

Motivational Interviewing as a Tool to Address Farm Stress and Transitions

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INTRODUCTION

- The ongoing conditions in agriculture have clearly taken a toll, financially and mentally, for many farms, farm families, and rural communities.
- Motivational Interviewing (MI) is one communication tool of many techniques that can be applied to address emerging and time-sensitive efforts in dealing with farm stress.
- MI is helpful with increasing the likelihood that educators can assist in ensuring positive behavior changes that may be impacting stress levels.
- MI technique emphasizes listening and affirming the person's perspective and recognizing that the motivation for change stems from them.
- MI skills provide the ability to: ask open-ended questions, affirm authentically, utilize reflective listening techniques, summarize statements and encourage participants to own their outcomes and seek out information (OARS+I).

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING IS A **COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATION** STYLE FOR STRENGTHENING A PERSON'S OWN **MOTIVATION** AND **COMMITMENT TO CHANGE**.



Photo credit: Nath Dresser, Joy Kirkpatrick and Kevin Bernhardt

OBJECTIVES

Outcomes for Trained Educators

- Increase knowledge in MI technique that can be applied to specific subjects and clientele.
- Gain confidence to engage and respond to sensitive conversations with clientele on challenging subjects.
- Be in a better position to develop strong relationships and presence in communities.
- Engage in meaningful conversations to assist in developing focus and direction.

Outcomes for Clientele

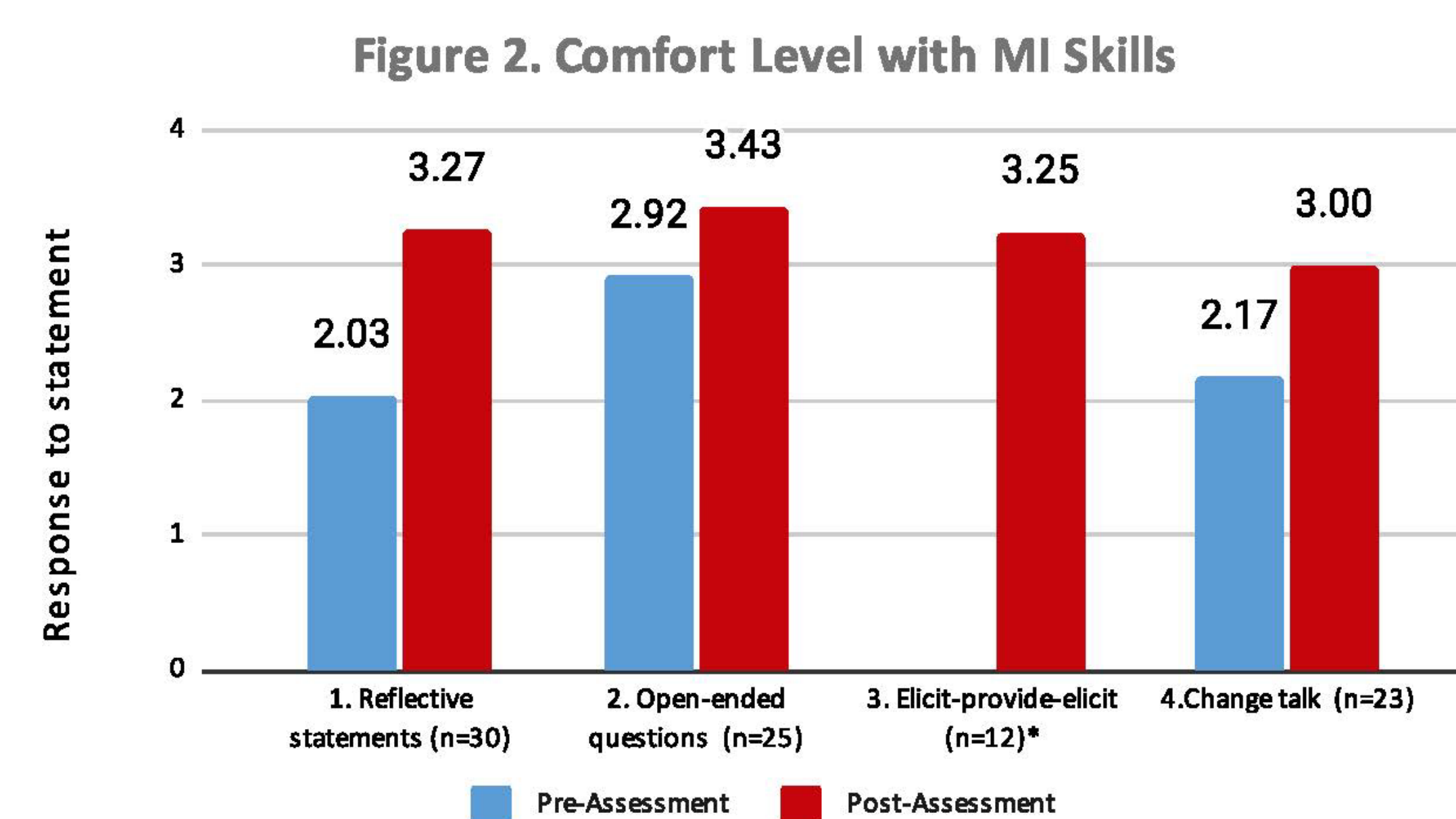
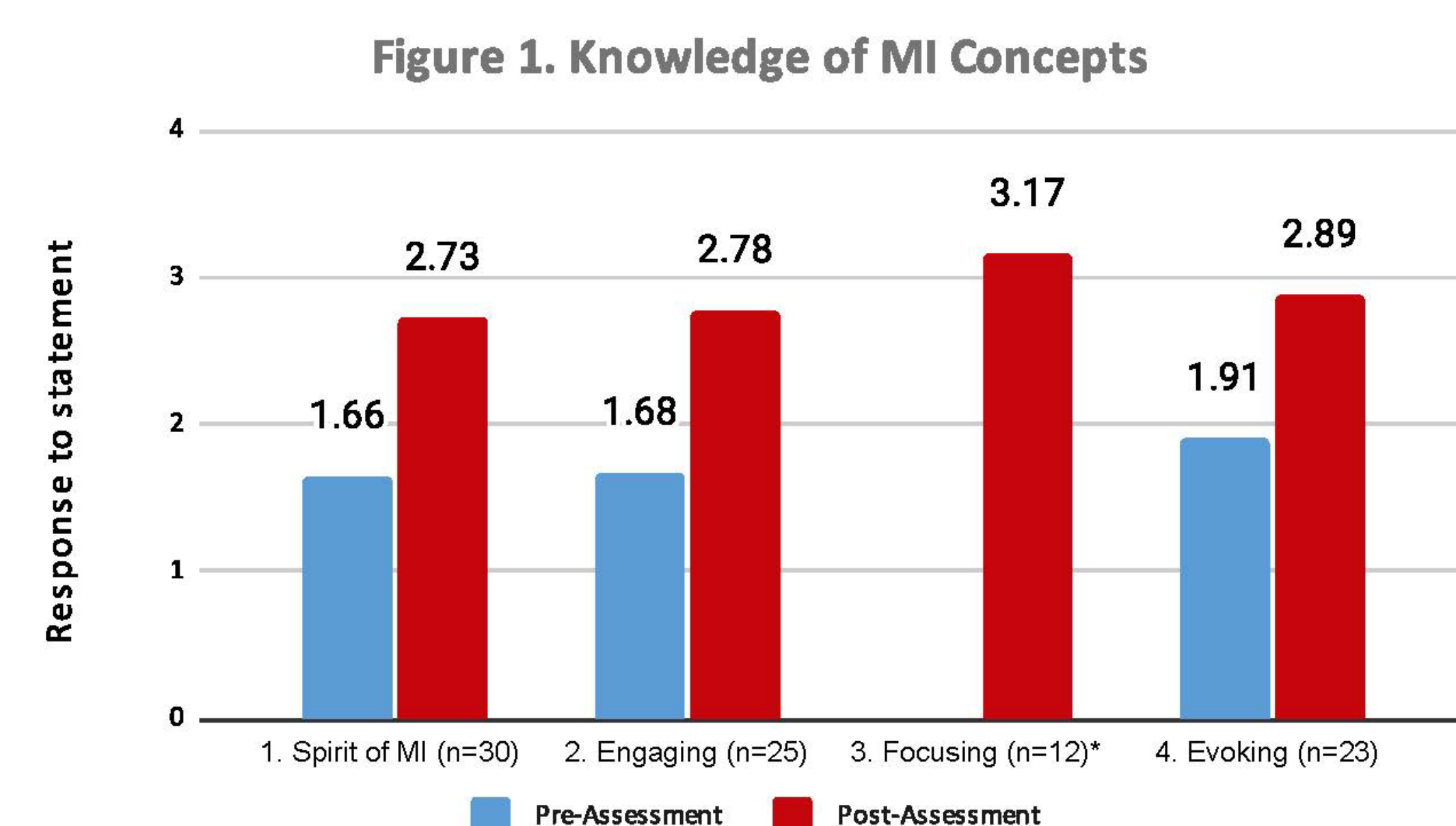
- Identify their vision and strengthen their own motivations for change.
- Encourage informed decisions based on their own values.
- Motivate to take action to reach their own goals.

