how, describe, and tell me about

Please note that there are times when closed questions are useful. When assessing risk or suicidal ideation, for example, it is important to obtain clear answers and specific information. The point of this section is to increase awareness of the two types of questions and highlight the function of open questions in conversations about change.

Action Tips for Using Open Questions

- Observe how frequently you use closed and open questions in conversations with youth.

- Open up your questions: Start with what, how, tell me about, or describe.

- Notice the youth's response when you ask open questions.

Affirmations

Affirmations are statements of a youth's strength, ability, values, effort, culture, and skill. They bolster a youth's developing sense of self-efficacy which is a youth's belief that they would be successful if they decided to make a change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Rosengren, 2018).

Think of affirmations as adding wind to a youth's sails, motivating forward movement. Effective affirmations reflect the youth's best self and what is most important to them, beginning with their goals, values, and culture. To deliver effective affirmations:

- Start with you to keep the focus on the youth;

- Reflect one specific strength, ability, value, effort, or skill the adolescent has displayed; and

- State the affirmation as a fact.

To get started, it can be helpful to work from a list. The Affirmation Cue Card contains a short list of adolescent-specific characteristics and values from which to form a genuine affirmation.

Affirmations are different from praise as shown in Table 4. Despite being well intentioned, statements of praise imply evaluation of one person by the other (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Praise is general and could be the same for everyone. An affirmation, on the other hand, is meaningful, specific, and represents genuine recognition of the individual's own strengths, abilities, values, efforts, skills, or culture.

Table 4: Comparing Praise and Affirmations	
PRAISE	**AFFIRMATION**
"Great job!" **"That's awesome!"** **"I'm proud of you!"** **"Cool!"**	"You are determined to improve your math grade this year." "You've got a few months substance-free so far, and you're discovering other interests." "Getting into that computer program would support your independence." "Helping your family is important to you."

Praising clients is not wrong; it serves a different purpose and is more about the relationship than the youth. In contrast, affirmations are focused on the adolescent. Imagine the effect on a person of hearing their strengths, abilities, values, efforts, and skills recognized and reflected back to them in a genuine, specific, and meaningful manner (Rosengren, 2018). This kind of empathy develops the three essential human needs described in Self-Determination Theory: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

In a study looking at which specific individual therapist behaviors elicited client change talk and sustain talk in MI, affirmations were the only therapist micro-skill that both increased change talk and reduced sustain talk (Apodaca, Jackson, Borsari, Longabaugh, Mastroleo, & Barnett, 2016). This finding has significant implications for treatment when coupled with the fact that increased change talk and decreased sustain talk are correlated with successful behavior change. Given their potential impact, learning to deliver accurate, specific, and meaningful affirmations is a useful skill for all JDTC team members to master.

Action Tips for Using Affirmations

- Before your next meeting with a youth, think about the strengths, abilities, values, efforts, or skills the youth displays. Affirm one of the identified qualities in your next interaction.

- Notice the impact of a meaningful affirmation on the youth.

- Affirmations have the ability to increase change talk and decrease sustain talk. Practice delivering one specific, meaningful, and accurate affirmation in your work or personal life.

Reflections

Reflective listening is the primary skill on which MI is built. It is the mechanism through which practitioners convey their interest, empathy, and understanding of clients. Practitioners can express acceptance of the client and also gently challenge positions; they can encourage greater exploration or a shift away from a problematic statement. Reflective listening is typically used to engage clients and create momentum, which can then be channeled in directions that are productive (Rosengren, 2018, p 70).

Reflections are a hallmark of MI-based interactions. They are statements about what the helping professional thinks the person means (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Reflections allow the practitioner to strategically highlight change talk and invite the client to elaborate and clarify as they continue thinking and talking. Reflections demonstrate understanding of the client's perspective, conveying accurate empathy, which is one of Carl Roger's critical conditions for change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Rogers, 1957).

Reflections prove that the team member is listening. They invite the adolescent to clarify and say more if the practitioner's reflection is not completely accurate. Regardless of whether the reflection is right on or a little off, the youth will provide confirmation, clarification, and elaboration.

There are two basic levels of reflections: simple and complex. Depth is the main difference between simple and complex reflections. In addition to a general complex reflection, there are three other types specifically focused on feelings, ambivalence, and identifying a metaphor. Table 5 summarizes the different types of reflections and provides examples of their use.

Simple reflections stay close to what the person said where the team member uses the same or similar words as the adolescent (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). They are particularly useful when a youth is agitated. Simple reflections can validate strong emotions and calm the youth down. Too many in a row, however, can elicit irritation and frustrated exclaims of, "I just said that!" (Naar-King & Suarez, 2011). Repeated use of simple reflections may make it feel like the conversation is going in circles. To step off the "merry-go-round," aim for complex reflections (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Complex reflections "…add some meaning or emphasis to what the person has said, making a guess about the unspoken content or what might come next" (Miller & Rollnick, 2013, pp. 57-58). Complex reflections move the conversation forward. They go beyond what the person said. An example of a complex reflection is one where the practitioner seeks to articulate and reflect a feeling that they think the youth may be experiencing. Teens may find it hard to express feelings directly and in words. Nonverbal communication, tone of voice, and posture

are clues into how a youth may be feeling. Even if the practitioner hasn't gotten it quite right, offering a "feeling reflection" gives the youth something from which to work and react.

Double-sided reflections recognize ambivalence. For example, the practitioner might say, "On the one hand, smoking weed with your friends is fun, and on the other, it's getting you into some trouble." The use of "on the one hand [insert sustain talk] and on the other hand [insert change talk]" is strategic. This language, rather than a but, is especially important. But negates what came before it, dishonoring the sustain talk while and respects both sustain talk and change talk. Additionally, double-sided reflections are an example of using sustain talk strategically. With this type of reflection, sustain talk is acknowledged and the practitioner ends with the change talk; strategically the practitioner's efforts are aimed at cultivating change talk, and the person will likely continue talking about the last thing the team member said.

Metaphor reflections provide a visual model for understanding. Statements such as, "You can see the light at the end of the tunnel," and "You're ready to get back on track," are memorable and often stick with a youth after leaving a session. Effective metaphors should be culturally relevant to the youth. What might make sense to a person of one culture may not translate well to a person from another culture. As always, the youth will provide the best feedback about the impact of a given metaphor.

Table 5: Examples of Simple and Complex Reflections		
TYPE OF REFLECTION	*FEATURES OF REFLECTION*	*RESPONSES TO:* *"I'D LIKE TO GET MY GRADES UP."*
Simple	– Stays close to what the youth says – Restate using the same words or rephrase using similar words – Use sparingly	– "You'd like to get better grades." – "You wish you could improve your grades."
Complex	– Goes beyond what the person says – Adds meaning – Connects goals or values to change – Moves the conversation forward	– "Some subjects are easier than others." – "You've been struggling in school." – "Something's getting in your way."

Table 5: Examples of Simple and Complex Reflections		
TYPE OF REFLECTION	FEATURES OF REFLECTION	RESPONSES TO: "I'D LIKE TO GET MY GRADES UP."
Feeling	– Adds an affective component – Reflection of emotion you think the person might be feeling	– "You're worried what might happen if you don't get your grades up."
Double-sided	– Acknowledges both sides of ambivalence: sustain talk and change talk – End with change talk to guide the person in talking about change	– "On one hand, you're not sure where to start, and on the other, some good things might happen if your grades improved."
Metaphor	– Offers a visual model for thinking about the situation or behavior change – Another way of understanding might spark new ideas	– "You're looking toward the finish line." – "You've got your eyes on the prize." – "You can see the light at the end of the tunnel."

One specific way for JDTC team members to begin developing their skills in MI is by adding reflections to their conversations with youth. Many conversations consist of an adult asking questions and the youth answering them. Asking a series of questions can feel like an interrogation, especially to an adolescent; the unintended impact is that the youth provides short answers and waits for the adult to ask another question. While this method is useful in gathering specific information, it is referred to as the question-and-answer trap in MI and is contrary to how people change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). JDTC team members may sidestep the question-and-answer trap by reflecting what they think the youth meant before asking another question. This beginning question:reflection ratio of 1:1 is a solid start; practitioners may increase the number of reflections as their skills continue to improve.

The type of reflection matters as well. JDTC team members are encouraged to aim for more reflections to be complex, rather than simple (Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Rosengren, 2018; SAMHSA, 2019). Note that complex reflections do not need to be wordy to be effective; they go beyond what the youth said, adding meaning to which the youth will respond. Complex reflections allow the JDTC team member to guide the conversation forward while inviting the youth to continue thinking and talking. Recall the concept of self-perception theory:

people talk themselves into changing when given the opportunity to verbalize their thoughts and ideas. Sample dialogue presented later in this TAB briefly demonstrates how reflections function in conversations about change.

Drop the Stems

In conversations about change, practitioners might start reflections with phrases such as, *"It sounds like…," "I hear you saying that…," "If I hear you right…,"* or *"So…"* These kinds of sentence starters are called "stems." While it is not wrong to use stems, there is a tendency to overuse them. This can result in the youth tuning out the well-intentioned team member (Naar-King & Suarez, 2011) or in the youth feeling "therapized" (Rosengren, 2018). Either can risk increasing discord between the team member and the youth, which works against the efforts toward change.

Team members may choose to use stems to show respect or to avoid feeling that they are putting words in the person's mouth. Practitioners learning MI are encouraged to notice their use of stems and be thoughtful about their purpose and the frequency with which they are used. The youth is the team member's best source of feedback; notice how the youth responds to the style and adjust as needed.

Action Tips for Reflections

- To reflect, state aloud what you think the youth means.

- Aim for at least one reflection between every question.

- Drop the stems. Start sentences with "You feel…" and "You think…" instead.

- When in doubt, reflect.

