

Motivational Interviewing

Interview Transcripts

Michelle

This is an unrehearsed candid conversation (not a clinical session or role-play) with Dr. William R. (Bill) Miller to demonstrate some specific aspects of motivational interviewing as described in the 2023 4th edition of Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change and Grow by Miller and Rollnick. Staff from The Change Companies volunteered to talk about specific topics in their own lives. The topic for this conversation was “Challenges of parenting” and Bill’s task was to manifest the quality of genuineness/authenticity. Specific skills to be demonstrated include empathic listening (simple and complex reflection), simple and complex affirmation, and appropriate self-disclosure. Bill’s notes in the right-hand column focus on these specific MI skills, not every MI-consistent response. Michelle spoke about changes in her life as she became a new parent. Much is missed when seeing only a transcription of the words. Genuineness is also expressed through voice tone and in-the-moment nonverbal responses such as facial expression.

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:00:12] So you’re a relatively new parent. Tell me about that experience.</p> <p>Michelle [00:00:15] Yes. So I’m a new parent, about five months in.</p> <p>Bill [00:00:18] Wow.</p> <p>Michelle [00:00:18] And it’s been exciting. Something that I’ve always wanted to have in my life is to be a mother. And I’m fortunate to have a very healthy young baby boy, which is exciting. And with that came a lot of, I would say, anxiety leading up to his arrival as well as currently — of how can I maintain my life prior with the addition of this added role of being a new parent, but also trying to maintain... and assuring that I’m being present. And I’m not just being a good parent, but I’m being a present mother and being a loving, caring mother and making the time that maybe I didn’t have the capacity for before. But now I really want to make that effort in my life to have the time and to be present with him.</p>	

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:01:10] So it's a huge change in not just affecting the rest of your life, which of course it does in many ways. But there are positive things you want to do. You want to be present for him, you want to be a good parent with him. And so that's a lot all at once to be adjusting to.</p> <p>Michelle [00:01:29] Yeah. And I think for me it's important because I've always been like a hard worker, and that comes from my parents who were like that when I was young. But I also saw some of the negative effects of that, too. My parents didn't have a choice but to work a lot, to maintain our livelihood and to maintain our family. And for me, I'm a little bit more privileged where I do have a little bit more cushion and space to still maintain my work ethic, but also make the space in my life to be a present and more caring mother that I want to be — than I think my parents have the opportunity to.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection / Simple Affirmation</p>
<p>Bill [00:02:06] You have a little more flexibility than they had.</p> <p>Michelle [00:02:09] Yes. It's a challenge. I think I have anxiety around, you know, how do I maintain that? Or how do I create that and ensure that I can give him maybe some of the things that I didn't have the opportunity to have with my parents?</p> <p>Bill [00:02:27] Such as?</p> <p>Michelle [00:02:30] I didn't get to spend a lot of time with them. I think normal dinner time, bedtime reading, those things were normal. But a lot of, you know, they couldn't attend a lot of my events as a young kid, like concerts or programs. They couldn't come to a lot of sporting events or the types of activities that I was involved in. And they just always seemed a little more distracted with the other things, the demands of life that they had going on. And I really want to be intentional that I'm creating that space for myself to be present and to live here and now with him as he grows and develops over time.</p>	<p>Simple Reflection / Open Question</p>
<p>Bill [00:03:11] Not just with the routine contacts like meal time, although not everybody gets those with their parents, too. But with making sure there's special time and additional time that you can spend together, which you didn't always get to do with your own folks.</p> <p>Michelle [00:03:28] Yeah, absolutely. And part of it is I'm finding that by my pursuit of trying to do that, I'm actually trying to help my younger self. Part of me that didn't get to have those experiences gets to live them with him. And so I don't want to necessarily live vicariously through him, but I want to be able to enjoy those moments that maybe I didn't get to nourish when I was young.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection</p>

