

Study Guide

Module 3: Understanding Client Speech



This module focuses on identifying different types of patient language and learning how to respond in a way that builds motivation rather than resistance. According to the sources, how you respond to specific types of speech can either "**wrestle**" with the patient or help you "**dance**" through the conversation.

1. The Three Types of Client Speech

Understanding the distinction between these three categories is essential for choosing the right MI-consistent response.

Type	Definition	Examples	How to Respond
Change Talk	Any client speech that favors movement toward a particular change goal (e.g., getting vaccinated).	"I wouldn't want my daughter to get measles". "I want to make the right choice".	Cultivate it. Use reflections (complex when possible), reinforcement, affirmations, or ask for more detail.
Sustain Talk	Any client speech that favors the status quo (keeping things as they are).	"It just seems like way too many shots". "I've got a strong immune system".	Soften it. Use simple reflections, acknowledge their research, and emphasize their autonomy.
Discord	Language that reflects dissonance in the relationship (e.g., arguing, interrupting, or questioning motives).	"It's my kid, not yours". "You probably get paid to say that".	Dance with it. Emphasize autonomy, acknowledge the lack of trust, and keep your cool by avoiding knee-jerk reactions.

2. Recognition Practice: Identify the Speech Type

Identify each statement as **Change Talk**, **Sustain Talk**, or **Discord**.

1. "I read that brochure you gave me about community immunity."
2. "You're just another authority figure judging me."
3. "I'm worried I might be putting my kids at risk by waiting."



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4. "Everyone in my church says natural immunity is better."
 5. "I can probably figure out a way to make the next clinic date work."
 6. "Doctors don't really care about what I think anyway."
 7. "I don't have time to wait in line for a shot today."
 8. "I want to feel confident that I'm doing what's best for my baby."
 9. "Everything I've read online says this vaccine is dangerous."
 10. "I need to take better care of myself to be around for my grandkids."
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Answer Key

1. **Change Talk** (Taking Steps).
 2. **Discord** (Reflects dissonance/lack of trust).
 3. **Change Talk** (Reason/Concern).
 4. **Sustain Talk** (Favors status quo based on social influence).
 5. **Change Talk** (Ability).
 6. **Discord** (Indicates lack of trust).
 7. **Sustain Talk** (Logistical barrier to change).
 8. **Change Talk** (Desire).
 9. **Sustain Talk** (Favors misinformation).
 10. **Change Talk** (Need).
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3. Listening Challenge

Your Goal This Week: Identify **3 examples of change talk** in real conversations (at work or at home).

- **Example 1:** _____
- **Example 2:** _____
- **Example 3:** _____

Tip: When you hear it, resist the "righting reflex" to argue. Instead, reflect it back to strengthen their internal motivation.