- If you feel like you are going in circles, try more complex reflections.

- Avoid the question-and-answer trap.

Summaries

Summaries are reflections and affirmations organized around themes from the conversation. Periodically summarizing the main points of what the youth has said communicates that the team member is listening closely. Summaries structure the conversation, organize the youth's experience, and ensure the conversation stays focused on the target behavior.

In forming summaries, the practitioner emphasizes certain elements of what the youth has said with particular attention to change talk, affirmations, and connections between

behavior change and goals or values of importance to the person. With a youth who expresses ambivalence, the summary can begin with a brief acknowledgment of sustain talk, moving into a deeper reflection of change talk, while guiding the conversation toward change.

Remember the guiding aspect of MI seeks to tip the balance toward change. Summaries in conversations about change typically place more weight on change talk than sustain talk. Miller & Rollnick (2013) describe three types of summaries, each serving a different purpose: collecting, linking, and transitional. Table 6 provides a description and example of each type.

Table 6: Types, Features, and Examples of Summaries			
	COLLECTING	*LINKING*	*TRANSITIONAL*
Features	– Focuses on the present – Gathers related topics – Adds topics until the person is finished	– Connects past and present information – Develops discrepancy	– Wraps up a task or topic in preparation to move on to something else – Sets up a key question
Example	"We've talked about how much heroin use is stressing your relationship with your mom. It's taking up a lot of your money and affecting your job."	"Last week, you were relieved to finally have that shoplifting charged dismissed. Every time you buy heroin, you feel more and more worried about getting more charges."	"With every attempt to quit heroin, you learn what works and what doesn't. You're concerned about letting your mom and your friends down when you use. You're getting stronger at challenging unhelpful thoughts that get in your way and you'd like to get a negative UA before your next court date coming up in a few weeks. Where does that leave you now?"

An effective summary sets the stage for a **key question**, which is a particular type of open question that capitalizes on momentum and assesses the impact of the conversation.

- "What do you think you *might* do?"

- "Where does all this leave you?"

- "What *might* be the next step?"

Be careful not to inadvertently push for commitment before the person is ready (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Notice the difference between "What are you *going* to do?" and "What do you think you *might* do?" The first implies pressure, even if it is unintended, and the second invites the youth to imagine his or her options without feeling pressured.

The youth may respond to the key question with sustain talk, change talk, or a bit of both. The JDTC team member responds strategically depending on which type of language the youth uses:

- If the answer is sustain talk, the youth is still ambivalent and likely in the pre-contemplation or contemplation stage of change. The youth hasn't yet decided to make the change; at this stage, interventions ideally remain focused on topics such as understanding substance use behavior, evaluating the pros and cons, and exploring substance use in relation to individual goals, values, and culture (SAMHSA, 2019).

- If the answer is change talk, it is a signal that the ambivalence scale has tipped toward change and the youth has moved forward, even slightly, in readiness to consider change. Interventions in this case include identifying possible prosocial activities that are incompatible with substance use, establishing relationships that support change, and affirming the connection between the youth's goals, values, and culture and the youth's choices (SAMHSA, 2019).

The intentions of the key question are to capitalize on the momentum of the conversation and assess whether the youth has moved along to the next stage of change.

Action Tips for Summaries

- Use summaries to highlight change talk and affirm the youth's goals, values, or culture.

- Begin a session with a brief summary highlighting change talk and affirmations from the previous session.

- Aim to close conversations with a summary plus a key question to assess the impact of the conversation.

Summary of the Core Skills in MI: OARS

- This section offered several key points about OARS as core skills of MI: Open questions elicit the youth's perspective and provide opportunities for intrinsic motivation to emerge.

- Affirmations are associated with increased change talk and decreased sustain talk.

- Affirmations are distinct from praise; they are specific reflections of the youth's strength, skill, ability, value, culture, or effort.

- Adding reflections into conversations is a first step toward developing MI skills.

- Reflections convey accurate empathy, which is a critical condition for change.

- Practitioners are encouraged to aim for half of their reflections to be complex, and for a beginning reflection:question ratio of 1:1.

- Powerful reflections are clear and succinct, and tend to start with "You..."

- Summaries emphasize certain elements of youth language, highlighting affirmations and change talk.

- The summary plus key question combination assesses the impact of the conversation and informs subsequent strategies.

The next section describes strategies for navigating specific situations in MI and presents annotated sample dialogue to illustrate the flow of MI conversations.

Strategies for Navigating Specific Situations in MI

Building on the theory, spirit, and skills of MI, what follows are descriptions and examples of MI strategies in action. The OARS skills described earlier combine with the strategies to achieve specific purposes. The strategies include cultivating change talk using specific types of open questions, open questions within the four processes, sharing information, responding to sustain talk, reflecting your way through "I don't know" responses, and dealing with a slip.

Strategies for Cultivating Change Talk: Specific Types of Open Questions

As noted earlier, Self-Perception Theory states that people are convinced by what they hear themselves say; that is, as applied to behavior change, people talk themselves into change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). The goal of the JDTC team member is to facilitate a conversation in which the youth is the one talking about change, generating potential components of the change plan, and building self-efficacy through the process. Quality open questions guide the youth to imagine what change might look like without feeling pressured into having to implement a plan right away, provided the conversation occurs within an atmosphere of partnership, acceptance, and compassion. Each strategy uses open questions to elicit change talk. Table 7 summarizes these strategies and provides examples.

Change Rulers are a strategy consisting of two parts that seeks to elicit the perceived importance of a target behavior to a person (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). The first part of the strategy asks the youth to rate how important the change is to them on a scale of 0 to 10. The second part of the strategy elicits the reasons the youth chose the particular number in comparison to a lower number. Implicit in the use of the ruler is inviting the youth to articulate change talk.

Change Rulers are used regularly in MI, Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET), and brief interventions, all of which have an evidence base for reducing substance use. In the context of JDTC, a team member first asks, "On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all important and 10 means extremely important, how important is it for you to change your use

of marijuana?" The youth answers with a number, and the JDTC team member follows up with the second part of the two-part strategy: "What makes you a 6 and not a 2?" The youth answers with change talk; that is, the youth describes the reasons why making the change is important.

When the youth rates the importance of change as a low number, such as a 3, another potential follow-up question is to ask, "What might it take to inch you up to a 3.5?" (Miller & Rollnick, 2013; SAMHSA, 2019). Note that this question elicits what might have to happen to increase the perceived importance of changing the target behavior.

Follow up questions such as "Why aren't you a 10?" are not advised, because they will elicit sustain talk, where the youth lists all of the reasons they cannot make the change. MI practitioners do not ignore sustain talk; rather, they think strategically about what their question will elicit. Decades of research into the effectiveness of MI tell us that "…it matters what clients say during treatment: increases in change talk (relative to sustain talk) are associated with subsequent change" (Miller & Rollnick, 2013, pp. 170-171).

Querying Extremes is another strategy consisting of two parts that elicits the best things that could happen if the youth made the change, and the worst things that could happen if the youth did not make the change. For example, a set of questions evoking a youth's motivation to engage in prosocial activities might sound like:

- "What might be the best things that could happen if you found something structured to do after school?"

- "What might be the worst things that could happen if you continued to have nothing to do after school?"

These questions invite the young people to think about structuring their time, which has been shown to strengthen recovery. Asking young people to verbalize the downside to staying the same reminds them of potential consequences that they might want to avoid. When young people engage in prosocial activities that are meaningful to them and with others who support their goals and values, they are building a lifestyle incompatible with substance use. This increases the likelihood of sustaining gains made in treatment (NIDA, 2014).

An example about graduating from high school follows: "What are the **best** things that could happen if you completed high school?" and "What are the **worst** things that could happen if you didn't complete high school?" Thinking about substance use, an example is "What might be the **worst** things that could happen if you continued drinking?" and "What might be the **best** things that could happen if you stopped?"

Asking for Examples or Elaboration invites youth to elaborate about their experience with a

specific behavior, topic, or activity. This is an effective strategy for evoking as well as engaging. Example or elaboration questions that begin with "tell me about…," and "describe…," convey the team member's sincere interest in learning more about the youth and the youth's individual experience. In the context of JDTCs, example and elaboration questions help team members understand the youth's perspective and achieve accurate empathy.

Consider this: If a parent asks an adolescent to clean his or her room, two different definitions on what constitutes a clean room might be operating. The parent might assume that a clean room means that clothes are picked up off the floor, laundry is put away, the bed is made, and the floor is vacuumed. The youth might think pushing the clothes under the bed and stuffing the closet is sufficient. Asking for examples and elaboration prevents this kind of misunderstanding and promotes the JDTC team and youth being on the same page.

Samples of asking for elaboration or examples in action follow:

- "Tell me what you like about smoking marijuana."

    ◦ "What are the not-so-good things about smoking marijuana?"

- "Describe a time you felt nervous and handled it."

- "Tell me about the last time you drank more than you intended."

These questions elicit context essential to understanding the youth's individual experience.

Asking evocative questions about DARNCATs prompts the team member to ask open questions about the different categories of change talk. Examples include:

- "What do you hope to get out of the drug court program?" (DESIRE)

- "Tell me about the last time you tried to quit smoking marijuana." (ABILITY)

- "What might make it worth your while to complete high school?" (REASON)

- "What feels urgent about stopping drinking?" (NEED)

- "What might you be able to commit to?" (COMMITMENT)

- "What are some things you've considered changing about your marijuana use?" (ACTIVATION)

- "What are some steps you've already taken?" (TAKING STEPS)

The team member is encouraged to match the youth's stage of change while evoking change talk. Asking about commitment before the youth has decided to make the change is likely to elicit sustain talk which indicates the team member is ahead of the youth. Get back on the same

Motivational Interviewing Skills in Action for Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Teams: A Technical Assistance Bulletin

page by asking about desire, ability, reason, or need for change as opposed to how the youth is going to do it.

