
MICROSKILLS FOR MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

The counselling skills used in motivational interviewing will likely be familiar to you. In motivational interviewing, the direction of the conversation is important to keep in mind, and always, the spirit of MI is key to the conversation.

Open Questions

Open questions encourage the person to present their own perspective, thoughts, or understanding.

- They are difficult to answer with just a 'yes' or 'no'
- They help avoid the question-answer trap of consultations
- They can create forward momentum in a conversation
- They help with rapport and engagement by allowing the person to do most of the talking

They often start with the words: How?, What?, Why?, or Tell me about...

See the information sheet "Open Questions" for more information

Affirming Statements

Affirming statements recognise a person's strengths, positive actions, skills or achievements.

It is important that they are genuine. Affirming statements help to strengthen the relationship with the person.

Reflections

Reflections are statements in response to what a person is telling you that make a hypothesis about meaning. They can be as simple as restating what the person says, or can be more complex and express the underlying emotion or meaning in what a person is saying. Complex reflections, in particular, express empathy. (See the text box for more information.)

Summaries

Summaries let the person know that you have heard and understood what they are telling you.

- They provide an opportunity to highlight strengths and arguments in the direction of change
- They can help you to move on in the discussion and redirect conversations in a helpful way

REFLECTING ON REFLECTIONS

...SIMPLE or COMPLEX?

Simple reflections are very useful in demonstrating listening, but complex reflections help to move a conversation forward. If a conversation feels circular, consider using more complex reflections.

SIMPLE

- **Repeating** - simply repeating something the person has said
- **Rephrasing** - stays close to what the person said, but substitutes synonyms or slightly rephrases
- **Paraphrasing** - infers meaning in what was said and reflects this back in new words
- **Reflection of feeling** - emphasises emotional dimension through feeling statements, metaphor, etc

COMPLEX