



**Notice.
Talk.
Act.[®]**

At School

In-Depth OARS Training Resource



OARS Technique: Essential Communication Skills

OARS is one of interactive techniques that is used to facilitate a conversation. It is a crucial part for you to understand to ensure that the Notice. Talk. Act.® key framework works within your school setting. This motivational interview technique is centered on the individual student who you are engaging in conversation with. These skills include verbal and non-verbal responses and behaviors that need to be culturally sensitive and appropriate. This technique integrates four principles of establishing and maintaining relationship with your student, assess your student's needs, and personalize your conversation and responses.

TALK Key Points to Remember-

REMEMBER the goal of starting a conversation with a student shows that you care and that you are interested in what is going on in their life.

REMEMBER the goals of talking with a student is to continue to show that you care, to gather information on what might be causing what you Noticed, and to determine if a referral is needed.

REMEMBER if the student does not disclose information that would deem a referral within your schools protocol, you just spent time building a stronger relationship with that student, and they may feel more comfortable coming to you if something does happen to them.

REMEMBER to practice the OARS technique with others in your school! You may find that others in your school community can provide you with critical feedback that helps you improve on your skills. This is something that with more practice, you will become more comfortable with, and will become second nature in your interactions with students.



Open Ended Questions

- ▶ Establish a safe environment and help to build a trusting and respectful professional relationship.
- ▶ Explore, clarify, and gain an understanding of your student's world.
- ▶ Learn about your student's experiences, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and hopes for the future.

You may ask:

- » How can I help you with ___?
- » Help me understand ___?
- » How would you like things to be different?
- » What are the good things about ___ and what are the less good things about it?
- » When would you be most likely to ___?
- » What do you think you will lose if you give up ___?
- » What have you tried before to make a change?
- » What do you want to do next?

Affirming

- ▶ Build relationship, demonstrate empathy, and affirm your student's strengths and abilities.
- ▶ Build on your student's level of self-efficacy and share a belief that they can be responsible for their own decisions and choices.

You may ask:

- » It's great that you are here today.
It's not always easy...
- » It sounds like you've been really thoughtful about...
- » You're really trying hard to...
- » It seems like you are really good at...



Reflecting

- ▶ Listen to your student to help you gain a deeper understanding of their life.
- ▶ Listen, observe, and share (*reflect on*) your own perceptions of what your student shares.
- ▶ Reflect on the words that they use (*don't be afraid to use the same words as them*)— You say you really don't want to be in class right now.
- ▶ Reflect on behavior and feelings — You have tears in your eyes and you sound sad...
- ▶ Your student gains an opportunity to “hear” your experience of what was shared reflected back to them. You can reflect words, emotions, and/or behaviors:

(Reflecting words)

Some of what I heard you say...

(Reflecting emotions) You seem [to be feeling]...

- » sad
- » frustrated
- » excited
- » angry

(Reflecting behavior)

I noticed...

- » tears in your eyes...
- » your voice sounds shaky...
- » you smiled when you said that

Summarizing

- ▶ Help move the conversation from the beginning, through the middle, to closing.
- ▶ Check that you are understanding your student's goals and preferences.
- ▶ Confirm that your student has an understanding of the key elements of a plan.
- ▶ Summarizing can be demonstrated in three ways:
 - » A collective summary — So let's go over what we have talked about so far.
 - » A linking summary — A minute ago you said you wanted to talk to... Would you like to talk more about how you might try?
 - » A transitional summary to close — So you've just described your plan. We're always here to help in any way. What other questions do you have before you go to next class?

Here are examples on how to apply OARS in different situations at school

- ▶ Loss of Family Member – Jessica
- ▶ Self-Esteem – Jessica
- ▶ Parental Pressure – Gul
- ▶ Peer Pressure/Substance Use – Gul
- ▶ Suicide Attempt/Self-Harm – Eunice
- ▶ Cyberbullying/Social Media – Eunice



Let's See OARS in Action with some different scenarios you may encounter.

