

**Directions: Write a Branching Script** (Adapted from Rosengren, 2009)

This exercise involves writing a script that reflects the multiple pathways that a conversation could take. The participants will work in small groups to create this branching script for a conversation where they choose the topic and responses, but the nature of client responses are preselected.

Break the training group into units of about four and make sure each has a completed script and a blank script. Put the completed script on the screen if you have an electronic copy. If not simply use a printed form as your guide.

*As you all know from experience conversations can go a number of ways depending how we respond. Think of a time recently when you were in a conversation about a tough subject and you thought, "How should I respond to this?" Has that happened to all of you? Now back up a minute and think about what made you stop and think, "How should I respond to this?" My guess is that you recognize that how you responded would affect how the other person would then respond. Yes?*

*Now, let's take that a step further. In MI, we've said that our responses are important determinants of what sorts of things that clients might say. In the next exercise, we're going to take that a step further and play out several different ways a conversation might go, but all starting from the same point. Let's begin by looking at how this might work.*

*Everyone look at the sheet that has these boxes filled in with statements. You'll notice that we have a sheet with several different colors on it. The blue boxes all represent practitioner statements and it starts with this very first one that says, "I understand your blood glucose levels have been running high." This is a factual statement by the practitioner and pretty neutral in tone. Now, below it we see three possible client responses. You'll notice one is green. Who will read that for me? Now, as you hear that statement, how does it sound to your ears? [The hope is that practitioners will say the client is moving with us or in a positive direction for change. If that doesn't come out, you can insert that this was the idea in the developers head anyway]. Then say, who will read the tan colored one? Now that one sounds a little more neutral, doesn't it? Now, the red one – how does that sound to you? Right the client is seeming a little resistant or there is at least some discord in the relationship.*

*And in the next row we have all blue responses? Whose talking now? Right, the practitioner is. And what sorts of responses are we seeing here? Right, these are all reflections and we see on the next line that to each reflection we see two types of responses. Now, even good reflections don't go exactly like we'd like them, too – perhaps in part because some are focusing on the sustain or resistant side of the equation. Let's just read through the rest of these and see how these play out.*

*Now we get to the fun part. You'll notice you also have a blank sheet with color code boxes. Now what I want is for you to create responses that you think might lead to these different response types. So, what type of reflection might lead to a green response if a client said, "I'm really having a hard time with this homework"? What would lead to a tan response? How about a red response? Okay,, so you have the hang of it. Don't worry about your skill as a playwright or screen writer. Just imagine your client responses and see where it takes you. Then start filling in parts of the branching script. I would like you to work through this row by row, if you can. But, if it works better for you to go all the way down, you can do that as well. Remember even when you don't get the first response you expected the goal is still to elicit change talk.*

Practitioner:  
I understand your  
blood glucose levels  
have been running  
high

C: Much higher than  
these usually are.  
That's not good.

C: Yeah, my doc is a  
little worried.

C: I think the doc  
over-reacted.

P: You're a little  
worried about these.

P: And maybe you are  
too.

P: He's making too  
much out of it.

C: I know I can do  
better. I just need to  
get refocused.

C: I'm not sure that  
I'd say worried.

C: Yeah, a little I  
guess.

C: I'm not worried.

C: A little, but I  
appreciate his  
concern.

C: He didn't even  
bother to find out  
why.

P: You know what to  
do.

P: Worried is a little  
too strong.

P: What do you think  
you might do about  
this?

P: You wouldn't go so  
far as to say worried.

P: So, you're glad  
he's looking out for  
you.

P: And you think he  
should have.

C: Yeah. I've had  
pretty good control in  
the past. Things just  
got out of balance.

C: A little.

C: At this point, I  
have no clue.

C: More like taking  
notice.

C: I don't know that  
in this case I'm so  
glad.

C: Damn right, before  
he sends me off to  
talk to you.

P: What would it take  
for you to begin this  
process?

P: Maybe not worried,  
but you are paying  
attention. What about  
it has your attention?

P: You might like to  
do something; you're  
just not sure how to  
start.

P: And being serious  
about it

P: But here you are.  
Given our time here,  
what would be like to  
do with it?

P: You sound pretty  
annoyed.

C: I guess just putting  
a plan together and  
then starting.

C: I know the long-  
term risks if I don't  
take care of it.

C: Exactly. I'm  
feeling a little adrift.

C: I guess I am taking  
it serious or I  
wouldn't have come.

C: I don't know. I've  
never been in this  
situation before.

C: Yeah. I guess I  
am.

