

What I Have Learned from 50 Years in Addiction Research and Treatment



by William R. Miller, Ph.D.

Who Am I?

In 1971 I began PhD training in clinical psychology, became interested in addictions, and embarked on a lifelong career studying and treating substance use disorders. Along the way I have been involved in treating thousands of clients in clinical research, and published over 400 scientific articles and chapters as well as 60 books, many of them focused on addictions. Since retiring from the University of New Mexico in 2006 I have been pulling together what I've learned along the way to share with current and future helping professionals. Here are some practice-friendly books for your consideration.

Treating Addiction: A Guide for Professionals (2nd Edition, 2019)

by William R. Miller, Alyssa A. Forcehimes, and Allen Zweben

This is the book I wished I had had when teaching clinicians about addiction treatment, but didn't get around to writing it till after I had retired. It's a comprehensive evidence-based guide for both generalists and specialists who work with people with substance use disorders, the most common diagnoses you're most likely to encounter in behavioral health care.

Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change (3rd Edition, 2013)

by William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick

Motivational interviewing (MI) was originally developed to help people change addictive behaviors, but has since spread into many other areas of health care and social services. It addresses the central issue of client ambivalence and motivation for change. More than 1,600 clinical trials involving MI have been published, and MI is now being taught and practiced in over 50 languages around the world.

Effective Psychotherapists: Clinical Skills that Improve Client Outcomes (2021)

by William R. Miller and Theresa B. Moyers

Behavioral treatments are inseparable from the people who provide them. Based on 70 years of psychotherapy research, this book reviews the scientific evidence that client outcomes are more influenced by counselors than by the specific therapeutic techniques they use. Chapters specify eight learnable and measurable therapist skills that improve client outcomes: accurate empathy, acceptance, positive regard, genuineness, focus, hope, evocation, and offering information and advice.

Listening Well: The Art of Empathic Understanding (2018)

by William R. Miller

Of all the characteristics that improve therapist effectiveness, the skill of accurate empathy has the longest and strongest scientific evidence. Originally described by Carl Rogers in the 1950s, accurate empathy is a specific kind of listening that is learnable and improves client outcomes across a broad range of treatment approaches and settings. This how-to paperback summarized what I have learned in 50 years of practicing and teaching the art of empathic understanding.

Controlling Your Drinking (2nd edition, 2013)

by William R. Miller and Ricardo F. Muñoz

It is now routine in health care to ask people about their drinking and advise heavier drinkers to moderate their alcohol use. This practical how-to guide was first published in 1976 and has since been tested and developed in multiple clinical trials. A consistent finding has been that drinkers working on their own using this guide were just as successful in reducing their drinking as those working with a therapist using the same methods. Specific guidelines are included for considering whether abstinence or moderation is more advisable.