



How to Use Ask-Offer-Ask as a Brief Motivational Interviewing Intervention

WORKBOOK

Trainers

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Date: May 23, 2025



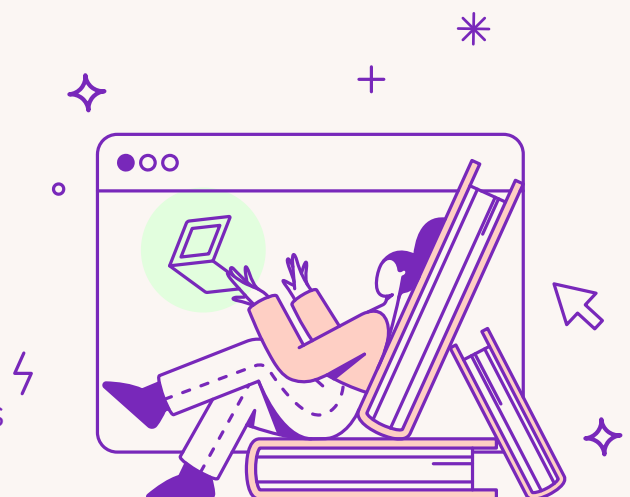
Time: 11:00 AM – 2:15 PM ET



Location: Live Zoom Training



Credits: 3 Clinical CE Credit Hours



Workshop Goals and Learning Objectives

- Define what a brief intervention is and why it matters.
- Describe the steps and flow of Ask-Offer-Ask.



- Recognize how AOA connects to MI Spirit values: Partnership, Autonomy, Compassion, Empowerment.
- Apply AOA in real-world conversations to guide change without pressure.

Reflect on personal communication instincts and growth areas.

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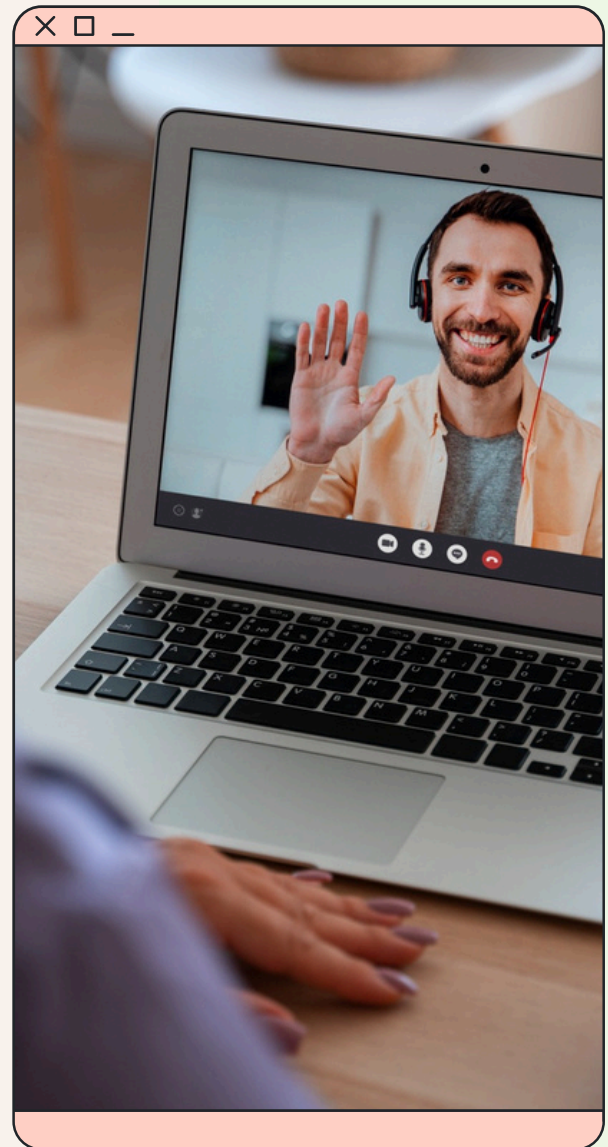


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Welcome to the Workshop



Welcome to today's interactive training experience.

We are here to explore Ask-Offer-Ask (AOA) — a simple, powerful framework for guiding meaningful conversations, especially when time is limited and stakes feel high.

This is not a lecture.

It's a working session where reflection, collaboration, and real-world practice are the center of learning.

IMPORTANT

This workbook does not replace the live facilitation by your trainers — Sarah and Alex will guide the journey.

You will see icons to guide you:



Slide Connection

Where we are in the presentation.



