

Dear Iris

Dear Iris,

For some time now, I have been fascinated by the concept of 'the spirit of MI'. It seems such a fundamental part of the approach, yet at the same time, so unspecific. Although described as 'collaboration, evocation and respect for autonomy' by Miller and Rollnick, it seems to me that it cannot be as simple as that. There simply must be more to it, and I feel that I need more in order to understand it and put it into action. I have therefore dedicated my life to a quest, searching for the true spirit of MI.

My quest has taken me to distant lands. I have travelled far and wide, and visited the wise members of several exotic tribes. 'Oh wise ones,' I pleaded, as if my life depended on it. 'What is the secret to truly embodying the spirit of MI? The resolution of my clients' ambivalence depends upon it.'

Their answers were diverse. On the suggestion of one Shaman, I spent six months in solitude in a cold dark cave against my will, to truly experience the misery of feeling trapped and unable to do anything about my situation. One wise elder suggested that sucking mints and drinking mint tea would cleanse the body, and give it a distinct mintie flavour. Another suggested that I needed to embody the essence of my forefathers in order to experience the spirit of MI, and that dying my hair red, growing a beard, and speaking with a South African accent should do the trick.

Iris, I have tried all their suggestions, and none of them seem to have worked for me. Although admittedly my South African accent could probably do with some more work, I have given them all a really good shot. However, I still feel that I have little understanding of the true spirit of MI. I feel that my efforts have not been worth it, and that others laugh at me. They do not fully appreciate how hard I have been working.

I have reached a point where I am on the verge of giving up my quest. However Iris, oh wise one, I thought that perhaps you may know the answer. What is the true spirit of MI, Iris? Please help me.

Yours hopefully,

An explorer of ambivalence

Dear Explorer,

It certainly seems that getting to grips with MI spirit is something that is really important to you. You have made so much effort to increase your understanding, and have gone to lengths that most others would not have had the ability to do. You were able to use your initiative and persist, even when times were tough. It seems like your will is currently being tested to the limit, yet you remain dedicated in wanting to truly embody the spirit of MI.

I am struck though that you have sought the expertise of others to answer your question, when within MI, it is the client who is seen to be the expert. It also sounds like these experts were incredibly directive in telling you how spirit should manifest itself within you. In my experience, spirit is a very personal thing. It's about your way of being with others. The person who is best able to answer that question is therefore you. Perhaps choosing to explore deep within yourself, rather than seeking the opinion of others, will help you in finding out what the spirit of MI truly means to you.

Failing that, try the 'spirits' section of your local supermarket. You may well find the spirit of MI down there. I've heard that a spirit called 'creme de menthe' has a distinctive mintie flavour, so that may be a good starting point.

Yours affectionately,

Iris xxx

Dear Iris,

I am keen to get some help. I hope you will indulge me?

I have been a MINTie for over a decade now and attended several forums. This experience has been great. I have met many people and have observed changes in all of them following conversations with me.

What I have noticed is that I have spent most of my time eliciting information from other MINTies, so much so that I now have a tomb of logs of these coded conversations (the majority of which are MITI coded and score highly on skills and globals).

Everyone else is changing except for me. I am still busy gathering data on everyone and find myself obsessively eliciting-providing-eliciting without due regard.

My active listening skills are so good I can tune into all of the simultaneous workshops at the forums by simply standing in the reception area of the hotel. I find myself asking permission before speaking to anyone. I am so person centred I don't know where my own centre is anymore!

Help me to move on please. How do I get to be a self-determinist?

Yours,

A rounder with a pony tail, diabetes and a cigarette habit

Dear Rounder,

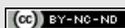
You are indeed not the first to question whether adopting MI as a way of life is healthy. I remember in the MINT Bulletin edition 13.2, Jake Rollnick shares some of his thoughts on this topic, and highlights the potential pitfalls of taking MI too far.

You say would like to move on. What would 'moving on' mean to you? How would life look if you did move on? What would need to change in order for you to be able to move on? I think perhaps if you started using your MI skills on yourself rather than on those around you, and focussed in on the spirit of the approach rather than the techniques, you might find it a little easier to get to where you really want to be.

Failing that, I suggest you just put in some ear plugs, shut your eyes and stop talking to people. That ought to solve the problem.

Yours affectionately,

Iris xx



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