Loss of a Family Member:

You notice that one of your students, Julie, has been sitting in the back of the class and has been much quieter than usual. After class, she lingers by your desk. You decide to utilize the OARS techniques to find out more.

O- “Hi Julie, how are you doing?”

I'm okay. I haven't wanted to talk in class much. I don't know if you noticed but I'm afraid that if I talk, I'll cry.

A- “Thank you so much for telling me that Julie. It can be really hard to talk about how you feel and you just did a great job. I had noticed you were a bit more quiet than usual.”

O- “Help me understand, what is making you feel like you might cry?”

My grandma died from coronavirus. And now I don't know who else will get sick

R- “Julie, I'm so sorry to hear about your grandma. It sounds like that is making you sad and scared”

Yea I'm really sad. But that's why I can't talk in class because I don't want to cry.

S- “Thank you for telling me Julie. It is completely understandable that you would be sad and that it might be hard to participate the same way you usually would. Would it be okay if I check in with you at the end of class each day to see how things are going?”

Okay that sounds good.



Self-Esteem:

One day in class, your students are told to make Vision Boards that show pictures about their goals and hopes for the future. You notice that your student Samuel is sitting alone at his desk and his paper is blank. He is scribbling small things in the corner of his paper with a pencil. You are wondering if something is preventing him from being able to work on the assignment, so you use the OARS technique to learn more.

O- “Hi Sam, how are you doing?”

I'm doing fine.

A- “I see you haven't quite started on your vision board. I know things like this can be pretty hard to get started.”

O- “What do you think is making it hard for you to get started?”

I don't know. I just don't like much about myself and I don't know what is my vision supposed to be? Be a new person?

R- “It sounds like there are a lot of ways in which you hope to grow. I wonder if we could start by thinking about some of the things you do like about yourself.”

Well, I really care about others, especially my cat Scribbles...

A- “That's a great point. I see you helping others all the time in class, and that shows you're caring and your cat must be very lucky.”

Yeah, but I don't know... My mom seems to think that other people will take advantage of that though.

R- “I'm hearing it is hard for you to be impressed by yourself, if your parents don't thinking your caring is a positive thing.”

Yeah...

S- “It sounds like it's hard for you right now to think about yourself in a positive way, even though you have a lot of great qualities. Would it be okay if I called your mom so we can talk about how your caring improves our class, along with the other things you do well in my class?”

I guess that sounds okay. She might like to hear that I do other things well, besides.

S- “Great then we can give her a call at the end of the day”

Self-harm/suicide attempt:

Your student, Sally, recently is not engaging in class and isolative from other classmates. You notice that she always wears long sleeve shirts and pants even in very warm weather. One day, Sally is sobbing alone, while superficially cutting her forearms with a razor blade in the locker room. You are concerned and decide to use OARS techniques to talk to her.

O: You sit down next to Sally; eye contact connects with her at the moment. You are curious but non-judgmental about the cutting marks. “You look upset. What is going on, Sally?”

“I don't know.”

R: “I noticed that you were sad and left early from class. It doesn't feel good to worry alone. Perhaps sharing the worries may feel better?”

“I broke up with my boyfriend, Jimmy. My heart was broken and numb.”

R: “I bet ending a relationship must be sad and disappointing to you”.

“Yeah, I thought that no one loves me anymore. Maybe I don't deserve good things for me. I am bad at everything I do. That's why I am cutting to punish myself.”



O: “This makes me feel really sad, too, Sally, and this also makes me worry. When you are cutting, what are you trying to do?”

“I used to think of killing myself, but I am so useless and so afraid that I did not think further. No one cares if I do anyway.”

A: “It might seem to feel that way since you broke up with Jimmy, but I can see that many people love you, care for you and support around you. I can also see that you are good at making friends and working with teachers.

“I know. I just don’t know how to talk to people about my feelings. I appreciate you are here for me.”

S: “So, from what I gather is that you feel sad since the recent breakup and need someone to talk through the feelings. Please do not worry alone. Next time, if you feel sad and ever have the thought of hurting yourself, please reach out to me or any of us you are close with.