Trainer-Led Reflection or Discussion.



Space for your notes and reflections.



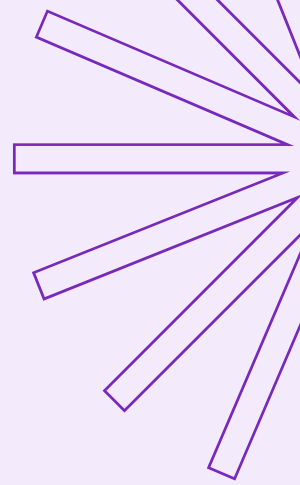
Practice Activity:

Hands-on application of skills.



Partner or Group Engagement:

Share and build insights with others.



Reflecting on Conversations

◇ Slide 1–2 Connection

We've All Been There

"You ever walk away from a conversation and think, 'I could've handled that better'?"

Every one of us has had conversations we wish had gone differently.

The goal today isn't to erase those moments — it's to learn how we can show up differently when it matters most.

Conversations aren't just exchanges of words — they are opportunities for connection, safety, and change.



Trainer-Led Group Discussion

Think about a recent conversation that stayed with you — in a way that left you wanting more.

- What happened?
- How did it leave you feeling?
- What might you wish you had done differently?



Your Reflections:

Trainer Tip:

Invite 2–3 participants to share reflections aloud before moving forward.

Why Conversations Matter

"The way we show up in conversations shapes everything else."

Conversations can:

Think about a recent conversation that stayed with you — in a way that left you wanting more.

- Open doors to safety, hope, and collaboration.
- Build or erode trust.
- Invite or inhibit motivation.

In child welfare, healthcare, and helping roles, we work inside conversations — **this is where change starts.**



Quick Self-Check Exercise

Complete these sentence starters:

When I show up well in conversations, I...

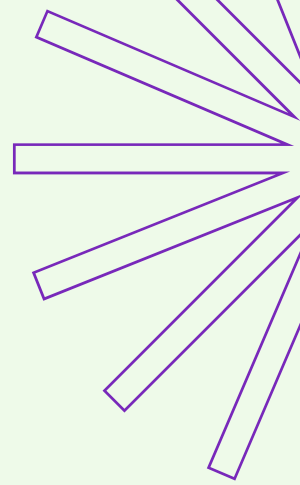
When I don't, I notice...



Optional Pair Share:

Turn to a partner and share one sentence you wrote.

What patterns do you notice about when you're at your best?



What Is a Brief Intervention?

◇ Slide 3–4 Connection

Brief Doesn't Mean Rushed

"Brief doesn't mean rushed — it means intentional, focused, and supportive."

In real-world work, we rarely get endless time. But we almost always get **moments** — moments that can open a door, plant a seed, or shift momentum.

A **brief intervention** is **not** about squeezing everything in.

It's about **showing up fully and intentionally** when the opportunity arises.



Trainer-Led Group Discussion

When you hear the words "brief intervention," what comes to mind?

What's a moment in your work where you only had a few minutes — but it mattered?



Capture a few words or examples:

Trainer Tip:

Invite 2–3 people to share a quick "brief moment" from their work.

Making Moments Count

"In real life, we don't always get the luxury of time — but we do get moments."

Brief interventions create impact because they:

- Focus on **connection over content**.
- Honor **autonomy** and avoid overwhelming.
- **Meet people where they are**, even when pressure is high.



Micro-Reflection Exercise: "Moments that Mattered"

Think back on a moment when someone said something brief but powerful to you — something that stuck.

- What made it impactful?
- Was it the timing, the tone, the trust, or something else?



Reflect here:



Optional Pair Share:

Turn to a partner and share your "moment that mattered."

What do you notice about what made it stick?

Identifying Micro-Moments in Your Work

List 2–3 moments in your daily work where a **brief intervention** could make a difference:



Micro-Moments in My Work:

1

2

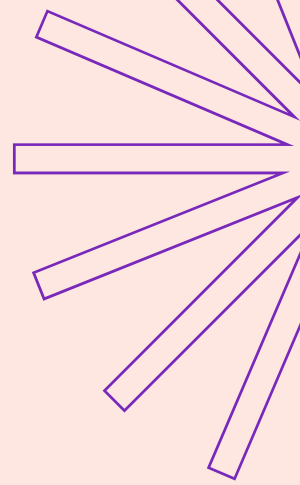
3



Trainer-Led Group Discussion

What's one word you would use to describe the feeling of *showing up fully* in a brief moment?

