

READINESS TO CHANGE – Tailoring Your Communication

Readiness to change is influenced by how important clients/patients think it is to change and how confident they feel in their own ability to change.

It's best to check how important it is for someone to change first, as even if a client/patient feels really confident in their ability to change, if they don't see change as important they'll never feel motivated!

The importance ruler and rating questions

How important is it to you to work on _____ given the other priorities you have in your life?

Where 0 = not important and 10 = very important.

Rating questions:

What makes you choose that number and not a lower number? (Eg Why a 6 and not a 3?)

Evokes change talk - the client's reasons for change (motivational hooks)

What would it take to move your score to a higher number? (e.g. why a 6 & not a 9?)

- reveals the barriers and reasons why change is not a priority.

If importance is high, ask about confidence

The confidence ruler and rating questions

How confident are you on a scale of 1-10, that you can make this change today or tomorrow morning?

Where 0 = not confident and 10 = very confident

What makes you choose that number and not a lower number? (Eg Why a 6 and not a 3?)

Evokes change talk - the reasons why the client thinks they have the ability to change (motivational hooks)

What would it take to move your score to a higher number? (e.g. why a 6 & not a 9?)

-reveals the barriers and and reasons why the client feels unsure they can change.

APPROACH FOR PRECONTEMPLATION

Acknowledge, validate and acknowledge client/patient's control the client's control of the decision: The decision to change is yours

Explore potential concerns: Is there anything aboutthat affects your life/condition or may affect your life/condition in the future?

What concerns do you have about this behaviour? What concerns you about the current behaviour? What consequences concern you the most?

Validate that the client is not ready: From what you are telling me, it sounds like you are..

Explore motivation: How important is it to you to change this behaviour?

Value: What is important to you? What do you value in your life? What matters to you?

How does your health affect what matters to you most?

If your deteriorated, in what ways would it affect your life?

Vision: What would you like to do in the future? How could your health help you?

How would changing make your life better?

Validate the client's experience: It's ok to feel that way

Offer information if appropriate: I understand now is not the right time to talk about..... would you like information for later reference?

Keep the door open: If you feel like you want to have a discussion later down the track let me know

PRECONTEMPLATION GOALS

Appropriate goals/actions for Pre-contemplation 'I won't'- aim to increase importance and get them thinking about change.

Client who don't think change is important could set goals that include thinking, talking, listening, researching, discovering and deciding.

For example, research the behaviour and how personally relevant it is to them to change it, talk to someone who has changed the behaviour or consider how changing the behaviour might have positive impacts on their future.

What if your client doesn't want to change?

If a person is not ready for a change for example, you should respect their decision. You can emphasize their autonomy and with their permission you could ask them to explore the possibility of changing:

'The decision change is completely up to you. I'm here to support whatever you decide to do'.

Appropriate actions for Pre-contemplation 'I can't' - aim to increase confidence and get them thinking about change.

Clients who feel that they can't change may need help processing their obstacles. They may have significant lifestyle stressors that seem overwhelming and impossible to overcome. A coach can help break these down and find small realistic actions that move a client towards change.

They could:

- List obstacles/challenges and research at least one strategy to overcome each obstacle
- Research facilitators for changing the behaviour, ie. support groups

APPROACH FOR CONTEMPLATION

Validate the client's experience and ambivalence: You are considering changing but are not sure if you are ready to start making changes yet

Acknowledge the client's control of the decision: Would you like to discuss your thoughts a bit further to help you move toward a decision?

Explore motivation: How important is it to you to change this behaviour?

What is important to you about making a change?

Why have you been thinking about changing this behaviour?

What concerns do you have about this behaviour?

What are the reasons you'd like to make a change?

What are you hoping to gain from making this change?

What does the future look like if you don't change?

What motivates you?

Value: What is important to you? What do you value in your life? What matters to you?

How does your health affect what matters to you most?

If your deteriorated, in what ways would it affect your life?

How might this change get you what you want?

How could this behaviour make you feel good?

Vision:

How will your health help you achieve your ideal life?

How would things be different (better) if you decided to change?

Imagine, sometime in the future, ie. 3 months and you have achieved change, how would you feel?

Confidence - Encourage exploration of possible behaviour change:

What would it take to be ready to change?

