

**University of New Mexico  
Center on Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and Addictions  
Tape B Phase I Part 2 – Motivational Interviewing  
Professional Training Videotape Series 1998**

An Initial Interview

Bill: John, we talked on the telephone, and I understand there was a problem at work, and that you were referred here to talk about that. Before we start, I just want to explain that what we say here doesn't go back to your employer, it's kept here, so you can use this time in whatever way you choose. But, I've been asked to talk with you and see if I can be helpful to you. So, tell me what's happening.

John: I guess it was about a week ago Monday. We, meaning myself and coworkers got more or less caught in a random drug screen. Our company likes to pull these off every once in a while, and just the day before yesterday, they told me I need to come down and speak with you. That they found some things in there that they weren't too happy about, and here we are.

Bill: Do you know what they are?

John: I came up positive for marijuana.

Bill: So this wasn't an accident or problem or anything; this was just a random...

John: It was just one of those...

Bill: event that you got caught up in.

John: Out of the clear blue-sky kind of things.

Bill: Did you know they were doing these, or was this kind of a surprise to you?

John: Well, normally they do is as a condition of employment when you come in to get a job. The random ones are kind of rare. So, no, I wasn't expecting it. Every few years in the company on a certain job you hear that they did one, but it wasn't expected, no.

Bill: So it was a kind of an unusual one, and you got snagged

John: Yeah

Bill: So I would imagine that you are pretty angry about that.

John: Well, it does make me angry and it ties into some of my feelings about my personal life and how I want my personal life to be my own, and that's a private

things that I'm not exactly too crazy about my company or anybody else being involved in. So I was angry when I had to go down and, of course, angrier yet when they found a positive result for marijuana. Because I believe that this is something I do on my own time, in my own life. I don't do it at work. Yeah, it's an intrusion into my... into my life.

Bill: So, it's none of their business really, in a way.

John: I don't feel that it is.

Bill: And so it doesn't affect your work, as far as you're concerned. This is something that's apart from that. It happens in your private life and really, the company has no reason to be concerned about this.

John: I don't think they should be – I won't go so far as to say that there's never been an occasion where a little excess partying on the weekend hasn't caused me to miss an occasional Monday here or there, or maybe be a little tired on any given day. But I don't use drugs on the job and so I still feel that it's my business.

Bill: So whatever the effects are, they're just like carryovers from the weekend or special occasion and might cause you to miss a Monday, might cause you to not work quite so well on a day, but using on the job is not something you have done.

John: Right.

Bill: Well, it sounds like you're recognizing a little bit that the company might have a legitimate concern that you might miss a day or be a less efficient, or something, but in general, this is your business. In general, this is your life and your choice.

John: That's a pretty good description of how I feel, yeah.

Bill: Ok, if you will, I'd like to know about the drug use patterns. How that fits into your life, what kinds of things you've been using, what kinds of things you've noticed over the years with regard to your drug use

John: Well, you know, marijuana has always been; ever since my high school days. You know, a pretty – I won't say an important part of my life. I guess, in a way, it's an important part of my life. It's been a pretty steady thing that I've enjoyed for the last 10 – 15 years, since I got out of high school; I probably started early in high school. I don't use probably any more or less than I did back then, so I don't see it as a big problem. There's other people who do see it as a big problem obviously, but to me, its just a way to blow off steam after a long day at work, or if I'm doing something relaxing on the weekend, or something like that, that's why I use it. And, there's always been a little bit of fooling around with a few other things, but I think I've kept that pretty much...under control. So, I just see it as a part of my recreational life.

Bill: So, really, it's not something you've worried about or wondered about at all. It sounds like there are some other people who have worried a little bit though.

John: Well, one is my wife, who is always on the safe side of everything. She smoked a little marijuana in high school herself, and when we got married we smoked...

Bill: You smoked together.

John: Yeah, together a little bit, but she's kind of gotten away from it. So I guess that more or less entitles her to nag me about it now, but...so there's some resistance from that department, for sure.

Bill: And that's how it feels to you, that she's nagging you. That, like your employer, she's intruding into your private space and what really isn't her business.

John: Yeah, well, in her case, I'll allow that maybe it's a little bit closer to being some of their business. Like, she had something to say the other day when I got back from playing cards with my friends; which I do every Thursday night. She had something to say about that because she knew we were partying and at that time, I felt like, you know, what does it matter to you? You know, so she's got some claim to having some concern, but on the other hand, it's a little bit of a pain in the neck for me to hear it all the time from her.