Looking back invites the youth to recall and compare the times before the problem occurred with the current situation (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Examples include:

- "Looking back, how were things different before you started smoking marijuana?"

- "What kinds of things did your family used to do together?"

- "What was school like for you when you were younger?"

This strategy highlights the discrepancy between two periods of time in an effort to elicit change talk.

Looking forward invites the youth to imagine what the future benefits of making the change might be before doing it (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). It might sound like:

- "If you look ahead, how might things be different if you completed high school?"

- "Thinking ahead to the summer, how do you see yourself spending your time?"

- "Imagine that you've stopped smoking marijuana three months from now. How would your life be different?"

Adolescents' sense of time is different from adults. Asking about one year into the future might be challenging for an adolescent whereas looking three months into the future might be more manageable.

Exploring goals, values, and culture works to connect the youth's deeply held thoughts and feelings to the target behavior. It elicits what is most important in the youth's life, which may be a source of discrepancy between the youth's current situation and desired future life (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Examples include:

- "How might completing the drug court program support your goals?"

- "How might changing your substance use give you more freedom?"

- "How might your relationship with your grandmother be different if you changed your marijuana use?"

- "What have people told you you're good at?"

Miller & Rollnick observe that "discrepancy between current behavior and a core value can be a powerful motivator for change when explored in a safe and supportive atmosphere" (2013, p. 89). Refer to the Affirmation Cue Card for additional ideas on eliciting goals, values, and culture.

Table 7: Descriptions and Examples of Strategies to Cultivate Change Talk		
NAME OF STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Change Rulers	A strategy consisting of two parts designed to elicit the perceived importance of change: the first part asks the youth to rate how important the change is to them on a scale of 0 to 10, and the second part elicits the reasons that the youth chose the particular number in comparison to a lower number. Implicit in the use of the ruler is inviting the youth to articulate change talk.	1 "On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all important and 10 means extremely important, how important is it for you to change your use of marijuana?" a. The youth answers with a number, and the follow-up question elicits change talk: 2 "What makes you a 6 and not a 2?" TIP: Use the same strategy to rate confidence to change: "On a scale from 0 to 10, how confident are you that you can change your use of marijuana?"
Querying Extremes	Another strategy consisting of two parts that elicits the best things that could happen if the youth made the change, and the worst things that could happen if the youth did not make the change.	1 "What might be the best things that could happen if you found something structured to do after school?" 2 "What might be the worst things that could happen if you continued to have nothing to do after school?"
		1 "What might be the worst things that could happen if you continued drinking?" 2 "What might be the best things that could happen if you stopped drinking?"

Table 7: Descriptions and Examples of Strategies to Cultivate Change Talk		
NAME OF STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Asking for Examples or Elaboration	Uses open questions asking youth to elaborate about their experience with a specific behavior, activity, or topic. This is a particularly effective strategy for the engaging and evoking processes.	− "Tell me what you like about marijuana." − "What are the not-so-good things about marijuana?" − "Tell me about a time you felt nervous and handled it." − "Tell me about the last time you drank more than you intended." − "Describe what it was like the last time you interviewed for a job."
Asking Evocative Questions About DARNCATs	This strategy prompts the team member to ask open questions about the different categories of change talk.	− "What do you hope to get out of the drug court program?" (DESIRE) − "Tell me about the last time you tried to quit smoking marijuana." (ABILITY) − "What might make it worth your while to complete high school?" (REASON) − "What feels urgent about stopping drinking?" (NEED) − "What might you be able to commit to?" (COMMITMENT) − "What are some things you've considered changing about your marijuana use?" (ACTIVATION) − "What are some steps you've already taken?" (TAKING STEPS)

Table 7: Descriptions and Examples of Strategies to Cultivate Change Talk		
NAME OF STRATEGY	*DESCRIPTION*	*EXAMPLE*
Looking Back	This strategy invites the youth to recall and compare the times before the problem occurred with the current situation. This strategy highlights the discrepancy between two periods of time in an effort to elicit change talk.	– "Looking back, how were things different before you started smoking marijuana?" – "What kinds of things did your family used to do together?" – "What was school like for you when you were younger?"
Looking Forward	This strategy invites the youth to imagine what the future benefits of making the change might be before doing it. Adolescents' sense of time is different from adults. Asking about one year into the future might be challenging for an adolescent whereas looking three months into the future might be more manageable.	– "If you look ahead, how might things be different if you completed high school?" – "Thinking ahead to the summer, how do you see yourself spending your time?" – "Imagine that you've stopped smoking marijuana three months from now. How would your life be different?"
Exploring Goals, Values, and Culture	This strategy connects the youth's deeply held thoughts and feelings to the target behavior. It elicits what is most important in the youth's life, which may be a source of discrepancy between the youth's current situation and desired future life.	– "How might completing the drug court program support your goals?" – "How might changing your substance use give you more freedom?" – "How might your relationship with your grandmother be different if you changed your marijuana use?" – "What have people told you you're good at?"

Getting the Most Out of Your Open Questions: "What Else?"

"What else?" is not a stand alone strategy; rather, it can be used after each of the strategies to elicit deeper change talk. When the team member asks an open question to elicit change talk as demonstrated above, the youth will respond with the first answer that comes to mind. Continue evoking change talk by asking, "What else?" This practice deepens the conversation and evokes stronger motivation for change through exploration and reflection. For example, if youth were asked, "What are your reasons for quitting smoking?" they may respond that they know it is bad for their health and they probably should quit. The question, "What else?", prompts them to delve deeper. The youth might describe how smoking costs a lot of money and how that money could be used for something important in life. If asked again, "What else?", the youth might talk about how a relative was hospitalized for COPD, and they're worried that might happen to them if they don't quit, or they might talk about how they felt scared when they woke up with chest pains after a night of drinking and heavy smoking.

"What else?" is a simple question that expands and deepens change talk and elicits internal motivation, the very intention of MI. Further exploration in this manner reveals the youth's richness and depth of thought, maximizing the effectiveness of JDTC interventions. Key to this strategy is to reflect and explore each piece of change talk before repeating the question.

Open Questions within the Four Processes

Using open questions effectively calls for strategically tailoring them to the four processes: Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, and Planning. In many conversations about change, the practitioner jumps right into planning questions in a well-intentioned effort to find and fix the problem. The youth in the JDTC program may be at different stages of change for different problems, and this approach can engender pushback or reluctant agreement. For example, youth might recognize that their use of alcohol is dangerous, especially if they have experienced consequences such as blacking out or doing something embarrassing in front of their friends while intoxicated; however, they might view marijuana as more helpful than harmful as in assisting with relaxation or getting to sleep at night. These two substances require different approaches. Jumping right to how the youth plans to stop using substances altogether may result in short-term compliance, discord, or disengagement. For sustained change to occur, the team member will begin conversations about change with engaging.

Open questions for **Engaging** seek to understand the context in which the target behavior or behaviors occur, as well as the youth's perspective. Open questions for **Focusing** elicit which

topics to discuss in a session, or which target behavior that the youth is most ready to begin discussing. The team member can avoid **a premature focus trap** in which the team member may push one change goal while the youth pushes back against it. When the team member argues for change, the youth is left to take up the argument for not changing, which is exactly backward (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Open questions in the **Evoking** process invite the youth to imagine what the change might look like without feeling pressured into committing to it prematurely. These are also known as strategies to elicit change talk and included the change rulers, looking forward or backward, exploring goals and values, and other strategies.

Lastly, open questions in the **Planning** process elicit a **menu of options** from which the youth may consider several solutions and think through the barriers each one might pose. Team members are encouraged to view developing a plan as a beginning step in carrying out change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). It will likely need to be evaluated and adjusted over time, and team members will want to affirm the youth's efforts, foster the youth's sense of self-efficacy, and strengthen intrinsic motivation along the way.

Examples of open questions within each process appear in Table 8. Note the different types of information each question might elicit and how it relates to the specific process.

Table 8: Examples of Open Questions in the Four Processes	
PROCESS	*EXAMPLE OF OPEN QUESTION*
Engaging	"Tell me how you're doing in your high school classes."
Focusing	"We've got 30 minutes today. What would you like to focus on?"
Evoking	*Exploring goals and values:* "How might completing JDTC support your future goals?"
Planning	"What are some ways that work for you to keep track of your court dates?"

If the youth initially responds to an open question with "I don't know," try making the question more specific. The youth may not know how to answer questions that are too general. For example, asking, "What do you want to change about your life?" might elicit a shoulder shrug from an adolescent because the scope is too broad. On the other hand, asking, "How might your life be different if you changed your substance use?" focuses on a specific topic while still being open, and makes it much easier for the youth to answer.

Adolescents, by the nature of their stage in development, have not yet developed the maturity or life experience to fully anticipate future consequences of their actions when they make decisions (National Research Council, 2013). This fact makes it even more important to guide adolescents in anticipating the benefits and potential barriers of the change plan before

expecting them to implement it successfully. A JDTC team member's role is to begin to bridge youths' here and now thinking with what they would like for their future according to their individual goals, values, and culture.

Strategy for Sharing Information: Elicit – Provide – Elicit

Elicit – Provide – Elicit (EPE) is a method for sharing information that is consistent with MI practice (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). This method guides practitioners to honor the existing knowledge of an individual, prioritize the person's interest, offer material in small pieces, and elicit thoughts and reactions to allow the person time to consider how the information might apply to the person's situation.

Initially, giving advice or information was contrary to the MI approach. In the third edition of *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change* (2013), Miller and Rollnick added EPE as an MI-adherent way to share information. Transferring information is essential in JDTC and other helping professions. The simple structure of EPE aligns with a guiding style of communication and is consistent with current MI practice.

