

MI Strategy: Ask Open-ended Questions

The use of open-ended questions allows for rich, deep and meaningful discussions with patients/clients. These open-ended questions encourage clients/patients to do most of the talking and tell their stories, while the practitioner listens and responds with a reflection or summary statement. This type of questioning approach gives the client/patient a voice and enables them to be heard and seen. This is a stark contrast to closed-ended questions that can make the client/patient feel as if they are being interrogated.

Closed-ended Questions:

❖ **Have a short answer (Yes/No):**

"Did you have problems this week with your alcohol use?"

❖ **Ask for specific information:**

"What is your address?"

❖ **Might be multiple choice:**

"What do you plan to do: Quit, cut down, or keep drinking?"

**Closed-ended questions limit the patient/client's answer options.

Open-ended Questions:

❖ **Open the door and encourage the client to talk**

❖ **Do not invite a short answer**

❖ **Leave broad latitude for how to respond**

"Can you tell me what you like about using _____?"

"What makes you think it might be time for a change?"

"Can you tell me more about how this began?"

"What is that like for you?"