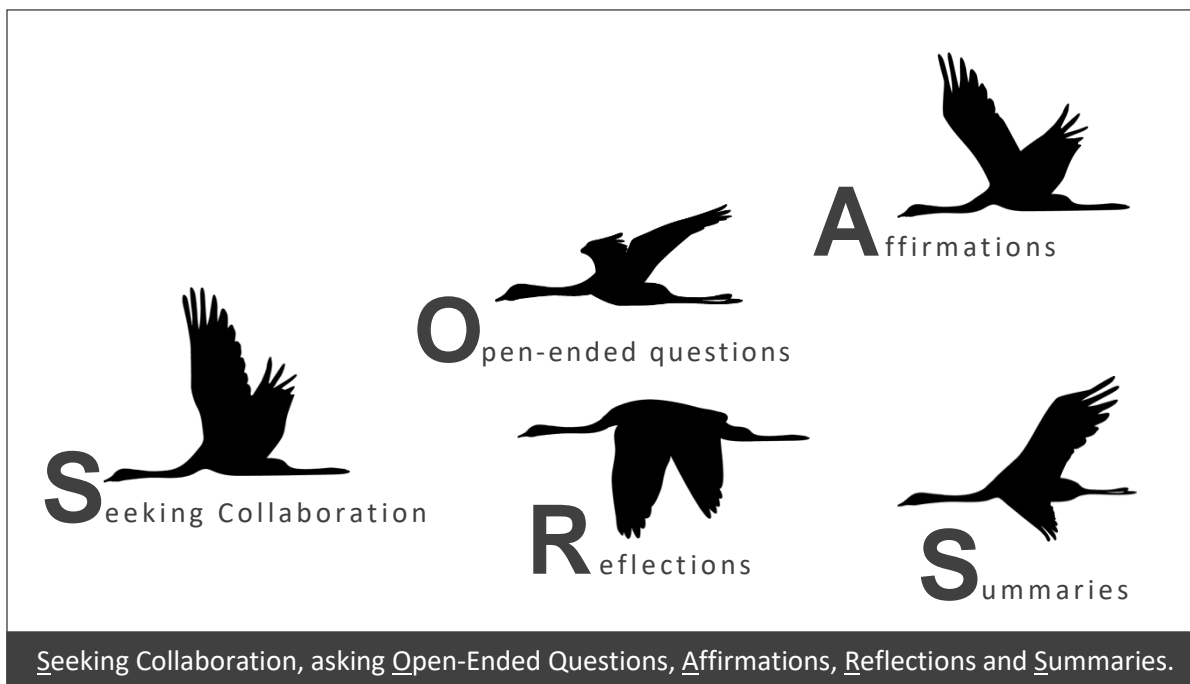


MiiWrap Relational Skills SOARS

Training Guides



The MiiWrap Relational skills are communication strategies to build, strengthen and sustain Engagement and the Collaborative Partnership. First, to demonstrate the nature of the partnership, you **Seek Collaboration** by sharing control of the conversation and process. You use **Open-Ended Questions** to get the youth and families talking so that you they share control of the conversational content and direction, use **Affirmations** to acknowledge strengths and accomplishments in order to strengthen Self-Efficacy, **Reflections** to show general interest and understanding and guide the conversation indirectly, and **Summaries** to ensure understanding and allow transition to new topics. The following Training worksheets provide some general information, guidance and examples of each of the relational skills.



What it is

Seeking Collaboration is an overt effort to share power, support mutual active partnership between staff and the youth and family and support the overall autonomy of the youth and family. Seeking collaboration conveys a respect for the expertise and knowledge of the youth and family and their autonomy to select their own goals and choose the options that will work best for them.

Why do we do it

Change comes from within the youth and family. A Collaborative Partnership recognizes the responsibility of the staff to guide and the youth and family to share their expertise about themselves and choose their own goals and options. MiiWrap is not a way of making people change but is a way of activating their own motivation and resources for change.

What makes it work

Seeking Collaboration invites the family into the partnership. Many of the people who enter into MiiWrap will have already experienced multiple expert service relationships. Seeking Collaboration overtly and consistently counters these expectations. Truly Seeking Collaboration shows acceptance of the person. Acceptance involves honoring and respecting each person's strengths, wisdom about themselves and what works for them, their autonomy and their right and capacity for self-direction. Seeking Collaboration reinforces acceptance and autonomy and supports engagement, self-efficacy and purposeful transition.