(Examples: Connected, Grounded, Focused, Human, Calm...)



Introducing Ask-Offer-Ask (AOA)

◇ Slide 5–6 Connection

Ask-Offer-Ask: A Simple, Powerful Framework

"Ask to understand. Offer with care. Ask again to re-engage."

In moments of tension, uncertainty, or decision-making, it's easy to fall into over-explaining, persuading, or giving advice.

Ask-Offer-Ask (AOA)

gives us a simple structure to stay connected, collaborative, and human — even when the pressure is on.

Think of it like an Oreo cookie



Key Principle

Always begin and end with curiosity — not authority.



Trainer-Led Mini-Teaching: The Three Steps of AOA

	PURPOSE EXAMPLE	
First Ask	Focus on their experience, understanding, or priorities.	"What's feeling most important for you right now?"
Offer	Share expertise, support, or options respectfully.	"There are a few options we could consider — would it help if I shared them?"
Second Ask	Invite reflection, planning, or next steps.	"What do you think fits best for you right now?"



Anchor Before Action Exercise

Before practicing AOA, let's ground ourselves in a **real moment** where you could use it.

STEP 1

IDENTIFY A REAL MOMENT



Describe the situation briefly:

Think of a conversation where:

- You often feel stuck or uncertain,
- You need to share something important,
- You want to strengthen connection, not control.

In that moment:

- What would you hope to achieve by using AOA?
- What would success feel like?

STEP 2

CLARIFY YOUR GOAL



Write your goal simply:

STEP 3

EXPLORE YOUR FIRST ASK



Write your goal simply:

If you slowed the moment down and started with curiosity...

- What is one thing you could ask first to open the door?



Optional Pair Share:

Turn to a partner and share your "moment that mattered."



New Ask Ideas You Heard:



Small Group Practice: Oreo Build

In triads (groups of 3):

- 1** One person shares their situation + goal.
- 2** Together, build an AOA sequence:
 - ☐ **First Ask**
 - ☐ **Offer**
 - ☐ **Second Ask**
- 3** Rotate roles after 5 minutes.



Capture your Oreo sequence:

First Ask

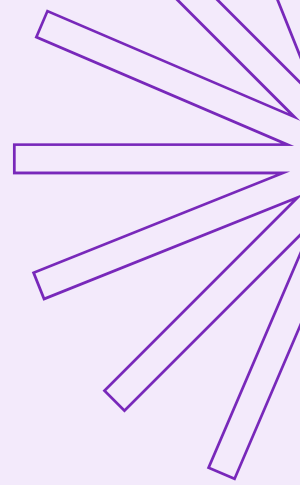
Offer

Second Ask



Trainer-Led Debrief Questions

- What made building the First Ask challenging or natural?
- How did it feel to move from understanding → offering → checking back in?
- What tone or pacing worked best?



Why AOA Works

◇ Slide 7–9 Connection

Staying Human in Tough Moments

"It helps us slow down, stay human, and make room for voice and choice."

In pressure-filled moments, it's easy to speed up — to over-explain, over-control, or rush decisions.

Ask-Offer-Ask (AOA) slows us down intentionally. It keeps us human, relational, and focused on partnership, even when the stakes feel high.



Trainer-Led Mini-Teaching: Why AOA is Effective

- **AOA creates safety:** Slowing down invites trust.
- **AOA protects autonomy:** It leaves room for the person's voice and choice.
- **AOA supports partnership:** It shifts us from "talking at" to "working with."



Quick Reflection Exercise:

Think about a high-pressure conversation you've had recently.

When I slowed down in the conversation, it helped by...

When I rushed or pushed, it led to...



Optional Pair Share:

Share with a partner: Which part (slowing down, staying curious, offering with care) feels most natural to you? Which feels hardest?

AOA Reflects the Spirit of Motivational Interviewing

"This isn't about getting people to agree with us — it's about honoring who they are."

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is rooted in four Spirit qualities:

- **Partnership** (working alongside, not over)
- **Autonomy** (supporting choice and ownership)
- **Compassion** (caring about their wellbeing)
- **Empowerment** (supporting their ability to move forward)

Every time you use AOA, you are embodying the Spirit of MI.



Quick Activity: Matching AOA Steps to MI Spirit Qualities

Draw lines or write in connections:

AOA STEP MI SPIRIT QUALITY	
First Ask	Partneship
Offer	Compassion
Second Ask	Empowerment
Bonus All steps	Autonomy



Optional Notes:

- Which quality feels strongest for you when you communicate?
- Which quality do you want to strengthen more?