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:03:54] There’s something about it that’s kind of healing for you, too — not just that this is a benefit to him.</p> <p>Michelle [00:04:01] Yeah. I know that I’m capable of being there and making that a priority in my life. I think the hard part is sometimes letting go of the parts of my identity that were taking up that space prior. And now that he’s that space, you know, what are the things that maybe aren’t as high of a priority for me internally that I can let go of? And is it okay to let go of those things?</p> <p>Bill [00:04:33] Well, you only have so much time. And so it’s what gets displaced by my “being a mom.” “What is it that I’ll do less of? And is that okay? How do I choose that?”</p> <p>Michelle [00:04:46] Yeah, I’ve worked on trying to write out a pie chart of my time and my energy and looked at, prior to his arrival, what were those buckets? And then now that he’s here, how does that shift? How do I balance? How do I take that pie but distribute it differently so that I’m still providing, you know... I have to provide a life and food on the table so work is a portion of that. My family is a portion of that. My partner, my relationship with him, being a mother is a part of that. But really, I think the most anxiety comes around my own self time. Like where do I fit into that pie where I’m still being Michelle and not necessarily Levi’s mom or Eric’s partner or, you know... my role, my job, like where do I fit into that?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Complex Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:05:37] And what is the pie? Is the pie you or the time that you have, or what?</p> <p>Michelle [00:05:45] I think it’s time. I think it’s how I divide my time.</p> <p>Bill [00:05:50] Some goes to your partner. Some goes to your child. Some goes to your work. And what’s left for you?</p> <p>Michelle [00:05:58] Yeah. And I do think that because — just take a day, for example. I do live all these different identities in my life. They are happening simultaneously. So that’s why I do feel it’s about the time that I choose and where I choose to spend it. It’s kind of what I’m struggling with. Like, how do I balance that appropriately where I feel present in all of those spaces, but I feel like I’m doing them at a level that I’m happy with? I don’t really like the term “success” necessarily, but how do I thrive in each of those?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Open Question / Complex Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:06:39] You expect a lot of yourself.</p> <p>Michelle [00:06:40] Yes, I do. Yeah. Yeah.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Simple Affirmation</p>

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:06:43] I remember coming home from work and thinking, “Now my next job starts,” which is being with my family.</p> <p>Michelle [00:06:51] Yeah, it’s exciting. I think, you know, you have your job, which is a type of work, but then you have this other job, which is parenting, which is very rewarding work. And it just has a different dynamic and it provides different things that I think are tied back to my meaning and purpose of my life. Both of those things mesh, but keeping them in balance is sometimes a challenge for me.</p>	<p>Self-disclosure</p>
<p>Bill [00:07:19] Both very meaningful to you.</p> <p>Michelle [00:07:21] Yeah.</p> <p>Bill [00:07:23] You talk about your meaning and purpose in life. What is that?</p> <p>Michelle [00:07:28] I think I’m not sure.</p> <p>Bill [00:07:31] Why are we here, huh?</p> <p>Michelle [00:07:35] I really do feel ever since being young, a sense of service to others has always been something that I’ve really tied to my purpose. And I think I’ve always done that through work. I’ve always used work as the catalyst to do that. But now I think I have this wonderful opportunity with this new person in my life to really expand that service to others, to be a good mother and to be present and caring for him in his life in a different way.</p>	<p>Simple Reflection / Open Question / Complex Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:08:10] That’s really part of who you are. To be helpful, to be of service to other people.</p> <p>Michelle [00:08:17] Yeah.</p> <p>Bill [00:08:18] Including, now, your own family.</p> <p>Michelle [00:08:20] Yes.</p> <p>Bill [00:08:23] And how to put all that together?</p> <p>Michelle [00:08:25] How?</p> <p>Bill [00:08:26] That’s what you’re thinking about.</p> <p>Michelle [00:08:27] Yeah, how do I manage it?</p> <p>Bill [00:08:31] Well, if it didn’t get bigger, I have the same amount of time...</p> <p>Michelle [00:08:33] There’s more sections within that pie.</p>	<p>Complex Affirmation / Complex Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:08:37] That’s right, yeah. “How do I slice it?”</p> <p>Michelle [00:08:40] Yes.</p>	<p>Simple Reflection</p>

