

Ten Strategies for Evoking Change Talk

1. Ask Evocative Questions: Use Open-Ended Questions

Examples

- ▶ Why would you want to make this change? (desire)
- ▶ How might you go about it to succeed? (ability)
- ▶ What are the three best reasons for you to do it? (reasons)
- ▶ How important is it for you to make this change? (need)
- ▶ So, what do you think you'll do? (commitment)

2. Ask for Elaboration

When a change talk theme emerges, ask for more detail:

- ▶ In what ways?
- ▶ How do you see this happening?
- ▶ What have you changed in the past that you can relate to this issue?

3. Ask for Examples

When a change talk theme emerges, ask for specific examples:

- ▶ When was the last time that happened?
- ▶ Describe a specific example of when this happens.
- ▶ What else?

4. Looking Back

Ask about a time before the current concern emerged:

- ▶ How have things been better in the past?
- ▶ What past events can you recall when things were different?

5. Look Forward

Ask about how the future is viewed:

- ▶ What may happen if things continue as they are? (status quo)
- ▶ If you were 100 percent successful in making the changes you want, what would be different?
- ▶ How would you like your life to be in the future?

6. Query Extremes

Ask about the best and worst case scenarios to elicit additional information:

- ▶ 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?

7. Use Change Rulers

Ask open-questions about where the patient sees himself or herself on a scale from 1 to 10:

- ▶ On a scale where “1” is not at all important, and “10” is extremely important, how important is it to you to change...? (need)
- ▶ Follow up: Explain why are you at a ... and not (a lower number).
- ▶ What might happen that could move you from ... to a ... (higher number)?
- ▶ How much do you want to ...? (desire)
- ▶ How confident you are that you could ...? (ability)
- ▶ How committed are you to ...? (commitment)

8. Explore Goals and Values

Ask what the person's guiding values are:

- ▶ What do you wish for your life?
- ▶ What values are most important to you? (using a values card sort can be helpful here)
- ▶ How does this behavior fit into your value system?
- ▶ In what ways does ... (the behavior) conflict with your value system?

9. 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.
- ▶ It may not be the main area that you need to focus on in our work together.