

Ten Strategies for Evoking Change Talk

1. Ask Evocative Questions
Ask open questions, the answer to which is change talk. The questions used in the “Taste of MI” exercise are good examples:
 - Why would you want to make this change? (Desire)
 - How might you go about it, in order 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?
3. 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?
4. Look Back
Ask about a time before the current concern emerged. How were things better, different?
5. Look Forward
Ask what may happen if things continue as they are (status quo). 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?
6. 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?
7. 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 a bit confusing because it combines competing components of desire, ability, reasons and need.
8. 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?
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.