Bill: You do think that what's behind it is concern for you.

John: Yeah, I suppose.

Bill: And she has some reason for that, as you can see it, but it also feels annoying to you that she has that concern.

John: Yeah, I mean, her concern is from -- she's on this bandwagon. A lot of her friends are starting to have kids and she's thinking down the road, and envisioning perfect little family set-up. So, I think her - I'm not quite ready for that. I think it's coming at some point, but I think her concern is motivated by that. And so, I think she's entitled to it but it still seems to me to be something I just have to constantly deal with.

Bill: So having a family, having children is something you want to do, maybe not as soon as your wife does, but it's in the plans for you somewhere down the line.

John: Oh, I imagine, yeah.

Bill: And since she's thinking or wanting that to happen a little sooner, she's concerned about this a little sooner, perhaps than you would be.

John: I'd say that's pretty accurate.

Bill: Yeah. So, lets suppose that you were planning to have children in the near future. I know that's not what you want, but suppose you were...how might that change your own sense of your drug use?

John: Oh, well, I suppose if we had a baby that I would have to take another look at how I'm living may life. I admit that there would probably have to be some adjustments I'd have to make.

Bill: And why would you do that? Why would you make a change in your drug use?

John: Well, number one, for one thing, even though I still insist that this is none of anybody's business but my own, once a kid comes along, you're even more tied into your monthly bills and making sure your well being, as far s your income is taken care of. So I'd be a little bit more concerned about something happening at work, like what just happened. If I play my cards right here, I'll probably get through this all right and keep my job and everything will be all right, but I don't know about if this were ever to happen again. So, there would be that concern. And, you know, I guess I would have to admit that somebody bringing up kids should probably have his concentration on that and not be running around spending money on substances and partying with friends as much, you know, maybe a little bit different lifestyle would be called for.

Bill: Which, in some ways, is part of what you don't want to give up, I sense.

John: Not right now I don't, no.

Bill: Yeah...and that's another thing I wanted to ask you about. What are the things you like about your drug use? What's good about those for you?

John: Oh, I don't know, you know, when I get together with my friends, its just become so much a part of what we do, that it is hard to stop and say well, what do I like about it. I like the feeling. I like the way marijuana, in particular, makes me feel. You know, we'll go off – whether it's a card game or a baseball game, or whatever the heck we're doing – or camping or fishing; sometimes I go camping or fishing with my friends. Its just part of the relaxation, you know; smoke a joint, you know, kick back, relax. I just like the whole feeling.

Bill: So it's really mixed in with having a good time with your friends and partying with them and maybe getting away from the hassles from everyday life

John: I'd say that's pretty much what marijuana does for me

Bill: And then you said there were some other drugs also. What is it you that like about those?

John: Well... you know, I'll use a little cocaine here and there, like I had mentioned, and a few other things on a much less regular bases, let' just say. I don't know, it's hard to describe. I feel like there's a need to really blow off steam sometimes I guess. My job – working life is a very high pressure one. I'm responsible for 15 guys work for me, I have to take orders, and respond to a lot of pressure from my superiors, and it's always in terms of getting things done and meeting deadlines, and getting all the paperwork in. They don't care that I was out there getting the job done, then they turn around and say where's the paperwork. It's one of these deals where I feel like I'm ready to explode sometimes from just the pressures working life brings me. I just like to blow off some steam, I guess, would be the best way to put it with those things.

Bill: So, you have a lot of responsibilities. The job you have, you're working with a lot of people, you oversee a lot of people, you've got – not a family yet – but a marriage and your responsible there; and in some ways this is a pull to feel free of that at least for a little while – to feel free of that responsibility.

John: Absolutely.

Bill: And that's...I hear there's a little more than just partying or having a good time. As you've said, need; that there's a sense of – it might be hard to deal with all that if you didn't have these drugs to use; that in a way, you need these to break the tension, to get away from the stress and the responsibility.

John: That's true. That's how I've been using those substances all along now for quite a while, and I can't envision not, you know, so it's hard to say how I would function if I couldn't or didn't.

Bill: You're a little bit nervous about how you'd get along if you weren't using these things to blow off steam, to let down.

John: Definitely.

Bill: You mentioned marijuana and cocaine, what else? You said there are some other things too.

