“Why Won’t They Listen?”
Engaging People in Conversations About Change

January 11, 2017
Jeremy Evenden, MSSA, LISW-S
Consultant and Trainer

www.centerforebp.case.edu

CENTER FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES
A partnership between the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences & Department of Psychiatry at the School of Medicine

A Technical-Assistance Center
Providing consultation, training, and evaluation for the implementation of integrated behavioral healthcare services
Learning Objectives

1. Explore what leads people to consider health behavior change
2. Define and identify a person’s readiness to change
3. Describe staff behaviors that interfere with a person’s motivation to consider a change.
4. Identify person-centered strategies to enhance engagement and increase motivation to change health behaviors.

Individuals change voluntarily when they . . .

• Become interested in or concerned about the need for change
• Become convinced that the change is in their best interests or will benefit them more than cost them
• Organize a plan of action that they are committed to implementing
• Take the actions that are necessary to make the change and sustain the change
Stages of Change

Precontemplation
Contemplation
Preparation
Action
Maintenance

Components of Change Overview

Resistance
Ambivalence
Motivation

Common Complications:
(Ways to Create Resistance and Strategies to Avoid Them)

6 Complications
1. Question & Answer
2. Be the Expert
3. Information Overload
4. Labeling
5. Blaming/Shaming
6. Demanding Change

6 Ways to Engage
1. Ask and Listen
2. Shared Responsibility
3. Check Understanding
4. Person-Centered
5. Acceptance of Person
6. Change is the Person’s Decision

www.centerforebp.case.edu
Question & Answer

Asking a series of close-ended questions can lead to:
- Restricted information
- Frustration
- Defensiveness
- Passivity

Solution: Ask and Listen

- Use open-ended questions (minimal closed)
- Communicate understanding (use reflections)
- People feel heard and engaged in their care
- Doesn’t necessarily take more time and yields more information

Expert

Provider telling person what to do can lead to:
- Passivity
- Half-hearted commitments
- Verbalized “compliance”
Solution: Shared Responsibility

- Ask permission to share information
- Avoid jargon
- Acknowledge person’s expertise
- Information sharing - a two way street
- Offer options/choices

Information Overload

Providing too much information at one time can lead the person to:

- Feel overwhelmed
- Be unable to act
- Stop listening
- Not absorb Information

Solution: Check Understanding

- Share small amounts of information
- Stop and check understanding before offering further information
Labeling

Referring to person as their condition or in negative terms can lead to:

- Barriers in relationship
- Resistance (people don't like labels)
- Dissatisfaction with provider

Solution: Person-Centered

- Be person-centered
- Seek to understand the person’s experience
- Treat person with respect
- Address person according to their preference
- View person as capable

Blaming/Shaming

Criticalizing person for behavior that may be worsening their health condition can lead to:

- Defensiveness
- Not feeling empowered
- Decreased motivation to change
- Increased unhealthy behavior
Solution: Acceptance of Person

- Learn what matters to the person
- Acknowledge behavior change is hard
- Repeated attempts at change are normal
- Affirm small change efforts

Demanding Change

Attempting to force behavior change can lead to:

- Resistance
- A power struggle - nobody wins!

Solution: Change is the Person’s Decision

- Choice and control belongs to the person
- View person as capable
- Express optimism about ability to change
- Create opportunities for person to voice need for change
- Be a resource
Motivating Behavior Change
What is it?

• Collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication
• Pays specific attention to language of change
• Elicits and explores person’s own reasons for change
• Occurs within the context of staff acceptance and compassion

Language in Favor of Change

Invite the client to argue for change

Desire – want, prefer, wish, etc.
Ability – able, can, could, possible
Reasons – Why do it? What would be good?
Need – important, have to, need to, got to
Commitment – intention, decision, readiness

Core Skills

• Asking open-ended questions
• Reflective listening
• Affirming
• Informing & advising
• Summarizing
Open-Ended Questions: Learning More About Person’s Experience

1. How are you feeling today?
2. What is worrying you most today about ...?
3. What concerns you most about ...?
4. How have you been doing since our last appointment?
5. What happens when ...?
6. When did you first notice...?
7. Tell me more about...?

Eliciting Change Language - Handout

• Pros/cons
• Importance/Confidence Rulers
• Looking back/looking forward
• Asking for more information
• Exploring goals and values

Assess Importance/Confidence

1. On a scale of 0 - 10 how important is it for you to ________ (exercise more)?
2. Why are you at a ____ and not a zero?
3. What would it take for you to be at a ____ (one number higher than they are)?
When Readiness is Low: Consider Hypothetical Questions

1. “What might it take for you to make a decision to ...?”
2. “If you were to (stop smoking), what might be some of the benefits?”
3. “How would you know it was time for you to make a change?”
4. “How would you like things to be different?”
5. “If you were to keep things the same, what might your life be like in 5 years?”
6. “What advice might you offer to a friend in a similar situation?”

Core Skills

- Asking open-ended questions
- **Reflective listening**
- Affirming
- Informing & advising
- Summarizing

Reflections

Making a statement that reflects what the person has said to you. This might include:
- A simple restatement of their words
- Restatement with different words
- A metaphor
- Making a guess at what person means
Core Skills

- Asking open-ended questions
- Reflective listening
- Affirming
  - Informing & advising
  - Summarizing

Affirmations

- Promotes positive relationship
  - Engagement
  - Retention in treatment
- Acknowledge the person’s strengths, abilities, good intentions and efforts
- Are genuine and non-judgmental

Affirmations

- “Your health is important to you.”
- “You’re the type of person that thinks things through before making a decision”
- “You don’t feel ready to tackle smoking and you do take your health seriously by taking regular exercise and watching your diet.”
- “Thank you for your patience today.”
- “You’re an independent person.”
Core Skills

- Asking open-ended questions
- Reflective listening
- Affirming
- Informing & advising
- Summarizing

Informing & Advice-Giving

Asking permission first:
- Conveys respect
- Information is more likely to be heard and considered

Explicitly acknowledge they have a choice
“You’ll know when you’re ready.”

Ask – Inform – Ask

Ask – What do you know about the effect of smoking on relapse of alcohol and drug use?
Inform – Provide the missing information
Ask – What are your thoughts that?
Core Skills

- Asking open-ended questions
- Reflective listening
- Affirming
- Informing & advising
- Summarizing

Commitment
Testing the Water

Offer summary & ask a key question

- At this point what do you make of all of this?
- What’s next?
- What do you think about …?
- What do you think you’ll do?
- What, if anything, do you plan to do?
- What do you intend to do?

Testing Commitment

- If you hear language in favor of staying the same:
  - Do not proceed to action planning
  - Continue to develop motivation over time
  - Revisit topic at another time
  - Evaluate if person needs more information

- If you hear language in favor of making a change
  (readiness, willingness or intention):
  - Proceed with planning a course of action
Action Planning

Collaborate on a SMART plan:
- Specific
- Measureable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Timed

Arrange for follow-up:
- Establish a date and time to review progress
- Trouble-shoot obstacles
- Consider any modifications to plan
- Promotes accountability

Summary

- Assess readiness, importance, and confidence
- Explore person’s health-related concerns
- Listen for statements about their own motivation for change
- Share small amounts of information
- Check understanding
- Convey hope and optimism

Contact Us

Center for Evidence-Based Practices (CEBP)
Case Western Reserve University
10900 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44106-7169
216-368-0808