

# Designing a tool to help caregivers to maintain and improve their motivational interviewing skills

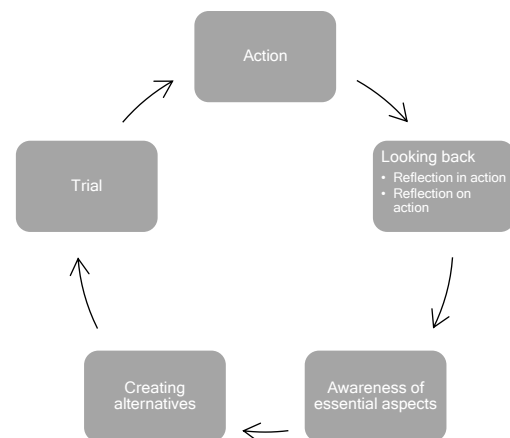
Bachelor assignment by Tom Boogerd for the organisation Vilans, supervised by Jelle van Dijk

For this bachelor assignment, a prototype of a tool was designed which will help caregivers to reflect on how they applied their motivational interviewing skills in conversations that they have with their clients, in order to learn from their actions and to keep improving.

Motivational interviewing (MI) is a conversation technique which aims to find a person's intrinsic motivation for behaviour change. In the context of this bachelor assignment, that behaviour change should be quitting to smoke. The clients are parents with a mental impairment, so for them, it might be even more of a challenge. Caregivers of different care organisations followed a training in motivational interviewing. They use an intervention by Vilans, which consists of five conversations, in order to try to achieve this goal of quitting to smoke. The intervention is based on the four MI steps, which are (1) engaging, (2) focusing, (3) evoking (of behaviour change) and (4) planning.

Maintaining and improving skills can be done by reflecting on past actions and learning from this. The models of Korthagen and Schön provide a fitting framework for reflection. The tool is used after a training is already given, so reflecting on how a caregiver applies the technique and learning from this, will help them to improve their skills.

The users (caregivers) have very busy schedules and are already using certain digital systems. Furthermore, they do already reflect on their actions, yet not explicitly. It turns out that the use of the tool would only be a success if it fits in the current flow of actions. Therefore, the choice was made to digitalise the current intervention and to implement the reflection into this. Then, the caregivers can use one digital package in which preparation, conversation and reflection are one flow.

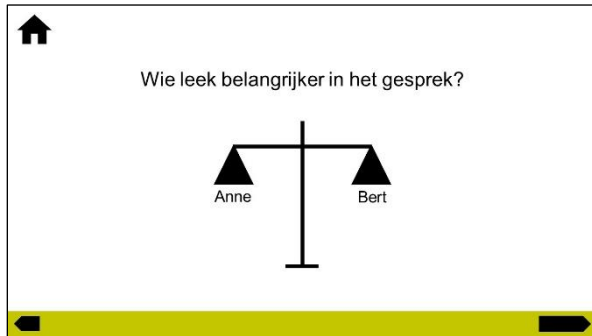


Korthagen's reflection cycle with Schön's model integrated in the 'looking back' step



Illustration: digitalised intervention, users can click through the booklet in-screen

When looking at the use context and use goal, it is important to note that the client and the caregiver are equal partners in the conversation, this is one of the four principles of MI. In total, these are (1) partnership, (2) compassion, (3) acceptance and (4) evocation. Connecting the reflection part of the tool to the principles is a good way to uncouple the tool from the use context, which makes it widely applicable in the end. Also, the goal of the use is to improve MI skills and not general conversation skills, so a good fit with the MI principles is essential in this.



"Who seemed more important in this conversation?"



"What did Anne think of this conversation?"



"How dedicated did Bert seem during this conversation?"



"How did you think the conversation went?"

As said, the reflection is part of the flow of preparing and having the conversation. The reflection takes place after the conversation. Then, when preparing the next conversation, one's previous filled-in reflection is shown and they are asked to note down a point of improvement for themselves. Then, just before the next conversation actually starts, this point of improvement is shown again so it can be taken into account when having the next conversation. This fits within the learning cycle of Korthagen and the reflection model of Schön. In order to make this flow happen, the pre-existing intervention was digitalised.

All in all, a tool can help caregivers to maintain and improve MI skills if it fits in their current flow of activities, is well aligned with the MI theory itself, and if it actively uses the outcomes of the reflection, instead of taking these as an observation. Only then can they help their clients the best.

### Current status

The prototype is ready for further testing within the intended target group. The prototype described above is based on research and several iterations, and is an advice by the student on a plausible direction for the tool design. Vilans will now take this advice and continue the development and implementation of the tool.