

When Change Feels Complicated

Addiction and recovery | Clinicians | 10 to 15 minutes

Offer an autonomy supporting conversation when a client feels uncertain about change.

Use these lines as flexible prompts, with space for the client to disagree. Reflect their meaning before moving to planning. The immediate goal is a clearer understanding of the client's perspective and one mutually chosen next step.

Open with permission

Clinician: Would it be useful to talk about what substance use is doing for you and where it creates problems? Client: Everyone just wants me to stop. Clinician: You want your experience understood before anyone tells you what to do. What do others miss?

Explore both sides

Clinician: What would you want to keep about how life is now, and what would you like to be different? Client: It helps me unwind, but mornings are rough. Clinician: Relief matters, and so does how you feel the next day. Which part would you like to explore first? If the client does not want change: What information or support would still be useful today?

Invite a step and check it

Clinician: May I share two options, then hear what fits? Offer accurate, relevant choices without a lecture. Clinician: Of those, what would you choose, if anything? What could get in the way? If confidence is low: How could we make the step smaller or add support? Close by asking the client to describe the plan in their own words.

Client language to preserve and the next step they chose