

Clinician Self-Assessment: Comfort with Difficult Conversations

This tool allows clinicians to evaluate their confidence, discomfort, and skill level when engaging in challenging conversations with clients about addiction, resistance, and relapse.

Self-Rating Questions (Likert Scale - 1 to 5)	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable initiating conversations about addiction with resistant clients.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can manage my emotions when clients become defensive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel confident in redirecting conversations that become unproductive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can distinguish between a client’s denial vs. emotional distress.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can challenge a client’s misconceptions about addiction without pushing them away.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I maintain nonjudgmental language when discussing sensitive topics.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to adapt my approach depending on the client’s emotional state.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel confident setting boundaries when conversations become inappropriate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 2: Self-Reflection Questions

What are the most challenging aspects of difficult conversations for you?

How do you handle your personal emotions during these discussions?

What strategies have worked for you in de-escalating resistance?

Where do you feel you need more training or support?

Section 3: Personal Action Plan

One skill I will focus on improving:

One training or resource I will seek out:

One real-life scenario I will prepare for:

Next Steps & Suggested Resources After Completing the Self-Assessment

If You Struggle with Starting the Conversation

Recommended Resources:

- Scripted Opening Statements Guide → Use structured, non-confrontational ways to introduce difficult topics.
- Role-Playing Scenarios for Supervision or Training → Practice real-life situations with peers.
- Motivational Interviewing (MI) Practice Cards → Learn effective engagement strategies for resistant clients.

Action Step:

- Watch a recorded session or training on motivational interviewing techniques (MI) and apply a strategy in your next client session.

If You Find Yourself Getting Emotionally Invested or Reactive

Recommended Resources:

- [“Am I Taking This Personally?” Clinician Self-Checklist → Identify emotional triggers in sessions.](#)
- [“Stay Calm” Checklist: How to Keep Your Cool When a Client is Resistant → Immediate de-escalation strategies.](#)
- [“When You Feel Stuck” Quick-Response Guide → Tips for regaining control of the conversation.](#)

Action Step:

- [Use the “Stay Calm” Checklist before challenging sessions to self-regulate.](#)

If You Struggle with Handling Resistance or Client Pushback

Recommended Resources:

- [Calm in the Chaos: Role-Playing Practice for Handling Resistance → Improve conflict resolution skills.](#)
- [Stages of Change Workbook → Helps tailor discussions to where a client is in their readiness to change.](#)
- [“What Would You Say?” Motivational Interviewing \(MI\) Practice Cards → Learn how to reframe client objections.](#)

Action Step:

- [Identify one common resistance statement from your clients and practice a motivational interviewing response.](#)

If You Want to Improve Boundary-Setting & Direct Communication

Recommended Resources:

- [“Recognizing & Challenging Clinician Bias in Addiction Care” Checklist → Understand how personal beliefs influence conversations.](#)
- [Key Questions for Vetting & Organizing Treatment Resources → Stay fact-based when discussing care options.](#)
- [“I Accepted Treatment... Now What?” Toolkit \(Customizable for Clients\) → Provide clients structured next steps after they agree to treatment.](#)

Action Step:

- Identify one common resistance statement from your clients and practice a motivational interviewing response.
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