Elicit – Provide – Elicit: Structure and Process

The practitioner draws from each component shown in Figure 3 starting with eliciting what the youth already knows about the topic, what interests the youth about it, and asks permission to share information before proceeding. Next, the team member affirms the youth's existing knowledge, shares information one piece at a time, and acknowledges the youth's autonomy in deciding what to do. After information is shared, the practitioner elicits what the youth makes of the information, what questions the youth has, and what next steps may be.

Note that the provision of information is sandwiched between eliciting. This may be thought of as a flexible model bouncing back and forth between the three components based on the needs of the conversation and prioritizing what is most important to the youth.

Figure 3: Elicit - Provide - Elicit Model
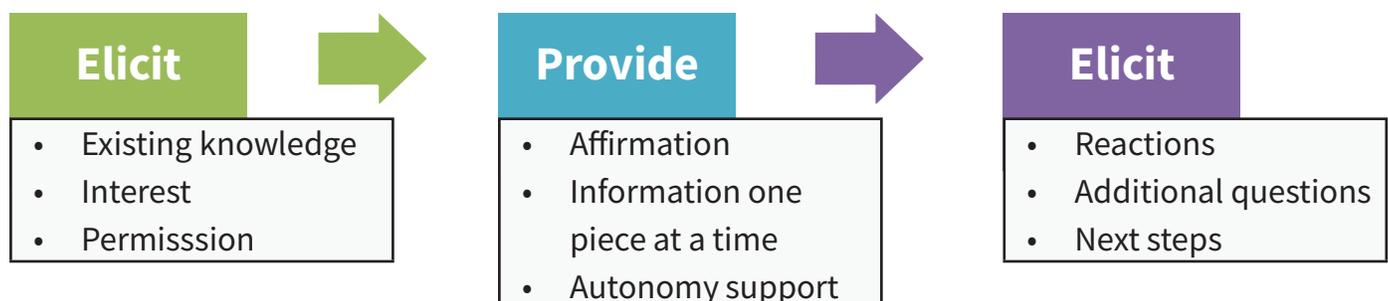
Elicit	Provide	Elicit
• Existing knowledge • Interest • Permisssion	• Affirmation • Information one piece at a time • Autonomy support	• Reactions • Additional questions • Next steps

A key feature of EPE is generating a menu of options from which the person making the change may choose. Ideally, the list starts with ideas from the person making the change. The practitioner may add a few as requested or needed. There are many paths toward recovery. Creating a menu of options allows the person to imagine several possibilities, thoughtfully considering the pros and cons of each without feeling the inherent pressure of responding to suggestions made by the JDTC team member (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

What Elicit – Provide – Elicit Might Sound Like

Examples of questions and statements that the JDTC team members may use when facilitating an EPE conversation follow. Treat these examples like a menu where one is selected from each category based on its function in the conversation. Each one does not need to be asked before moving to the next; rather, the team member selects the components most useful to the conversation.

ELICIT:

- *Existing knowledge*: "What do you already know about how marijuana affects memory?"

- *Interest*: "What would you like to know about depression?"

- *Permission*: "Would it be OK if I share some information with you about binge drinking?"

PROVIDE:

- *Affirmation*: "Being a good friend is important to you" or "You've already thought about…"

- *Information one piece at a time*: Examples include "What we know is…" or "Others have benefited from…" or "People have found…" or "Research shows…"

- *Autonomy support*: "The decision is yours" or "The choice is up to you".

ELICIT:

- *Reactions*: "This surprises you" or "What do you make of that?"

- *Additional questions*: "What questions do you have?" or "What else would you like to know?"

- *Next steps*: "What might help you decide?" or "What might be the next step?"

In a therapeutic court proceeding, the judge has the unique opportunity to hear directly from the youth within the court proceedings. EPE provides the judge with a way to partner with the

youth to engage, build rapport, and focus on goals relating to behavior change.

The next section contains two sample dialogues illustrating EPE in action. The first is an interaction between the judge and a youth and the second features an interaction between the juvenile probation counselor (JPC) and a youth. The column on the right side labels the specific MI skill and strategy in use.

Dialogue 1: Elicit – Provide – Elicit Sample Dialogue: Maria and the Judge		
SPEAKER	*DIALOGUE*	*MI SKILLS ILLUSTRATED (EPE BOLDED)*
Judge	Hi Maria. I'm the JDTC Judge. I wanted to welcome you and check in regarding what you may already know about JDTC.	**Elicit**
Maria	Well, I have heard some things about how hard it is.	
Judge	You're wondering what it would be like for you.	Reflection
Maria	Well, I heard that I must be at court every week, and if I miss I have to go to detention.	
Judge	You are quite right that it is a commitment, yet detention is not usually our first response. Would you like to hear more?	Reflection **Elicit**
Maria	Yeah, my mom works, and I have a hard time getting to where I need to be when she's not around and I have to watch my little brother.	
Judge	You are committed to your family; transportation is a concern, and you want to be successful in this program.	Affirmation
Maria	Yeah, and the buses don't really get me to the courthouse, but I think I should try to do this.	
Judge	One thing you're thinking about is how you would get to the courthouse when needed. Would you like to hear about some things that have worked for other adolescents?	Reflection **Elicit**
Maria	Sure.	
Judge	The treatment provider you are working with has a van that helps get some people to court and treatment. Taxi/Uber has worked for some, and there is childcare here at the court. Would you like to know more about any of those options?	**Provide Elicit**
Maria	Yeah. (pauses) I think I can work out who is watching my brother. Getting here is really my biggest worry.	

Dialogue 1: Elicit – Provide – Elicit Sample Dialogue: Maria and the Judge		
SPEAKER	*DIALOGUE*	*MI SKILLS ILLUSTRATED (EPE BOLDED)*
Judge	I need to talk to the next person, but before I do I want to make sure I understand your situation. You know this program is going to be hard, and if you took advantage of the transportation and planned for your brother it might work for you. What do you think might be the next step?	Summary + Key Question
Maria	I guess talking to my mom and the probation counselor would be a start.	
Judge	Maria, I look forward to hearing your thoughts about it next week.	Closing
Maria	Thank you, your honor. I'll let you know.	

In the second example that follows, notice the function of reflections and affirmations within EPE. The JPC affirms what is important to the youth during the conversation and uses reflections to invite the youth to clarify and continue talking.

Dialogue 2: Elicit – Provide – Elicit Sample Dialogue: Zeek and the Juvenile Probation Counselor		
SPEAKER	*DIALOGUE*	*MI SKILLS ILLUSTRATED (EPE BOLDED)*
Juvenile Probation Counselor (JPC)	Hi Zeek. I'm your assigned JPC for JDTC. I know that you received a lot of information since your recent opt-in and I'm wondering how much you remember about our random UA schedule.	**Elicit**
Zeek	Well, I know that someone may show up at my door randomly and ask for one and that sometimes it happens at court.	
JPC	Correct. We have a system that randomly picks adolescents for their turn after the first UA, which is today.	**Provide**
Zeek	Oh, I didn't think I would get one so soon. Um… so what happens if you find something?	
JPC	You are concerned that it might be positive for something.	Reflection
Zeek	Yeah because I know marijuana stays in your system for a long time and I'm not sure.	
JPC	Marijuana was something you used in the past.	Reflection

	Dialogue 2: Elicit – Provide – Elicit Sample Dialogue: Zeek and the Juvenile Probation Counselor	
SPEAKER	**DIALOGUE**	**MI SKILLS ILLUSTRATED (EPE BOLDED)**
Zeek	Yeah, when I'm stressed it helped me chill. It was easier to sleep sometimes.	
JPC	You were looking for something to relieve your stress and marijuana was something that helped. What else are you concerned about?	Reflection **Elicit** "What else?"
Zeek	Well, all this court stuff stresses me out so I will have some marijuana in my system.	
JPC	Your honesty about your UA shows you are serious about succeeding.	Affirmation
Zeek	I am serious about getting the charges dropped. I'm not sure how it will work out.	
JPC	You feel conflicted; marijuana has helped you with some things, and now it could be getting in your way of having the charges dropped.	Double-Sided Reflection
Zeek	Yeah, even though this program was my idea I still kind of dread it.	
JPC	Parts of the program feels like they're gonna be tough. Tell me more about the dread you are feeling.	Reflection **Elicit**
Zeek	Well, I know this is what I should do but I have used weed for a couple years. It keeps me chill and out of trouble with annoying people. I'm not sure how I'll be without it.	
JPC	You mentioned this before, that marijuana calmed you down. Having a reliable way to deal with stress is important to you. What do you know about other ways you've heard people deal with stress?	Reflection Affirmation **Elicit**
Zeek	I had a friend who took medication and it kind of messed with him. I don't want to deal with that.	
JPC	There might be some other things you could try.	Reflection
Zeek	Yeah, I have enough things to deal with already. I'm just not sure about having to take medication every day.	

