

Summarising for change

Tutorial

A summary is very useful in allowing you to recap on some of the key points of the conversation to date. It allows you to think about what's important and allows the young person to respond so that you know you're both at the same point. It also gives you valuable thinking time about how to progress. In motivational dialogue we use summary for change. We spend more time in the summary on the reasons for change, so that the young person understands what we're trying to do. We need to concentrate on our tone and the way we say things – making sure we emphasise the importance of any key aspects that we cover. Reasons for change should be mentioned mainly at the end of the summary.

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The difference between a summary and a summary for change

A summary is an extended form of reflective listening – and a summary for change is a particular form of summary.

When you do a summary, the following structure is helpful.

- Tell the learner that you are about to do a summary and explain why.

For example:

“Let's just stop there a moment, so that I can see if I've got this straight.”

- From what the learner has said, pick out what you think are the most important points and list them in your summary. If the learner had expressed ambivalence, include this.

For example:

“You've said [...] and [...] You also mentioned that on the one hand you're nervous about doing a placement, but on the other you believe that it would help you eventually get a job.”

- Check with the learner whether you have missed anything that is important to them.



For example:

“Have I missed anything?” Or: “Is there anything you want to add to that?”

- If you are doing a summary at what seems to be a natural break in the conversation, invite the learner to make meaning from what you have said.

For example:

“What does all this mean to you?” Or: “What do you make of all this?”

When you do a summary for change, you will:

- pay less attention to the things a learner has said that do not support change. You can do this by moving through them quite quickly, at the start of your summary;
- pay more attention to the behaviours and attitudes that support change. You can do this by mentioning them at the end of your summary, and by speaking more slowly and emphatically.

You will want to acknowledge the positive things a learner tells you, but you might want to bias your summary towards the issues that still need to be addressed. So a summary for change is not just a matter of ending with the positive things a learner has said. It is a way of focusing attention on whatever you believe will support change.

Watch out for ...

When you are doing a summary for change, take care to include only what the learner has already said. A summary for change is not an opportunity for you to add in your own version of events.

Activity: What did Jules say?

Purpose

To become more fluent in making summaries and summaries for change.

Description

Analysing the use of summaries and summaries for change, using dialogue adapted from role-plays on CD-ROM 1.

Instructions

- Read the script.
- Reflect on how the conversation seems to be progressing and where you would like to take it next.
- Write a summary for change.
- Compare your version with ours (see the feedback on p.5).
- If there are significant differences, reflect on why this might be.

Example: A conversation between Jules and her tutor

Tutor: So your supervisor has given you a warning and there's a possibility that you'll lose your placement. What's been going on, Jules?

Jules: I don't see why he's bothered. I mean, I go out with my friends to – you know – get away from everything else, have a laugh, get a few drinks in, stick the music up. It's just a bit of fun isn't it, you just need to get away and just chill.



Tutor: You go out with your friends, have a good time. Anything else?

Jules: Well mostly it's good, do you know what I mean? Most of the time it's really good, nothing much happens

Tutor: *Most of the time it's good.*

Jules: Yeah... Well... the other night – I had this fight with my mate, and we were having a go at each other. I wasn't drunk or anything next day, I just didn't remember what happened, so I suppose that's not great really but we made up and everything, so it's fine.

Tutor: The next day you didn't remember what had happened. How were you feeling?

Jules: Obviously I wasn't drunk when I went into work. I suppose I was a bit tired because of the night before but everyone is tired if they've done something the night before. But I suppose that maybe I felt... I don't know... maybe I was just a bit hung-over – and I did get shouted at – that wasn't good – I mean, at least I went in. Yeah, I was a little bit tired – but not drunk. And now I can't go out or I'll lose my placement – I mean, what am I going to do? I want to stay there, but I want a life, too. No way am I going to give up my friends.

Tutor: (Summary for change emphasising any indication Jules has given that would support her in changing her behaviour.)

**Activity: What did Jules say?
Feedback**

What did Jules say?

What we thought

Jules seems to swing between resisting the idea that she needs to change her behaviour, and acknowledging that her nights out with friends may have some after-effects.

A summary for change would pick up and emphasise the comments she made about these after-effects and wanting to keep her placement.

For example:

Tutor: OK Jules, let's just stop there a moment.

You like to go out in the evenings and have a good time with your friends – like anyone else. But you say that the other day, after you'd been out with your friends the night before, you went into work feeling a bit tired and with something of a hangover. The supervisor warned you that you could lose your placement.

And now you're wondering how to have your fun without it interfering with your work the next day. Is that how you see things?

Learning points

A well-placed summary for change can take a learner's attention away from the obstacles to change and on to the things that support change.

Activity: Taking things forward

Purpose

To become more fluent in making summaries and summaries for change.

Description

Finding opportunities to practise.

Instructions

When you next find yourself in partial or even total disagreement with someone, try the following sequence.

- Hold back from expressing your point of view, or justifying something you have done.
- Listen to the other person. Invite more information, so that you fully understand their perspective. Use your reflective listening skills.
- When it appears that the other person has said what they need to say, offer them a summary. You might choose to bias it towards the points that you agree with, or perhaps those with which you are most willing to engage. Whatever you choose, the speaker is likely to welcome your focus and be grateful for the hearing you have given.

Learning points

Summaries can contribute to greater understanding between two parties. Summaries for change enable you to influence the direction of a conversation.

Notes