John: Well, every once in a while. For a while there, I was on the road. I did a job out of state. The guys I was staying with up there were all into – this was actually back about a year, were all into heroin. You know there's been a lot in the news for the last couple of years about “heroin has kinda come back”, you know, and I wasn't really into that stuff in high school or anything, but..

Bill: And that's really changed.

John: Well, it has; it sort of – I have to admit it sort of got my curiosity going a little bit. You know, my own personality is like - I'll try anything once and see if I like it, so, it kind of got the best of my curiosity, so to be thoroughly honest with you, and I'm assuming that our conversation is confidential here...

Bill: Yes, it is.

John: And it won't go anywhere. For the last year or so, I've used heroin off and on, lets just say, a couple of times a month; something like that; so a little of that. I've used speed on occasion, but it doesn't do much for me, I don't really care for it too much, so, if there's nothing else around, and somebody's got it, I'll do it, but that's about it.

Bill: But, in terms of getting away from it and life and stepping out of your stressful life, stepping out of your responsibilities; what heroin does has been more attractive than what speed does.

John: Most definitely. I always like tend to call it mini-vacations, almost

Bill: A drug vacation.

John: Yeah.

Bill: Yeah. What's your own reflection on that? In high school, you said you weren't into heroin; marijuana was there, that's kind of continued, and now you find yourself using heroin and speed, and some other things. As you step back and look at yourself here and you're saying where am I going in my life? What have you thought about that?

John: Well, I guess at one time I was pretty much anti anything other than marijuana. You know, I had taken that attitude; I'd taken that sort of approach that.

Bill: That's where you draw the line.

John: Right, because, you know, at the time all the people were advocating that we shouldn't use drugs of any kind. Would always say it would lead up to something stronger. You know, me and my friends were always like, "oh, bull", we smoke our pot, don't bother us, we won't bother you. Don't tell me that I'm going to be laying in the gutter next week, hooked on some other kind of drugs, because it's not true. And I still don't know if I believe that's still true or not, but it has caused me a little bit of doubt in myself to sort of... I've have had to change my philosophy a little bit to make room for that. Because now here I am sort of indulging in some of those things and so, it's caused me a little internal conflict., I guess.

Bill: Yeah, that's what I'm asking about. I really appreciate how honest you are

being, and how you're struggling with this with me. But, there was a line that you drew and said ok, that's where I'm going to stop, then you stepped over it, then you stepped over another line, then another line. That is what I'm asking about, is...are there moments where you say, gee, where am I headed here?

John: I guess there are. There are a few moments where I'm wondering, not so much that I can't envision the kind of life that I want to be leading in another year or so, and wondering how am I going to get from where I am now to there. I keep thinking that when the time comes, everything's going to take care of itself, and... I'm still so sure that's not going to be the case, but I don't know.

Bill: I hear a confidence that if you were to decide that you need to make a change there; if you were having a baby, for example, that you could make that change. You feel pretty confident that you've got that ability within you and its more that you haven't seen the need in doing that yet.

John: Right.

Bill: And in some ways, you don't want to see that this is the time, because it's a letting go of something that was dear to you.

John: That's true, because part of what concerns me; or what my fear is about that is that everybody wants to tell you that well, once you pass the sort of point of no return, that you've got to completely radically change your whole life, and that you are never going to even have a beer again, and you're going to have to put down all your toys completely, and that sort of stuff. So, in a sense, I'm kind of afraid of what changes I'm going to need to make, or what someone's going to make me do to try to get to where I can keep things cool with a family and a job and all that kind of stuff. Those are what my fears are about that.

Bill: That someone would make you make that change. Yeah. What you say is absolutely true, that it is up to you. No one makes that choice for you. No one can make that choice for you. Even if your wife wanted to decide for you, or I wanted to decide for you, or your employer wanted to decide for you; nobody can. It really is completely your own choice; how you live your life, what you do about drugs, where you're headed; so that is yours. And, what I hear you struggling with is "what do I want? Is this time for me to think about things? Is this drug test a little wake up call?"

John: At first, I didn't think it was a little wake up call to be honest with you.

Bill: Just angry about it.

John: My usual mindset is to just take it on as one more little thing that's in my way of getting to my goal; like anything in my job, or anything else in my life; just get through it, and bang through it. But, I have to admit, it is, you know, once you

wind up seeing all the hoops I have to jump through now, just to get back to square one with the company and everything like that. Not to mention getting things back together with my wife, as far as, she didn't react too badly to this, but she's not exactly terrifically happy about it either.

Bill: What's she concerned about?

