The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are.

J. Pierpont Morgan

Eliciting change talk is at the heart of motivational dialogue. When people increase their change talk, their commitment to change seems to increase too.
What exactly is change talk?

In motivational interviewing, change talk is defined as any statement or non-verbal communication from a consumer indicating interest in, consideration of or commitment to change.

People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they have themselves discovered than by those which have come into the minds of others.

Blaise Pascal

Change talk

- A central focus of working with consumers in the early stages of change is to elicit change talk.
- Change talk consists of self-motivational statements or declarations on the part of the consumer that indicate a movement towards change.
- Change talk may reflect a consumer’s interest in, concern about, readiness to, or ability to change.
Change talk is a way for the consumer to “try on” the idea of change.

• Change talk indicates hopefulness that change may be possible.
• Change talk can trigger ambivalence and fear.
• Change talk is **NOT** your cue to push someone towards a commitment to change or immediate action.

_Eliciting_ change and _forcing_ change are two different things...

It is frequently difficult for helpers to avoid pushing people before they are ready to change

- Are you able to let go of the “righting reflex”?
- In pairs, discuss situations that bring out the “fixer” in you....
- How is that working for you?
Pick a partner.

One of you will discuss something you have wanted or tried to change for some time (smoking, exercise, weight loss, managing finances, etc.)

Your partner will follow the instructions on the next slide.

1. **Explaining** why you should make the change
2. **Outlining** at least three specific benefits that would result from the change
3. **Instructing** you on how to go about making the change
4. **Emphasizing** how important it is for you to change **NOW!**
5. **Warning** you about what will happen if you don’t make the change.

How do you like being “fixed???”
“I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.”

Abraham Maslow

Motivational Interviewing is about illuminating and guiding—**NOT** fixing.

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**Two Phases of Motivational Interviewing**

**Phase I:** Building motivation to change  
**Phase II:** Strengthening commitment to change

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**Stages of Change**

- **Precontemplation**  
  I don’t have a problem

- **Contemplation**  
  maybe this is a problem

- **Determination**  
  I need to do something about this problem

- **Action**  
  I have begun to make a change

- **Maintenance**  
  I am continuing to build on the changes I have made

- **Relapse**  
  oops!!!
1. Engaging: listening to understand—**OARS**

2. Focusing: agenda setting, finding a common and strategic focus, exploring ambivalence

3. Evoking: selective eliciting, responding, summarizing change talk

4. Planning: offering information and advice, moving toward commitment and change

**Phase I: Building Motivation: OARS**

- Asking **Open-ended** questions about consumer’s goals, interests, values, beliefs
- **Affirming, validating** and normalizing consumer’s experiences and thoughts
- **Reflecting** what you have heard to elicit further information
- **Summarizing** periodically to check your understanding

The goal is to elicit change talk!

**10 Strategies for eliciting change talk**

1. Ask **evocative** questions
2. Explore **problem**
3. Ask for **examples**
4. Look **back**
5. Look **ahead**
6. Ask about **extremes**
7. Consider **pros and cons** (decisional balance)
8. Use **readiness rulers**
9. Explore **goals and values**
10. Plan and **commit** to action
Questions to elicit change talk

- What would you most like to be different in your life?
- If you could have one thing in the world, what would it be?
- What are your dreams and hopes?
- What may be some benefits of changing?
- How do you think things might turn out if you don’t change?
- Where does this leave you now?
- How does “x” interfere with who you want to be?
- What would you like your life to be like?

- What are the things you value most?
- How would you describe yourself?
- What matters most to you?
- Of the things we have discussed, which ones concern you most?
- What worries you about how things are?
- What might you want to do?
- How would you like things to turn out for you now, ideally?
- What could be some good things about making a change?

Values
- What is the most important quality in a human being?

Goals
- If you could pick one thing to have in your life what would it be?

Other changes
- What are some things you have tried to change in the past and how was that?

Past successes
- What are you most proud of?

What is unseen
- What might people not know about you if they were meeting you for the first time?

Strengths Based questions
A way to identify the type of change talk you are hearing:

**D**-desire: consumer expresses a desire or interest in the change - "I want to..."

**A**-ability: consumer expresses a confidence or belief that he/she is able to effect the change if and when they choose - "I know I can..."

**R**-reason(s): consumer articulates incentives or rationale for the change - "If...then..."

**N**-need: consumer identifies the importance or necessity of the change - "I have to..."

**C**-commitment: client indicates a readiness and/or willingness to implement the change.

Listen for indications of readiness to change in the consumer's language. Phrases to listen for include:

- "I want to..."
- "I can..."
- "There are good reasons to..."
- "I really need to..."
- "I started..."

When you hear change talk: reflect, reinforce and elicit more!

