



Making Connections:

Communication skills
for building relationships
& having conversations
about COVID-19 vaccines



Open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summarizing (OARS) are communication skills that come from an approach to working with people called motivational interviewing. These skills can act as building blocks for meaningful and respectful conversations about COVID-19 vaccines that help people make a decision about getting vaccinated in their own time and in their own way.

Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions are the opposite of close-ended questions which can be answered with a “yes” or “no” (such as “Are you concerned about getting the COVID-19 vaccine?”). Open-ended questions invite people to “tell their story” in their own words, without guiding the conversation in a specific direction.

Some examples can be:



01.

What are some of the good things about getting the vaccine?

02.

What are some of the not-so-good things about getting the vaccine?

03.

What do you want to do next?

Affirmations

Affirmations are a way of giving encouragement and recognizing a person's strengths and all the ways they are already taking care of themselves. Affirmations can be about small things or big things – the important thing is that they are always genuine!

Remember:
Encouragement
is key!

Some affirmations can look like this:

01.

"You are really trying hard to make the best decision."

02.

"I appreciate your willingness to chat about this"

03.

"Thanks for speaking so openly with me"

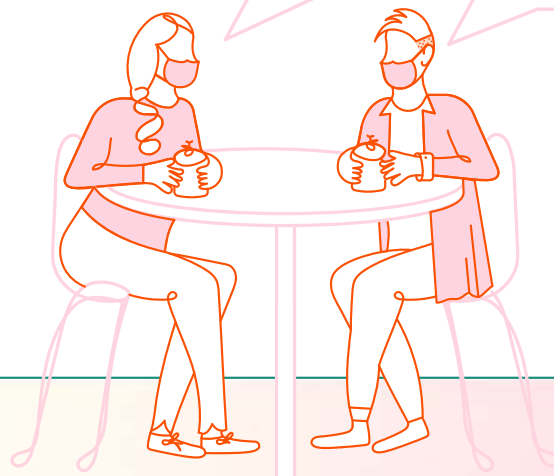


““

That's a good suggestion.
I enjoyed talking with
you today!

““

Anytime!



Reflective Listening

Reflective listening is a statement that lets people know they are heard and that you are interested in understanding their perspective.

You can repeat the thought or feeling that people are sharing with you or use a phrase like "So you feel like... ", "It sounds like... ", "You're wondering if..." or "Help me to understand. On the one hand, you.... and on the other hand, you...".

Some other reflective opening phrases may look like:

01.

"You said that it's really important for you to..."

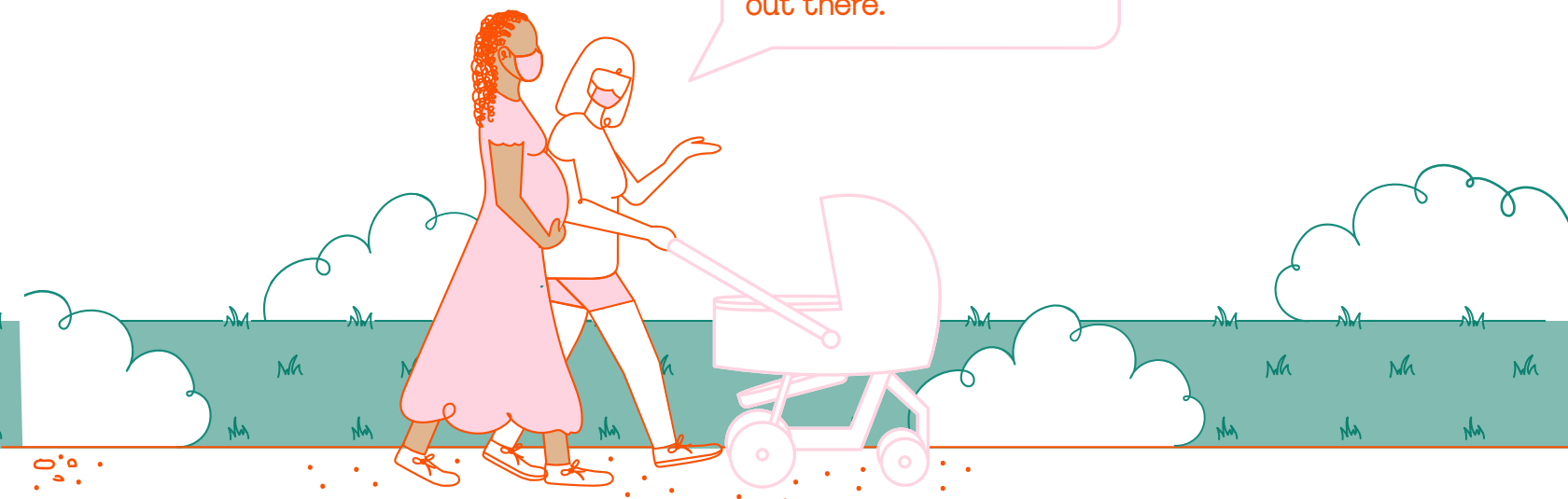
02.

"It sounds like you're angry right now."

Repeat the
thought or feeling
the person is
sharing.

“”

I can definitely relate to your concerns ... and I do agree with you that there is a lot of conflicting information out there.



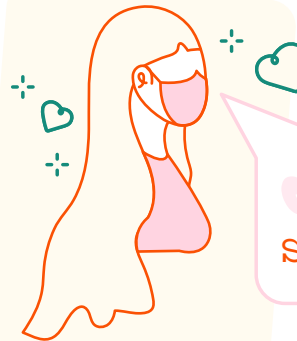
Summarizing

After someone has shared a personal story or their thoughts about a particular issue or after you've been talking for a while, it can be helpful to summarize what has been talked about. This helps to make sure that everyone is on the same page and can help transition the conversation in a new direction.

After summarizing, you might want to end with an invitation such as "Did I miss anything?" or "Is there anything else that's important to think about?"

“

Here is what I've heard so far.
Please tell me if I've missed anything.



Sure!



Relationships take time

It might take several days, weeks, or months for someone to make a decision about getting vaccinated. Help people address other priorities in their life and let them know you're available to help or talk some more, when they're ready.



It's safe
to get
vaxxed!

For more vaccine confidence resources, visit covid.bcachc.org and atira.bc.ca.