

Motivational Interviewing

Desk Reference

Foundation of Motivational Interviewing (MI): OARS - The Basics

Motivational Interviewing is an **"A directive, client-centered counseling style for helping clients explore and resolve ambivalence about behavior change."** William R. Miller, 1991

Open-ended Questions, Affirmations, Reflective Listening, and summarizing (OARS)

OARS are the foundation of the MI skills and techniques that are used regularly and consistently, and will become a comfortable way of communicating with clients, colleagues and family alike. OARS, an acquired MI skill, will eventually become a natural interpersonal communication skill observable in all interactions.

Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions allows the client to speak more than the Intensive Supervision Officer (ISO), they allows the client to share information, in their own words, without input from their ISO. ISOs must listen to what the client is saying which will assist the ISO in asking any follow up questions. Open-ended questions while used often in an exchange in dialogue are not exclusive, closed questions (yes or no responses) and will be used as follow up tools to expand on the subject or provide clarification.

Here are some samples of open questions:

- Who is the most important person in your life? And why are important to you?
- How does being on probation affect your home/work life?
- Who are the 5 most important people in your life?
- How can I help you with ___?
- Help me understand ___?
- What was the best 5 minutes of your day?
- What was the worst 5 minutes of your day?
- How would you like things to be different?
- What are the good things about ___ and what are the less good things about it?
- When would you be most likely to ___?

- What do you think you will lose if you give up ____?
- What have you tried before to make a change?
- Who in your life support you changing this behavior?
- What do you want to do next?
- How does your (behavior) affect your family?
- "What do you know about the risks of (drinking/drugs)?"
- How will getting off probation affect your home/work life?

OARS: Affirmations

Affirmations are positive reinforcements, statements of a client's behavior that deserve recognition. When a behavior is acknowledged, the pride the client feels from the recognition, can lead them client to continue the positive behavior. Affirmations can encourage and support the client through the change process. Affirmations build self-confidence in the client's belief that he or she can change, supporting their self-efficacy. For affirmations to be meaningful it must be genuine and appropriate to the positive behavior.

Examples of affirming responses:

- I appreciate that you are willing to meet with me today.
- You are clearly a very resourceful person.
- You handled yourself really well in that situation.
- That's a good suggestion.
- Congratulation on your successful completion from drug treatment (or GED, class)
- Your counselor informed me you participate well in her group...that is nice to hear.
- If I were in your shoes, I don't know if I could have managed nearly so well.
- I've enjoyed talking with you today.
- "You are very courageous to be so revealing about this."
- "You've accomplished a lot in a short time."
- "You've tried very hard to quit."

OARS: Reflective Listening

Reflective listening is significant in building a rapport. Reflective listening is a skill that engages others with an authentic communication

exchange that builds trust, relationship and impacts the desire to change. Reflective listening seems simple, but quite tricky; it involves repeating, rephrasing and/or paraphrasing, as well as, reflecting on feeling statements, at times, reflective listening can be misconstrued as summarizing. In order to master the skills of reflective listening consistent practice is necessary. It requires really listening to what the client is saying, responding back to the client to ensure understanding of what the client just said and/or to clarify.

Using some standard phrases may help until the skill feels comfortable:

- So you feel...**
- It sounds like you...**
- You're wondering if...**
- So what I hear you saying is...**
- This is what I am hearing, please correct me if I am wrong ...**

There are three types or degrees of reflective listening that can effect and impact the rapport building process. In general, the depth should match the situation.

Examples of the three levels include:

- Repeating or rephrasing:** Listener repeats or substitutes synonyms or phrases, and stays close to what the speaker has said
- Paraphrasing:** Listener makes a restatement in which the speaker's meaning is inferred
- Reflection of feeling:** Listener emphasizes emotional aspects of communication through feeling statements.

This is the sincere and genuine form of listening. Varying the degree of reflection is effective in listening. Also, at times there are benefits to over-stating or under-stating a reflection. An overstated reflection may cause a person to back away from their position or belief. An understated reflection may help a person to explore a deeper commitment to the position or belief.

OARS: Summarizing

Summaries can be used throughout a conversation but are particularly helpful at transition points, for example, If you are in a lengthy conversation with a client, you may summarize at some point to ensure you are on track with where the client is going, then continue

with the conversation. Summarizing is also done at the ending of the conversations as well.

Example of Summaries: Begin with a statement indicating you are making a summary

- Let me see if I understand so far...**
- Here is what I've heard. Tell me if I've missed anything.**
- "What you've said is important."**
- "I value what you say."**
- "Here are the salient points."**
- "Did I hear you correctly?"**
- "We covered that well. Now let's talk about ..."**
- In summarizing**

Change Statements

During all conversations with a client pay special attention to **Change Statements**. These are statements made by the client that point towards a willingness to change. Miller and Rollnick (2002) have identified four types of change statements, all of which overlap significantly:

- Problem recognition:** "My use has gotten a little out of hand at times."
- Concern:** "If I don't stop, something bad is going to happen."
- Intent to change:** "I'm going to do something; I'm just not sure what it is yet."
- Optimism:** "I know I can get a handle on this problem."
 - 1) If the person expresses ambivalence, it is useful to include both sides in the summary statement. For example: **"On the one hand you feel... on the other hand you want to..."**
 - 2) It can be useful to include information in summary statements from other sources to offer a full picture (e.g., your own professional knowledge, treatment, research, courts, or family).
 - 3) Be clear & concise.
 - 4) End with an invitation. For example:
 - Did I miss anything?**
 - If that's accurate, what other points are there to consider?**
 - Anything you want to add or correct?**
 - 5) Depending on the client's response to your summary statement, it may lead naturally to change talk and/or show client's ambivalence.