

Helpful Strategies for Motivational Interviewing

1. Ask Evocative Questions – Use Open-Ended Questions

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?
- How do you see this happening?
- What have you changed in the past that you can relate to this issue?

3. Ask for Examples

When a change talk theme emerges, ask for specific examples.

- When was the last time that happened?
- Describe a specific example of when this happens.
- What else?

4. Looking Back

Ask about a time before the current concern emerged:

- How have things been better in the past?
- What past events can you recall when things were different?

5. Look Forward

Ask about how the future is viewed:

- 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 in the future?

6. Query Extremes

Ask about the best and worst case scenarios to elicit additional information:

- 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 Change Rulers

Ask open questions about where the client sees themselves on a scale from 1 – 10.

- On a scale where one is not at all important, and ten is extremely important, how important (need) is it to you to change _____?



- Follow up: Explain why are you at a ____ and not (lower number)?
- What might happen that could move you from ____ to a ____ [higher number]?
- How much you want (desire),
- How confident you are that you could (ability),
- How committed are you to ____ (commitment).

8. Explore Goals and Values

Ask what the person's guiding values are.

- What do they want in life?
- What values are most important to you? (Using a values card sort can be helpful here).
- How does this behavior fit into your value system?
- What ways does _____ (the behavior) conflict with your value system

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.
- It may not be the main area that you need to focus on in our work together.

Reference: [Strategies](#) from [West Liberty University's Department of Health Sciences](#)