Open-ended questions to prompt DARN-C statements

- What is working or not working in your life right now? What would you like to be different? (D-desire)
- What types of things have you successfully changed in the past? How did you do it? (A-ability)
- What are some things that may be good about changing? What makes them good? (R-reason)
- What worries you about what may happen if things stay the same? What are your fears? (N-need)
- What's the smallest step you could take to start moving in that direction? (C-commitment)
Exercise

• Pick a partner. Each of you will have the change talk exercise sheet.
• One of you will speak, the other will respond in a manner designed to elicit change talk. Speaker will answer, partner will respond again, speaker will finish the exchange. *(Remember, you may use questions, reflections, affirmations/validations)*
• After each interaction, try to identify which kind of change talk was elicited.
• After the first 4, switch!

Reflection

• A way of responding to something you have heard
• A statement as opposed to a question, often using a "stem" – "It sounds like..." – "I guess you mean..." – "I wonder if you are saying..."
• Can be simple or complex
• Can be passive or directive
• Can involve
  – Repeating
  – Restating
  – Paraphrasing
  – Hypothesizing
  – Summarizing

Simple vs. Complex Reflections

Simple reflection

• Stays close to the content by repeating or restating
• Useful early in relationship building
• Not designed to direct or elaborate but to convey understanding of what has been said
• Should not exceed the length of the original statement
• May employ a stem or merely be a statement

Complex reflection

• Seeks to make an inference or hypothesis about the statement
• Appropriate for relationships in which baseline rapport and comfort has been established
• May involve amplification – Overstatement or exaggeration of what has been said
• May be double-sided – Highlights both sides of ambivalence
Reflective listening is not a passive process... It can be selective or leading. Counselor determines what to reflect in order to emphasize or deemphasize certain aspects of what the consumer is saying. Change talk may be preferentially reflected so that consumer hears his/her own statements of change reinforced.

Form groups of 3.
**Person 1:** Spend about a minute talking about something challenging, fun or memorable you recently did.
**Person 2:** Use simple reflections along the way sticking close to the content but allowing speaker to elaborate or edit.
**Person 3:** At the end of the story, use a more complex summary to identify change talk and/or focus on the emotional salience of the experience.

**Process as a group**

Listen closely to each statement as it is read. Determine whether it is an example of change talk or sustain talk. Demonstrate your answer by Clapping for a Change talk statement or Stomping for a Sustain talk statement. Be prepared to support your positions!
Change talk is often intertwined with sustain talk. That is the nature of ambivalence. The key is to reinforce change talk when you hear it!

**Sustain Talk**
- Disinterest
- Unwillingness
- Lack of motivation
- No perceived benefit
- Fear of loss
- Desire to maintain status quo
- Hopelessness

**Change Talk**
- Interest
- Curiosity
- Motivation
- Need
- Perceived benefit(s)
- Dissatisfaction with status quo
- Hopefulness

Two sides of the same coin!

a person may NOT be ready to change if...

- They deny the problem exists
- They interrupt or argue with you
- Everything you say is countered with reasons to stay as they are
- They appear bored and/or angry
- They change the subject.
- They end the session early.
- They agree with everything but follow through with nothing.
If resistance or sustain talk occurs, avoid the natural impulse to rebut or debate it. How we respond to consumer resistance or sustain talk can alter the behavior and change the dynamic. Sometimes the goal is simply reducing resistance. Implicit in the MI approach is that persistent resistance is not the consumer’s problem but a skill or delivery issue on the part of the counselor. So… we can change our style in ways that will decrease resistance and make collaboration and agreement more likely.

Okay—Now what???

Phase II: Strengthening Commitment to change

Exploring ambivalence (open-ended questions)
Evoking and identifying change talk
Reducing sustain talk (complex reflection)
Decisional balance
Readiness rulers

Responding to ‘sustain’ talk

Shifting focus
– Sidestepping the resistance
– Coming alongside
– Aligning with client
Emphasizing personal choice
– Reinforcing client autonomy and control
Reframing
– Changing client statement from a negative to a positive
Agreement with a twist
– Validating and offering different perspective
Shifting Focus

Shifting focus attempts to get around a contentious or defensive issue by sidestepping it. The counselor validates the consumer’s experience and asks for clarification instead.

**EXAMPLE:**
Consumer: “I know I made a mistake, but the hoops they are making me jump through are getting ridiculous.”
Counselor: “You are upset by all of these hoops. Can you tell me more about the mistake you think you made?”

Coming Along Side

Coming along side allows the counselor to align with the client. It demonstrates empathy and support and allows the client to modify the original statement or agree with it. **EXAMPLE:**
Consumer: “I know I made a mistake, but the hoops that they are making me jump through are getting ridiculous.”
Counselor: “You may be at your limit and might not be able to keep up with all this. What may be a good follow-up question for a consumer who agrees that ‘it’s all too much?’”

