

**The Principle of Congruency:  
Tips to Create an Environment Consistent with MI Principles**

1. **The 'U' shaped format is one of the best workshop set-ups**, as it allows everyone to see one another, which is essential to creating a shared experience in the workshop. It also allows you, as the presenter, to walk closer to those who are talking. If the 'U' isn't possible, small groups at round tables is second-best. Classroom set ups, with rows of tables and chairs is the least effective.
2. **Dedicate a generous amount of time (at least 1 minute per person) to introductions**. Even if all participants will know each other, asking a low-risk question for them to answer during introductions sets a tone of comradery. For example, what made them come to the workshop (make being 'made' to come, okay for people to share on this one!), what they have heard about MI, or what they hope to get from the workshop.
3. Let participants know at the beginning of the workshop, **when breaks will be**, and stick as closely as possible to this. This models care and attentiveness to the needs of the participants.
4. **Having refreshments is best**. Offering food and drinks is one way of demonstrating empathy, concern for participants' comfort, and an appreciation of their time.
5. **Arrive early**, in order to be available to connect with participants as they begin to come in. Attempt to connect with each participant as they arrive to welcome them, modeling smiling, eye contact and connecting statement; this creates a friendly environment that is essential to successful MI workshops.
6. Since the foundation of MI is connecting with others, dedicate some time (2-3 minutes for a short 1-2 hour workshop, or 10-15 minutes for a 3 hour or longer workshop), **to sharing what your personal connection is to MI**. This is where telling a story about yourself can be particularly effective.
7. Aim for having participants actively practicing for about 30% of the workshop. Remember that the goal is for participants to have an **experience** of using the skills in the workshop, as well as **being the recipient** of empathic listening.
8. Model **'rolling with resistance'** by avoiding contradicting, arguing, or criticizing any participant's comments, even in the most subtle ways.

9. **Model the intervention of autonomy** by avoiding verbal or written 'command' rules at workshops (for example, 'no cell phones' or 'no late entry'). If limits are necessary, state the action you will take, not what others 'must' do, for example *'Unfortunately if a participant is more than 15 minutes late, the workshop won't be very useful to them, so we will reschedule for the participant to come to another workshop'*.
10. **Evaluate every workshop** with a formal evaluation document; explicitly invite honest feedback at the end, when handing out evaluations. Review all feedback in the spirit of improvement (not self criticism ☺)
11. Use **participants' names** whenever possible. If you won't know everyone, name plates are very helpful unless your memory is very good.
12. Recall that **preserving participants' self-image and self-esteem** is very important. No one is able to learn, or take in information if they feel criticized, or less than. One way to do this is to **focus explicitly on participants' strengths when giving feedback**.
13. Another way to preserve participants self-esteem is to rely on **descriptive feedback**, (as opposed to evaluative feedback) when observing participants during practice sessions. Descriptive feedback is more specific and actionable, and also makes it easier to avoid wounding participants.
14. **Walking around and listening briefly to participants practicing** allows you to ensure no one is role-playing, and instead everyone is **using their real selves in practice**.
15. Use the MI techniques in the workshop with participants when possible, such as **normalizing, affirming, acknowledging**, as well **reflective listening and open ended questions**.
16. If you catch yourself giving advice, asking closed questions or other less skillful means, **engaging in transparent, narrated self-correction** demonstrates humility as well as a growth mindset for the participants.