If you were to change your _____ how would you do it?

What would change look like for you?

What is currently working well for you or has worked in the past?

What ideas do you have that could work?

What did you learn from past attempts?

Encourage further self-exploration: Would you like to explore factors that can influence behaviour? You don't have to make a decision right now.

Clarify the client's perceptions of change: It can be helpful when making a decision to consider the pros and cons of staying as you are now vs. changing. Would this be something you'd be willing to have a look at now?

Restate your position that it is up to them: It is up to you to decide if change is right for you. Whatever you choose, I'm here to support you. I'm here if you want help.

Leave the door open for moving to preparation: After considering this, if you feel you would like to make some changes, we can discuss the potential next steps

CONTEMPLATION GOALS

Appropriate goals for Contemplation 'I may' are to move them into preparation - planning to make the change.

Clients who are thinking about making a change can build importance and confidence by thinking about the change they'd like to make, talking to others, reading articles, listening to podcasts, investigating how they might do it, and deciding what they intend to do.

They could:

- investigate fitness centres, collect a timetable and consider which class they would like to take
- increasing awareness by mindful eating or keeping a food diary
- talk to someone who has changed this behaviour
- research healthy lunch recipes

- break the behaviour into small achievable steps

APPROACH FOR PREPARATION

Affirm the client's decision to change behaviour: It's great that you feel good about your decision to change. You are taking action to improve your health

Explore motivation

What are the most important reasons for wanting to change?

What do you value in your life? What matters to you?

How might this change get you what you want

Help the client to prioritise behaviour change opportunities:

What would make the most difference in achieving your goal whilst also being achievable right now?

Anticipate feeling good/Notice benefits

What will you feel like once you've achieved change?

How could this behaviour make you feel good?

Imagine, sometime in the future, ie. 3 months and you have achieved change, how would you feel?

What did you notice after doing the behaviour (more alert, focussed, slept better etc)

Identify and assist with problem solving regarding barriers:

Have you ever attempted to make changes before?

What was helpful?

What worked?

What would possibly get in the way of making changes? How could you deal with these barriers?

What will help you to overcome barriers or challenges when they arise?

What/who will help you to keep on track?

How can I support you?

Encourage small initial steps:

What will help you to get started?

Setting small tasks every few weeks can help to break your goal down into achievable chunks.

Assist the person in identifying social support: Which family members/friends/colleagues could support you as you make this change? How could they support you?

PREPARATION GOALS

Appropriate goals clients in preparation stage are 'doing' goals to move them into action - making the change.

Clients in preparation stage are ready to take steps towards trying out their behaviour and seeing how they can make it work.

They might:

- Trial a gym class
- Cook a healthy meal
- Watch a mindfulness Youtube clip
- Have a detailed plan of action steps and tracking method
- Set a reminder to drink water or increase movement

APPROACH FOR ACTION

Engage and reinforce the importance of their change: It's great you have been making progress and achieving your goals, you are heading in the right direction towards your increasing your energy levels/improving your health.

Support a realistic view of change through small steps: Successful change is usually a result of small steps that add up to big results.

Acknowledge difficulties in the early stages: It takes a lot of work in the early stages to achieve change. You don't have to be perfect, it usually takes a few attempts for people to successfully change.

Help assess whether they have adequate support in place: Who have you shared your plan with? Who is helping you to stay on track? Are there any not so helpful influences?

Review plan including tracking: Is the plan working out? How are you tracking your progress?

Reaffirm strengths and vision: It can be helpful for long term motivation to review your vision. Considering your strengths can also help to boost your confidence in maintaining changes.

Anticipate lapses: It's normal for clients to take action, lapse, take action. As a coach you can explore what interrupted the action, triggered the lapse, and support the client to then put plans in place to prevent it happening next time.



ACTION GOALS

Clients in action are trialing out their goals and adjusting as necessary. They may wish to make the goal harder if they are achieving it easily, or reduce it or change it if it's proving too difficult. You may also coach them to adjust the action plan to see if that makes the goal easier to achieve next time.

You will ask them about the next couple of weeks ahead to ensure there are 'what if' plans in place and to ensure they feel confident about tackling the weeks ahead.