

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