

Motivational Interviewing: *Are YOU ready, willing, and able?*

Najah Musacchio, MD

February 11, 2026

Disclosure

None of the individuals in a position to influence the content for this educational activity have a relevant financial relationship(s) to disclose with ineligible companies whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients.

Accreditation

MAVEN Project is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

MAVEN Project designates this live activity for a maximum of 1 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the common techniques of Motivational Interviewing (MI)
- Describe common clinical scenarios in which MI could be helpful



20 yo with depression ends up with 100 mg of cannabis use 2x per week

- “I recommend stopping car use for good for your health.”

I month later: same

- *“I strongly recommend staying away from screens. It’s not good for your mental or physical health. You’re healthy now, but you’re going to get sick if you keep doing this.”*

| month later: same

- *Clinician does not push because patient being unmotivated*



“What fits your busy schedule better, exercising one hour a day or being dead 24 hours a day?”

The Alternative: MI

Patients solve their own problems

- Enhance motivation
- Explore and resolve ambivalence



Benefits of MI

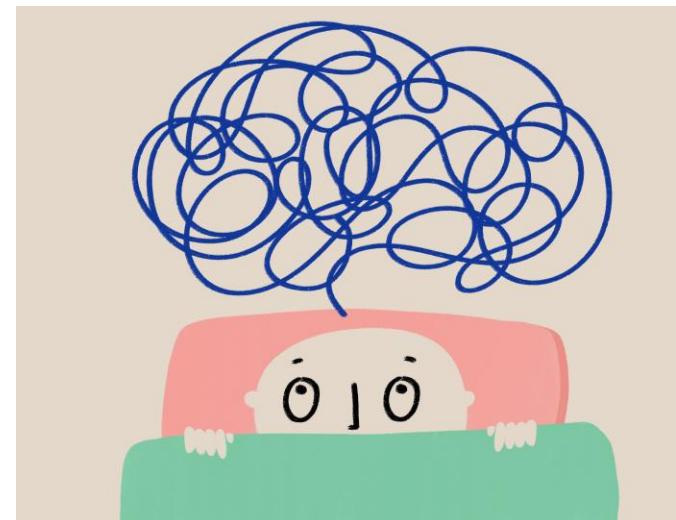
Saves time

Can be brief

Enhances clinician-patient relationship

Useful when:

- Ambivalence is high
- Confidence is low
- Desire is low
- Importance is low
- “*Not following advice*”