	Dialogue 2: Elicit – Provide – Elicit Sample Dialogue: Zeek and the Juvenile Probation Counselor	
SPEAKER	**DIALOGUE**	**MI SKILLS ILLUSTRATED (EPE BOLDED)**
JPC	Makes sense. Everyone responds differently to medication. There are other options that might work for you. First, I'd like to hear what it's like for you when you feel stressed.	**Provide** **Elicit**
Zeek	Sometimes I think my friends are avoiding me when they don't answer my texts. I worry that I said or did something wrong. Sometimes it bothers me so much I can't sleep and keep checking my phone.	
JPC	Thinking you did something to make your friends mad is very upsetting to you.	Reflection
Zeek	Yeah. We do everything together. And now I'm in this program. I can't be around them when they're smoking weed and I really need these charges dropped.	
JPC	You've got a lot to think about. While you're in this program, we'll work together to sort these things out. What might be the best things that could happen if you found another way to relax besides smoking weed?	Reflection **Provide** **Elicit**
Zeek	Well, if I make it through JDTC, my charges would get dropped. That would be one thing I wouldn't have to worry about anymore.	
JPC	That would be a relief for you.	Reflection
Zeek	Yes (thinking) And my mom worries about me sometimes. I don't want her to worry, she's got enough to worry about in her life.	
JPC	You and your mom both have a lot of stress.	Reflection
Zeek	(nods) Yes. And I kinda feel bad about it but weed is the only thing that helps me relax.	
JPC	You care about your mom a lot.	Affirmation
Zeek	Yeah, I mean, she gets on my case most of the time, but she also does stuff for me.	
JPC	We're coming up on the end of our session today. I'd like to continue talking at our next session if you're willing.	Structure **Elicit**

	Dialogue 2: Elicit – Provide – Elicit Sample Dialogue: Zeek and the Juvenile Probation Counselor	
SPEAKER	DIALOGUE	MI SKILLS ILLUSTRATED (EPE BOLDED)
Zeek	That's fine.	
JPC	Today, you talked about feeling stressed a lot. You said that weed has helped you relax in the past, and now you're working to get marijuana possession charges dismissed. You are willing to consider other ways to deal with stress if you can find something that might work. What might be the next step?	Summary & Key question
Zeek	As we were talking, I was thinking that running used to tire me out. I fell asleep quicker after a run. Maybe I'll try that.	
JPC	You might be on to something there.	Affirmation
Zeek	Maybe. (pauses) Not sure where my running shoes are.	
JPC	Let's continue talking next week. Running is one option and I'm curious to hear what else you might come up with between now and our next session.	Reflection Closing
Zeek	Yeah, I have to figure this out so I can get out of court.	

Overall, the JDTC team regularly provides information to youth, caregivers, and other stakeholders connected to the program. EPE is an engaging and respectful method that honors a youth's existing knowledge, prioritizes information the youth is most interested in, and shares information in a manner consistent with strategic and relational components of MI practices.

Action Tips for Elicit – Provide – Elicit

- Bring the EPE MI Cue Card with you to court or a session with a youth as a reminder of the structure.

- Before giving information, ask what the youth already knows.

- Provide a small piece of information and elicit what the youth makes of it.

Strategies for Responding to Sustain Talk and Dodging Discord: Rethinking Resistance

In the third edition of *MI: Helping People Change*, Miller & Rollnick discontinue the use of the term resistance to describe "…any apparent client movement away from change" (2013, p. 196). Labeling a youth as resistant places responsibility for not changing solely on the youth, blames the youth for "being difficult," and pathologizes the youth for behaviors consistent with ambivalence, which is a natural part of the change process.

Instead, Miller & Rollnick (2013) break down "any movement away from change" into two parts: sustain talk and **discord**. As noted earlier, sustain talk consists of youth statements to stay the same. Remember that DARNCATs is the acronym for types of change talk. These same categories exist for sustain talk. For example, a youth may express no desire for change when saying, "I really like smoking." The youth might not feel an urgency to make the change when saying, "I don't need to quit smoking." And the youth may take specific action away from change when saying, "I went to counseling a few times, but I don't need to go back." Table 9 presents types, definitions, and examples of sustain talk.

Table 9: Types, Definitions, and Examples of Sustain Talk		
TYPE	*DEFINITION*	*EXAMPLE*
Desire	No desire for change	"I really like smoking."
Ability	Inability to change	"I've tried to quit before, and it's impossible."
Reason	Reasons for staying the same	"Smoking helps me relax."
Need	No urgency for change	"I don't need to quit smoking."
Commitment	Commitment to status quo	"I'm not giving up smoking."
Activation	Leaning away from the direction of change	"I'm not sure I need to do all this stuff."
Taking steps	Specific actions away from change	"I went to counseling a few times, but I don't need to go back."

Discord refers to a disturbance in the relationship where people are no longer "dancing to the same tune" or "singing the same song." It may take the form of interrupting, arguing, or disagreeing within the conversation. When discord arises, it is a signal to the team member that a shift in approach is needed (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Discord may occur in response to the practitioner telling the youth how to change rather than evoking ideas, or as an indicator that the youth is feeling overwhelmed, disengaged, hopeless,

or misunderstood. Strategies to dodge discord include revisiting engagement; connecting the youth's goals, values, and culture to behavior change; affirming the youth's strengths, abilities, values, efforts, and skills; and remembering to elicit from the youth.

Guidelines for Softening Sustain Talk

The JDTC team member has several options when deciding how to strategically respond to sustain talk. First, the JDTC team member will need to decide whether to reflect the sustain talk. There is a risk in lingering too long in sustain talk. While this might express empathy for the person's perspective, it is unlikely to motivate the youth toward change. Additionally, it may reinforce the youth to continue focusing on the reasons to stay the same. Developing discrepancy between the youth's current behavior and the youth's goals, values, and culture is meant to evoke an internal tension that the youth feels motivated to resolve.

A team member who decides to reflect sustain talk should do so simply and briefly. Reserve the complex reflections for change talk. Listen for opportunities to reflect change talk that might be intertwined with sustain talk. Both will be present, especially in a person expressing ambivalence about change.

Other strategies include using time stamps and qualifiers to leave the door open to the possibility of change. Words and phrases added to reflections such as right now, yet, or sometimes convey accurate empathy while at the same time adding a temporary stamp to leave open the possibility for change.

Strategies for Softening Sustain Talk

The goal of MI is to guide adolescents toward change using the strategic and relational components. To this end, MI practitioners selectively attend to change talk as opposed to equally reflecting both types of youth language. This is not to say that sustain talk is ignored; rather, as has been suggested elsewhere in the TAB, practitioners are encouraged to be strategic in how they respond to a youth's sustain talk. Strategies for softening sustain talk described in this section include **simple** and **double-sided reflections**, **reframing**, **emphasizing personal choice**, **shifting focus**, and **coming along side** (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Simple and double-sided reflections were previously described. **Reframing** invites the youth to consider another perspective by looking at the youth's situation from a different point of view. **Emphasizing personal choice** is a simple yet powerful strategy, especially if the team member is hearing more sustain talk than change talk. Imagine the team member and

the youth are holding a piece of rope as one would in a game of tug of war. When the youth begins to pull away and slips into sustain talk, the team member has two choices: pull harder attempting to drag the youth into change talk or drop the rope. Emphasizing personal choice has the effect of dropping the rope and acknowledging the truth: changing is the youth's decision, despite any external pressure; it is ultimately up to the youth to decide if and how to change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Shifting focus recognizes that current motivation to change a target behavior may not be strong enough to tip the balance toward change. This strategy invites the practitioner to guide the conversation toward another target behavior in an effort to promote productive conversation. It is possible to revisit the topic at a later time; shifting focus seeks to harness energy for what the youth is willing to change now. The change ruler described earlier in the TAB can be used to assess how important the youth feels it is to change the target behavior at the moment. Generally, scores of 5 and above represent the tipping point toward change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). If a score is below 5, the youth is less likely to go through the effort of making the change for the specific target behavior. Shifting focus offers a path to a more productive conversation.

In the last strategy, **coming alongside**, the team member sides with sustain talk; that is to say the team member reflects the youth's reason for not changing. This strategy invites the youth to take the opposite side of the argument. If the JDTC team member sides with not changing, this gives the youth the space to take up the side for change.

Examples of Softening Sustain Talk

The strategies to soften sustain talk provide options for JDTC team members to respond strategically to youth. Table 10 provides examples of how the strategies might sound in response to the sample youth statement: "Everyone is nagging me about smoking weed. Yes, I smoke when I need to focus and calm down. I would be in way more trouble if I didn't smoke."

Table 10: Examples of Strategies for Softening Sustain Talk	
STRATEGY	*EXAMPLE*
Simple reflection	"Smoking weed has helped you in some ways."
Double-sided reflection	"You feel weed has been helpful in some ways, and it's causing problems in others."
Reframing	"A lot of people care about you."
Emphasizing personal choice	"There's a lot for you to think about; ultimately, the choice is yours."
Shifting focus	"You're not sure about changing this right now; there's something else you'd rather start with first."
Coming alongside	"You feel things might be worse if you didn't smoke."

Action Tips for Softening Sustain Talk

- When an adolescent shares reasons to stay the same, or barriers to change, take a deep breath before responding. Then, simply and briefly reflect what you heard the youth say.

- If the youth seems to be pulling away or pushing back, simply and powerfully honor the youth's autonomy aloud with statements such as, "Ultimately the choice is yours," and "I wonder what you'll decide to do."

- Use a double-sided reflection, starting with sustain talk and ending with change talk. For example, "On one hand, smoking marijuana is fun, and on the other it's starting to cause some problems."

- Voice the youth's dilemma and use a double-sided reflection: "You're in a tough spot; part of you isn't ready to stop smoking weed and another part is tired of being nagged all the time."

Strategy: Reflecting Your Way through "I Don't Know"

Imagine this: You are fresh from an MI training and can't wait to try out reflections during your first session of the day. You deliver a beautiful complex reflection, and the youth responds with **"I don't know."** You feel a bit stunned that the youth didn't continue talking in response to your well-formed empathic complex reflection. You're feeling pressured to get the conversation moving, and you begin asking a series of questions in an attempt to engage the youth. Unfortunately, the reaction is the opposite. The questions elicit short, one-word answers. The youth does not offer change talk. You are at a loss for how to dig yourself out of the question-and-answer trap.

The above scenario is a frustrating experience, especially as team members are eager to practice their MI skills to help adolescents succeed in JDTC. When an youth says, "I don't know," it can feel like a stop sign or a roadblock for which there is no detour. Adolescents may say "I don't know" for different reasons: they might need time to think and feel pressured to give an immediate answer, they might feel afraid of the consequences if they say what they're thinking, or it could be that they sincerely don't know how to respond.

