CHAPTER 1

Why Motivational Interviewing and Leadership?

Being drawn to pick up this book suggests that you are a manager or leader. You may have a leadership title, such as supervisor or manager, or find yourself a leader simply because of your influence. You might also be someone seeking to grow into a leadership role or thinking about what it takes to be a successful leader. Regardless of your role or how you came to be attracted to this book, we hope that you have picked it up because you want to become the most effective and impactful leader you possibly can.

Becoming a successful leader consists of more than implementing what lies between the covers of this book. However, in introducing you to motivational interviewing (MI), we hope to draw your attention to a specific, not well-addressed, workplace problem. We hope that by reading this book, thinking about the ideas shared therein and, most important, applying what you learn, you will be better equipped to manage a specific problem that faces most leaders every day: *How can you best help your employees and organization embrace change?*

SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

Good leadership is one of the most essential conditions for organizational success. It is increasingly recognized as key to positive employee and organizational outcomes (Gifford, Graham, Ehrhart, Davies, & Aarons, 2017; Green, Albanese, Cafri, & Aarons, 2014; Judge &

3

Piccolo, 2004). But what does it mean to be a successful leader? Being an effective leader is a journey that never truly ends, and one where you never actually arrive. There are thousands of articles, books, webinars, conferences, and consulting groups focused on the topic of successful leadership. All of them describe how important leadership is to the success of organizations, and most of them also explain what you should do to achieve that success. For instance, leaders need to have a compelling vision for why their organization does the work it does if they are to inspire and mobilize their employees (Sinek, 2009). They need to have the skills to develop a healthy team, strategy, message, and direction (Lencioni, 2012). They need to have character and the ability to model vulnerability, trust, and personal growth in order to establish a safe and innovative culture (Covey, 1989; Quinn, 2004). They need to know what actually aids in motivating employee behavior (Pink, 2009). They need to have the technical skills required to accomplish their organization's unique mission and task. They need to be able to perform the role of coach, teacher, visionary, mentor, ally, and manager. In other words: A lot is asked of leaders. We all look to our leaders to give us vision, direction, and a way forward. However, the million dollar question remains: *How* do you motivate your employees and your organization? *How* do you guide them? *How* do you help them change?

MI: A HELPFUL STRATEGY FOR LEADERS

This book discusses how the science-based behavior change approach of MI can complement your efforts to help your teams, employees, mentees, and organizations change and grow (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). In our experience in both executive-level leadership roles and direct consumer-facing behavior change services, we have found that MI has much to offer. The insights from MI have helped us guide our organizations and employees, enabling them to make the necessary changes that led to personal and organizational success. We will share some of these stories with you. We hope that if you should choose to use MI, it will bring you the same success.

Successful leadership is most often defined as the ability to ensure that the organization is achieving its mission. In health care and social services, that typically means achieving the triple aim of providing effective treatment, a good patient experience, and a reduced cost of care. Implementation of change is necessary to respond to client input, to integrate the most recent research, and to follow the most relevant efficiency improvements in the field.

Pursuing continuous quality improvement means leaders are often faced with helping others change. This could be as simple as helping a

staffer complete a task he seems reluctant to take on, or as big as coaching a professional to take on a role she feels is beyond her reach and ability. The change could be as mundane as helping your organization tweak a simple process and as major as redesigning an entire clinical program. Whatever the challenge, if behavioral change is the key to the employee's and organization's success, then MI will likely be highly useful.

The ability to help your staff grow, perform at their best, and achieve success is one of your most important roles as a leader, if not your most crucial role. When leaders seek to understand, coach, and train an employee to accomplish goals and that employee fails, it is easy to become frustrated and blame the employee. Leaders may blame employees for not being the right fit, not having the necessary skills or the right character attributes, or for simply just being a pain in the neck. They then look to their human resources department for help in removing them from the organization. This approach is similar to the way clients were treated for years in the addictions and behavior change field. They were blamed for their illness, their behavior, and their failure. People tried to find ways to remove them from their communities, their programs, and their families. There had to be a better way to help people than by simply removing them from our lives. MI has helped many people provide this better way to help. Changes that were once thought impossible are now possible. We now also know that MI can help us find a better way to help our employees change as well. We certainly cannot promise you that by adding MI to your skill set you can avoid removing employees in the future. But we have found that by implementing the spirit and the communication strategies of MI in leadership, we often are able to reach better solutions than simply firing and replacing people.

