

Examples of Directional OARS

Open Questions are used to evoke change talk by allowing our clients to open up more by seeking their perspective of change. They structure the conversation to deepen the frequency and momentum of change talk. Followed up with one or more reflections of change talk.

- Tell me about...
- What is it like for you...?
- How do you feel about...?
- Describe...
- What do you like about...?
- What do you think...?
- What can you tell me about...?
- Explain...
- What would you like to know about...?
- What do you need to do...?
- Give me some examples...
- Fill me in...
- What are some good things about... (change)?
- What are some not-so-good things about... (not changing)?
- What are the most important reasons to you

Affirmations are used to genuinely acknowledge an individual's strengths, values, behaviors, and should occur 1-2 times per interaction. Specific and genuine affirmations are more impactful than simple compliments or non-specific praise.

- You appreciate/value...
- You've really demonstrated (strength)... by...
- ...show you are really sticking with...
- You've accomplished...
- You've really been able to...
- Your willingness to... shows that you are committed to this!
- It is remarkable that...
- You've really seen success in/by...

Reflections are statements that repeat specific pieces of what an individual has said (simple) or what they may have meant but not explicitly said (complex). They do not indicate agreement; instead, they are used to demonstrate active listening and intent to connect.

- I hear that...
- Looks like...
- You really care about...
- You feel that...
- For you, ...
- You have thoughts about...
- A possibility you see is...
- You would really like to...
- One the one hand... (sustain talk), but on the other hand... (change talk)
- ...is a concern of yours.
- It seems important for you...
- You believe...
- It makes you feel... when...
- You are willing to...
- This really connects with your strength/value...
- Seems like

Summaries are statements that are linked together that repeat specific pieces of what an individual has said (usually change talk) and reinforces material that has been discussed. They summarize major discussion points and often test the waters for moving into a new phase through either open questions or the use of scaling questions (readiness ruler).

- Today we discussed...
- We have talked about a couple of things today, specifically...
- You indicated...
- What we have covered today...
- You are thinking about changing..., and we discussed...
- Your goal is to...
- From our conversation, it sounds like you are willing to...
- In summary, ...
- During our conversation about... you think it would work for you to...
- Tell me about your plan of action to...
- Let me make sure I have got this right... (reflect a few things heard)

Readiness Ruler: A tool consisting of closed questions that seek to quantify the Importance, Confidence, Willingness, and Readiness to change. These help providers assess for their clients' stages of change and can inform spontaneous adjustments to the conversation. Typically, they are asked in a manner such as, "On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least important and 10 being the most important, how important is it for you to make this change?"