

Motivating People to Make Healthy Changes



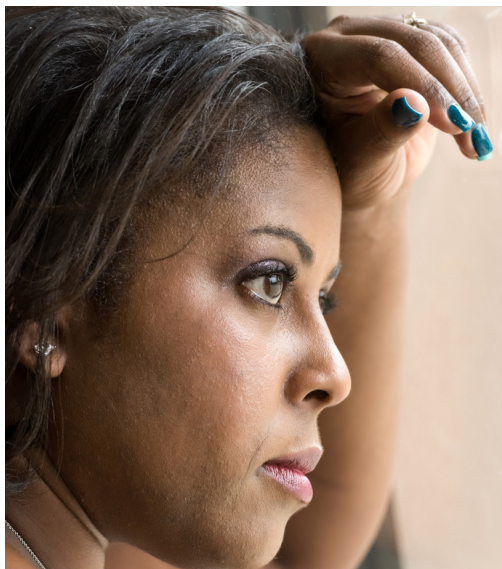
Helping people make healthy changes, such as increasing physical activity or quitting smoking, can be challenging.¹ For example, you might provide a detailed explanation to an overweight person with diabetes about the importance of losing weight only to learn two months later that the individual has gained a few pounds. A lack of progress can be frustrating for you both.

How is it that some individuals successfully change their health behaviors while others don't? Often, you cannot simply tell someone to change and expect the desired results. Instead, you need to artfully engage people and guide them in figuring out for themselves if, when, and how to make a healthy change.^{1,2}

Understand the Ingredients of Motivation

Motivation is what leads to change, and the strength of a person's motivation or readiness to change is determined by two core components: importance and confidence. When both of these ingredients are present, the

individual's efforts to change are more likely to be successful. If one or both are lacking, an individual may not want to make changes or may be ambivalent about doing so.¹



Motivation

Should I really start exercising regularly?

Belief in Importance of Change (the "why" of change)

- ▶ Why is regular exercise worthwhile?
- ▶ Will it make a meaningful difference in my life?

Confidence in Ability to Change (the "how" of change)

- ▶ Can I really commit to regular exercise?
- ▶ How will I begin to exercise regularly?

Source: This framework draws from the work of Pip Mason.¹

Engagement Tip: Give the individual you are helping a copy of the "Gearing Up to Make Health Changes" self-management health aid, which is posted on ArchiTools. Then, work with the individual to assess his or her motivation and make healthy changes.



Assessing the Individual's Motivation to Change

When working with individuals to make behavior changes (eg, stop smoking, eat more fruits and vegetables), you can gauge their motivation levels, or readiness to change, by talking to them about importance and confidence.

Consistent with the rulers on the right, ask them^{1,2}:

- ▶ On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is this change to you?
- ▶ On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you that you can make this change?

