



## Thumbs up, thumbs down - Activity sample

*Based on an activity developed by David B. Rosengren (Building Motivational Interviewing Skills, 2009)*

### Rate for the spirit of motivational interviewing

This activity is designed to test your ability to assess for the spirit of motivational interviewing. The following are examples of short client statements and key worker responses. Review these exchanges and then decide if the practitioner's response is consistent with the spirit of MI.

- If it is in the spirit of MI give the response a thumbs up - 
- If not give the response a thumbs down - 

You might want to jot down a few notes as to why you rated each sample as you did.

After you have rated each of the example statements and key worker responses look at the answers at the end of this exercise and rate how you went. The discussion points for each example will provide an explanation of why each response fell within or outside of the spirit of MI.

## Interaction 1

**Client:** *I can't believe she went to the cops with this shit. I mean this is how we are. We always fight and usually things get physical, but it goes both ways. I'm just furious that she went behind my back.*

**Key worker:** *Looking back, what could you have done to avoid this situation?*

### Thumbs up or down for MI spirit?

- My answer \_\_\_\_\_
- My answer explanation:

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## Interaction 2

**Client:** *They said if I don't get my drinking under control in the next few months I might not make it to Christmas. But I've been drinking like this for years. Yeah I feel shitty sometimes but it hasn't been getting worse and I'm still here aren't I? So yeah I haven't made any appointments yet. Anyway I don't trust that lot at the hospital.*

**Key worker:** *OK I hear what you're saying but I think you're crazy not to listen. I just don't understand why you would play dice with your health. Despite not trusting them (medical staff) they are the experts and they do know what they're talking about. Look we have the phone right here why not call them now. Here you go... I'll dial the number.*

### Thumbs up or down for MI spirit?

- My answer \_\_\_\_\_
- My answer explanation:

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### Interaction 3

**Client:** *I'm done with my mates. I mean I want to be loyal to the gang but I just don't know if it's worth it anymore. Every time I try and do something legit they muck things up for me. Maybe I should just move towns?*

**Key worker:** *Well firstly you're brave for putting this stuff on the table. And secondly it sounds like you feel stuck. Loyalty is clearly important to you, yet you would also like to be able to do things the right way, the legal way. You're trying to make sense of how these two things fit together.*

#### Thumbs up or down for MI spirit?

- My answer \_\_\_\_\_
- My answer explanation:

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## Answers

### Interaction 1

**Answer:** Thumbs down for MI spirit

**Why?** Adhering to the spirit of MI means working in partnership and evoking from the client their thoughts and ideas about what has happened and what needs to happen, if anything. It also takes a position of neutrality in which blaming or labelling is not a part of. The comment above assumes that a) the client wanted to avoid this situation and b) that they were in the position of wanting to change things. What this comment also fails to acknowledge is the obvious feelings of anger that the client is feeling.

**What could work?** The following comments are more aligned with the spirit of MI

**Key worker:** You're angry about the way things went down and that you're now involved with the police.

**Client:** You bet I'm angry!

**Key worker:** What I also heard is that your relationship can often get physical (violent). I'm interested to get your thoughts on that and, I'd be even more interested to know if there is anything you would like to be different regarding your relationship with your partner?

### Interaction 2

**Answer:** Thumbs down for MI spirit

**Why?** In this response the key worker is doing several things that are not aligned with the spirit of MI. Firstly, despite possibly having the best of intentions for the client the key worker labels the client 'crazy', and assumes that just because they think this is important the client does too. Secondly the key worker also states that the client is gambling with their health, ignores the comment made about the lack of trust the client has in the medical staff by saying "you're wrong as they know what they're doing". Thirdly the client is forced to make an appointment they don't want to make, nor are ready to make.

**What could work?** The following comments are more aligned with the spirit of MI

**Key worker:** Sounds like the medical staff has a pretty strong opinion of what should happen, however you're not too sure if they are 100% right?

**Client:** I don't trust them.

**Key worker:** What I feel is more important is what you want to do. On one hand you're not entirely convinced there's a problem, and on the other hand your saying people are concerned about your health and your drinking. What do you think would have to happen before you felt right about making an appointment?

### Interaction 3

**Answer:** Thumbs up for MI spirit

**Why?** The key worker starts by affirming the client for the fact they are sharing this information with them, possibly because they know how hard it can be for gang members to talk openly in this way. The key worker then goes on to highlight the ambivalence felt by the client by reflecting back the importance of two conflicting ideas, that is loyalty and 'going legit' before making a final statement that is designed to invite the client to further discuss this conflict.

Take the frustration out of helping people change! Would you like the ability to quickly engage with clients, elicit loads of change talk, and ultimately help clients to help themselves?

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