Motivational Interviewing Summaries

Summaries can be used for multiple purposes:

• Highlight important aspects of the discussion.
• Shift the direction of conversations that have become “stuck”.
• Highlight both sides of an individual’s ambivalence about change.
• Communicate interest and understanding of an individual’s perspective.

The structure of the summary is straightforward:

• Announce that you are about to summarize.
• Include both sides of the ambivalence about changing.
• End with any change talk heard.
• Invite client to correct anything missed.

Example:

“Let me stop and summarize what we’ve just talked about. You’re not sure that you want to be here today and you really only came because your partner insisted on it. At the same time, you’ve had some nagging thoughts of your own about what’s been happening, including how much you’ve been using recently, the change in your physical health and your missed work. Did I miss anything? I’m wondering what you make of all those things.”