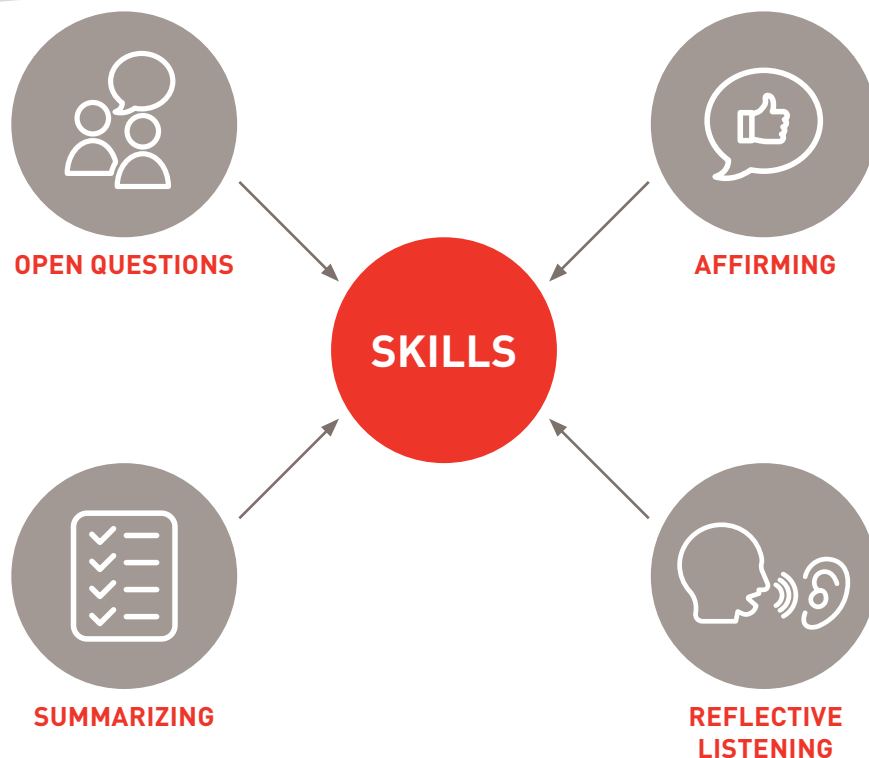


OARS: Person-Centered Communication Skills



When to use this resource:

Use this resource as a reference to help you employ OARS (open questions, affirming, reflective listening, summarizing) when talking with patients about change



Why it's important:

The core skills of OARS help you move through a motivational interviewing (MI) conversation.

Reviewing OARS¹⁻⁵

Core skill	Objectives	In practice
Open questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To invite the patient to provide a thoughtful and informative response 	<p>Ask questions that promote reflection and expansion upon a topic.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “How do you feel about your medicine routine?” <p>Instead of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Are you happy with the way you are currently taking your medicine?”
Affirming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To acknowledge something that is good about the patient To support and encourage 	<p>Focus on accentuating the positive. Respect your patient’s ability and willingness to grow and change.</p> <p>Think:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What patient strengths can you recognize? What does this tell you about your patient’s values and achievements? What are you going to say to your patient?
Reflective listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To more deeply understand the meaning behind your patient’s words To keep your patient speaking, exploring, and thinking 	<p>Simple reflections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat or rephrase what the patient has said Demonstrate understanding <p>Complex reflections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add meaning or emphasis to what has already been said Make a reasonable guess at the unspoken meaning behind your patient’s words Help move the conversation forward with statements
Summarizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To present a synopsis of what your patient has been saying during the conversation To show your patient that you have been listening To confirm that your patient understands the key elements of a plan 	<p>Provide summaries throughout the conversation.</p> <p>Summarize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review important points To provide a link between two related topics When transitioning from one topic to another to signal a shift in conversation

OARS skills are used throughout all 4 processes of MI. However, you can use these skills as part of any patient-provider conversation.

Examples of open questions^{1-4,6,7}

Open questions elicit more than a “yes/no” response and typically begin with “What”, “When”, “Where”, “Who”, “How”, “Tell me about”

What would you like us to talk about first today?

How has this affected ...?

What is at stake if you don't make a change ...?

Tell me about your experience with ...?

How do you think that ... is related to ...?

Tell me what you think about ...?

How hopeful are you that you are going to be able to ...?

What is the biggest question or concern you have about ...?

Examples of affirmations^{1-2,4,7,8}

Affirmations show appreciation or understanding of the patient's actions or behavior

It's great that you are here today and want to make a change

This shows that

This a great way to ...

You showed a lot of [self-control/willpower/restraint] by doing that

You really tried hard

It must have taken a lot of effort to ...

You're showing your commitment by ...

You're a person who remains positive, even when you encounter difficulties

Examples of reflective listening^{3-5,9,10}

Simple: Stabilizes conversation

Patient: I'm feeling very anxious

Clinician: You're feeling anxious today

Patient: I can't seem to find the time to check my ...

Clinician: It sounds like it's hard to find the time

Patient: I am unhappy with my health

Clinician: What I hear you saying is that you are worried about your health

Patient: I know smoking is bad for me; I've tried to quit before but it's too hard

Clinician: So you would like to quit but you have had a hard time doing this in the past

Patient: I don't need medication right now

Clinician: As you see it, treatment isn't necessary for your condition

Complex: Moves conversation forward

Patient: I'm feeling very anxious

Clinician: You appear to be concerned about something since we last spoke; something has happened

Patient: I can't seem to find the time to check my ...

Clinician: You're hoping to find a way to make it more of a priority

Patient: So I will do 20 sit ups or go for a 15-minute walk and then I forget I wanted to eat that chocolate bar

Clinician: So the exercise is working for you

Patient: I want to change, it's just every time I try I fail, What's the point?

Clinician: It's really important to you to make a change. You have been discouraged a lot and are looking for ways to keep hope alive

Patient: I would like to start treatment, but my dad had a problem with pills

Clinician: On the one hand you understand the benefit of the medicine and on the other hand you are worried about becoming addicted

Summarizing^{1,2,4}

Summaries are reflections that collate several points that a patient has shared with you and can also help patients to remember and reflect on the experiences that they have described. They can also be used to emphasize things that support a person's change goal.

Collecting summary: Links a series of related points and can be pulled together once a few items have been discussed

Linking summary: Reflects on what has been said and connects it to something else from a prior conversation

Transitional summary: Wraps up a topic or session by bringing together the important points or announces a shift in the discussion

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