What MI has added to our toolkit as leaders, and hopefully will add to yours as well, is a specific way of interacting with and believing in people. It provides a way of seeing employees through their own eyes. It helps leaders understand their staff's *stuckness* and offers practical skills to teach you how to guide a conversation toward change. Leaders are told over and over that they must listen to their employees but are rarely taught *how* to do so. The skills used in MI help you do just that: listen to understand, rather than listen to respond or to fix. We hope that by learning how to listen and by understanding what motivates people to change their behavior and what you can do to facilitate the process, you will be able to directly influence the success of your employees and your organization.

As with any method or approach, MI is no panacea. We discuss the limitations of MI, the situations in which you might consider using MI, and those for which you will want to apply an entirely different leadership approach. However, if you choose to learn and use MI with your employees, people you once believed *could* not or *would* not change will

surprise you and perform at work in ways that you did not think possible before.

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Before jumping into discussing when MI may be a helpful listening and change strategy for leaders, we will spend a little time on what we mean by leadership. Leadership has been described in many ways, but it typically revolves around who you are and what you do. Some describe leadership as a way of being that involves what you value and what you model. For instance, Quinn (2004) notes that "leadership is first about what we are. . . . It is not what [leaders] do, because each one of them is unique in how they pull it off. It is not about what they do; it is about who they are." Other leadership authors note, on the contrary, that although values, virtues, and mindset are very important, leadership is also about what leaders are trying to accomplish, or about what they do and what roles they play. Drucker (1967) explains that the leader's objective is "to leverage the strengths of people and make their weakness become irrelevant," and Blanchard and Miller (2004) add, "The servant leader manifests caring by knowing the potential of each of the followers, respecting their powers and skills, and listening to what is in their hearts. People cannot be led where they do not want to go. Business books say that the goal of a leader is to motivate people. However, people cannot be motivated since they are already motivated. The goal of a leader is to identify these motivations and tap into them."

In truth, it is both who you are and what you do. Blanchard and Miller (2004) describe it best: "Many believe they can become effective leaders if they only had the skills. Others believe they can become great leaders if they could just develop their character. Both are wrong. It takes skills and character." Both skills and character are also essential for the effective use of MI as well.

We discuss both of these perspectives briefly in the following sections: the roles leaders play and the values and virtues successful leaders embody. Finally, we explore how MI and leadership fit together.

LEADERSHIP DEFINED

Leaders hold organizational roles that require the performance of specific functions, which include, to name but a few:

- *Visionary.* Leaders actively communicate the vision for the organization, the "why" behind their company's existence: Why do they

exist?; Why do they do what they do?; Why does what they do matter to the world?; and Why should people care? (Sinek, 2009).

• *Manager.* Leaders oversee the organization, so that it achieves its mission and gets the job done. This includes overseeing and distributing tasks and the workload. It includes responding if the quality of the work is not as good as expected. It includes making the best use of the resources available and constantly being aware of budgetary and organizational demands.

• *Supervisor.* In contrast to managing, when supervising, the leader gives feedback, guides, supports, and helps the staff become more and more skillful at their tasks.

• *Implementer.* A leader is a change facilitator. In organizations, positions, tasks, and methods change, and it is the leader's job to ensure that the organization implements those changes.

• *Dual leadership.* Leaders have a constant focus on the organization and its employees. This is often referred to as dual leadership, meaning that the leader focuses on the staff, trying to lead and support them the best she can, while at the same time keeping her eye on the organization, taking stock of how she and her employees impact the collective. For instance, a leader may want to acknowledge an employee who has done a great job and give her a raise. However, before doing so, the leader has to consider how giving just one employee a raise will affect the other staff, the budget, and how it fits with the overall strategy for salaries. Similarly, the leader may feel tempted to refrain from approaching a staff member whose work is not up to scratch, because she fears it will lead to a conflict. However, the leader has to consider what that avoidance would indicate to the rest of the organization.

