

## OARS Skills Practice Worksheet

✦ *A guided exercise for strengthening MI communication skills*

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### Overview: Using OARS in Peer Conversations

OARS is a **core set of Motivational Interviewing (MI) skills** that helps facilitators guide peer support conversations in a non-directive and supportive way. Practicing these techniques improves your ability to **engage peers, explore ambivalence, and reinforce motivation for change.**

- ✓ **Open-Ended Questions** – Encourage deeper exploration.
- ✓ **Affirmations** – Recognize strengths and efforts.
- ✓ **Reflective Listening** – Demonstrate understanding and build trust.
- ✓ **Summaries** – Reinforce key points and keep the conversation focused.

💡 **Key Insight:** The more you practice using OARS, the more naturally these techniques will become part of your peer support conversations.

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### Practice Exercise: OARS in Action

#### Step 1: Identifying OARS Responses

Below are peer statements. **Write an MI-aligned response** using each OARS skill.

##### Scenario 1: The peer is uncertain about change.

◆ *Peer:* "I know I should probably quit smoking, but it's the only thing that helps me manage stress."

- **(O) Open-ended question:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **(A) Affirmation:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **(R) Reflective listening:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **(S) Summary:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Scenario 2: The peer expresses change talk.**

◆ *Peer:* "I think I could cut back on drinking if I had a solid support system."

- **(O) Open-ended question:**

\_\_\_\_\_

- **(A) Affirmation:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **(R) Reflective listening:**

\_\_\_\_\_

- **(S) Summary:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Scenario 3: The peer expresses sustain talk.**

◆ *Peer:* "I've always done things this way, and I don't think I can change."

- **(O) Open-ended question:**

\_\_\_\_\_

- **(A) Affirmation:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **(R) Reflective listening:**

\_\_\_\_\_

- **(S) Summary:** \_\_\_\_\_

💡 **Pro Tip:** If a peer is unsure about change, focus on engagement and reflection—avoid pushing solutions.

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**Step 2: Applying OARS in Real Conversations**

✓ Think of a recent peer support conversation. Write a short summary of what was discussed.

✓ Using the OARS framework, **rewrite how you could have responded** using Open-Ended Questions, Affirmations, Reflective Listening, and Summaries.

✓ Compare how the conversation might have been different using MI techniques.

💡 **Pro Tip:** Reviewing past conversations helps identify areas where MI can strengthen engagement and motivation.

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**Quick OARS Cheat Sheet**

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✓ **Open-Ended Question Example:** "What's on your mind today?"

✓ **Affirmation Example:** "You've already taken an important step by thinking about change."

✓ **Reflective Listening Example:** "It sounds like you're feeling unsure about quitting, but part of you is considering it."

✓ **Summary Example:** "So far, you've shared that smoking helps with stress, but you also recognize that quitting could be beneficial. Let's explore that more."

 **Practice using OARS daily to strengthen your MI communication skills!**