While the youth may not be offering verbal information from which the JDTC team member may generate reflections, the youth is likely providing nonverbal clues as to his or her thoughts or feelings. When the team member is faced with an youth who says "I don't know" that is an opportunity to test the power of accurate empathy as expressed through reflections.

If the youth says, "I don't know" in a tone of voice that indicates the youth may be feeling *unsure*, the JDTC team member could respond with "You're not sure if change is possible." The youth didn't say those words, and yet the tone of voice is a clue to how the youth is feeling. The team member says aloud what the youth may be communicating, inviting the youth to confirm, clarify, or elaborate. Staying within the rhythm of reflective listening keeps the team member out of the question-and-answer trap.

If the youth says "I don't know" in a posture that indicates a feeling of *distrustfulness*, the JDTC team member can say "You're not sure who you can trust right now" or "You're worried I might tell your mom everything you say." These are common concerns of adolescents. The reflections acknowledge these common worries and invite conversations the youth may not have known how to initiate about how his or her treatment information is shared, for example. The youth may not engage fully in treatment if the concerns are missed.

If the youth says, "I don't know" with body language that is communicating anger, the JDTC team member can reflect, "Something has gotten under your skin," or "No one understands you yet," or "You're *angry* about something." Think about how the youth might respond to

these reflections. The youth might talk about an event that elicited anger or talk about being misunderstood by the JDTC team. *The most important impacts of reflecting through "I don't know" are expressing accurate empathy, finding a detour around the communication roadblock, and engaging the youth in the conversation.*

A youth who has experienced trauma, anxiety, or depression may communicate *shame* or *hopelessness* by saying, "I don't know." In these situations, reflections might include "This is hard to talk about," "Right now, it's hard to see *how* things could change," or "You wonder about giving up." These reflections validate a youth who may be feeling vulnerable, and accurate empathy has the potential to deepen the therapeutic alliance in these circumstances.

JDTC team members who build skills in complex reflections are equipped to manage challenging conversations in a manner that promotes engagement and honors the relationship. They actively avoid falling into the question-and-answer trap and rely on reflective listening to move the conversation forward into productive territory.

Strategy: Dealing with a Slip or Return to Use

A challenging situation faced by JDTC team members is how to handle slips and returns to use. Substance use disorders carry the possibility of a return to use similar to other chronic diseases like diabetes and asthma (NIDA, 2014). Treating slips or returns to use as learning experiences illuminates gaps in the change plan and further needs of the youth.

Dialogue 3 features a conversation between a 17-year-old young man named Chris and his treatment counselor. Chris has been in drug court for six months. He had been attending the majority of his intensive outpatient groups and was testing negative for substances up until now. In this scenario, he is meeting with his treatment counselor for his weekly individual session and to talk about his recent positive urine drug screen.

While reading the dialogue, notice the flow of the conversation, the attention to change talk, and how the counselor guides the youth forward in recovery according to his goals, values, and culture while eliciting intrinsic motivation for change. Also, notice how reflections and affirmations are greater in number than open questions.

SPEAKER	DIALOGUE	MI SKILLS ILLUSTRATED
	Dialogue 3: Dealing with a Slip: Chris and the Treatment Provider	
Counselor	Good to see you again, Chris.	
Chris	Yeah, you too.	
Counselor	Today, for our weekly individual session, I wanted to check in to see how things are going for you. You've been in the program for six months now. You've had good attendance at group. Your urine drug screens have been mostly negative except for the last one. I'd like to hear what you make of your progress so far and for us to talk about the weekly court report. What's on your agenda for us today?	Collaborative agenda-setting Summary Affirmation Open question
Chris	Man, I'm stressing about that UA. That's all the judge is gonna see. She's not gonna see all the good stuff I've been doing.	
Counselor	You're really worried about this.	Reflection
Chris	Yeah, I was doing fine for so long, and then I slipped.	
Counselor	It kind of snuck up on you.	Reflection
Chris	Yeah, I was heading home from school and ran into some old friends. They asked me to go to the park, and we smoked a little. I hadn't seen them in a while, and I wanted to hang out. I didn't think it would show up on the UA.	
Counselor	It was a tough situation for you: On one hand, you miss your old friends, and on the other, you've been working hard to change your substance use.	Reflection
Chris	Exactly. None of this has been easy. The judge expects so much, and I've made all these changes. I don't get to hang out with my old friends, and I can't even smoke a little weed once in a while. I want to get that charge off my record but it's really hard to follow all these rules.	
Counselor	You've been working so hard for the past six months: understanding your substance use, learning new coping skills, and recently, trying out a new lifestyle without substances. You've changed a lot of things in your life. What do you make of that?	Summary + Key question

	Dialogue 3: Dealing with a Slip: Chris and the Treatment Provider	
SPEAKER	**DIALOGUE**	**MI SKILLS ILLUSTRATED**
Chris	I've really changed a lot. I need that charge off my record. That's why I'm doing all this. My uncle has a felony and he has had lots of problems getting a good job and a good place to live. I don't want that for my life. I am good at computers; you can make a lot of money in computers.	
Counselor	You've got some goals for yourself. Tell me about your computer skills.	Affirmation Open question
Chris	It was the one class in school I liked. The teacher was cool and taught us a lot.	
Counselor	You could see yourself continuing to learn about computers after you finish your high school completion program.	Reflection
Chris	Maybe. If I can find a program that's quick and doesn't cost a lot.	
Counselor	You're clear about what you want.	Affirmation
Chris	Yeah, you have a lot of time to think about things when you get locked up. That was not fun.	
Counselor	You don't want to go back there, especially when you have potential for something more.	Reflection
Chris	Yes. If I can just get through this program, my record will be clear, and I'll be free to spend my time doing what I want.	
Counselor	You've got some good reasons for needing to get through this program. Let's talk more about that. The weekly report is due to the court and I need to include the urine drug screen results.	Reflection Structure
Chris	Do you have to?	
Counselor	I can see you're dreading this. Slips happen to lots of people and if the judge sees that we're dealing with it in treatment, she might be less likely to give you a sanction. I can't guarantee it; what we can do is highlight your treatment attendance, and share what you learned from this slip and how you'll prevent it from happening in the future.	Reflection Providing information
Chris	OK.	

	Dialogue 3: Dealing with a Slip: Chris and the Treatment Provider	
SPEAKER	**DIALOGUE**	**MI SKILLS ILLUSTRATED**
Counselor	You mentioned that you missed hanging out with your friends as part of the reason for the slip.	Reflection
Chris	Yeah, I wanted to have some fun and hang out. I'm always doing something serious, like going to court, seeing my Juvenile Probation Counselor, working on classes, or coming to group. I wanted to chill for a bit.	
Counselor	You've been meeting all of your responsibilities.	Affirmation
Chris	Yeah, and it could all be lost because of one mistake. I'm really wishing I hadn't smoked. Do you think I'll be able to avoid detention?	
Counselor	That really depends on the judge. One thing we can do is to show her that you're taking this seriously and that you've learned something from the slip. What do you think we're missing from your recovery plan?	Provide Open Question
Chris	I don't really have anything fun to do. I'm so busy going to court, school, or treatment that I don't get to hang out with friend or do many fun things.	
Counselor	You're onto something there, Chris. One part of recovery is finding activities you enjoy and making friends who have similar interests and goals.	Affirmation Providing information
Chris	(pauses in thought) If I had something to look forward to, and friends to hang out with who wouldn't mess me up with the judge, this could be easier.	
Counselor	Your day wouldn't feel like it was only things you *had* to do.	Reflection
Chris	Yeah.	
Counselor	You mentioned liking computers. What other things do you like to do?	Reflection Open question
Chris	I used to play basketball at the park a lot, but everybody smokes there.	
Counselor	That could be risky.	Reflection

SPEAKER	DIALOGUE	MI SKILLS ILLUSTRATED
	Dialogue 3: Dealing with a Slip: Chris and the Treatment Provider	
Chris	Definitely. It's hard to make friends with people who don't smoke.	
Counselor	This could take a bit to figure out. Let's keep talking about it. We've got some connections to programs that you could try out and see what you think.	Reflection Providing information
Chris	OK.	
Counselor	Today we talked about how "all work and no play" may have led up to a slip. I'll put that in my report to the judge, along with the plan to start finding activities you enjoy. We can look for something fun where you can meet other people who have similar interests and goals. I'll also note that you've had good attendance at group and that you're starting to build awareness of high-risk situations for using, like the one you just experienced. What do you think?	Summary + Key question
Chris	I hope it's good enough for the judge. I don't want to spend any more time in detention.	
Counselor	If you want, I can give you the list of programs we have connections to, and you can start thinking about which ones might interest you. There's a songwriting program and some exercise programs on that list, along with vocational programs focused on technology.	Providing information
Chris	OK. That would help me feel more prepared to answer the judge's questions in court. She's gonna ask what I have to say about the positive UA. I can tell her what we talked about and maybe there's something fun I can even try out before the court date.	
Counselor	She might be impressed with your actions. And you might find something fun to do that could also help you with your computer goals.	Affirmation of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation
Chris	I hope so.	

The dialogue illustrates MI skills in action. It provides one model for understanding the flow of MI where skills and strategies capture the teachable moments involved in a slip while maintaining the kind of warm, firm, and encouraging adult relationship associated with protective factors for substance use (National Research Council, 2013). The counselor developed discrepancy between Chris' slip in using substances, the requirements established by the court, and his intrinsic motivation to get a good job in the future, within an atmosphere of partnership, acceptance, and compassion.

Summary of Strategies for Navigating Specific Situations in MI

Key points covered in this section include:

- The strategic goals of MI are to cultivate change talk and soften sustain talk.

