

# Interaction Techniques in MI



The basic approach to interactions between the healthcare practitioner and client in Motivational Interviewing (MI) is captured by the acronym OARS:

**O**pen-ended Questions

**A**ffirmations

**R**eflective Listening

**S**ummaries

## Open-ended Questions:

Are questions that the client cannot answer with a simple “yes”, “no” or “five times last week”. Most healthcare practitioners begin treatment sessions with open-ended questions:

**“What brings you here today?”**

**“Tell me about what has been happening since we met last?”**

**“So what makes you feel that it might be time for a change?”**

Open-ended questions help the client explore change and evaluate for his/herself what are the pro’s and con’s to change.

## Affirmations:

Affirming means to actively listen for the client’s strengths, values, aspirations, and positive qualities and then to reflect those back to the client.

**Example:** a client discusses many previous efforts to change a particular behavior from the position of feeling like a failure. The interviewer (healthcare practitioner) reframes the comment to affirm the client’s strengths:

**“What I am hearing is that it is very important to you [the client] to change this behavior. You have made numerous efforts over a long period of time. It seems that you have not found the way that works for you.”**