

Motivational Interviewing is an evidence-based communication style that helps families move towards positive change.

# **Session 12**

## **Motivational Interviewing for Families**

explores another method for encouraging families to share and to motivate change.

## **THE OARS MODEL**

### **ESSENTIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

O.A.R.S. is a skills-based model of interactive techniques adapted for a family-centered approach, using motivational interviewing principles. These skill-based techniques include verbal and non-verbal responses and behaviors. Both verbal and non-verbal techniques need to be adapted to be culturally sensitive and appropriate.

The OARS Model includes four basic skills:

**O** = Open-Ended Questions

**A** = Affirmations

**R** = Reflective Listening

**S** = Summarizing

The purpose of referring to the OARS model is to:

- 1) Provide us with a **common language** when teaching communication skills.
  - 2) Provide us with a **“checklist” of skills** as we do our on-going skills self-assessment.
  - 3) Provide us with a format to help us be **intentional** when working with our families.
- Using skills intentionally helps us become more efficient and more effective in the work that we do.

<sup>1</sup> Miller, W.R., & Rollnick, S.; Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change, 2nd Edition. New York: Guilford Press, 2002

## **O = OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

As a professional, one of the most important skills (techniques) you will use with families is open-ended questions. Using this skill effectively can save a lot of time in each session. When you use open-ended questions effectively, your family is usually doing most of the talking.

**The purpose of using open-ended questions is to:**

- **Establish a safe environment, and build trusting and respectful relationships.**
- **Explore, clarify and gain an understanding of your family’s world.**
- **Learn about the family’s past experience, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.**
- **Gather information – the family does most of the talking.**
- **Help the family make an informed decision. EXAMPLES – Ask:**

1. *What has worked in the past?*
2. *How can I help you today?*

Sometimes closed questions are appropriate:

1. *Have you had a drug test?*

Avoid "Why" questions; use "How" or "What" instead:

"Why" questions can put a person on the defensive. Listen to how these questions sound.

**“Why”...**

1. Why didn’t you use condoms with a new partner?
2. Why did you wait so long to come see me?

**Better...”What” or “How”...**

- What did you do to protect yourself?  
What made it hard to come see me?

Using “What” or “How” in your questions can often bring you the information you need without asking the family to justify a decision or behavior.

**A = AFFIRMATIONS**

The skill (technique) that is often forgotten is the simple affirmation statement to a family about what they have already done, or a personal strength, or ability. An affirmation takes very little time, but it does require that you listen very carefully to what a family is telling you and find opportunities to acknowledge the positive aspects of your family’s life.

**The purpose of using affirmation statements is to:**

- **Build rapport; demonstrate empathy; affirm exploration into the family’s world.**
- **Affirm the family’s past decisions, abilities, and healthy behaviors.**
- **Build a family’s self-efficacy – an ability to believe they can be responsible for their own decisions and their lives.**

**EXAMPLES**

1. Use appropriate silence, attentive body posture and appropriate eye contact.
2. Maintain relaxed facial expression and voice tone.
3. Use statements of appreciation, understanding and positive feedback.
  - I am so glad you came into the clinic today—it isn’t always easy the first time.
  - You are already taking care of yourself, when you let someone know where you will be and when

**R= REFLECTIVE LISTENING**

The most challenging skill (technique) is to listen reflectively to your family. This skill also requires that you listen very carefully, observe your family’s body language and behavior and reflect using your own words and perceptions.

Using this skill effectively promotes the most movement in a family’s awareness. This part of your intervention can help a family make more intentional decisions and consider behavior changes.

**The purpose of using reflective listening is to:**

- **Demonstrate to the family that you are listening and trying to understand their situation.**
- **Offer the family an opportunity to “hear” their own words, feelings and behaviors reflected back to them.**
- **Reflect the family’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors.**
- **Reflect the family’s general experiences and the “in the moment” experience of the visit.**

**The following are types of reflective listening:**

1. **Simple reflection** (repeat the family’s words)
2. **Reflecting feelings** (reflect what the family might be feeling) **A format for reflecting feelings:**  
*“You’re feeling \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.”*
3. **Reflecting behavior** (state observation about the family’s behavior)  
**A format for reflecting behavior:** *“I noticed you just \_\_\_\_\_.” “What are you thinking?”-or- “What are you feeling right now?”*
4. **Amplified reflection** (rephrase the family’s words - exaggerated)
5. **Double-sided reflection** (family’s words + note ambivalence – and point out discrepancy)
6. **Shifting focus** (going back to something else or changing the direction)
7. **Rolling with ambivalence** (accept the family’s perception)
8. **Reframing** (invite the family to examine their perception in a new way)

**S = SUMMARIZING**

Summarizing, which may also include paraphrasing, is the skill that will help the professional and the family move through a session to transitions & closure. Summarizing can be demonstrated in three (3) variations:

**1. A collective summary**—*“So let’s go over what we have talked about so far.”*

**2. A linking summary**—*“A minute ago you said you wanted to talk to \_\_\_\_\_. Maybe now we can talk about how you might try ....”*

**3. A transitional summary**—*“So you will make an appointment today before you leave and maybe we will see you again soon.”*

Summarizing skills keep you and your family on the same page throughout your session. In addition, summarizing the session will help you close your session with the family’s plan of action.

**O.A.R.S. +****R = Roll with Ambivalence**

When you sense that signs of an argument are present, stop the conversation and indicate that the intent is not to take sides but that you are seeking understanding of his/her point of view. Argument, confrontation, lectures, and fear tactics lead to the family’s resistance. This can be perceived by the family as judging and typically breeds defensiveness.

Ambivalence is behavior that occurs when two people have their own point of view. Ambivalence occurs when the professional is moving the family ahead too quickly, or the professional has failed to understand something that is very important to the family. When ambivalence appears, it is time to do something different.

If your family is ambivalent, change your strategy. Strive for collaboration by:

- Asking **open-ended questions** to clarify.

*Can you tell me more about what happens when you try to stop drinking?*

- **Summarizing** what you have heard from the family—Are you hearing correctly?

*So it sounds like you are more likely to drink when you encounter someone from your past that you often spent time drinking with?*

- **Reflective listening** to reframe a family’s statement and offer a positive perspective on what the family has already done.

*I know you said you are really frustrated and don’t know what to do. But you are talking with me about it and it seems like you want to do something different.*

- **Reflective listening** to turn the question back to the family. The family has the solution.

*As we talk about changing your social community it seems like there might be more going on ... what am I missing?*

**D = Develop Discrepancy (Disconnect)**

The focus of MI is on developing discrepancy (disconnect) between the family’s behavior and broader goals and values. Most often people are motivated to change when they hear it from themselves rather than from someone else. Guide the discussion to allow the family to share personal values/beliefs regarding what is important for them and their future goals. Listen closely for statements about life, health, financial status, living situation and any other personal considerations.