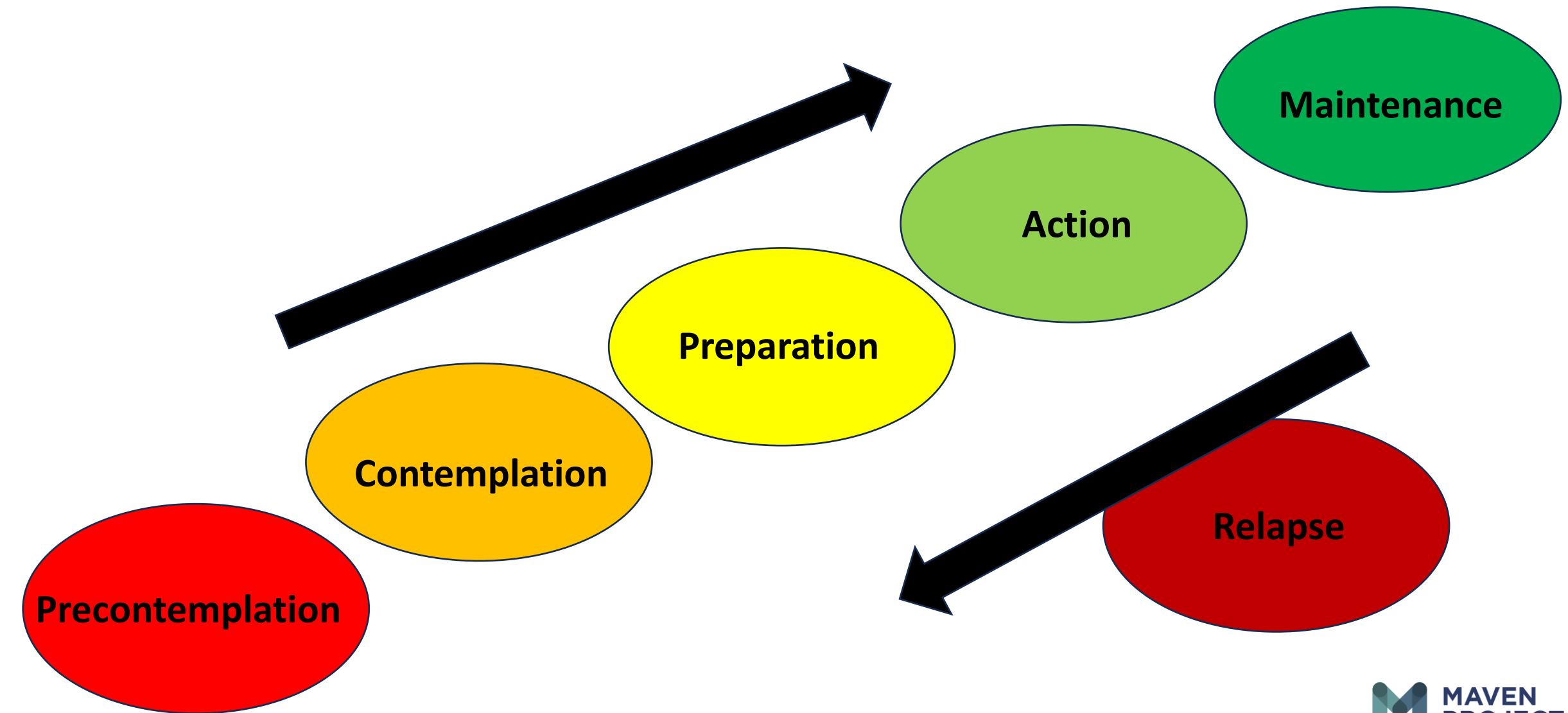
Applications of MI

- Nutrition
- Eating disorders
- Exercise
- Substance Use
- Sexual risk behaviors
- Gambling
- Illegal behaviors
- Unhealthy relationships
- Parenting
- Medication adherence
- Attending/scheduling appointments/procedures

“Ready, able, and willing to change”



Stages of Change



Spirit of MI

- Partnership
- Acceptance
- Compassion
- Evocation



Core Processes

- Engaging
- Focusing
- Evoking
- Planning

Core Skills

- Open-ended questions
- Affirmations
- Reflections
- Summaries



Open-ended Questions

- Patients and clinicians split talking
- Learn about their values and goals



“Can you tell me about your concerns about...”
“What has your experience with X been like?”
“Why do you think it might be time to quit?”

NOT:

“Do you know that smoking affects your heart?”
“Do you think you can make this change?”

Affirmations

- Build self-efficacy and confidence
- Notice determination and efforts towards change

“You appear to have had a lot of resourcefulness to deal with these difficulties the last few months.”

“I appreciate it took a lot of courage to speak with me today about your cannabis use.”



Reflections

- Rephrase to confirm meaning, helping patient to understand motivations more fully
- Can amplify desire for change
- **I open-ended question then 2-3 reflections**

“Cannabis was useful to you because it was the only thing that made you relax. Now you don’t have fun vaping with your friends. You just feel tired when you use it.”

Summaries

- Binds together information and checks in
- **Develop discrepancies between goals and current situation**
- Can adjust focus of the discussion

“Let me make sure I understand everything. You are not enjoying cannabis anymore, and you have used it because it is around you a lot. You are worried it might not be good for you. How am I doing?”

Attending to the Language of Change

Change Talk=

Any argument for
change

Sustain Talk=

Any argument
against change



Change Talk

- **The more time spent in Change Talk, the more likely change will occur**
 - Elicit
 - Selectively reinforce via reflective listening
 - Ask for elaboration, examples, details
 - Make affirming statements
 - Body language

Desire

Change Talk: “I **want** to cut back on vaping.”

“What do you **hope** our working together will accomplish?”

“What don’t you **like** about how things are now?”

“How would you **want** your life to be different in a year from now?”

“If you could wave a **magic wand**, how would you want things to be different?”