How do we do it

Seeking Collaboration occurs when staff explicitly attempt to share responsibility and power and when they acknowledge the expertise and autonomy of the youth and family. When done well Seeking Collaboration genuinely seeks and listens to the ideas and feedback from the youth and family, provides pauses for reflection and response, acknowledges their strengths, knowledge and autonomy.

- It occurs when the staff genuinely seek consensus with the family regarding the tasks, goals and direction for sessions and activities.
- Seeking Collaboration occurs when staff ask permission before giving information and sharing experiences
- Seeking Collaboration occurs when staff ask and actively listen to the family's comments on information provided
- Seeking Collaboration occurs when staff genuinely acknowledge the family's autonomy to choose their own goals and options

Some examples of Seeking Collaboration include:

- Jointly planning the content and approach to interactions and activities
- Genuinely seeking consensus on needs, tasks, goals and team membership
- Asking permission to give information or share experiences before providing them
- Asking for feedback on information using reflective listening to elicit fuller feedback
- To debrief the results and process of an activity with a genuine interest in their input and ways to improve the process
- To acknowledge and honor the autonomy of the family to make their own choice

What do we need to attend to?

- Youth and families may not expect a partnership approach and may be resistant to it in the beginning. When this occurs, it is important to talk through the rationales and advantages of this shared approach.
- Is the family speaking up, doing much of the talking and making suggestions compared to just going with your flow?
- Are we sharing the work of deciding on direction and options

Strong examples

- Last time we met we decided to seek to better understand Jake's drinking and discussed the reasons and process for a behavior exploration. What are your thoughts on how we should do that?
- I have some information from the child welfare worker on her expectations and perceptions of your progress and I wonder if I might discuss this with you
- I have had some experiences with strategies for getting a child to do his chores and keep his room clean. Would you be interested in hearing these options?
- You've shared a lot of information about this issue. Would it be ok if I summarized what I have heard back to you to see if I got it right?

Weaker examples

- Today we are going to do a behavior exploration of Jake's drinking. First, I need to know
- The child welfare worker provided me with her expectations and perceptions of your progress, and I need to tell you what she expects
- The evaluation from school has some recommendations for you to be successful at school let me tell you what you need to do?
- I got my child to clean his room by using a star chart. He got a star for every day he cleaned his room and another for doing a chore. If he got 10 stars, we had movie night with popcorn and candy on Saturday night. I think that would work for you too.
- You told me you want Alice to do well at school, but you are not getting her to do her homework can you tell me about that?



What it is

Open-ended questions are questions that encourage the person to reply with broad latitude and choice in how to respond. These questions are more than a yes or no or a limited range response.

Why do we do it

Open ended questions invite the youth and family to reflect and elaborate. The goal is to get the person to talk more and provide a wider range of responses. Open ended questions allow us to hear the person's point of view about a topic. MiiWrap uses open-ended questions to encourage the person to expand on their view of their situation and provide us with more information to achieve accurate empathy. By using open-ended questions, you guide the youth or family to do most of the talking. Open ended questions make the conversation more collaborative by giving the youth and family more control over both the content and direction of the conversation. This helps you discover more information and gain a better understanding of their perception of the issue. In brief, by using open-ended questions, you give the person a wide latitude for discussing his or her life circumstances as a partner in the conversation.

What makes it work

Open-Ended Questions build and strengthen engagement and reduce Discord. By encouraging people to discuss the things that are important to them and pairing these questions with nonjudgmental reflective listening and Affirmations, you demonstrate your genuine curiosity and acceptance. This communicates authentic interest and an expectation and an opportunity for people to self-disclose. High quality open-ended questions move the conversation in the direction of change talk. In MiiWrap gathering information is not the most important function of questions. In the engagement and focusing processes open ended questions help you understand the person's internal frame of reference, strengthening the Collaborative Partnership and finding a clear direction. Open ended questions also play a key role in evoking motivation and planning a course for change.

