

Motivational Interviewing and Behaviour Change: **Skills Module**

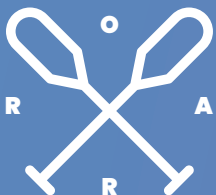


Motivational Interviewing can be used to support youth in changing their behaviour around vaping. A key theme of motivational interviewing approach is that “people are the best experts of their own lives” and is guided by the “spirit” of partnership, acceptance, compassion and evocation. It isn’t a technique or something that “you do” to someone but a way to arrange conversations in order to support behaviour change and address ambivalence.

Changing behaviour is hard. Especially behaviours that involve the use of addictive chemicals. Wanting to change behaviour and taking steps to do so isn’t an all or nothing experience. Youth need guidance and support along the journey in which they are the driver.

As adults, we need to fight the righting reflex and avoid directing and judgement. Our job is to listen and guide into the direction in which the young person wishes to go.

To learn more about a motivational approach, please review the following skills and examples below. Want to learn more? Check out our MI Worksheet or visit motivationalinterviewing.org.



Increase your collaborative skills by utilizing OARS Skills in your discussions with youth.

OARS Skills

Open Ended Questions, **A**ffirmations, **R**eflections, and **S**ummaries

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS:

Open ended questions are types of questions that evoke thoughts, feelings, and emotions. They avoid the pitfalls of getting single word answers and help you to better understand the meaning behind their behaviours and their motivations for change. These questions are designed to understand the “what” of the behaviours, rather than the “why”. Exploring “why” often brings out defensiveness and justifications. Exploring the “what” gives you the context and details needed to understand their perspectives. Be cautious when the conversations become too one sided, as you don’t want to feel like it’s an interrogation.

Here are some examples of open-ended questions to understand youth vaping:

- What do you like about vaping?
- How is vaping helping/harming you?
- How do you feel about stopping (vaping)?
- What do you think this (behaviour) will look like in 3 years?

AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations are statements that recognize youth’s strengths and acknowledge behaviors that lead in the direction of positive change, no matter how large or small. Affirmations help to build confidence in one’s ability to change. To be effective, affirmations must be honest and genuine.

Examples of affirmations:

- It’s great to hear that you’re thinking about...
- I appreciate how hard you’ve worked to...
- I’ve enjoyed talking with you today.
- You have some really great ideas.

REFLECTIVE LISTENING

Reflective listening is the primary skill used to show empathy, interest and understanding. Reflective listening will help to clarify what the youth is thinking, manage conflict, and explore reasons for change. Reflective listening begins with an interest in what the youth has to say, and a desire to truly understand how the youth thinks and feels. In practice, this could be repeating or rephrasing some important points that have been shared, or paraphrasing an extended dialogue to help highlight a main point/theme/emotion.

Examples of reflective listening phrase shortcuts could be:

- So you feel...
- It sounds like...
- You’re wondering if...

SUMMARIES

Summaries are parts of reflective listening. Using good summaries in your interactions are helpful during transition points, changing topics or when the encounter is coming to an end. Summaries help to confirm that the speaker and listener are clear on their communication and can be valuable in planning the next steps in the change process. A good time to use summaries are when youth share large amounts of information, and you want to highlight the important points. This is especially true if they are speaking about change talk.

Examples of Summaries:

- Let me see if I understand fully what you’re looking for. It seems...
- It sounds like you know that vaping is bad for you, but you’re worried your friends won’t ask you to hang out anymore if you stop vaping with them, and you don’t want to miss out.

RECOGNIZING AND REINFORCING CHANGE TALK

Change talk and sustain talk reflect two sides of a person's ambivalence about changing. Interactions should help to guide youth away from sustain talk and toward change talk, listening especially for statements that show commitments and efforts for change.

- **Change talk**
 - Change talk in general refers to statements about desire, ability, reasons and need for change.
- **Sustain talk**
 - Sustain talk is the opposite of change talk. Sustain talk can be used to share the desire to stay as they are, worries about being able to change, and reasons not to change.

CHANGE TALK	SUSTAIN TALK
I really hate vaping because of the bad example I am setting for my younger siblings.	I love to vape; I've met so many of my friends by vaping.
I have started an exercise program, and things are going well.	But I know I will go back to my old ways once the cold weather comes.
My vaping is costing me a fortune.	Vaping helps me manage my stress.

By reflecting change talk—and moving away from reflecting sustain talk—it keeps the momentum of the conversation toward enhancing motivation for change.

Working to support youth in changing behaviours can be a valuable experience. As you work with the skills described above, be mindful of the **“Spirit of Motivational Interviewing”**. Remember that this approach is a partnership between you and the youth you are supporting, and the process is meant to be collaborative. Your goal is to understand and put aside the “righting reflex”. You're not present to solve all the issues or to give advice. Instead, your role is to accept them from where they are coming from, what they are bringing with them, and by doing your best to evoke their thoughts, feelings, and reasons for change in a compassionate manner. This work is crucial for what comes next- meaningful change!