- Effective strategies invite the youth to imagine what change might look like without feeling inadvertently pressured into making the change before the youth has committed to following through.

- Asking "What else?" is a simple way to elicit deeper change talk before moving to another strategy. A key component is to reflect each piece of change talk heard before repeating the question.

- EPE provides a structure for sharing information and is particularly useful in JDTC settings.

- The more ownership the person making change has over the plan, the more likely the person is to follow through with it.

- Think strategically before reflecting sustain talk; if it makes sense to reflect sustain talk, do so simply and briefly.

- Words and phrases added to reflections such as right now, yet, or sometimes convey accurate empathy while at the same time adding a temporary stamp to leave open the possibility for change.

- Listen for nonverbal cues to reflect your way through "I don't know" responses. Reflect the feeling you think the youth is expressing rather than asking a question.

- Treat slips or relapses as learning experiences; sustained behavior change takes time.

The next section describes a variety of options to continue training and practice in MI as well as concluding remarks.

Closing Remarks

Furthering MI Skills

Rosengren (2018) describes three general progressive levels of learning MI: (a) understanding the core concepts; (b) developing beginning proficiency; and (c) achieving and maintaining expert proficiency. Knowledge, practice, and feedback may be gained through a variety of activities including, reading, participating in live and virtual trainings, and receiving coaching and feedback based on observed individual skill practice. Below is a menu of free and paid options for getting started:

- Read books and articles of particular interest from the reference list

- Order free copies of the SAMHSA's 2019 edition of *Enhancing Motivation for Change in Substance Use Disorder Treatment: Treatment Improvement Protocol 35* for JDTC team members

- Identify one skill per week to practice, evaluating what went well and what to improve

- Select one action tip to practice with other members of the JDTC team

- Browse the Library section of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) website offering access to free and paid multimedia materials

- Participate in a virtual or in-person training event located through an internet search

- Work with a trainer who provides coaching and feedback to build proficiency in the delivery of MI services

While one- and two-day training workshops are helpful for initial learning of MI skills and strategies, observed practice and coaching are vital parts of a successful path toward beginning and advanced proficiency in MI (SAMHSA, 2019). JDTC teams considering implementing MI are encouraged to work with a professional who can guide them in assembling an effective plan for their team's specific needs. SAMHSA (2019) offers elements to consider in generating a plan of training activities.

Working with a trainer who understands the developmentally-informed application of MI in the JDTC setting is essential. There are several places to begin searching for an individual trainer or training organization. The SAMHSA-funded Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) Network offers regional training and technical assistance in the implementation of evidence-based addiction and recovery-oriented practices (ATTC Network, 2020). The MINT website hosts a searchable listing of trainers where individuals describe the type of training activities they offer in addition to specific areas of practical expertise (MINT, 2020). Another option is using an internet search engine to find contact information for individual trainers and organizations.

Conclusion

Guiding young people with substance use disorders and juvenile justice involvement toward intrinsically motivated behavior change is challenging and impactful work. This TAB was created to help JDTC team members, with varying levels of experience in MI, learn and apply the research-based principles to their individual and collective work on JDTCs.

Working from the spirit, skills, and strategies of MI, team members may develop confidence in their ability to establish the type of warm, firm, and encouraging relationship with youth that has been shown to be a protective factor against substance use and other risky behaviors (National Research Council, 2013). It is hoped that this TAB and the companion MI Info Card and Cue Cards will equip team members with practical ways to infuse the MI spirit, skills, and strategies into the JDTC programming they currently offer to guide youth toward happy, healthy, and productive lives.

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MI Skills in Action for Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Teams

Motivational Interviewing in a Nutshell

Spirit & Four Processes
- Partnership, Acceptance, Compassion, Evocation
- Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, Planning

Core Skills (OARS)
- Open Questions
- Affirmations
- Reflections
- Summaries

Change Talk (DARNCATs)
- Desire, Ability, Reason, Need
- Commitment, Activation, Taking steps

Strategies
- Elicit – Provide – Elicit
- Cultivate Change Talk
- Soften Sustain Talk

Definition of Motivational Interviewing

Notice the vital components of MI in the definition below: **strategic** elements appear in green, and **relational** components appear in orange:

> "Motivational Interviewing is a **collaborative**, **goal-oriented** **style of communication** with **particular attention to the language of change**. It is designed to **strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person's own reasons for change** **within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion**" (emphasis added; Miller & Rollnick, 2013, p. 29).

Both are essential to effective MI practice.

Four Processes (Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, Planning)

A team member's first stop is to **engage** and build trust with the youth. Once rapport is established, the team member and adolescent collaborate on one or more target behaviors that become the **focus** of change. Once the target behavior has been established, the team member **evokes** the youth's motivation toward the specific behavior change. Shifting into **planning** can occur when the balance of a youth's statements tilts away from sustain talk and toward change talk.

Engage ▸ **Focus** ▸ **Evoke** ▸ **Plan**

Change Talk (DARNCATs)

Change talk is based in self-perception theory: when a youth talks in favor of change, their perspective begins to line up with their statements. The practitioner's primary role is to recognize, evoke, and respond to change talk within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion.

Recognizing Change Talk

Sounds like...	
Desire	I want, I wish, I hope
Ability	I can, I could
Reason	Factors supporting change
Need	Reason plus urgency
Commitment	I will, I have
Activation	I'm ready to, I plan to
Taking steps	I'm starting to

There are two types of motivation described by self-determination theory: extrinsic and intrinsic. External pressure from parents, schools, and courts can provide a running start to make the leap from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation, with help from the MI spirit, skills, and strategies. Behavior that is intrinsically motivated is more likely to be sustained, as it generates self-reinforcing feelings of self-efficacy, competence, and excitement. Effective practitioners connect behavior change to what is most important to the youth, starting by understanding their goals, values, and culture.

Core Skills: OARS

The acronym, **OARS**, refers to the core skills of MI: **Open Questions**, **Affirmations**, **Reflections**, and **Summaries**. The OARS propel forward conversations about change.

O Open Questions **A** Affirmations **R** Reflections **S** Summaries

Reflections are a hallmark of MI practice. Practitioners are encouraged to aim for half of their reflections to be complex, and for a beginning reflection:question ratio of 1:1.

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING CUE CARD
OARS in Action

OARS refers to the core skills of MI: Open Questions, Affirmations, Reflections, and Summaries. The OARS propel forward conversations about change. Use the prompts below to form high quality OARS.

Open questions (OQ) elicit the youth's perspective and evoke change talk. Consider how they function within each of the four processes.

Forming OQs in the four processes:	EVOKING
ENGAGING	• "What might be the benefits if you decided to…?"
• "Tell me more about…"	• "What else?"
• "Describe…"	**PLANNING**
FOCUSING	• "How might you go about…?"
• "What topic would you like to focus on?"	• "What ideas have you considered to…?"
• "What would be most helpful today?"	

Affirmations are reflections of a youth's strength, ability, values, effort, culture, and skill. Think of affirmations as adding wind to a youth's sails, motivating forward movement. The intention is to reflect the youth's best self and what is most important to them, starting with their goals, values, and culture.

Highlight the youth's:	Forming affirmations:
• Strength	• Start with "You…"
• Ability	• Identify a specific strength, ability, value, effort, culture, or skill to affirm
• Values	• Ensure the affirmation is accurate, genuine, and meaningful
• Effort	• "____ is important to you."
• Culture	• You are [insert quality]."
• Skill	

Reflections are statements about what the JDTC team member thinks the youth means. Reflections convey accurate empathy, allow the team member to highlight change talk, and invite the youth to elaborate and clarify as they continue thinking and talking. Practitioners are encouraged to aim for half of their reflections to be complex, and for a beginning reflection:question ratio of at least 1:1.

Types and levels of reflections:	Forming reflections:
• Simple: Restate or rephrase using the same or similar words • Complex: Goes beyond what the youth said, adding meaning to move the conversation forward • Feeling: Name the emotion you think the youth might be feeling • Double-Sided: Reflect ambivalence, start with sustain talk, end with change talk • Metaphor: Offers a visual model for understanding	• "You're thinking…" • "You're wondering…" • "On one hand [insert sustain talk], and on the other hand [insert change talk]." • "You're looking toward the finish line."

Powerful reflections are accurate, clear, and succinct; they invite elaboration from the youth.

Summaries are reflections and affirmations organized around themes from the conversation. Capitalizing on the momentum of the change conversation, summaries set the stage for a **key question**, the effect of which is to assess whether the youth has moved along to the next stage of change. JDTC team members are encouraged to close each conversation with a **summary plus key question**.

Forming summaries:	Follow a summary with one key question:
• Highlight change talk and affirmations • Connect the behavior change to the youth's goals, values, and culture • If the youth is ambivalent, meaning they haven't decided whether to change, start with brief sustain talk leading into change talk and affirmations.	• "What do you think you might do?" • "Where does this leave you now?" • "What might be the next step?"

Be careful not to inadvertently push for commitment before the person is ready (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Notice the difference between "What are *you* going to do?" and "What do you think you might do?" The first implies pressure, even if it is unintended, and the second invites imagining what change might look like without expectation.

Affirmations

Affirmations are reflections of a youth's strength, ability, values, effort, culture, and skill. Think of affirmations as adding wind to a youth's sails, motivating forward movement. Affirmations bolster a youth's developing sense of self-efficacy which is a youth's belief that they would be successful if they decided to make a change. The intention is to reflect the youth's best self and what is most important to them, starting with their goals, values, and culture.

To form an affirmation, follow the prompts below:
- Start with "You..." to keep the focus on the youth.
- Identify a specific strength, ability, value, effort, cultural component, or skill to affirm.
- Ensure the affirmation is accurate, genuine, and meaningful to the adolescent.
- "_____ is important to you."
- "You are [insert quality]."