Emphasizing Personal Choice and Control

Consumers ultimately have the choice to take action or not and this technique simply asserts this fact. Acknowledging this can sometimes help consumers recognize that they are making a choice. **EXAMPLE:**
Consumer: “I know I made a mistake, but the hoops that they are making me jump through are getting ridiculous.”
Counselor: “You have complied so far even though you haven’t liked what they’re asking you to do. Now, seems you are questioning whether you can or want to continue…”
Reframing

This technique takes consumer communication and gives it a different twist. It may be used to take a negative assertion and give it a positive spin. **EXAMPLE:**

Consumer: "I know that I made a mistake, but the hoops they are making me jump through are getting ridiculous."

Counselor: "You are not happy about others having so much control, but so far you have been able to keep up with all the expectations and have been quite successful!"

**How might you follow this up?**

Agreeing with a twist

This is a complex technique that combines a reflection with a reframe. This gives the consumer confirmation that he was "heard" and then offers another perspective on the communication. It is similar to reframing. **EXAMPLE:**

Consumer: "I know that I made a mistake, but the hoops they are making me jump through are getting ridiculous."

Counselor: "You're feeling frustrated with all these expectations. It's clear, though, you are also committed to moving forward and being successful."

Other responses to Change Talk

- Ask for elaboration
- Ask for more details or examples
- Affirm, reflect, summarize
- Ask "What else?"
- Say "Say more about that"

**Note:** Avoid over-responding...

*(what does that mean?)*
Readiness Rulers: A quick assessment of motivation to change

• A visual tool that enables the consumer and helper to "see" readiness, confidence and ability to change.
  – May be used to identify readiness to change in the earlier stages.
  – Springboard for questions about the potential change, consumer’s fears and hopes, and obstacles to the change occurring.
  – Allows both consumer and helper to see readiness to change on a continuum rather than as a discrete set of stages.
  – Helps to elucidate more specific variables of the change process.

Importance

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is this change to you?

Not important at all

Extremely important

(l) Importance of changing

(C) Confidence in one's ability to change

(R) Readiness to change
Confidence
On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you that you could change if you chose to?

Not confident at all          Extremely confident

Readiness
On a scale of 1 to 10, how ready are you to make this change happen?

Not ready at all          Extremely ready

Precontemplation          Preparation          Action

Readiness ruler questions
• What puts you at “3” and not “2”?
• What happened that moved you from “4” to “5”?
• How did you decide that you were a “6” instead of a “5” or a “7”?
• What would it take to get you from a “3” to a “4”?
• What would be different for you if you were at “7” instead of “6”?
• How would you know if you moved up to “2” from “1”? What would be different?
• When you were at “3”, what do you remember about what it was like for you then?
• What number would (____) put you at on the ruler? What would make their answer different or the same as yours?
Exercise

You will be discussing an issue/concern, in a group of three.

One person will speak, the other will listen, focusing on change talk and readiness and the third will observe.

Observer will note **open-ended questions** that elicit change talk, the type of change talk elicited, **complex reflections**, affirmations and responses to sustain talk. Each exchange should last about 7-10 minutes.

**Offer no advice, but you may express concern...**

Ask questions to elicit change talk:

- What would it take for you to want to make this change?
- How might you go about it, in order to succeed?
- What may get in the way of you doing it?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is it right now for you to make this change?

For every question, offer at least two reflections.

**Tips for the listener...**

**Advice**

**Stronger and more frequent self-motivational statements**

Statements that reflect recognition of, concern about, openness to, or optimism about change

**Increased questions about change**

the consumer wants to know what they can do about the problem or what others have done in similar circumstances.

**Signs of readiness to change**
Signs of readiness to change

- Envisioning
  Consumer talks about how life could be/look in the future or discusses advantages of change

- Experimenting
  Consumer is willing to talk about first steps or begins to try different change approaches

### ‘PAPA’
Moving towards commitment

- Request Permission to further explore the subject
- Ask consumer what their knowledge or experience has been with the issue.
- Provide a menu of options for making the first step.
- Ask how the consumer feels about what you have said.

What’s the next step?

### Change Plan

- When the consumer has increased change talk and there is little sustain talk this is may signal to the counselor that the consumer is moving towards making a decision.
- At this point, counselor may want to shift towards negotiating a change plan or strategy. This can be a formal exercise such as the change plan on the next page or it can be a more informal conversation about consumer’s options, desires, hopes or ideas about what might work.
Sample Change Plan Worksheet

The changes I want to make are:
1. 
2. 

The most important reasons for change are:
1. 
2. 

The steps I plan to take in making this change are:
1. 
2. 

The ways other people can help me change are:
Person: Possible ways to help:
1. 
2. 

Some things that could interfere with my plan are:
1. 
2. 

I will know if my plan is working if:
1. 
2. 

Consumer Signature: ________________________________
Counselor Signature: ________________________________

Regardless of where a consumer seems to be in their change process, try **not** to get ahead of them...

- Ambivalence about change is natural
- Progress towards change may be imperceptible
- The trajectory of change is rarely linear
- People are more likely to consider change when they feel respected and understood
- Change involves a 'leap of faith'
- Comments or thoughts?
Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change.  

Mary Shelley

“It's so much easier to suggest solutions when you don't know too much about the problem.”  

Malcom Forbes