

Strategies of Motivational Interviewing – OARS

Strategies	Description	Examples
Open-Ended Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elicits descriptive information • Requires more of a response than a simple yes or no • Encourages client to do most of the talking • Helps us avoid premature judgments • Keeps communication moving forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often start with words like “how” or “what” or “tell me about” or “describe.” • What was that like? • Tell me more about [] • What was that like? • Who was there for you? • Help me understand • How would you like things to be different? • What have you tried before to make a change?
Affirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be done sincerely • Supports and promote self-efficacy • Acknowledges the difficulties the client has experienced • Validates the client’s experience and feelings • Emphasizes past experiences that demonstrate strength and success to prevent discouragement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I appreciate how hard it must have been for you to decide to []. You took a big step. • I’ve enjoyed talking with you today, and getting to know you a bit. • I appreciate your honesty. • You handled yourself really well in that situation. • That’s a good suggestion. • You are very courageous to be so revealing about this. • You’ve accomplished a lot in a short time.
Reflective Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A way of checking rather than assuming that you <i>know</i> what is meant • Shows that you have an interest in and respect for what the client has to say • Demonstrates that you have accurately heard and understood the client • Encourages further exploration of problems and feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It sounds like you... • You’re wondering if... • So you feel... • Please say more... • Reflections are statements. Statements ending with downward inflection (as opposed to questions) tend to work better because students find it helpful to have some words to start a response. Statements are less likely than questions to evoke resistance. • Avoid “Do you mean...” and “What I hear you saying is that you....” (can appear patronizing).
Summarize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforces what has been said • Shows that you have been listening carefully • Prepares the client for transition • Allows you to be strategic in what to include to reinforce talk that is in the direction of change • Can underscore feelings of ambivalence and promote perception of discrepancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So, let me see if I got this right... • So, you’ve been saying... is that correct? • Let me see if I understand so far... • Here’s what I’ve heard. Tell me if I’ve missed anything. • Let me make sure I understand exactly what you’ve been trying to tell me... • What you said is important. I value what you say. Here are the salient points. • We covered that well. Let’s talk about...