

## Dear Iris

Dear Iris,

I have an embarrassing problem. I hope you might be able to help.

The problem is that I can't stop reflecting. Reflection was a skill that I struggled with initially, so I decided that I would try to practice reflections at every opportunity. Gradually, I found myself more able to stop asking questions, and became addicted to the depth of responses that I got not just from my clients, but from all those around me.

Initially, this meant that discussion at the dinner table was a little more plentiful at home, which was great for the entire family. However, it has escalated to the point where I am bringing queues to a standstill as the shop assistants tell me the story of their lives. Dinner at home now takes a minimum of three hours, and the kids have no time to do their homework so they are getting into trouble at school. People who stop me to ask for directions often end up having lengthy chats over a cup of coffee, rather than getting where they need to be.

I am ironically on the verge of social exclusion due to my ability to empathise and listen to others. I have tried not to reflect in public, but everything I've tried instead hasn't worked. My friends and family have started calling me the 'talking mirror'. I feel so ridiculed, but helpless to stop reflecting. How can I give up something that makes life so interesting?

Yours in desperation,

A super-complex reflection

Dear Iris,

As a trainer with several years experience, I have to say that I am dismayed by the fact that a new MI book has come out. New terminology, new spirit component, no more principles? Some of my best training exercises are about MI principles! They worked really well too!

Do the authors not appreciate that I am going to have to spend hours redesigning my PowerPoint slides, thinking up new exercises and restructuring well developed training plans? Do they not care about how good my trainings were? Little by little is one thing, but they have turned this into a major training material overhaul.

Why are they doing this to me?

Yours disgruntled,

Resistant to change

Dear Resistant,

I can see you are a very dedicated trainer, who integrates new material into trainings to remain contemporary and up to date. You clearly care about your trainees and endeavour to do the best that you can to deliver effective training.

I can see that you feel put upon. It feels almost like your autonomy as a trainer has been violated by these authors, by them taking a description of MI that you were happy with and changing it, without you having any say over the kinds of changes that they made. Now, you feel you are being forced to change against your own will.

It seems to me that you have three options, rather than just one. The first is to stay the same and not change your materials. Alternatively, you have the option to change some things, but keep the others that you were happy with. The final option is to change everything in line with the contents of the new book. There are pros and cons to each of these options, and you are best versed to weigh up what those might be for you personally. If you decide to make changes to your trainings, remember that you are more likely to succeed if you aim to make small changes over a period of time, rather than trying to change everything immediately. There is an entire MINT community out there to support you working through these dilemmas, if you would like this assistance.

Alternatively, you could buy up all the copies of the new book and burn them, so that the information does not get out. Then you can remain up to date without having to change your materials. In fact, you could find other like-minded trainers and have burning parties where you toast marshmallows and devour them slowly as you watch the new texts go up in flames. This of course, would be a more costly option, but could potentially be a lot of fun.

I wish you the best of luck with whichever path you choose.

Yours affectionately,

Iris xx

Dear Super-Complex,

It certainly seems like developing your reflection skills was very important to you. You managed to embrace reflections to the point that they became instinctive. That must have taken real determination.

However, you seem to have reached a point where reflections are starting to stand in the way of your daily functioning, and that of others. You say that reflections make your life interesting. I wonder how ready you might be to change this.

I also wonder if perhaps you may need to give due consideration to some of the other OARS. If you only use one oar, you just end up going round in circles. Additionally, you may wish to think about direction in your reflections. Where do the people you are speaking to want to get to, within the context of what they are doing at that moment? Evidence is suggesting that it is important for us to help clients find direction towards their goals, rather than becoming distracted from this.

Failing that, I've heard that a well known stationery chain has heavy duty parcel tape on special offer at the moment. I'd invest in some, and place it firmly over your mouth, for the sake of your own wellbeing and that of wider society.

Yours affectionately,

Iris xx



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