

## Ten Strategies for Evoking Change Talk

### 1. Ask Evocative Questions

Ask open questions, the answer to which is change talk.

### 2. Explore Decisional Balance

Ask first for the good things about status quo, then ask for the not-so-good things.

### 3. Ask for Elaboration

When a change talk theme emerges, ask for more detail. In what ways?

### 4. Ask for Examples

When a change talk theme emerges, ask for specific examples. When was the last time that happened? Give me an example. What else?

### 5. Look Back

Ask about a time before the current concern emerged. How were things better, different?

### 6. Look Forward

Ask what may happen if things continue as they are (status quo). Try the miracle question: If you were 100% successful in making the changes you want, what would be different? How would you like your life to be five years from now?

### 7. Query Extremes

What are the worst things that might happen if you don't make this change? What are the best things that might happen if you do make this change?

### 8. Use Change Rulers

Ask, "On a scale from zero to ten, how important is it to you to [target change] – where zero is not at all important, and ten is extremely important? Follow up: And why are you at \_\_\_ and not zero? What might happen that could move you from \_\_\_ to [higher score]? Instead of "how important" (need), you could also ask how much you want (desire), or how confident you are that you could (ability), or how committed are you to \_\_\_ (commitment). Asking "how ready are you?" tends to be confusing because it combines competing components of desire, ability, reasons and need.

### 9. Explore Goals and Values

Ask what the person's guiding values are. What do they want in life? Using a values card sort can be helpful here. If there is a "problem" behavior, ask how that behavior fits in with the person's goals or values. Does it help realize a goal or value, interfere with it, or is it irrelevant?

### 10. Come Alongside

Explicitly side with the negative (status quo) side of ambivalence. Perhaps \_\_\_\_\_ is so important to you that you won't give it up, no matter what the cost.

## Motivational Interviewing - Condensed “High Yield” Summary Notes

William R. Miller

### An Overall Person-Centered Approach

Collaborative: Working in partnership and consultation with the person; negotiating

Evocative: Listening more than telling; eliciting rather than installing

Respectful: Honoring the person’s autonomy, resourcefulness, ability to choose

### Ambivalence

“Lack of motivation” is often ambivalence: Both sides are already within the person

If you argue for one side, an ambivalent person is likely to defend the other

As a person defends the status quo, the likelihood of change decreases

Resist the “righting reflex” - to take up the “good” side of the ambivalence

### Change Talk

Counsel in a way that invites the person to make the arguments for change

Common dimensions to ask about (DARN)

Desire - want, prefer, wish, etc.

Ability - able, can, could, possible

Reasons - specific arguments for change - Why do it? What would be good?

Need - important, have to, need to, matter, got to

Commitment language - the bottom line This predicts actual change

### Four Basic Micro-skills: OARS

Ask OPEN questions - not short-answer, yes/no, or rhetorical questions

AFFIRM the person - comment positively on strengths, effort, intention,

REFLECT what the person says - “active listening”

SUMMARIZE - draw together the person’s own perspectives on change

### Reflective Listening: A Valuable Skill in Itself

A reflection seeks to summarize what the person means; it makes a guess

A good reflection is a statement, not a question

Levels of reflection

Repeat - Direct restatement of what the person said

Rephrase - Saying the same thing in slightly different words

Paraphrase - Making a guess about meaning; continuing the paragraph;  
usually adds something that was not said directly

Other types of reflection

Double-sided reflection - Captures both sides of the ambivalence (... AND ...)

Amplified reflection - Overstates what the person says

## Eliciting Change Talk

The simplest way: Ask for it, in open questions to elicit desire, ability, reasons, need

*In what ways* would it be good for you to . . . .?

If you did decide to . . . ., how would you do it?

What would be the good things about . . . .?

Why would you want to . . . .?

The balance: What are the good things about . . . . And what are the not so good things?

Importance and Confidence rulers

On a scale from 0 to 10, how *important* is it for you to . . . . .

And why are you at \_\_\_\_ and not zero? (The answer is change talk)

On a scale from 0 to 10, how *confident* are you that you could . . . . .

And why are you at \_\_\_\_ and not zero? (The answer is ability talk)

Looking forward

If you don't make any change, what do you think will happen?

Where would you like to be in \_\_\_\_ years? What do you hope will be different?

And how does \_\_\_\_\_[smoking]\_\_\_\_\_ fit into that?

## Responding to Change Talk

When you hear change talk, don't just sit there!

Reflect it - Restate it back to the person

Ask for examples/elaboration: When was the last time; in what ways,

Ask for more: What else? What other reasons?

Affirm change talk - reinforce, encourage, support it

Summarize - "Collecting flowers into a bouquet"

## Giving Advice

The person is more likely to hear and heed your advice if you have permission to give it

Three forms of permission

1. The patient offers it (e.g., asks for advice)

2. You ask permission to give it

There's something that worries me here. Would it be all right if I . . .

Would you like to know . . .

Do you want to know what I would do, if I were in your situation?

I could tell you some things other patients have done that worked. . .

3. You preface your advice with permission to disagree/disregard

This may or may not be important to you . . .

I don't know if this will make sense to you . . .

You may not agree . . .

I don't know how you'll feel about this . . .

Tell me what you think of this . . .

It's often better to offer several options, rather than suggesting only one

## Responding to Resistance

- Remember that “resistance” is just the other side of the ambivalence
- Don’t argue against it; pushing against resistance entrenches it
- Respond in way that does not increase resistance; roll with it
- Some effective responses that tend to defuse resistance and refocus on change
  - Reflection - Simply acknowledge it by reflecting it back
  - Amplified reflection - Overstating it a bit
  - Double-sided reflection - On the one hand . . . . and on the other . . . .
  - Emphasize the person’s ability to choose, control, autonomy

## Strengthening Commitment

- Change talk (desire, ability, reasons, need) increases commitment
- Commitment language signals behavior change
  - Encourage even low-strength commitment language:
    - I’ll think about it; I might; I’ll try; I could
  - High-strength commitment language:
    - I will; I’m going to; I promise; I’ll do my best
- Is the obstacle *importance* or *confidence*?
  - Certain language signals desire, but low confidence/ability
    - I’ll try; I wish I could; I would if I could; I’ve tried

## Closing Summary

- Complete a consultation by giving a summary:
  - Bouquet: draw together the person’s desire, ability, reasons, need themes
  - Briefly acknowledge areas of reluctance, if appropriate
  - Summarize the person’s commitment strength
  - If commitment is strong, elicit/negotiate a change plan

## Sources

- Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2002). *Motivational interviewing: Preparing people for change* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Guilford Press.
- Rollnick, S., Mason, P., & Butler, C. (1999). *Health behavior change: A guide for practitioners*. New York: Churchill Livingstone.