A Brief Intervention is a brief dialogue with a patient that explores the consequences of substance use and aims to strengthen the patient’s own motivation and commitment to positive behavior change. An effective Brief Intervention uses patient-centered motivational interviewing skills. Attempt to get your patient to start thinking about change and remember to focus on what matters to that individual.

### Steps in the Conversation

1. **Ask** permission to discuss screening results.
2. **Build** rapport and establish a collaborative approach to engaging with the patient.
3. **Provide Feedback** regarding the risks of substance use and connect to current health concerns.
4. **Build motivation** of the patient towards readiness to positive behavior change.
5. **Negotiate** a plan with the patient, having identified specific action steps and follow-up.

### Motivational Interviewing Skills

**Open-ended questions** encourage the individual to talk, aid in defining the problem, and reveal realistic opportunities for behavior change. Open-ended questions often begin with *How...?*, *What...?*, or *Tell me...*

- “What are some reasons why you drink?”
- “How do you feel about smoking marijuana?”

**Affirmations** are statements that emphasize past and present strengths. These are useful in building confidence and can reinforce changes that are under the individual’s control.

- “It must be very difficult to think about which friends will help you stay clean.”
- “It sounds like you have a real interest in staying healthy.”

**Reflection** is listening to what people say and to what they mean. Listen carefully to accurately understand what is being said and to create an environment of non-judgment so that individual feels comfortable being honest.

- “You wonder if your friends will be there if you cut back on the partying...”
- “What you are saying is that you are nervous about getting caught.”

**Summarization** is a way to avoid miscommunication. Summarize what has been agreed to during the conversation, so that you are both clear on the next steps.

- “Let me summarize what we have just discussed.”
- “So here are the steps that you said you would do.”