Ability

Change Talk: “I **could** cut back on vaping to weekends only.”

“If you decided to quit smoking, what steps **could** you take?”

“What do you think you might be **able** to change?”

“How **confident** are you that you could change if you decided to?”

Reasons

Change Talk: “Vaping is really affecting my grades.”

“What do you see as the **downsides** to smoking?”

- “What do you see as the **benefits**?”

“What are some of the **reasons** you want to quit?”

“What might be the **good** things about quitting?”

“What **concerns** you the most about drinking?”

Need

Change Talk: “I need to cut back on vaping.”

“How **important** is it for you to cut back?”

“What makes you think you might **need** to quit?”

“How **serious** does this feel to you?”

“How **urgently** do you think this needs to happen?”

Preparation- Change Talk

Commitment

*“I am **going to** stop vaping during the week.”*

Activation

*“I am **ready** to cut back.”*

Taking Steps

*“I **didn’t** smoke last week.”*

Evoke Change Talk



- **Importance Ruler**
 - “On a scale of 0-10, how important is this change to you?”
 - “Why are you at 3, and not 1?”
 - “Why are you at 7, and not 9?”
 - “What would help you move from a 4 to a 7?”
- **Confidence Ruler**
 - “On a scale of 0-10, how confident are you that you could quit smoking?”

Evoke Change Talk

- **Personal strengths**

“How have you made difficult changes in the past?”

“What qualities do you have that might help you get through this?”

“You are determined, even in the face of discouragement. This change must be really important to you.”

Evoke Change Talk

- **Others' concerns**

“Why do you think your Mom is worried about your drinking?”

- **Share knowledge**

“Would it be OK if I shared some information with you about the health risks of smoking?”

- *“What would you most like to learn about?”*
- *“...What are your thoughts on that?”*

