

# STRATEGIES OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

## Use Your OARS!

O pen-ended Questions

A ffirmations

R eflective Listening

S ummarizing



**O**pen-ended questions - to allow the person to explore and discuss items she or he is prepared to discuss. Open-ended questions usually start with words like When, How, What, Who (but not Why, since a Why question often sets up some fear of judgment in the person). These open-ended questions are much more likely to elicit responses from the person rather than unwillingness to talk. Examples to use when you have a person unwilling to discuss “the problem” directly (generally indicating the person is in Precontemplation):

- \* “How are things going for you and your family?”
- \* “What do you think are the things I’m here to talk about?”
- \* “When did you first notice things getting like this?”
- \* “Who have you discussed this with before?”
- \* “What have you done on your own about these things?”
- \* “How would you describe your ability to care for your children?”
- \* “I’m concerned about the bruises on your children. What do you think about this problem?”



**Avoid questions which elicit a “yes” or “no” response, or which are intended to get a specific answer, such as “How many beers a day do you drink?”**

**Affirmation** - to build self-efficacy, and to develop and sense of safety for the person that the helper is not blaming or judging.

Examples:

- \* "I appreciate how hard it is for you to handle all those problems you've been telling me about."
- \* "This must be very difficult for you."
- \* "It takes a lot of strength to admit what you just did."
- \* "Great idea!"
- \* "You've described yourself as strong-willed, and that's a real strength when it comes to taking care of things."
- \* "Sure."
- \* "That's wonderful, how you've taken care of your children in spite of lots of violence around here."



**Reflective Listening** - to allow the person to hear their own words, to show understanding to the person, and to help the person move further into the ambivalence. This is the most important of the strategies - you can't do Motivational Interviewing if you can't do Reflective Listening.



Levels of reflection are:

1. Repeating: The simplest reflection simply repeats an element of what the speaker has said.
2. Rephrasing: Here the helper stays close to what the speaker said, but substitutes synonyms or slightly rephrases what was offered.
3. Paraphrasing: This is a more major restatement in which the listener infers the meaning in what was said and reflects this back in new words. This adds to and extends what was actually said.
4. Reflection of feeling. Often regarded as the deepest form of reflection, this is a paraphrase that emphasizes the emotional dimension through feeling statements, metaphor, etc.

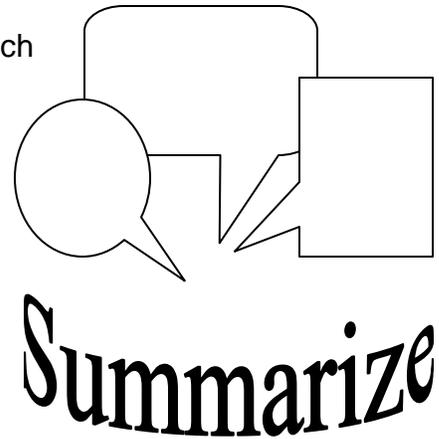
Here's an example of a person's statement: "My life just doesn't seem worth living any more. I'm a lousy mother. I can't control my kids, so I hit them when I don't want to. Then I go out and get high for a couple days. Nothing good ever happens to me. Everything I try to do turns rotten. Sometimes I wonder whether it's worth it."

Simple repetition: "It seems like nothing good ever happens. Sometimes you wonder if it's worth it."

Partial rephrasing: "Things just aren't going very well. Nothing you do seems to work, causing you to then use drugs more than you'd like."

Whole paraphrase, adding meaning: "Things look pretty hopeless, you see yourself as a failure because you hit your kids, and you can't see things ever getting any better. Things look very bleak right now, maybe so bleak that you think about ending it all".

**Summarizing** - to help the person connect things which may seem unrelated, to use as a check with the person, and to transition from one thing to another. A summary statement is used throughout the interview to capture the main points made by the person, as a way to transition to another area, and at critical times to transition into another phase of the change process. For example, when the helper believes the person is ready to look at options (Determination stage), a summary of all the reasons given by the person is provided, with an open-ended question added, such as “How do you think you might want to address that?”



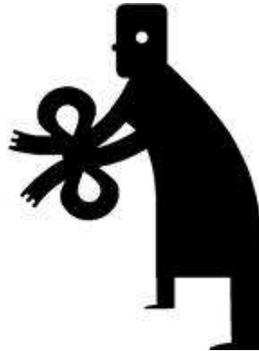
This is an important time for a helper to be sure to address the harmful behavior which must be changed.