Trainer Tip:

After participants complete matching, invite a quick discussion:

“How does it change a conversation when you start from Partnership, not persuasion?”

The Law of Reciprocity

"When we offer the first Ask, we give someone the experience of mattering — and they often give it back."

When we lead with curiosity and respect:

- People often feel safer.
- They are more likely to stay engaged.
- They are more open to hearing what we have to offer.

Reciprocity is natural — but it starts with how we show up first.



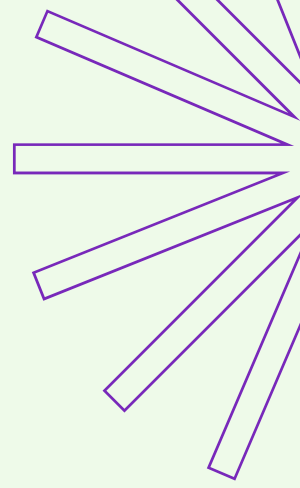
Mini-Reflection: "Offering Dignity"

Think about a moment when someone treated you with genuine respect and curiosity.

- **How did it change the way you responded?**
- **What did it make possible that might not have been otherwise?**



Write a few thoughts



What Gets in the Way

◇ Slide 10 Connection

When Instincts Take Over

"In the heat of the moment, our instincts get louder than our intentions."

Even with the best training, the best intentions — when emotions rise, instinct often takes the wheel.

That's normal.

It's human.

And it's something we can notice, learn from, and practice differently.



Trainer-Led Mini-Teaching: Common Derailers

Here's what often shows up under pressure:

- **Advice-Giving:** Jumping in with solutions before fully hearing the other person.
- **Avoiding:** Changing the subject, minimizing emotion, rushing past discomfort.
- **Controlling:** Pushing for agreement, insisting on compliance, over-explaining.

Each of these instincts usually comes from a good place — wanting to help, wanting to fix, wanting to protect. But they often close the door rather than open it.



Self-Reflection Exercise: "My Go-To Derailers"

Think about a high-pressure conversation you've had recently.

Offering advice too soon ("Have you tried...?")

Talking more than listening

Avoiding emotion or depth ("Let's just stick to the facts.")

Jumping to solutions ("Here's what you need to do.")

Getting defensive when challenged

☐

Using authority to push compliance

☐

Filling awkward silences too quickly

☐

Minimizing someone else's concerns or fears

☐

Other (write your own):

☐

Mini-Reflection:

Choose one derailer you checked.

Write a few words about what might be underneath it for you.

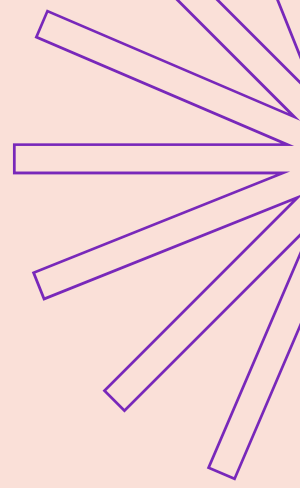
(Examples: Urgency? Anxiety? Fear of conflict? Desire to fix?)



Optional Pair Share:

- Share your identified derailer with a partner.
- **Reflect:** How might slowing down and using AOA help shift this instinct?

Transition to Section 6: AOA in Action — Demo 1 and Debrief (Slide 11)



AOA in Action — Demos & Debrief

◇ Slide 11 & Slide 13 Connection

Seeing AOA Come to Life

"Let's see this in action."

It's one thing to talk about a framework — it's another thing to feel it in a real conversation.

In the upcoming demos, you'll watch how tone, pacing, curiosity, and presence can shift the dynamic — even when the conversation is complex or emotional.



Trainer-Led Mini-Teaching: What to Watch For

During each demo, notice:

- **Tone:** Calm, warm, inviting (not rushed or authoritative).
- **Pacing:** Enough space for reflection — not crowding or filling every silence.
- **Curiosity:** Staying interested in the person's experience — not solving too quickly.
- **Flow:** Moving naturally from First Ask → Offer → Second Ask without forcing it.

Trainer Tip:

Invite participants to focus more on *how* the conversation feels than *what* is being said.



Demo 1 Observation Space

As you watch Demo 1, take notes:

- **What stood out to you?**

- **How did you see AOA being used?**

- **What impact did it seem to have on the conversation?**



Group Debrief Discussion (Post-Demo 1):

- What did you notice about the tone and pacing?
- How did curiosity change the direction of the conversation?
- Where did it feel different than typical "advice-giving" or "directing" conversations?

