



Communicate – Long Conversations Reference Sheet

Facilitator Tips:

The following are points that the facilitator should make if none of the group members have already:

- The purpose of having longer conversations with people is to help them reflect on their own values, beliefs, opinions, and attitudes so that they can critically think about the decisions they are making or are going to make
- It's important to recognize when someone isn't open to talking further and not to force it
- Be sure that group remembers and understands OARS
- Asking questions to understand a person's reasons for wanting to change their behaviour or wanting to keep their behavior the same is a way to implement the 4 pillars. Respecting their values and motivations, and listening to their reasons in an effort to really understand where they are coming from can be as simple as asking "Why do you want to make this change/keep this the same? What is important to you in this decision?".
- Not all conversations will effect movement in the stage of change. Some people will simply not be ready to change. But that's not to say that you shouldn't support them in their change process (wherever they may be with it) . Everyone has a reason behind their choices. If you encounter a conversation like this you can:
 - a) *Emphasize personal choice and control*—Again, it is every person's choice (e.g. with marijuana to use, not use, or make any other decision regarding marijuana.)
 - b) *Try to understand the pros and cons of their decision*—(e.g. Try to understand their own pros and cons for using or not using marijuana.)
 - c) *Use the credible, accurate, reliable information you have about marijuana* – (e.g. If it seems like it might be helpful, give them information you have about marijuana.)
- Anytime it begins to feel like an argument or debate, or like you are trying to convince someone of something, it's a sign that you're being too pushy so re-group and change your approach or end the conversation.
- If you take up one side of an argument, people have a tendency to take up the other. To make things worse, people tend to believe and remember what they say more than what other people say. Research has shown that behaviours like persuading, confronting, directing, and warning have been associated with negative outcomes (Apodaca, 2009). (In other words, direct persuasion is not an effective way to resolve ambivalence)

- Influencing Conversations are *collaborative*. They are about cooperating and collaborating with the other person, because only THEY can take the actions needed to change their behaviour. You cannot make them change.
- Influencing Conversations are *about the other person*. They are not intended to teach, it's intended to facilitate discussion about *their* values, goals, beliefs, and perspectives. The facts that you have learned may help you start conversations and be knowledgeable when you talk, but that's only one little piece of the conversation. Share what you know if it's relevant, but that shouldn't be all you do.
- Influencing Conversations *are respectful of others' decisions*. Ultimately, people will make the changes that they want in their lives, and acknowledging that is probably more helpful than trying to tell them what to do.