
TUNING IN TO CHANGE TALK

What am I hearing, and why is it important?

By encouraging people to talk about what they want to change, feel is possible, within their ability and important to them; we can encourage behaviour change. Motivational interviewing is a counselling style which focuses on the language of change. MI skills are particularly focused on eliciting change talk.

What does change talk sound like?

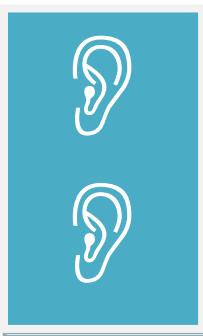


Change talk is any language in the direction of change. People may say things like: "I want to lose weight", "I could walk more often", "I need to get fitter, because I can't keep up with my kids". These are statements that tell us what's important to the person, and what they think they can do.

As this language gets stronger, it is predictive of commitment language: "I'm ready to try the new medication", "I'm willing to see the psychologist", or "I will start tomorrow." See the references below for some studies that support the idea that more change talk and commitment language is predictive of actual behaviour change. Research also highlights that clinicians can be instrumental in eliciting this language, and thus promoting change.

What do I do if I hear change talk?

Use 'EARS' to reinforce and elicit more change talk. Encouraging change talk in the conversations you have with people is a key part of motivational interviewing.



E – Elaborate; ask the person to tell you more, seek elaboration.

"What do you enjoy the most about exercise?"

A – Affirm; acknowledge and affirm the person's efforts and strengths

"You are a determined person."

R – Reflect; reflect what you hear, so that the person can hear it too

"It's important to you to get fitter and to be a more active parent."

S- Summarise; 'collect' change talk statements and summarise them

"You would like to find out more about depression and how to manage it. Your family and your work are important to you, and you need to feel useful, and that you're making a contribution. You've got excellent support and you've started exercising again – which has been helpful. You're ready to see if talking to someone will help."

References:

Amrhein, P. C., Miller, W. R., Yahne, C., Knipsky, A., & Hochstein, D. (2004). Strength of client commitment language improves with therapist training in motivational interviewing. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 28(5), 74A.

Amrhein, P. C., Miller, W. R., Yahne, C. E., Palmer, M., & Fulcher, L. (2003). Client commitment language during motivational interviewing predicts drug use outcomes. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 71, 862–878.