



Academic Success
and Advising Center
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

Motivational Interviewing Cheat Sheet

OARS

- Open Ended Questions**
 - “What brought you here today?”
 - “Help me...” or “Tell me more...”
 - “What do you like about...?”
 - “What will happen if you don’t declare a major?”
 - “On a scale from 1-10, how important is it for you to declare a major? Why’d you choose that #?”
 - “Suppose you don’t change, what is the worst thing that might happen?”
 - “What would you like to see different about your current situation?”

- Affirmations**—used to recognize a student’s strengths, successes and efforts to change.
 - “Your commitment really shows by [insert reflection about what the student is doing].”
 - “It’s clear you’re really trying to change your [insert problem].”
 - “You showed a lot of [what describes the student’s behavior—strength, courage, determination] by doing that.”

- Reflections**—staying connected to the student’s thoughts, suspending judgement, acknowledging what student has said to feel validated.
 - “It sounds like...”
 - “What I hear you saying...”
 - “It seems as if...”
 - “It feels as though...”
 - “I get the sense that you want to change, and you have concerns about [insert problem].”

- Summaries**—recaps what has occurred, expresses interest and understanding, and highlights the main components of the discussion.
 - “You said that picking one major makes you feel like you’re closing the door to possibilities and having options is really important to you. I can see why this decision isn’t easy.”



TENANTS OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

- Expressing Empathy**—seeing the world from the student’s perspective and sharing in their experiences to ensure the student feels heard and understood.
- Avoiding Argumentation**—avoid trying to convince the student that a problem exists or change is needed because it could cause more resistance.
- Rolling with Resistance**— avoid eliciting resistance by not confronting the student and when resistance occurs, work to de-escalate and avoid a negative interaction.
- Developing Discrepancies**—recognizing and examining the discrepancies between a student’s current circumstances/behavior and their values and future goals.
- Supporting Self-Efficacy**—highlighting skills and strengths the student already has indicating their ability to change successfully.

STAGES OF CHANGE