How do we do it

An open-ended question invites the person to think and reflect before responding and provides plenty of latitude for how to answer. You do not use the questions to control the direction of the answers but allow for the person to explore the issue of the question as it relates to them. Many times, these questions begin with "What," "How," "In what," and "Why" or lead off with the request, "Tell me..." or "Describe..." Done well open-ended questions *avoid a mechanical sound, are not asked one after another but are interspersed with reflections to extend and better understand their answers that seek an in-depth exploration of the persons situation and their perceptions and values about the topic. In addition, open-ended questions do not prescribe or suggest the direction of the answer.*

Good open-ended questions are:

- nonjudgmental and show genuine curiosity about their experiences
- are relevant to the conversation (what went on before)
- end with a pause to allow the person to reflect and answer
- are interspersed with Reflections to show interest in their answers
- Guide the conversation toward Change Talk

Strong examples

- How are you feeling about school?
- What change about school do you think would make the biggest difference to you?
- What do you think the advantages of being more involved with activities at school?
- How might you go about making changes so your school experience would be better?

Weaker examples

- Appear to be leading to expected answers
- Jump from topic to topic instead of flowing from the person's answer
- Are more focused on your agenda than showing genuine curiosity about their experience

What do we need to attend to?

- Is the family doing most of the talking?
- Are some of the directions and answers different than what we expect? (that is a good thing)
- Are they elaborating and explaining their answers more fully to help you gain accurate empathy?



What it is

Affirmations comment on something that is good about the person. They involve noticing, recognizing and acknowledging the positive and demonstrating acceptance and respect for the youth and family. An affirmation should be about something specific such as strengths, intentions or actions. It is also possible to affirm by reframing the individual's actions or situation in a positive light.

Why do we do it

Affirmations accentuate the positive. To affirm is to recognize and acknowledge strengths including the individual's inherent worth as a fellow human being. Affirmations when provided genuinely and honestly support and encourage these strengths thus building self-efficacy and in turn motivation to be better.

What makes it work

Affirming can serve several positive functions within the Collaborative Partnership. It encourages engagement in that positivity is reciprocal and people are more likely to spend time with, trust, listen to, and be open with people who recognize their strengths. Affirming can also reduce defensiveness and discord. By affirming and validating the person, you foster the person's belief and hope for successful change. When you affirm true (non-flattering) strengths, it increases the strength of the relationship and hope for success strengthens self-efficacy in the process and behavior change.

How do we do it

Affirmations include acknowledging the person's strengths. Strengths include abilities, interests, accomplishments, supports, change talk and change efforts. Verbally supporting any move taken in the direction of change or acknowledging personal qualities that might facilitate successful efforts to change fosters the belief in the individual's strengths increasing self-efficacy. You can improve the person's confidence by sincerely complimenting, acknowledging, and validating the individual's strengths, you. Good affirmations

- *Are genuine, thoughtful and specific to the current conversation or situation*
- *Focus on the youth or family not your perception of the youth or family ("you tried hard" not "I see you tried hard")*
- *Reframe the person's perceptions to bring out the positive aspects*
- *Focus on possibilities and change talk*
- *Affirm all attempts at changes not just the successful ones*
- *Avoid trying to falsely buoy the person*

What do we need to attend to

While affirming can be a powerful way to increase engagement, self-efficacy and motivation, they need to be genuine and not merely "**cheerleading.**" People sense when we are artificial or superficial and you risk losing engagement when you do this. If we think about a person who has been an absent father, a low-quality affirmation would state that he is "*a great father.*" The affirmation might sound

more like “*you really would like to have a better relationship with your son, you are just not sure where to start.*”

Strong examples

- Your phone alerts and calendar seem to really help you stay on top of things
- Your success in summer school gives you hope for a better year at school
- You let Eddie know when you were getting mad and he helped you avoid a fight and now you feel good about your plan

In addition, affirmations can serve as strategic reflections as you pull strengths from sustain talk. Some examples of this type of affirmations include:

- *You have been thinking about this for a long time and have come up with some good ideas about reducing your drinking*
- *You have your doubts, but you are willing to try it*
- *You tried something different and it didn't turn out the way that you hoped, but you gave it sincere effort*
- *You are feeling bad because you broke your diet two days this week, but compared to two months ago you had five good days*

Weaker examples

- *Affirmations are generalized and not attached to a specific conversation or behavior*
- *Affirmations are done in a knee jerk fashion*
- *Affirmations are made in a “righting” fashion to buoy the person*
- *They appear to be insincere to the person*
- I am really proud of you
- You did great
- Way to go



What it is

When using reflections the staff forms a reasonable guess as to what the original meaning of the speaker's statement and provides it back to them in the form of a statement (reflection) to show the person we are genuinely listening and trying to ensure we understand the verbalized and intent of the conversation.

