

Conducting the Brief Intervention

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

- O** **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?”
- A** **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.”
- R** **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 you your friends will be there if you cut back on the partying...”*
“What you are saying is that you are nervous about getting caught.”
- S** **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.”