Associated with these and other leader roles are a range of leadership functions and tasks. Many leadership books and papers present long checklists of tasks that leaders should perform and suggestions for how they should behave. Such a checklist might look like the following, inspired by a paper on leadership scales (Gifford et al., 2017):

• Have a profound knowledge of your organization and what it is delivering.
• Be able to develop a plan for implementation of change.
• Recognize and appreciate employees' efforts.
• Support employees.
• Answer questions about the change that is to be implemented.

- Persevere through the ups and downs of the implementation of change.
- Respond to critical issues.
- Remove obstacles.
- Establish clear standards.
- Support further learning and growth among employees.

Some of these required leadership tasks and functions are straightforward and easy to understand, albeit not necessarily easy to perform. Others, however, may appear more diffuse and difficult to pin down like, for instance, support employees, recognize the employee's efforts, and support further learning and growth. These more diffuse tasks are not only difficult to operationalize, they are also consistently highlighted as the most important leadership functions correlated to organizational success. These rather nebulous functions have been identified as necessary for the implementation of change (Sfantou et al., 2017); important for staff job satisfaction (Pishgooie, Atashzadeh-Shoorideh, Falco-Pegueroles, & Lotfi, 2018); and essential to prevent burnout (Green, Albanese, Shapiro, & Aarons, 2014; Madathil, Heck, & Schuldberg, 2014). In essence, it seems as though the difficult parts of leadership functions and tasks are the most important and the most intractable in terms of knowing whether you are doing them well. We have found that MI can help with operationalizing many of these more vague functions.

LEADER STYLE, VALUES, AND MINDSET

Part of knowing whether you are performing these essential functions well is to know whether your intention flows from *who you are* as a leader and not just from what you are doing. Leadership is, in other words, more than performing specific tasks and functions. Equally important is what a leader values and what leadership style she models.

Overall leadership styles can be antisocial or prosocial. Features of an antisocial leadership style are aggressiveness, deceitfulness, lack of remorse, and responding aggressively to criticism—particularly from subordinates (Piotrowska, Stride, Croft, & Rowe, 2015). In contrast, leaders with a prosocial leadership style have an interest in the development and well-being of others, and are empathetic to the needs, sensitivities, and difficulties of those they lead. They tend to be supportive and friendly, fostering confidence and creativity in their employees and organizations (Colonello, Petrocchi, & Heinrichs, 2017; Ewest, 2017). They endorse high moral standards for themselves and their organization and seek to avoid causing harm to themselves or others (Boyatzis, Smith, & Blaize, 2006). They have a highly developed sense of responsibility

(Ewest, 2017), and seek to create safety and security for their organization, not least in a situation of change (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). The leadership style that leaders model has a direct impact on the staff and organization. When leaders act from an antisocial or self-focused perspective, they create a workplace based on fear (Gilbert & Basran, 2019), achieving compliance at best. They lack the ability to help others grow and create. However, when leaders lead from a prosocial or other-focused perspective, they are more likely to lead an organization toward positive change, personal growth, and organizational innovations (Guerrero, Padwa, Fenwick, Harris, & Aarons, 2016; Lorenzi, 2004; Swensen, Pugh, McMullan, & Kabcenell, 2013). In particular, prosocial leaders promote trust, mutual sharing, team building, creativity, and innovation (Gilbert & Basran, 2019; Øvretveit, 2008).

In addition to leadership style, what leaders value and what motivates them are also important to successfully lead a change in an organization. Leaders who successfully lead change hold different values or intentions than leaders who fail to do so. Quinn (2004) describes leaders who successfully lead some of the hardest changes as purpose centered, internally driven, focused on others, and open to those around them. These behaviors differ from the traditional conception of leadership, in which the leader is externally driven, self-focused, closed off, and comfort centered. In the externally driven conception, leaders tend to put their interests ahead of the collective. They ignore or deny the existence of signals to change, and define themselves by how they think they are perceived and how well they obtain external resources. This type of leader is neither effective nor open to change. When leaders view their role through this prism, they are unable to listen, adapt, motivate, inspire, or lead others.