Examples:
"You've got a few months substance-free so far, and you're discovering other interests."
"Getting into that computer program would support your independence."
"Helping your family is important to you."

Affirmation starters
Think about the youth in JDTC and the resilient qualities they demonstrate. Instead of general statements or praise, such as "Great job!" or "That's awesome!", use the list below for inspiration to affirm a youth's specific strength, ability, value, effort, culture, or skill.

Athletic	Contribute to my family	Flexible	Hopeful	Physically fit
Attractive		Friendly	In control	Respected
Brave	Creative	Good student	Independent	Responsible
Competent	Disciplined	Good friend	Kind	Successful
Confident	Energetic	Helpful	Mature	Strong

Selected values from University of Oregon Youth Transition Program. (n.d.). *Anya Shefel on Card-Sorts (Videos): Teen Values Card Sort*. https://ytp.uoregon.edu/content/anya-sheftel-cardsorts-videos.

In a study looking at which specific individual therapist behaviors elicited client change talk and sustain talk in MI, **affirmations were the only therapist microskill that both increased change talk and reduced sustain talk** (Apodaca, Jackson, Borsari, Longabaugh, Mastroleo, & Barnett, 2016). This finding has significant implications for treatment when coupled with the fact that increased change talk and decreased sustain talk are correlated with successful behavior change.

MI Cue Card

Strategies for Cultivating Change Talk

There are a number of strategic open questions designed to elicit the youth's desire, ability, reason, and need for change. MI guides the youth in talking about change, preferably toward evoking their internal motivation for change by connecting their goals, values, and culture to behavior change. Select a strategy below and reflect the youth's answers.

Use Change Rulers: Importance and Confidence

- "On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all important and 10 means extremely important, how **important** is it for you to change your use of marijuana?"
- The youth answers with a number, and the follow-up question elicits change talk:
  ◦ "What makes you a 6 and not a 2?"

TIP: Use the same strategy to rate confidence to change: "On a scale from 0 to 10, how confident are you that you can change your use of marijuana?"

Querying Extremes

- "What might be the **best** things that could happen if you found something structured to do after school?"
- "What might be the **worst** things that could happen if you continued to have nothing to do after school?"
- "What might be the **worst** things that could happen if you continued drinking?"
- "What might be the **best** things that could happen if you stopped drinking?"

Asking for Elaboration or Examples

- "Tell me what you like about marijuana."
- "What are the not-so-good things about marijuana?"
- "Tell me about a time you felt nervous and handled it."
- "Tell me about the last time you drank more than you intended."
- "Describe what it was like the last time you interviewed for a job."

Other strategies to cultivate change talk include:

- **Asking evocative questions about DARNCATs:**
    - "What do you hope to get out of the drug court program?" (*DESIRE*)
    - "Tell me about the last time you tried to quit smoking marijuana." (*ABILITY*)
    - "What might make it worth your while to complete high school?" (*REASON*)
    - "What feels urgent about stopping drinking?" (*NEED*)
    - "What might you be able to commit to?" (*COMMITMENT*)
    - "What are some things you've considered changing about your marijuana use?" (*ACTIVATION*)
    - "What are some steps you've already taken?"(*TAKING STEPS*)

- **Looking back:**
    - "Looking back, how were things different before you started smoking marijuana?"
    - "What kinds of things did your family used to do together?"
    - "What was school like for you when you were younger?"

- **Looking forward:**
    - "If you look ahead, how might things be different if you completed high school?"
    - "Thinking ahead to the summer, how do you see yourself spending your time?"
    - "Imagine that you've stopped smoking marijuana three months from now. How would your life be different?"

- **Exploring goals, values, and culture:**
    - "How might completing the drug court program support your goals?"
    - "How might changing your substance use give you more freedom?"
    - "How might your relationship with your grandmother be different if you changed your marijuana use?"
    - "What have people told you you're good at?"

> **TIP:**
> Before moving on to another strategy, continue asking "What else?" to expand and deepen change talk, and elicit intrinsic motivation from the youth. Then, reflect. Further exploration in this manner reveals the young person's richness and depth of thought regarding behavior change, maximizing the effectiveness of JDTC interventions.

MI Cue Card

Strategies for Softening Sustain Talk

Sustain talk is a type of youth language in favor of staying the same and not changing. Opposite to change talk, youth can express desire, ability, reason, need, or commitment not to change. This Cue Card provides guidelines and strategies for softening sustain talk.

Guidelines for Softening Sustain Talk

- Decide whether or not to reflect sustain talk.
  - **If you decide to reflect sustain talk**, do so simply and briefly.
- Listen for opportunities to reflect change talk that might be intertwined with sustain talk.
- Words and phrases added to reflections such as "right now", "yet", or "sometimes" convey accurate empathy while at the same time adding a temporary stamp to leave open the possibility for change.

Strategies to Softening Sustain Talk

Observe each strategy in action in response to the following sample youth statement: "Everyone is nagging me about smoking weed. Yes, I smoke when I need to focus and calm down. I would be in way more trouble if I didn't smoke".

Simple reflection
"Smoking weed has helped you in some ways."

Double-sided reflection
"You feel weed has been helpful in some ways, and it's causing problems in others."

Reframing
"A lot of people care about you."

Emphasizing personal choice
"There's a lot for you to think about; ultimately, the choice is yours."

| Shifting focus |
|---|
| "You're not sure about changing this right now; there's something else you'd rather start with first." |

Coming alongside
"You feel things might be worse if you didn't smoke."

Elicit - Provide - Elicit (EPE)

MI Cue Card

Elicit – Provide – Elicit (EPE) is a method for sharing information that is consistent with MI theory and practice. This method guides practitioners to acknowledge the existing knowledge of the youth, prioritize the youth's interest, offer material in small pieces, and elicit thoughts and reactions, allowing the youth time to consider how the information might apply to their situation.
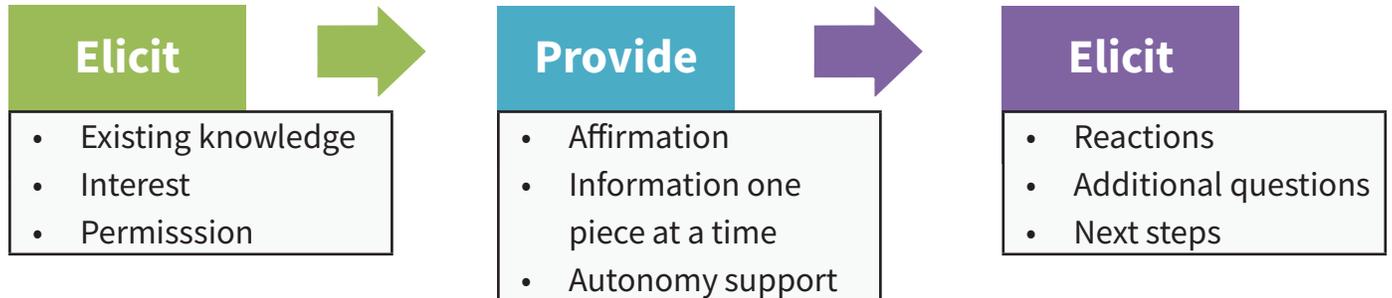
Elicit ➡ **Provide** ➡ **Elicit**

Elicit	Provide	Elicit
• Existing knowledge • Interest • Permisssion	• Affirmation • Information one piece at a time • Autonomy support	• Reactions • Additional questions • Next steps

ELICIT:

- *Existing knowledge*: "What do you already know about how marijuana affects memory?"
- *Interest*: "What would you like to know about depression?"
- *Permission*: "Would it be OK if I share some information with you about binge drinking?"

PROVIDE:

- *Affirmation*: "Being a good friend is important to you" or "You've already thought about…"
- *Information one piece at a time:* Examples include "What we know is…" and "Others have benefited from…" and "People have found…" and "Research shows…"
- *Autonomy support*: "The decision is yours" or "The choice is up to you."

ELICIT:

- *Reactions*: "This surprises you" or "What do you make of that?"
- *Additional questions*: "What questions do you have?" or "What else would you like to know?"
- *Next steps*: "What might help you decide?" or "What might be the next step?"

TIP:

A key feature of EPE is generating a **menu of options** from which the person making the change may choose. Ideally, the list starts with ideas from the person making the change. The practitioner may add a few as requested or needed. There are many paths toward recovery. Creating a menu of options allows the person to imagine several possibilities, thoughtfully considering the pros and cons of each, without feeling the inherent pressure of acquiescing to suggestions made by the JDTC team member (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Rethinking Resistance and Dodging Discord

In the third edition of MI: Helping People Change, Miller & Rollnick discontinue the use of the term, **resistance**, to describe "…any apparent client movement away from change" (2013, p. 196). Labeling a person as resistant:

- Places responsibility for not changing solely on the adolescent,
- Blames the youth for "being difficult," and
- Pathologizes the person for behaviors consistent with ambivalence, which is a natural part of the change process.

Instead, Miller & Rollnick (2013) break down "any movement away from change" into two parts: **Sustain Talk** and **Discord**.

Sustain Talk	Discord
• Reasons to stay the same, or not to change • Natural part of ambivalence • Common response to feeling pushed into changing	• Disturbance in the relationship between the youth and team member • Common response to the Righting Reflex • Signals the team member to shift their approach

Discord may occur in response to the practitioner telling the youth how to change rather than evoking ideas, or as an indicator that the person is feeling overwhelmed, disengaged, hopeless, or misunderstood. **To dodge discord**:

1. Listen for what is important to the person and affirm it.
2. Engage, focus, evoke.
3. Connect behavior change to the youth's intrinsic motivation; that is, their goals, values, and culture.
4. When in doubt, reflect what you hear the youth saying to recharge accurate empathy.