Evoke Change Talk

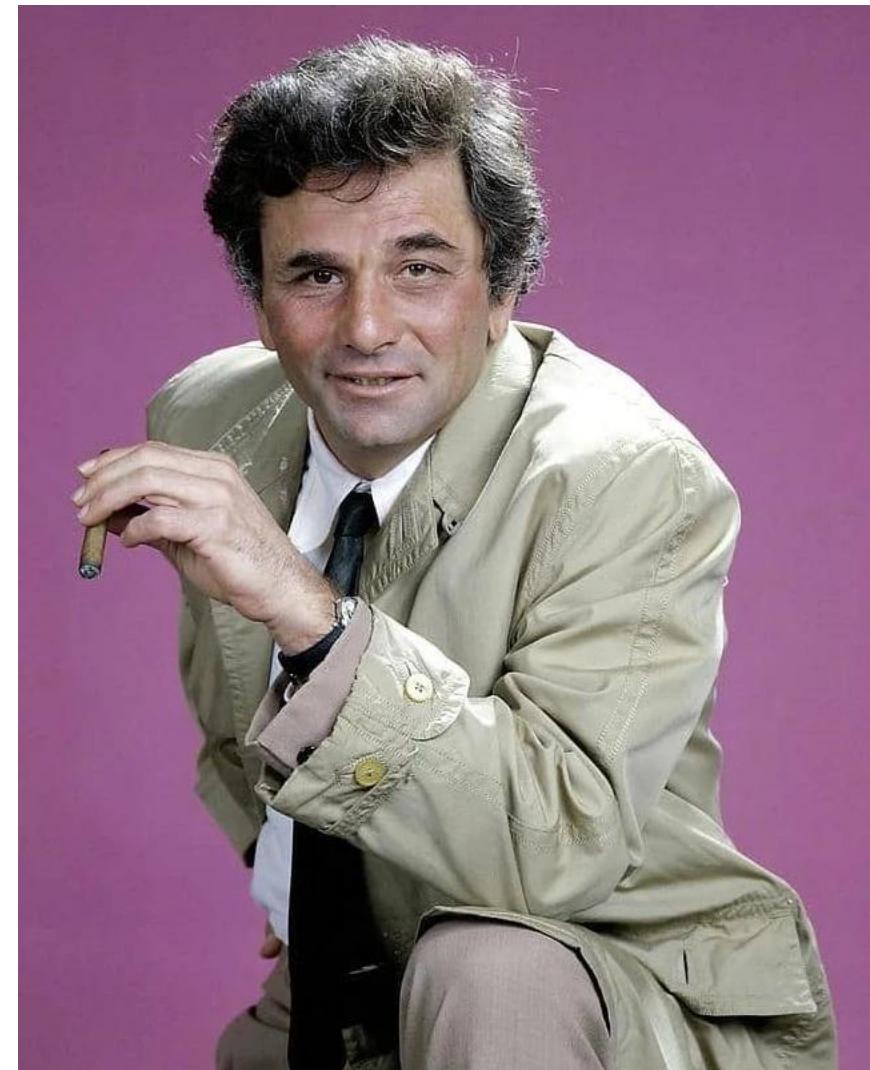
- **Look backwards**

“What was life like before you started vaping?”

- **Look forwards**

“How might your life be different in a month/year if you stopped vaping?”

- **The “Columbo Approach”**



Respond to Sustain Talk



- Need to understand the reasons behavior hasn't changed
- Don't persuade
- Reflect back
- Combine with change talk
 - *“You’re worried you won’t be able to stop vaping AND you want to be healthier.”*
- Amplify
 - *“Maybe it’s so important to you that won’t give it up, no matter the cost.”*

Respond to Sustain Talk



- “Resistance” can be evoked by discord in clinician-patient relationship
 - **Resist the Righting Reflex**
 - Listen more closely
 - Change focus
 - Emphasize autonomy
 - *“It’s really up to you. No one can make that decision for you.”*
 - *“It’s hard to imagine how I could possibly understand.”*

Planning for Change



Planning



“It sounds like you don’t enjoy vaping anymore and you are concerned that it might be making you more sad, so you want to quit?”

“I am wondering what you are thinking your next step should be.”

“What approaches do you know about for quitting vaping?”

“Do you think any of those methods would work well for you?”

“What goal would you like to set that you are willing to accomplish?”

“What would that look like for you?”

Planning

If the patient asks for a quick fix:

- *“Different approaches work differently for people. You know yourself best.”*
- *“I can describe several approaches that I have seen work in my patients. Would you be interested in hearing about that?”*
- *“What do you think would work best for you?”*



Goal Setting

- Repeat the goal back to the patient
- Document in the chart
- Follow up at next visit



Case 2

21 yo with anxiety reports binge drinking 3x a week for years.
“It’s all good, it’s just how me and my buddies wind down.”

What stage of change is this patient in?

Pre-contemplation

What is the visit goal?

- Develop rapport and build trust
- Raise doubt and concerns about current behavior
- Emphasize personal choice
- “Leave the door open”



Precontemplation

“Is it OK if I ask you a few questions about your alcohol use?”

“What are your thoughts about your drinking?”

“What do you like about drinking? What do you like less?”

“Has alcohol ever been an issue to you or someone else in your life?”

“What would be the first sign that would tell you that it might be time to cut down on alcohol use?”

“How long do you think you might continue drinking as you do today?”

“Would it be OK if I shared some information about drinking alcohol and anxiety? What do you think about what I shared with you?”



Case 3

20 yo reports smoking 1 pack/day. “I know it’s bad, you don’t have to tell me. I know I should quit. It’s tough.”

What stage is this patient in?

Contemplation

What is the visit goal?

- Identify pros and cons of behavior
- Support increasing patient’s confidence to change

Contemplation

“What do you like about smoking?”

“How does smoking fit in to your desire to save money?”

“What do you think your life would be like if you weren’t a smoker anymore?”

“What do you think would be the hardest thing would be about quitting smoking?”

“What’s next for you?”

Case 4

24 yo reports he wants to start exercising more and has just joined a gym. He is wearing a new fitness watch.

What stage of change in this patient in?

Preparation

What is the visit goal?

- Set realistic, measurable, short term goals
- Develop a plan

Preparation

“*What does going to the gym look like to you?*”

“*What do you see as the challenges to going to the gym?*”

Enlist social support, going public

Case 5

19 yo reports she quit smoking a month ago.

What stage of change is this patient in?

Action

What is the visit goal?

- Support healthy behavior change
- Explore potential challenges and strategies to manage them

Action

“Wow, that’s really great work quitting smoking, I know that’s very difficult!”