Why do we do it

Typically, good reflections increase the time spent talking by the Individual, foster a collaborative tone, and reduce discord. Nonjudgmental listening and genuine curiosity build engagement and strengthens the collaborative partnership. Reflecting especially reframed reflections can demonstrate and expand your empathy for the person and their situation. Empathy is seeking to understand and accept the individual and their view of their situation and goals.

What makes it work

We have asked Individuals over the years what they have found most helpful about MiiWrap. One of the most frequent response is: "the Staff **listened to me.**" Reflective Listening may be your most powerful relational skill. The primary way we show Individuals that we are listening is through the effective use of Reflections. A well framed reflective statement is less likely than a question to evoke defensiveness and more likely to encourage further exploration thus improving our understanding of the family's ideas and point of view.

Reflective listening is meant to close the loop in communication to ensure breakdowns don't occur. The listener's voice turns down at the end of a reflection. This leads to clarification and greater exploration, whereas questions tend to interrupt the conversation for the youth and family signaling you are in charge of what will be talked about. Some people find it helpful to use some standard phrases:

- So, you feel...
- It sounds like you...
- You're wondering if...

How do we do it

Quality Reflections occur when the Staff identifies the essential meaning of what the Individual has said and reflects it back in terms easily understood. Reflections should "tail down" at the end, assuring the Individual that it is not a question. At the same time the Staff should encourage the Individual to respond to the reflection. This maintains the flow of the conversation and builds understanding by allowing the person to tell you if you have understood what they are saying. Well-delivered reflections are concise and clear. Good reflections:

- *Grasp the essential meaning of what the person has said*
- *Are simple and clear*
- *Turn down at the end to avoid sounding like a question*
- *Increase the amount of time that the individual spends talking*
- *Allow enough time for the person to think and then respond*

- Often contain a “feeling” word such as *happy, sad, frustrated, etc.* to clarify empathy

The basic types of MiiWrap Reflections are:

- **Simple Reflections** mirror back the words of the Individual. They make no attempt to alter the meaning or create new insight.
- **Rephrasing** as a type of Reflection stays close to what the Individual said but substitutes a few words or phrases with no intent of changing the meaning. This avoids the appearance of being a parrot and is thus a higher quality reflection.
- **Reframing**, as a Reflection seeks more from the statement. It is often a best guess at the unstated and goes beyond the superficial language used. Reframing Reflections are typically an empathetic guess at what the person is not saying and seeks a deeper understanding of the person’s point of view. Quality Reflections prompt the individual to expand on their statements or clarify things you don’t understand. Quality Reflections can prompt the person to consider their perception of the topic and may prompt improved self-awareness.

What do we need to attend to

Good reflections result in feedback and further exploration by the family. If the reflections are getting short answers you might intersperse them with questions to increase the length and depth of family answers and to keep the overall conversation feeling natural and genuine. If the answers are not moving the conversation forward, try for more complex reflections.

Strong examples

The person says:

“I want to lose weight, but I just love to eat, especially sugary treats, I can’t stop myself when they’re in the house, I know it’s not good for me”

Paraphrase - It’s tough to stay away from the sweet treats but deep down you know you’re better off without them

Double-sided - You love to eat sugary foods and losing weight is a priority for you

Metaphor - You want to show others you can tame this lion

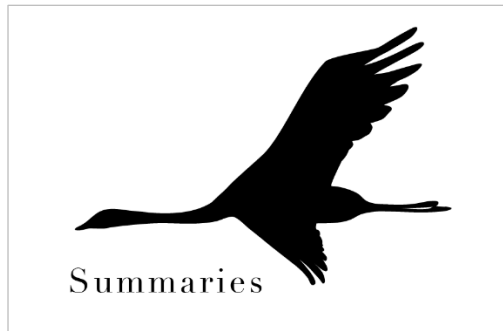
Feeling - You’re upset you can’t control your eating

