What’s new in MI?
The story of Sustain Talk

DENISE ERNST PHD
News Flash!!!!

- Latest research indicates that responding to sustain talk in a way that diminishes it may be as important as eliciting and reinforcing change talk to achieving good outcomes for the client.
This is a story of

- How the concepts of MI develop and grow over time
- How MI is adapted as it responds to the science
- The role that MI coding has played in that process
- What you can do to adapt your own MI skills to the new evidence
From the beginning of MI

- Client language was considered important and learning to elicit it was a key skill
- Self-Motivational Statements; problem recognition, expression of concern, intention to change, and optimism about change
- On the other side---resistance; arguing, interrupting, negating (which includes most of the currently defined sustain talk)
- Rolling with resistance and avoiding argumentation were principles
The first coding tool

- Motivational Interviewing Skill Code (MISC 1.0, 2000) developed during EMIT
- The concept of Change Talk emerges
- Counterchange talk is on the other side
- Developed to evaluate training, the MISC also became very useful in process research
- The first studies examining the language of change with outcomes failed to find a correlation
Seminal work by Amrhein (2003)

- DARN-C (desire, ability, reasons, need and commitment to change or to maintain the status quo)
- The idea that the nature of the change languages changes over time, even within a session
- Change talk and counterchange talk as opposite sides of the same coin
Consensus on Change Talk (2006)

- Change talk is a generic term that encompasses all type of language in favor of change
- Sustain talk is a generic term for language that moves away from change or towards the status quo
- Separates sustain talk from other responses labeled as resistance and counter-change talk
The CLAMI (Client Language Assessment in Motivational Interviewing) 2008, and the CLEAR (Manual for the Client Language EAsy Rating) 2012, developed to address the concept of sustain talk as the flip side of change talk.
Client outcomes

Client Responses in the session

Clinician MI Skills in the session

MI training
Evidence starts coming in

- Clinician skill is increased with training and maintained and enhanced with additional post-workshop activities
- Clinician skill, both relational and technical are related to change talk
- Change talk is related to outcomes some of the time
- A causal chain is hypothesized and examined
Current research evidence regarding client language; a meta-analysis

- Therapist MI-consistent skills were correlated with more change talk but not less sustain talk.
- MI-inconsistent skills were associated with less change talk and more sustain talk.
- Client change talk was not associated with follow-up outcome.
- Sustain talk was associated with worse outcomes.
- Composite client language showed an overall positive relationship with client behavior change.
More nuanced evidence

- High levels of empathy in combination with more complex reflections can lead to reduced sustain talk and thus, better outcomes (Gaume, et al. 2015)
- Low levels of empathy render the micro-skills less effective and may even be toxic
What to do about the decisional balance (DB)?

- No longer recommended for most MI sessions. Why?
- In the DB, sustain talk is intentionally elicited and enhanced. In most situations, this is counter-productive, if not harmful.
- DB is appropriate when the clinician is intentionally maintaining neutrality or is in equipoise.

In the meantime......

- These tools to evaluate MI are too complicated and time-consuming.
- Just a simple tool to determine the extent to which MI is happening is needed
- The MITI is born, derived from MISC data, validated, and widely disseminated
- This is relatively easy tool to use and is very helpful for feedback to clinicians
MITIs 1.0 through 3.1.1

- Contains global measures of the MI spirit and empathy
- Codifies basic MI skills (open-ended questions, reflections, and affirmations)
- Is solely focused on the clinician responses
- Does not take into account what the client is doing or saying (at least not much)
The MITI is revised

- To take into account the client’s language and how the clinician responds to it and shapes it
- New technical global measures added
- Cultivating Change Talk (CCT)
- Softening Sustain Talk (SST)
### Cultivating Change Talk

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<td>Clinician shows no explicit attention to, or preference for, the client’s language in favor of changing</td>
<td>Clinician sporadically attends to client language in favor of change – frequently misses opportunities to encourage change talk</td>
<td>Clinician often attends to the client’s language in favor of change, but misses some opportunities to encourage change talk</td>
<td>Clinician consistently attends to the client’s language about change and makes efforts to encourage it</td>
<td>Clinician shows a marked and consistent effort to increase the depth, strength, or momentum of the client’s language in favor of change</td>
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### Softening Sustain Talk

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<td>Clinician consistently responds to the client’s language in a manner that facilitates the frequency or depth of arguments in favor of the status quo.</td>
<td>Clinician usually chooses to explore, focus on, or respond to the client’s language in favor of the status quo.</td>
<td>Clinician gives preference to the client’s language in favor of the status quo, but may show some instances of shifting the focus away from sustain talk.</td>
<td>Clinician typically avoids an emphasis on client language favoring the status quo.</td>
<td>Clinician shows a marked and consistent effort to decrease the depth, strength, or momentum of the clients language in favor of the status quo.</td>
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Who is making the argument for change?

New behavior counts in MITI 4.2.1

- Persuade: Is the clinician building a case for change which is likely to produce sustain talk?

- Seeking collaboration, affirming, emphasizing autonomy: Is the clinician using strategies and language likely to prevent sustain talk?
Can Clinicians be trained to soften sustain talk?
Training implications

- Project ELICIT: Testing Theory Based Training in Motivational Interviewing
- Theresa Moyers, Jon Houck, Jennifer Knapp Manuel, Lisa H. Glynn & Kevin Hallgren
- NIDA R01 DA021227-01
- Presented at APS 2015
Conclusions of ELICIT

- Clinicians can be trained to intentionally influence client language
- This training results in differences in the amount of sustain talk from clients
- Differences in client language are not accounted for by changes in general counseling skills in MI but only to specialized training focused on technical element
What can you do to improve practice?
IN SERVICE OF ENGAGEMENT, CLINICIANS OFTEN SPEND TOO MUCH TIME AND ENERGY AND EMPATHY ON THE CLIENT’S PROBLEM.
A few practical tips

- Strengthen your MI relational skills; MI spirit and empathy matter
- Deepen your reflective listening practice and focus the deeper listening on change talk as opposed to sustain talk
- You influence and guide the conversation each time you speak; become more intentional about where you are going
- Learn to cuddle up to the client’s values, goals, hopes, desires, and dreams—not just the problem.
- Reign in the righting reflex; learn about how and when it shows up for you. Look closely at your language
Thank you for your time and attention