“What have been the major challenges in avoiding smoking?”

“How have you handled those situations?”

“What challenges lie ahead for you in avoiding smoking?”

“How do you see the future for yourself?”

Case 6

22 yo had quit vaping cannabis for a year. After losing his job last month, he went through a weeklong period of vaping daily. He since quit again.

What stage of change is this patient in?

Maintenance → Relapse → Action

What is the visit goal?

- Relapse is normal and an opportunity to learn about how to maintain long term change
- Renew contemplation/action without being stuck or demoralized

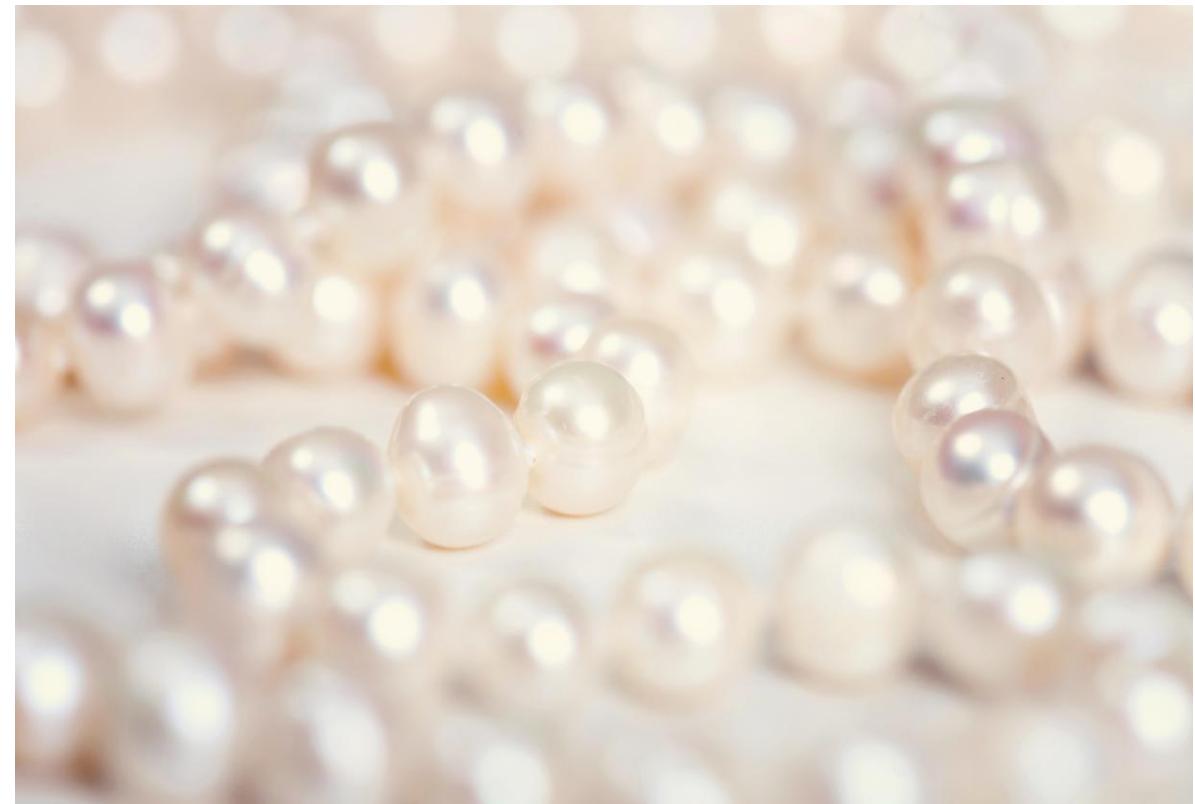
Relapse (Learning)

“Some lapses are normal when you change a long-standing habit. After that week, how did you regain control?”

“It sounds like there was a new stressful situation that could trigger vaping you had not expected. That’s understandable. The important thing is that you went back to quitting vaping.”

Pearls

- Notice ambivalence
- Be curious about values and motivations
- Elicit change talk
- Emphasize patient autonomy



Questions?

- **Send me an e-consult!**
- Small group sessions
- Mentoring