AOA in Complex Moments

"AOA doesn't fix the mess — it helps us stay in it with care."

The goal isn't to smooth over hard conversations. It's to stay present, connected, and collaborative, even when things are messy or emotional.

AOA helps:

- Hold space without rushing.
- Acknowledge difficulty without needing immediate solutions.
- Keep human dignity and choice in the foreground.



Demo 2 Observation Space

As you watch Demo 2 (more emotionally complex scenario), take notes:

- **What stood out to you?**

- **How did the practitioner use presence and pacing under emotional pressure?**

- What impact did it have on the trust or engagement of the conversation?
-
-

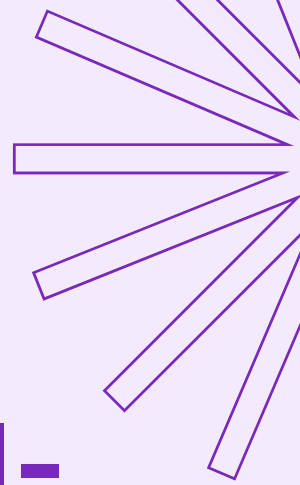


Group Debrief Discussion (Post-Demo 2):

- What differences did you notice between Demo 1 and Demo 2?
- Where did AOA help hold space even when emotions got heavier?
- What parts of AOA felt most critical under emotional strain?

Quick Reminder:

AOA isn't about avoiding tough moments — it's about staying human inside them."



Preparing for Real-World Use

◇ Slide 12 Connection

Getting Ready to Use AOA

"What do you need to feel ready?"

Learning a new approach is exciting — and sometimes a little intimidating. It's normal to feel both ready *and* unsure at the same time.

The key is to **name what you need** — and set yourself up for success.



Trainer-Led Reflection: Internal Readiness

Think about trying AOA tomorrow:

- What feels exciting about it?
- What feels uncertain?
- What would help you feel more confident stepping into it?



Capture a few thoughts here:



Quick Planning Exercise: Setting Yourself Up for Success

Look at the list below.

Check off any supports you might want to put in place to help you use AOA tomorrow:

A simple reminder (sticky note, note card)

☐

Practice the First Ask aloud before the conversation

☐

Visualize the Oreo structure mentally

☐

Talk through your plan briefly with a colleague

☐

Give yourself permission to be imperfect and reflective

☐

Schedule 30 seconds of breathing before starting

☐

Plan a short debrief with a supervisor/peer afterward

☐

Other support you need:

☐



Write your Personal Commitment:

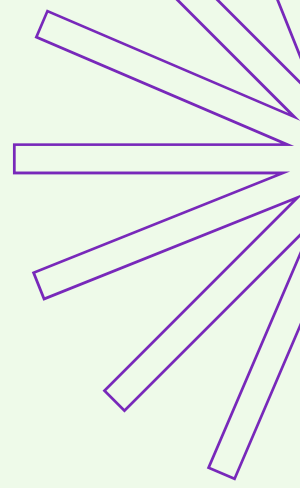
Before my next important conversation, I will...

Trainer Tip:

- Turn to a partner and share your plan.
- What small commitment are you making to yourself for tomorrow?

Quick Reminder:

"Confidence doesn't come from knowing everything — it comes from starting anyway."



Practice in Triads

◇ Slide 14 Connection

It's Time to Get in the Sandbox

"Now it's your turn. Get in the sandbox and play around."

Learning happens when we **try it out** — not when we get it perfect.

This practice space is designed to be **safe**, **supportive**, and **focused on learning**, not performance.



Trainer-Led Set-Up: Practice Instructions

In groups of **three** (triads), you will rotate through three roles:

PRACTITIONER

Use Ask-Offer-Ask in a real or realistic conversation.

“CLIENT”

Play the role of a real-world person you might encounter (can be real or fictional).

OBSERVER

Watch for use of AOA, tone, pacing, and curiosity.

Each round will be about **5–7 minutes**, then you'll switch roles.



Step-by-Step Triad Practice

Follow these steps:

- 1 Choose a real-world situation** (it can be light or serious — your choice).
- 2 Practitioner:**
 - Begin with a First Ask.
 - Offer information, options, or support.
 - End with a Second Ask to re-engage.

3 Observer

- Watch for how the practitioner uses tone, pacing, and flow.
- Take notes below.