METHODS

- Four-part series held through Zoom in March & April, 2020.
- Each 'Motivational Mondays' workshop held 75 minutes.
- Workshop included intro of MI, exercise of skills, group discussion, and case examples.
- Series highlighted the four key concepts of MI and MI skills:
 1. Spirit of MI; Reflective statements
 2. Engaging; Open-ended questions
 3. Focusing; Elicit-provide-elicicit
 4. Evoking; Change talk

RESULTS

- Over forty educators from across multiple disciplinary perspectives (agriculture, community development, families, health and well-being, natural resources, youth) participated in the series.
- Likert-type pre and post assessments were given in Zoom to determine educators self-evaluation of knowledge (Figure 1) and comfort level (Figure 2) in each MI topic and skill area presented.



* Due to a Zoom meeting host issue, pre-workshop data was lost.

- All participants reported gaining a considerable amount of knowledge, with an average increase of 1.05 (based on a 4-point Likert-type scale, 4 being *very knowledgeable*).

- All participants indicated feeling more confident with using MI skills, with an average increase of 0.86 (based on a 4-point Likert-type scale, 4 being *very comfortable*).

IMPACTS

- In an eight-month follow up survey, participants found the training program to be valuable, reporting an average of 4.08 on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being *very valuable*.
- Educators became aware of ways to increase their professional capacity by improving their communication and facilitation skills with the clientele they serve.
- Educators continued to practice the MI techniques and increase their skills through a peer-to-peer "community of practice" in 2020.
 - Seven 45-minute monthly professional development series held through Zoom during July to December, 2020.
 - The series featured in-depth focus on the OARS+I (specific MI components) with take-home practice ideas.
- Work-from-home requirements as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the ability of educators to implement the MI techniques and skills learned in this training series.

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