

## Twelve Strategies for Evoking Change Talk: 12 Strategies for Evoking Change Talk

- 1. Ask Evocative Questions:** Ask open-ended questions, the answer to which is change talk.
- 2. Explore Decisional Balance:** Ask first about the good things related to the status quo (or reflect what you've heard); then ask about the not-so-good things. Use this sparingly and with good reason. Always ask: *So, where does this leave you now?*
- 3. Ask for Elaboration:** When a change talk theme emerges, ask for more details. *In what ways? Tell me more...? What does that look like?*
- 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, or a time the person was successful in this area. *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? Ask: If you do make these changes, what will life be like, say 6 months from now (or whatever time frame makes sense)? And if you don't make these changes?*
- 7. 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?*
- 8. 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 \_\_\_ [lower number than they stated]? What might happen that could move you from \_\_\_ to [higher number]?* Instead of "how important" (need), you could also ask: how much do you want (desire), or how confident are you that you could (ability), or how committed are you to (commitment). If importance and confidence are high, ask how ready are you?
- 9. 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?
- 10. 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.* (Careful how you say this! You could easily come across as sarcastic or seem manipulative.)
- 11. Hypothetical questions about change:** This is especially useful when importance is low. *So, let's just pretend you were going to make this change, or you were going to tell a friend to make this change; what would it look like? How might you go about it?*
- 12. Typical day:** Useful to help define a pattern of the target behavior, such as smoking or to help a person see where change might be possible. *Take me through a typical day of your smoking; if you were going to make some changes, where in this day might you begin?*