

MI Strategy: Provide Summaries

During the Brief Intervention (BI), it is important for practitioners to provide summaries back to the client/patient about what they heard so far (what the client/patient has already expressed about pros and cons, readiness to change, and personal reasons to change). This gives the client/patient assurance that the practitioner has carefully listened to what they have said throughout the BI session as well as allows for identifying any areas that may require clarification or further discussion. Summaries are also a good way to either end a session (i.e., offer a summary of the entire session), or to transition a talkative client to the next topic.

Summaries can:

❖ **Collect material that has been offered:**

“So far, you’ve expressed concern about your children, saving money, and providing a stable living environment for your family.”

❖ **Link to something just said with something discussed earlier:**

“That sounds a bit like what you told me earlier about feeling lonely.”

❖ **Draw together what has happened and transition to a new task:**

“Before I provide you with some referral recommendations, let me summarize what you’ve told me so far, and see if I’ve missed anything important. You came in because you experienced some really bad anxiety last night and it scared you. It caused you to wonder whether your drug use was contributing to you feeling this way. You’ve expressed interest in cutting back on your drug use because your family is concerned about you and you would like to avoid experiencing these negative feelings in the future. Based on our discussion today you think it is a good idea to get further assessed by a substance use counselor/specialist. Is there anything else that you would like to add before we move on?”