Change Talk: Help Your Clients Talk Themselves into New Behaviors

“The Language of Change: Working with a Client’s Own Words to Support Change”
Molly Kellogg, RD, LCSW

Our Outline

- What is Motivational Interviewing?
- The role of change talk in MI
- What is change talk?
- Practice searching for change talk
- Responding to change talk
- Questions

What is motivational interviewing?

Motivation is a fire from within. If someone else tries to light that fire under you, chances are it will burn very briefly.
Stephen R. Covey

What is motivational interviewing?

Motivational interviewing is a collaborative conversation to strengthen a person’s own motivation for and commitment to change

Change talk

- Desire
- Ability
- Reasons
- Need
- Commitment
- Activation
- Taking Steps

DARN

- **Desire**: Statements about preference for change. “I want to… I would like to… I wish…”
- **Ability**: Statements about ability. “I could… I can… I might be able to…”
- **Reasons**: Specific arguments for change. “I would probably feel better if… That would give me more energy to play with my kids.”
- **Need**: Statements about feeling obliged. “I ought to… I really should… I need to…”

CAT

- **Commitment**: Statements about likely change. “I will…” “I am going to…”
- **Activation**: Statements about readiness, willingness “I’m ready to look for…” “I’m willing to…”
- **Taking Steps**: Statements about action taken. “I actually went out and…” “This week I started to…” “I am now doing…”

Practice recognizing change talk

- TV shows, movies
- Videos of participants
- Listen to others’ interactions
- Ask interns to tally change talk
- Audio record your sessions

Elaborate

- **Elaborate** with open questions
- **Affirm** efforts and strengths
- **Reflect** the change talk
- **Summarize** all the change talk you heard

Celebrate what you want to see more of.

Tom Peters
**Affirm**

Reflect what patient is already doing and strengths you hear

“You are already someone who…”

“That took a lot of courage/persistence…”

“You are a person who can make changes.”

“Anyone would find that difficult.”

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**Reflect**

“You really want…”

“Your health is really important to you.”

“You realize it’s become a problem.”

“You know your kids would be healthier.”

“You are able to cook vegetables.”

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**Summarizing**

You reflect a collection of change talk that you have heard from the client.

It’s not about you.

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**Eliciting Change Talk**

- **Desire:** What do you want, like, wish, hope...
- **Ability:** What is possible? What could you do? What are you able to do?
- **Reasons:** What would be the benefits? What would get better?
- **Need:** How important is this change? How much do you need to do this?
- **Commitment:** What are you going to do? What is your plan?
- **Action:** What have you done so far?

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**Suggested Reading**

- Motivational Interviewing in Health Care; Stephen Rollnick, William Miller, Christopher Butler; 2008
- Counseling Tips for Nutrition Therapists: Tips # 69, #110, #122 at www.mollykellogg.com