John: Well, she kind of used the drug test situation that I'm in right now as an opportunity to bring up all of this. She's not completely aware of everything that I do on my own time, as far as substances, but she's aware enough to where she decided to use this as a time to really turn up the heat on her concern on all this.

Bill: I think you really could choose to see this either way; that what's happening here is other people are stepping into your life and trying to take control of you and make you do things you don't want to do. You could see that your wife is doing it that way; here she's taking advantage of this opportunity now to tighten down on you now, your employer is making you do things you don't want to do. And it sounds like you also- looking at it another way- see that that's concern; that they have some reasons for concern and what they're doing is saying, "I care about you, and I'm worried about this". Your employer, on the phone said to me, "we don't want to lose this guy - he's very, very important to us". And so, what I was hearing from them, was that same kind of concern.

John: Well, my usual obstinate way is to try to put concerns like those and - within the framework of that, these people are just on my back. Because there are plenty of things that my wife wants too. You know, between a husband and wife, there's always a little bit of a power struggle going on at any given moment. And, I thought at first, she did want to gain the upper hand on me with this. My boss is a great guy, he runs a pretty good company, but he's a businessman, and I've made him a lot of money over the years. So, yeah, I know he doesn't want to lose me. But, on the other hand, I do admit that there's some human concern there too. I know they care about me.

Bill: Both of them. Yeah. Let me see if I've got a picture of where we are so far. We're really just getting started here, but what I've heard so far from you is this drug test has first of all caused some concern about work. You don't certainly want to lose your job; you don't want things to get messed up there. Somewhere down the line, you're thinking about having children, and at that point, you're thinking you're going to need to make some changes; at least down there, if not sooner. This has caused a little bit of friction in your marriage, which sounds like it's pretty important to you; and that's a worry, to some extent. And then, also, there's this stepping over lines. You've set a limit for yourself, and then you've seen over the years that you've stepped over that, and find a way to make that ok for yourself, and then you step over another one and find a way to make that ok for yourself, and you think, "is this really what I want to be doing? Where's this taking me? Is this going to be ok?"



John: Yeah.

Bill: In terms of making a change, though, in that a worry is, how would I deal with this very responsible and difficult life I have, if I don't have this to help me blow it away; to help me get through it, to take a little vacation from it.

John: Absolutely.

Bill: What thoughts do you have about that? What other ways in which you might be able to deal with that level of responsibility and stress, without using chemicals?

John: Well, whenever I've said that to anyone; I've talked about it to my wife, or I've talked to my parents about the same thing. My parents are also people who are not obviously as keyed into the range of what goes on in my life as far as using drugs as my wife is, but they've always felt that I've indulged a little bit too heavily over the years too. People like that, I know that they care about me, and they're full of suggestions, and I have not really been able to incorporate any of those changes into reality, you know. I mean, they all say well, you can blow off steam by doing this, or by doing that, or by exercising, and you know, all these kinds of things. I don't know, I'm almost skeptical; I am skeptical that those things can successfully take the place of what I do now. I'm afraid of, you know, these things that I do now, are a part of who I am, really, in a way, and I'm a little bit reluctant to just start thinking about trading them out for another whole set of things I'd do just to try to keep the lid on.

Bill: There are lots of people with lots of ideas about how you could do it; you're not too convinced about that. And more than that, the drugs, as you've stepped over these lines, the drugs have somehow become a part of you, and it's almost like giving up a part of yourself, in a way; to think about changing from this. It's offensive to think about that, because its like sacrificing part of who you've become.

John: Right. I feel like in a sense I'm not being treated myself, almost, with that, but the external forces want me to make those changes and I don't want to give up what I am, who I am.

Bill: Well, that happens. And it keeps coming up, you versus the external forces; it's one way to think about what's happening, that there are all these folks out there are trying to make you change something that is really a part of you and that you have a right to hang on to. In looking at it that way, certainly that makes you want to feel like "I'm not about to give this up, I'm not about to let go of this, and sacrifice this; this is mine, I'm going to keep it."

John: Right.

Bill:    And thinking that way, you feel entitled to what you're doing. And, I've also heard from you another way of thinking about things; which is looking at this as something that maybe you would want to make a change in for your own life, for your own interests, for your own values. And I would guess that which way you're thinking about it; you would feel different ways about it. One is, "damned if I'm going to give up this stuff for somebody else." And then when I hear you talk in another context, its "well, maybe this is really something I need to think and do something about, but what would I do?"