Here's an example: A parent is not providing adequate meals and the children are often hungry coming to child care and school. The summary should include the point that this is too unsafe to let it continue. It could sound something like this:

“You’ve told me you think your children are eating as much as you, and that should be enough. I’m very worried, though, about how they tell their teacher and child care staff about always being hungry; and they look so thin. What other choices do you think you have in order help them get the nutrition they need?”

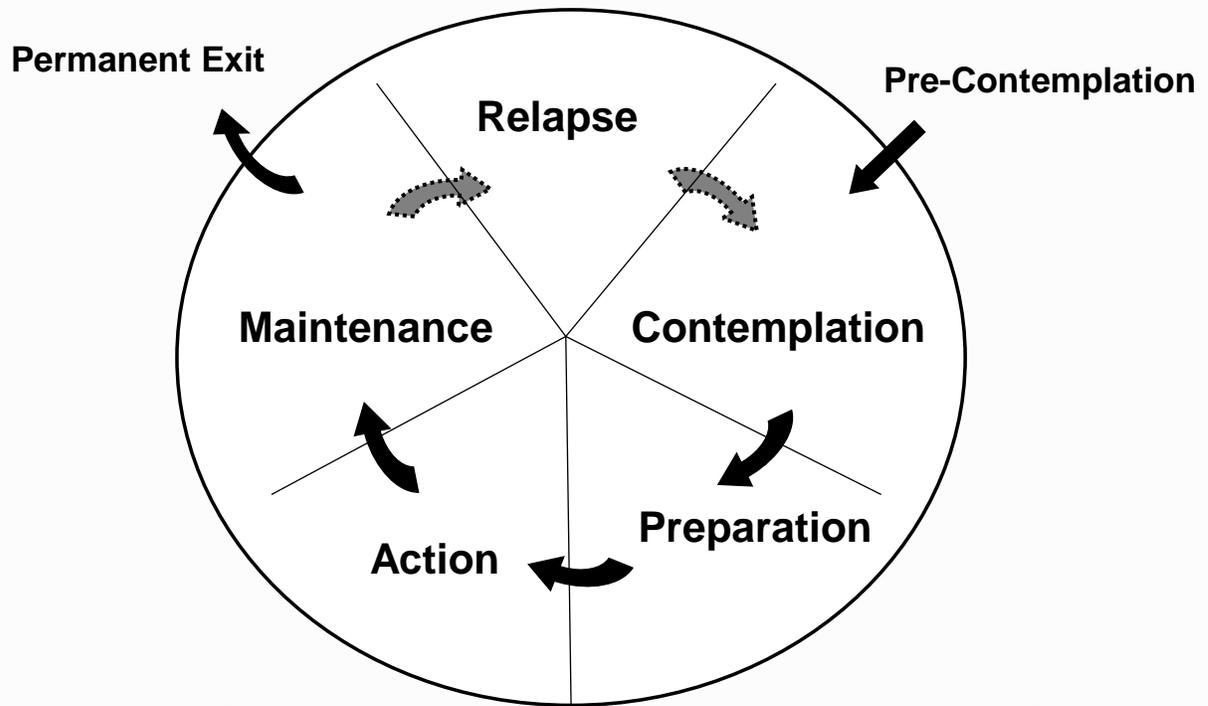
# "Traps to Avoid"

(from William Miller, Motivational Interviewing)



<b>The question-answer trap</b>	<u>Instead Use</u> : open-ended questions and reflective listening
<b>The confrontational/denial trap</b>	<u>Instead Use</u> : reflective listening and eliciting self-motivational statements
<b>The expert trap</b>	<u>Instead Give</u> : the individual the opportunity to explore and resolve the uncertainty about change for themselves.
<b>The labeling trap</b>	<u>Instead Give</u> : reflection and reframing. "It doesn't matter what we call a problem, what matters is how drug/alcohol use harms you and what, if anything, you want to do about it."
<b>The premature focus trap</b>	<u>Instead start</u> with family's' concerns
<b>The blaming trap</b>	<u>Instead</u> , remember is not about who is at fault, but rather about what's troubling the family and what they want to do about it.

# Stages of Change



Prochaska & DiClemente