

Core Skills: OARS+E

Health coaches can use particular skills to facilitate, guide, and deepen motivational conversations with clients. These skills are useful in embodying the spirit of partnership, acceptance, compassion, and evocation. In addition, they help us navigate our way through the four processes of engaging, focusing, evoking, and planning. These skills are briefly described below:

Open questions (O): Questions that offer a client broad latitude and choice in how to respond; open questions invite self-exploration and discovery on the part of the individual

Affirmations (A): Statements that accentuate and acknowledge the positive things about a person, such as his or her strengths and efforts; affirmations help build confidence

Reflective statements (R): Statements that rephrase or make a reasonable guess about the meaning of what the client has said; reflective statements help to clarify and deepen the conversation

Summaries (S): A collection of reflective and sometimes observational statements that draw together different aspects of what a person has said; summaries typically focus on client statements related to “change talk”

Exchanging information (E): A two-way conversational process for offering information, options, or suggestions as a health coach; exchanging information includes asking permission and clarifying what input is needed, providing input in small amounts, and asking for the client’s response

Similar to learning to play a musical instrument, developing competence in using the core skills of MI requires a commitment to ongoing practice and receiving accurate feedback and coaching. To increase proficiency in using these skills, you might consider receiving coaching and supervision from a seasoned MI practitioner, engaging in a peer learning circle, observing professional video recordings, reading books and articles, utilizing on-site and online training opportunities, and submitting recorded samples of your own work for coding and feedback.