Observer Notes:

Observation Focus	Your Notes
What strengths did you notice in how they used AOA?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Where did they pause, reframe, or stay curious?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
What seemed to open up connection in the conversation?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>



Practitioner Self-Reflection:

After your turn practicing:

- What felt natural for me?

- **What felt awkward or hard?**

- **One thing I want to keep practicing next:**

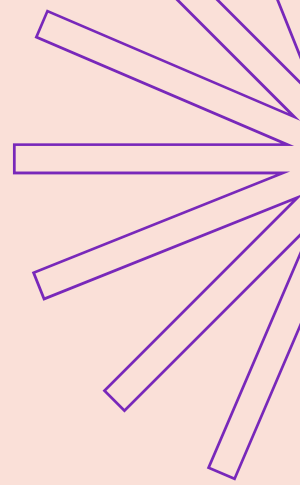


Optional Pair Share:

- What surprised you about using AOA in practice?
- Where did slowing down change the outcome?
- What insights did you gain as an observer vs a practitioner?

Quick Coaching Reminder:

"Practicing doesn't make perfect — it makes present."



Real-Life Application

◇ Slide 15 Connection

Choosing Your Real-World Application

"Who's your person — and what will you say first?"

Today's learning is only valuable if it moves from the training room into your real-world conversations.

This next step is simple, but powerful:

- **Identify a real person** you will likely speak with soon.
- **Plan your opening Ask** to begin the conversation intentionally.



Trainer-Led Prompt: Reflection and Planning

Think ahead to your work tomorrow or next week:

- Who might you have a conversation with where AOA could make a difference?
- What would you want your first Ask to sound like?



Your Real-World Plan:

- **Who is your person?**

- **Briefly describe the situation:**

- **What will your First Ask be?**

- **What mindset or support do you want to carry into the conversation?**



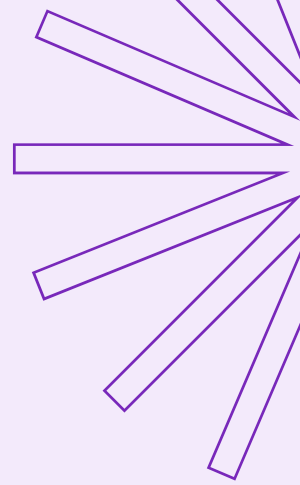
Optional Pair Share:

- Share your chosen "person" and First Ask with a partner.
- Reflect together: How does it feel to approach the conversation with AOA in mind?

Quick Coaching Reminder:

"You don't need the whole script figured out — you just need your next right move."

The rhythm of Ask-Offer-Ask can hold you steady even in uncertain or emotional conversations.



Closing Reflections

◇ Slide 16-17 Connection

A Return to Ourselves

"Every time we ask with curiosity, we return to who we're trying to be."

Ask-Offer-Ask isn't about using a new tool for the sake of technique.

It's about **staying connected** to your values:

- Being human.
- Honoring autonomy.
- Supporting change through dignity, not force.

Every AOA conversation is a small act of choosing presence over pressure, connection over control.



Trainer-Led Reflection: The Journey Today

Think back over the past few hours:

- What shifted for you?
- What stood out about how you want to show up in conversations moving forward?
- How does AOA support the kind of practitioner — and person — you want to be?



Capture a few reflections here:



Personal Statement Exercise:

Complete this sentence for yourself:

"Moving forward, I want to show up in my conversations more like this:

(Example: "Curious and present, even when it's hard." or "Focused on helping people feel heard before offering solutions.")

**Optional Pair Share:**

- Invite a few participants to share their personal statements aloud if comfortable.
- Celebrate growth, presence, and the spirit of learning together.

Trainer Tip:

Keep closing share light, brief, and emotionally affirming. End on pride, not pressure.

Keep the Conversation Going

"Continue your journey with Ask-Offer-Ask. Learn more, engage deeper, and bring these tools to life in your practice."

There are many ways to continue growing:

- ☒ **Reflect after each important conversation:**
 - ☐ What worked?
 - ☐ Where did I stay present?
 - ☐ Where did I rush or push?
- ☒ **Revisit the AOA rhythm when preparing for important meetings.**
- ☒ **Explore more resources, tools, and trainings at:**
 - www.ignitingchange.go.com
 - www.amigallc.com

Most of all: Trust your ability to stay human, even in hard moments.

Final Reminder

"Your presence matters more than your perfection."

Thank you for showing up today with curiosity, courage, and commitment to growth.



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