

Ten Strategies for Evoking Change Talk

1. Ask Evocative Questions

Ask open questions, the answer to which is change talk.

2. Explore Decisional Balance

Ask first for the good things about the status quo, then ask for the not so good things.

3. Ask for Elaboration

When a change talk theme emerges, ask for more detail. In what ways?

4. 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?

5. Look Back

Ask about a time before the current concern emerged. How were things better, different?

6. Look Forward

Ask what may happen if things continue as they are (status Quo). Try the miracle question: 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?

7. Query Extremes

What are the worst things that might happen if you don't make this change? What are the best things that could happen if you do make this change?

8. Use Change Rulers

Ask, "On a scale from 0 to 10, how important is it to you to change, where 0 is "not at all important" and 10 is "extremely important"? Follow up with: And why are you at a ___ and not a (lower number)? What might happen that could move you from ___ to a slightly higher number? Also, use the same scaling question to determine a person's current confidence, why they didn't select a lower number, and what could bump them up a notch in terms of their confidence?

9. 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. (See MI website for cards). Gently ask how the problem behavior fits in with the person's values.

10. Explicitly Side with the Status Quo

In a genuine and sincere tone of voice, you may say, "Perhaps ___ is so important to you, it's worth it no matter what the cost."