

## Open-Ended Questions

- Open questions gather broad descriptive information and facilitate dialogue
- Require more of a response than a simple yes or no
- Often start with words like “how” or “what” or “tell me about” or “describe”
- Examples:
  - “Tell me about. . .”
  - “What concerns you most about. . .?”
  - “What do you make of this?”
  - “What ideas do you have about things that might work for you?”
  - “How are you feeling about everything?”
  - “How’s the school year going for you?”

## Affirmations

- Acknowledges the difficulties the client has experienced
- Validates the client’s experience and feelings; supports and promotes self-efficacy
- Emphasizes past experiences that demonstrate strength and success to prevent discouragement
- Must be done sincerely
- Examples:
  - “I appreciate you taking the step to come in today”
  - “You’ve done a nice job handling the stress already”
  - “You are a strong-willed person. You know what you want and find ways to get it.”
  - “That’s a good suggestion”

## Reflective Listening

- One of the most important and challenging skills. This is not just repeating what a person said.
- It includes an interest in what the person has to say and a desire to truly understand how the person sees things.
- Hypothesis testing: reflections allow the client to consider different possible meanings of what they say.
  - What you think a person means may not be what they actually mean.
  - It is acceptable to get the meaning of what the client says wrong as they will clarify what they meant. Thus, there is no such thing as wrong reflection.
- Examples:
  - Client statement: *“But I can’t quit drinking. I mean, all of my friends drink!”*
    - **Simple reflection:** Repeating problem back to the client
      - Counselor: *“Quitting drinking seems nearly impossible because you spend so much time with others who drink.”*
      - Client: *“Right, although maybe I shouldn’t.”*
    - **Amplified reflection:** Increasing the intensity of what client is saying
      - Counselor: *“So you really can’t stop drinking because then you’d be too different to fit in with your friends.”*
      - Client: *“Well, that would make me different from them, although they might not really care as long as I didn’t try to get them to quit.”*
    - **Double sided reflection:** Shows client their ambivalence
      - Counselor: *“You can’t imagine being with your friends without drinking, and yet at the same time you’re worried about how your drinking may be affecting you.”*
      - Client: *“Yeah. I guess I have mixed feelings.”*
    - **Reflection of feeling:** Gets at deeper level; emotional content of statement
      - Counselor: *“You’re scared you’d lose your friends if you quit drinking.”*
      - Client: *“Yes! I don’t know how they’d treat me if I stopped drinking.”*

## Summaries

- Summaries reinforce what has been said, show that you have been listening carefully, and prepare the client to move on to a new topic.
- Summaries can link together client’s feelings of ambivalence and promote perception of discrepancy.
- In groups, summaries can help highlight the change talk discussed by multiple participants.