

OARS Model: Essential Communication Skills for TPP Projects

OARS is a skills-based, participant-centered model of interactive techniques. These skills include verbal and non-verbal responses and behaviors that need to be culturally sensitive and appropriate. Using these skills will help you establish and maintain rapport with a youth participant, assess the participant's needs, and personalize your education responses.



OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- Establish a safe environment and help to build rapport and a trusting and respectful professional relationship.
- Explore, clarify, and gain an understanding of the participant's world.
- Learn about the participant's experiences, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and hopes for the future.

You may ask:

- ✓ *What... brings you here today?*
- ✓ *Where... will you get the support you need?*
- ✓ *Who... have you talked to about ways to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?*
- ✓ *How... have you made decisions before about your reproductive health?*
- ✓ *Tell me more about...?*



AFFIRMING

- Build rapport, demonstrate empathy, and affirm the participant's strengths and abilities.
- Build on the participant's level of self-efficacy and share a belief that they can be responsible for their own decisions and life choices.

You may ask:

- ✓ *It's great that you are here today. It's not always easy...*
- ✓ *It sounds like you've been really thoughtful about your decision.*
- ✓ *You're really trying hard to...*
- ✓ *It seems like you are really good at...*

R

REFLECTIVE LISTENING

- Listen to the participant to help you gain a deeper understanding of their life.
- Listen, observe, and share (reflect on) your own perceptions of what the participant shares.
- Reflect on the words that they use — *You say you really don't want to be pregnant right now.*
- Reflect on behavior and feelings — *You have tears in your eyes and you sound sad...*
- The participant gains an opportunity to “hear” your experience of what was shared reflected back to them.

You can reflect words, emotions, and/or behaviors:

(Reflecting words) *Some of what I heard you say...*

(Reflecting emotions) *You seem [to be feeling]...*

- ✓ *sad*
- ✓ *frustrated*
- ✓ *excited*
- ✓ *angry*

(Reflecting behavior) *I noticed...*

- ✓ *tears in your eyes...*
- ✓ *your voice sounds shaky...*
- ✓ *you smiled when you said that...*

S

SUMMARIZING

- Help move the conversation from the beginning, through the middle, to closing.
- Check that you are understanding the participant's goals and preferences.
- Confirm that the participant has an understanding of the key elements of a plan.

Summarizing can be demonstrated in three ways:

- ✓ A collective summary — *So let's go over what we have talked about so far.*
- ✓ A linking summary — *A minute ago you said you wanted to talk to your boyfriend/girlfriend... Would you like to talk more about how you might try?*
- ✓ A transitional summary to close — *So you've just described your plan. What other questions do you have before you leave today?*