

Strategies for Eliciting Change Talk

Adapted from Berg-Smith Training and Consultation, 2009

Ask Evocative Questions

Reasons for Change

What about the change is appealing to you?

If nothing changes, what might happen? What's at stake?

How has _____ stopped you from doing what you want to do?

What are some of your concerns about?

Change in the abstract

If you wanted to, how would you do it?

If you were to try again, what might be the best way to do it?

So let's pretend you were going to make this change. How might you go about it?

Exception question

How did you stop yourself for overeating on an occasion when you felt depressed?

What was going on when you kept food records consistently?

Not ready for change

What might need to be to be different for you to think about changing?

What would need to happen for you to think about changing?

If you were to decide one day to change, how do you think you might do it?

What do you think is stopping you from putting _____ at the top of your list?

Explore pros and cons

What are some of the advantages for keeping things just the way they are?

What are some of your concerns about keeping things the way they are?

What do you like about _____? On the other hand, what don't you like?

Look Forward:

How would you like things to turn out for you? Where would you like to be?

Where are you now? Where would you like to be?

What would be the best results you could imagine if you made a change?

How might your life be different if you _____?

Query Extremes

What is worst thing that could happen if you stayed this way?

What are your worst fears about what might happen if you don't make a change?

What concerns you the most about _____?

Use change rulers

How important is it to you to...?

How confident are you...?

How ready are you?

How interested are you...?

Then –

Tell me about why you chose ____?

Why an ____ and not a ____ (number lower)? (example, why a 4 and not a 1 or a 2?)

What would it take to get you to ____ (higher number)?

Explore Goals & Values

Help people identify their guiding values and longer-term goals. Explore current behavior in the context of how it is supporting or getting in the way of those values and goals.

Complex Reflections

AIM TO REFLECT: AMBIVALENCE RESISTANCE CHANGE TALK

Type	Strategy	Statement	Reflection example
Reframe	Suggest a new way of looking at something that is more consistent with behavior change	I've tried so many times to change, and failed.	You're very persistent, even in the face of discouragement.
Amplification	Offer an exaggerated form of what the person said to allow them to look at the other side of ambivalence. Note: Empathy, not sarcasm 😊	My girlfriend is always blowing things out of proportion. I haven't ever been that bad.	It seems to you that she has no reason for concern.
Double-sided	Capture both sides of ambivalence. Note: connect with "and" not "but" & finish with the change talk	It's not possible that I had that much alcohol in my system. I drank more than I should have but it wasn't that bad.	So on the one hand, you're wondering how your BAC could have been that high and on the other hand, you recognize that you drank more than you should have.
Affective	Reflect feeling - either stated or implied.	I haven't had an HIV test in over a year, I guess maybe I've been avoiding it.	You're worried.
Metaphor	Use descriptive language that paints a picture for the other person.	I've been doing this forever. It doesn't seem like anyone cares anymore whether I get it done or not.	It's kind of like you're running a marathon with no one cheering you on.
Emphasizing choice	Point out individual choice and control.	I don't know if I have a problem with drinking or not. I am NOT going to AA.	You'd like to have some say in how you handle this.
Coming alongside	Take up the argument for no change to allow the other person to take up the argument for change.	I don't think this is going to work for me, either.	It's certainly possible that it won't work and so it might not be worth trying.
Continuing the paragraph	Venture the next sentence in the person's paragraph, instead of merely echoing the last one.	I am not so sure that this is the right thing. I know what's required of me and I am not sure that this is what I should be doing.	And yet, getting out from under this level of monitoring is important to you.

MI Reflections Practice

Read the statements below and write down three different responses to each item. Each should emphasize a different aspect of the statement.

Example:

It's been fun, but something has got to give. I just can't go on like this anymore.

1. You've enjoyed yourself.
 2. You're worried about what might happen.
 3. It's time for a change.
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Harold: *I know I could do some things differently, but if she would just back off, then the situation would be a whole lot less tense. Then these things wouldn't happen.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Kelly: *I've been depressed lately. I keep trying things other than drinking to help myself feel better, but nothing seems to work except having a couple of drinks.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Michelle: *So, I'm not too worried but it's been over a year since I've had an HIV test.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

David: *I know I'm not perfect, but why do they always tell me what to do. I'm not 12 years old!*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.