In contrast, if leaders are *other focused,* they transcend their own self-interest and put the common good and welfare of others first. They gain in authenticity and transparency, nurturing trust and enriching the levels of connectivity in their teams. They are *externally open.* They move out of their comfort zone. They listen and they experiment. They seek real feedback and adapt, reaching exponentially higher levels of discovery, awareness, competence, and vision. They are *internally driven*; they examine their own hypocrisy and close the gaps between their values and behaviors. They reach for higher levels of personal security and confidence. They are *purpose centered*; they clarify what result they want to create. Full of energy, they commit, engage, and hold to an unwavering standard in pursuit of a meaningful purpose (Kirkeby, 2004; Quinn, 2004).

It is generally acknowledged that the values of integrity, honesty, and compassion are essential for successful leaders and successful organizations as well. In a *Harvard Business Review* article, Covey and

Conant (2016) discuss the connections between employee trust and organizational financial performance. They quote from *Fortune* magazine's research on the 100 Best Companies to Work For, which showed that companies with high levels of trust "beat the average annualized returns of the S&P 500 by a factor of three. . . . With trust, all things are possible—most important: continuous improvement and sustainable, measurable, tangible results in the marketplace."

What a leaders' values are and how they behave directly affect their ability to be successful and help others to be successful as well. Leaders cannot fake this (Covey, 1989). They must start by modeling and leading based on who they are and what they believe. If leaders are in the business merely to enrich themselves, viewing their employees as simply resources to be used, they have no interest in the development or growth of their employees. This mindset is known and felt throughout the entire organization. Then the relationship between leader and organization is transactional at best. On the other hand, if leaders believe in the potential of others and believe that employees are team members who have something of value to bring to the organization and have their own original thoughts to contribute, their leadership style will be reflective of this belief. Others will see that, feel that, and respond in kind.

In order to be a leader who leads others to a purpose and a cause worth working for, you must first take a hard look inside. You need to look at your own motives and values, and lead from a place that is congruent with who you are and your intentions. Successful leaders get closer and closer to closing the gap between their values and their behavior with every decision, every interaction, and every conversation. As Blanchard and Miller (2004) shares, "All genuine leadership is built on trust. There are many ways to build trust. One way is to live consistently with the values you profess."

Who leaders are—what their styles are, what their virtues are, and what they value—is critical to the success or failure of implementing changes in the organization (Aarons, Ehrhart, & Farahnak, 2014; Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfarlane, Bate, & Kyriakidou, 2004; Øvretveit, 2008).

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership is another way of describing the kind of leader we have in mind when we think about leaders who might also use MI to support change. Transformational leadership is described as a leader's ability to recognize the unique talents and strengths of individual employees, encourage new ways of thinking and problem solving through intellectual stimulation, create a shared sense of purpose

among employees through inspirational motivation, and provide positive role modeling (Aarons, Sommerfeld, & Willging, 2011; Brimhall et al., 2016). Transformational leaders empower staff and nurture them through change, attempting to help them transcend their own motives and self-interest for the sake of others or a greater good. Researchers have found that transformational leadership stimulates staff development and creativity, which in turn increases staff openness to change (Aarons, 2006). Transformational leadership is positively associated with performance (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). Transformational leaders can be defined as leaders who "motivate others to do more than they intended and often even more than they ever thought possible." But again we must ask, *how*? *How* do transformational leaders support their employees to change and achieve more than they thought possible? *How* do they motivate employees and their organization? This is where we believe MI comes in.

THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND MI

Quinn, Covey, Blanchard, and Aarons, among others, make clear that *who* you are as a person, *what* you believe in, and *what* your values are form the bedrock for how you lead. What you value and believe in and how you view your role are clearly communicated in your actions, your decisions, and your relationships. This view of who you are and what you value is at the heart of MI as well. What the leadership gurus too often neglect, however, is to tell you how to translate who you are into practice. How can you engage and motivate your staff, and how can you help your employee and your organization to change?