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:08:43] I certainly relate to that. I mean, I had a very busy work life and then in our case, we adopted two children and suddenly we had an eight- and nine-year-old dropped into our home and... wow. Now I have a lot more to attend to than I did before.</p> <p>Michelle [00:09:05] I think I have good tools at my disposal that I can use. Setting better boundaries has been really helpful. I think recently saying, "This is my time for this, this is my time for this..." And really communicating with even my partner in some aspects, reaching out to help me define those boundaries, but also put my hand up and say, "Hey, this is time I want to spend with my family." But there's also times where I'm going to need to have my separate time too, to maintain who I am and what I value. Because I don't want to directly translate everything from one bucket to just the mother bucket because I lose sense of my bucket of what is important to me as a person too, and how I show up in the world as an individual.</p>	<p>Self-disclosure</p>
<p>Bill [00:10:02] This is pretty new for you. And it also strikes me that you've already thought a lot about this and you already know a lot of what you need to know to have that balance and to have this be the kind of life that you want.</p> <p>Michelle [00:10:16] Right.</p> <p>Bill [00:10:17] So what are the challenges?</p> <p>Michelle [00:10:24] I think one is, I've taken too much out of my own bucket where I maybe don't know how to... What are the things I enjoy doing or I miss doing? And how do I bring those things back? Because I think those things, like the activities I choose to do, the hobbies that I like, are part of who I am. When I'm doing them, if they're bringing me joy and they're bringing me happiness, I want my son to see that in me. Instead of being the anxious, tired, exhausted person, I want him to see the good things. So I think somehow incorporating those activities back into my life here and there, and including my son and including my partner in those experiences will help me be more attentive to how he is perceiving me as a mother. How can I help make sure that I'm being a good role model and that I'm showing him a healthy balance of life? I want him to just remember me as happy and loving and joyous and not overworked or just tired all the time or just constantly high-anxiety where I'm not enjoying those moments like I should.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection / Simple Affirmation / Open Question</p>
<p>Bill [00:11:50] Again, a difference from your own experience as a child and in how hard it was for your parents. You have a little more flexibility, a little more control over how you balance those things.</p> <p>Michelle [00:12:02] Yes. I think just having awareness. Going through that experience as a child with my parents, it gave me the awareness of like — that's what that moment was. I can't change that. But I do have an opportunity to move forward in a good way, in a more positive way for my family. Just give him the opportunities and things I didn't have before.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection</p>

Interview	Skill
<p>Bill [00:12:30] And it's not that you're trying to fix the past. It's using what you experienced and know, to have the kind of life that you want with your family now.</p> <p>Michelle [00:12:41] Yes.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection / Continuing the Paragraph</p>
<p>Bill [00:12:43] It makes a lot of sense. Yes, it does.</p> <p>Michelle [00:12:47] Yeah.</p>	<p>Simple Affirmation</p>
<p>Bill [00:12:48] I mean, those are, of course, really common issues when you've had a very active work life and then suddenly you have a child.</p> <p>Michelle [00:12:59] Yes.</p>	<p>Normalizing</p>
<p>Bill [00:13:00] And life just got bigger in a way. "How am I different? How will I change the way I spend my time now?" And the easy part to give up is your own, what takes care of you individually. But you already know you don't want to do that either. You don't want to sacrifice that piece because that's important.</p> <p>Michelle [00:13:27] Right. So maybe the bigger challenge is maintaining it, putting the right things in place to help me maintain that over time.</p>	<p>Complex Reflection</p>
<p>Bill [00:13:39] Well, you're so aware of how this feels and what's happening also. It doesn't seem like you're likely to just charge ahead and make a huge change that wasn't a good idea. You're always tracking, "How's this going? How's my child reacting? How am I feeling right now, and my partner feeling?" So you're just doing a lot of constantly checking and noticing what's happening.</p> <p>Michelle [00:14:10] Yes.</p> <p>Bill [00:14:14] That's a gift in itself. Yeah.</p>	<p>Simple Affirmation</p>

"Within a helping relationship, the art of self-disclosure is to offer something of yourself without interrupting the person's flow of self-exploration. The function of self-disclosure is not to shift the focus to yourself, as might occur in ordinary conversation. Ideally it does not distract from or derail the person's experiencing. Michelle naturally kept right on speaking from her own experience. It simply mirrors something that the person is saying and communicates, 'I think I understand something of what you're experiencing.'"

— Dr. William R. (Bill) Miller