Is that ok if I can check in with you later, or connect you to talk to our school counseling? They are trained to help with these situations.”

“I could give it a try.”

Parental Pressure

You notice you’re A student, Mary, falling asleep more during classes and you decide to approach her after class.

O: “Mary I noticed you have been falling asleep during class. I want to check in with you to see if you are ok.”

Yes, I have been staying awake late to finish my homework since my schedule is packed during the day. I feel anxious if I don’t get it all done and if it’s not perfect”

A- “You’re really trying hard to be on top of everything.”

“Yes I have to otherwise I will disappoint my parents”

O- “Help me understand how you will disappoint your parents?”

“If I’m not perfect or get all A’s they will not love me as much as they do my sister who is perfect.”

R- “You/re saying you have to do well for your parents to love you?”

“Yes, exactly!”

A “That is a lot of pressure to do well, your parents know how hard you try and what a good student you are. Have you talked to them about this?”

“No I have not”

S “It sounds like you feel pressured to do well by your parents and that has been leading to feelings of anxiety and lack of sleep. The school and I are here to help in any way we can, including setting up a meeting with your parents. What do you think?”

“okay that sounds good, thanks”

Cyberbullying/Social Media:

Rachel Chen is an Asian American student in your class. You received a phone call from her mother stating that Rachel refuses to attend online classroom. The reason was that one of her classmates posted a racially offensive video on Tiktok calling her Chinese coronavirus and eating bats at home. You talk to Rachel via zoom call to understand the issue.

O: “Rachel, how are you doing?”

“I don’t know.”

O “I know talking through the screen sounds difficult. I also learn that something might have happened to your classmate that really upsets you. How may I be helpful to you?”

“He posted something ridiculous on Tiktok. I don’t want to see him again.” Rachel started tearing.



R: “I see the tears in your eyes. This must have been bothering you.”

“I couldn’t sleep at all! I worry that other classmates will start calling me “Chink”, or Chinese virus. What is wrong with these people? I tried to block them, but I cannot delete the Tiktok account because I love to stay in touch with my friends. I also talked to my mother and wanted to report to school.”

A: “I am glad to hear that you are taking actions to report and to stop this. You are doing the right thing to speak up. I also hear it is incredibly hard to see the classmate in class. We should have a conversation with the school. This is not tolerable, and we will support you.”

“Thank you.”

S “So it sounds like you did not attend online classes because this particular classmate posted something on social media and that really hurt your feelings. Is it ok for the school to do some investigation and follow up with you?”

“I would like to do that”.

Peer pressure/substance use:

O “Hi Matt, how have things been?”

“I’m fine” (he eyes the group of guys hanging outside the classroom)

O “You don’t seem like yourself lately, I wanted to see how things were going?”

“fine, I guess” (shifts nervously)

A- “It seems like you’re nervous, I know it can be hard to speak to a teacher but we’ve always had an open relationship.

“Yeah, I guess”

PAUSE

“I guess I don’t know what to do about my new friends”

A “Could you tell me a little more and maybe I can help, I know it can be hard sharing your thoughts and feelings.”

“You can’t tell my parents or they’ll freak out, but these guy are vaping and I’ve tried it, I don’t like it but I have to do it to hang out with them”

R “You want to fit in with the new group of friends so you feel like you have to impress them.”

“yeah by vapping, I don’t want to be a loser”

A “It seems like you feel pressured to do something you actually don’t want to do.”

“Yeah I don’t...”

O- “wonder if we could think of ways you could say no, I know it’s hard to say no, but you really want to in this situation and real friends will accept you for your beliefs. What are your thoughts on that?”

“I know, I know...I guess I could do other things with them and not vape”

A- “that sounds like a great idea, being involved in another activity with them and holding your ground and saying no.”

“I can try that”

S “You’ve been strong and courageous to tell this to me, it seems like you have a good game plan on saying no to things you don’t want to do. Is there anything else you want to talk about or that I can help with?”

“No ,thanks though”