MI was born out of the belief that helping people toward change starts with expressing empathy, understanding, acceptance, and respect. Helping professionals trained in MI have assisted people to lose weight, floss their teeth more, increase their exercise, decrease or stop the use of alcohol or illicit drugs, improve their overall health and reduce the symptoms of chronic disease, and more. By understanding the normal process of change and the role that ambivalence plays, by knowing how our own *righting reflex* (discussed in later chapters) gets in our way, and by specifically understanding the spirit of MI and how we can support someone's choice to move toward change, we can help people make some of the hardest changes in their lives.

As we briefly described earlier, leadership is not a technique but a way of being, a virtue (Covey, 1989; Kirkeby, 2004). Similarly, it is important to know that MI is not merely a technique. MI is not something you can just do to people. MI is not about learning how to trick people into doing what you want them to do. MI is based in one's values.

It is a way of being with people. "MI is done *with* people, not *to* people" (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF MI?

If your goal when using MI is not about trying to get people to do what you want, then what is your goal? What are you trying to do? In a nutshell, you are trying to help your employee, through a collaborative conversation, to resolve whatever is keeping them or the organization stuck. You are trying to increase their own reasons to change, enhance their beliefs that they can change, and explore their ideas on how they might change. You are trying to support your staff's autonomy in deciding whether or not they are willing to make the changes needed. You are not trying to trick them into doing something *they do not want* to do or *do not believe* they can do. You are not speaking passionately to try to convince them that you believe in them and that they can do it. You are not cheerleading your way toward change.

You are supporting people and the organization in becoming ready, willing, and able to manage the change before them. This does not mean necessarily that they *will*. They may actually choose to do something entirely different than make the change you believe is needed. Indeed, some staff may decide to find another role or even to leave your organization. But by having an open, compassionate conversation about the change and how employees view a particular struggle or issue, you are inviting them to make a decision and feel ready to move forward with that decision. With MI you are more likely to see success and see your employees make the changes necessary for their and your organization's success. You are more likely to see improved job performance and employee engagement. You are also more likely to help someone choose to stay in your organization, choose to improve, and ultimately succeed.

Our intention behind the book is simple. We hope that by learning how to use MI in your work as a leader you will be able to solve a problem leaders face every day. How do I best support my employees and help them make changes that are best for them and for the organization?

SUMMARY

As a leader, one of your most critical and demanding tasks is to guide and lead behavior change among the staff and the overall organization. Research has shown that prosocial leadership is essential for the successful implementation of this behavior change. MI is a particular

type of conversation aimed at strengthening a person's own motivation and commitment to change. You may find MI helpful as leader, both in relation to individuals, and when you are in dialogue with the entire organization. The spirit of MI supplements the literature on successful leadership.

SELF-REFLECTIVE EXERCISES

Throughout this book we offer exercises to help give you a clearer sense of MI. They're designed to help you decide whether MI is something you would like to use in your work—and if so, how. Each exercise builds on the previous one and, through these exercises, by the end of the book you will have sampled all parts of MI.

Some of these exercises relate to the individual, and others relate to the organization. You can choose to use all of them or just the ones directly relevant to how you hope to implement MI in your own work. You can also download the exercises in their entirety on the book's website (see the box at the end of the table of contents).

SELF-REFLECTIVE EXERCISE. OBSERVE YOUR THINKING

We would like you to reflect on your thinking the next time an employee who is considering a change comes to you, or the next time you interact with an employee you believe needs to change something. It could be that he needs to change how he interacts in a particular situation, or change how he manages or improves on something, or change a process. Just notice your own thinking when someone you work with is facing change.

Try to notice your thoughts in the moment, but also after the interaction has ended, take a few minutes to reflect on your automatic responses. Write down your thoughts so that you can come back to them at the end of this book.

- What did you notice?
- What were your thoughts about the person who approached you?
- What did you understand this person's dilemma to be? Why was the person stuck?
- How much did you attempt to understand and express understanding before moving to a solution or giving advice?
- What did you think was being asked of you? What did you feel you needed to do in that moment?

- Can you explain the person's *stuckness*?
- Why is this change important to the person? How confident does the person feel in carrying out this change?
- How helpful to the person's own growth did you feel your interaction was?
- What, if anything, might you have done differently?