Meaning - Controlling your eating is important for you to feel good about yourself

Continue the sentence... - And now might be the time to make your first steps towards change

Weaker examples

- *Fail to reflect the content of what the person has said*
- *Change the meaning in a way that creates Discord*
- *Do not allow enough time for a response from the person*
- *Are long and complicated and convey multiple thoughts*



What it is

In MiiWrap Summaries are a special form of Reflection in which you draw the threads of a conversation together. This may be a summary of a current conversation or pulling together conversations across a session or over multiple sessions. William Miller has described Summaries as a process where the person hands you flowers one at a time and then you gather them together, arrange them in a bouquet and give them back to the person.

Why do we do it

Summarizing helps to ensure that there is clear communication between the person and the Staff. Summaries provide your understanding of what the person has said, what is important to them and how they view a behavior change need or situation. This is done to ensure (or correct) your understanding and sometimes putting it all together gives the person a better understanding of the situation. It then becomes a steppingstone towards behavioral change. Summaries can be used to **collect the threads** of an extended conversation (even over sessions) to put them together and check your understanding. Summaries can also be used to transition to a new topic or to end a session. Summaries let the Individual know that you have captured their thoughts along the way.

- A collecting summary recalls a series of interrelated items as they accumulate (e.g., this is how we turn the list of needs into a potential vision statement).
- A linking summary takes a current topic and ties it to an earlier conversation to build a fuller picture for yourself and the family.
- A transitional summary is used to wrap up a topic that has gone on too long and at the end of a session

What makes it work

Summaries can be affirming because they show you are paying attention, remember what the person is saying and want to understand how it all fits together. Summaries also help to ensure that you are getting a good understanding of what the person is telling you or provide a reflection that will prompt the person to help you understand better. Summaries can help the person because they see all the parts of the conversation which encourages them to continue and often has them reflect on the topic as a whole.

How do we do it

A quality summary contains the highlights of the discussion and is given back to the person with the preface “I would like to see if I can capture what we have been talking about” and ends with “does that sound right to you?” A well worded summary also acts as a guide to where you and the person are going next. Effective Summaries have a specific structure to them.

- You start with a statement that lets the person know what you are doing. It often sounds like:
 - I would like to know if I have understood what you have been saying so far...
 - Let me see if I can summarize what we have been talking about

- Before we move on, I would like to make sure that I have heard you right
- We then Summarize for the person being clear and concise
- Emphasize Change Talk, if it has occurred.
- Next, we check with the person to see if we heard them correctly
 - Does that sound right to you?
 - What else?
 - “Did I miss anything?”
 - “If that’s accurate, what other points are there to consider?”
 - “Anything you want to add or correct?”
- Finally, we pause and give them time to reflect on the summary allowing the person to check to see if we have it right and wait for them to respond

What do we need to attend to?

- Gauge the frequency that you use Summaries so as not to appear disingenuous
- Use the MiiWrap Mindset of genuine curiosity to guide your summaries
- Always check with the person to see if you have it right before moving on

If you miss the content, there’s a risk that the person may think you haven’t been listening correctly, so... listen carefully! Also, there will be times when you accurately give the Summary back to the person, but they don’t like hearing what they’ve said, especially hearing another person say it! Even if you know that you’ve nailed it, don’t reply with: “Well, I’m just repeating what you said!” Instead, understand that the person is uncomfortable with what they’ve said, and respond with: “I missed something. Help me understand what you really meant.” It’s not about who’s right, it’s about maintaining and building the relationship.

Weaker examples

- *Fail to reflect the content of what the person has said*
- *Are used to frequently add information not provided by the person that is not relevant to the conversation*
- *Are done without Seeking Collaboration and follow-up clarification*

Strong example

“Let’s see where we’re going with this. A couple of weeks ago you said that you were going to keep leaving the house when you want, regardless of what your mom said. We’ve spent some time talking about how that helps you, and some not so good things about it.

Today you were able to come up with some possible responses to your mom that you think would work for both of you when talking about your curfews and chores. You’re making progress – some ideas that might help make your life a little easier at home. Does that sound as though I got what you’ve been talking about?”