

## NINE STRATEGIES FOR EVOKING CHANGE TALK

Motivational Interviewing (asking questions!) is done in relation to a clear change goal. The MI clinician uses a specific strategic method to elicit and strengthen change talk. This is the defining aspect of MI that differentiates it from general client-centered counseling.

- 1. Ask Evocative Questions** - Ask open questions, the answer to which is Change Talk. Here 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 are things better or 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 Changes Rulers**
  - Ask, "On a scale of zero to ten, how important is it to you to (TARGET BEHAVIOR CHANGE) – where zero is not at all important and ten is extremely important?"
  - Follow up: "And why are you at \_\_\_ and not zero?"
  - Instead of "how important" (need), you could also ask how much you want (desire), or how confident you are that you could (ability)
- 8. Explore Goals and Values** - Ask what the person's guiding values are.
  - What do they want in life?
  - 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."

## **RESPONDING TO CHANGE TALK**

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

Explore – Ask for elaboration – how, in what ways, why? Ask for examples: when was the last time this happened. Note that these are in the list above and are actually follow-up questions when change talk occurs.

Affirm – Express agreement, appreciation, encouragement, etc.

Reflect – This is the most common response to change talk – to offer a simple or complex reflection

Summary – Change talk is also “collected” into a summary

## **ELEMENTS OF MI**

SPIRIT – collaboration or partnership, evocation, autonomy, compassion

OARS – counseling skills: Open questions, Affirmations, Reflections, Summaries

PRINCIPLES – RULE: Roll with resistance, Understand motivation, Listen with empathy, Empower

PROCESSES – flow of a session: Engage, Focus, Evoke, Plan