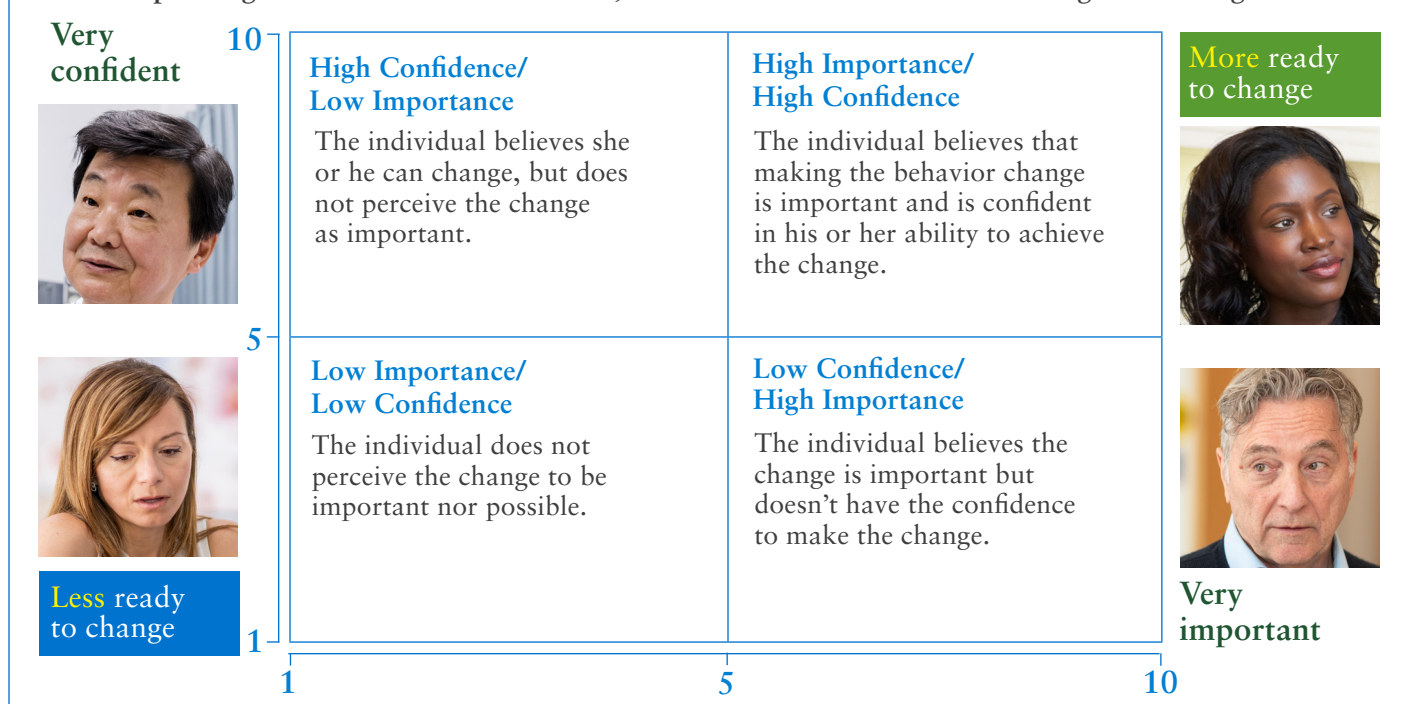
Elicit Positive Change Talk

To encourage people to start thinking more deeply about the value they place in making a healthy change or their confidence in achieving that change, you can ask follow-up questions¹:

- ▶ Why did you rate yourself a 4 and not a lower number on the scale?
- ▶ What would it take to have you rate yourself a higher number than the number you chose?



Depending on the individual's answers, he or she will fall into one of four general categories:



Source: The ruler and grid draw from the work of Pip Mason¹ as well as William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick.²



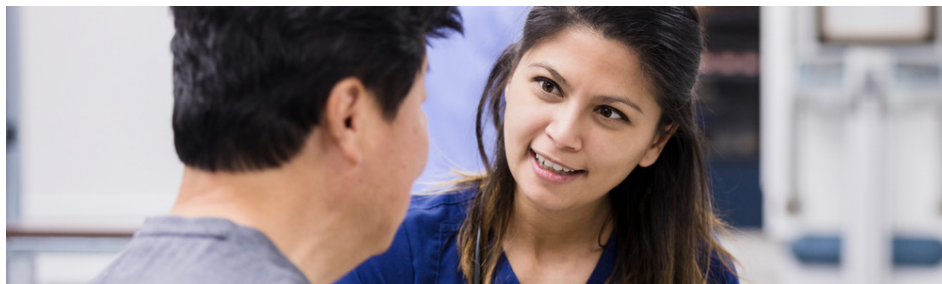
Align Interventions With Individual's Motivation

No blueprint exists for how to handle conversations about making healthy changes,¹ but a lot has been learned about how to engage individuals. Different approaches for encouraging and supporting behavior changes are needed, depending on how individuals rate the importance of the change and their confidence in achieving the change. The following examples illustrate some of these learnings.

Fred: High Confidence/Low Importance

Fred knows he's capable of becoming more physically active, rating his confidence an 8. But he is ambivalent about starting to exercise regularly. He gives the importance of exercise a 3.

Since Fred places relatively little value in exercise, start by exploring importance. Help Fred to think more deeply about the value of regular exercise and identify the benefits of becoming more physically active.¹



Ask open-ended questions to explore the pros and cons of behavior change.^{1,2}

"Fred, can we talk about exercise now? (After Fred says 'yes') Great, so what might be some good things about getting exercise?"

"Well, it would probably help my stress levels. I am on edge a lot, and it's not good for my family."

"Stress relief is a big benefit. Anything else?"

"Exercise could help me avoid type 2 diabetes. As you know, I have prediabetes."

"Preventing diabetes is big positive. What about the not-so-positive aspects of exercise? What's getting in the way?"



Motivating People to Make Healthy Changes



"I prefer to spend what little free time I have with my kids."

Summarize the issue, using the patient's own language. Ask if there's anything else.²

"Fred, it sounds like you think exercise has healthy benefits, but you prefer to spend your free time with your kids. Is there anything else I should know?"

"I enjoy team sports, especially soccer and basketball. But I find solitary exercise, like running or walking, boring."

Ask the individual to imagine the future.¹

"Fred, if you had a crystal ball, what do you think might happen to you in five years if you don't start exercising."

"I'll likely be another 5 pounds heavier and have full-fledged type 2 diabetes, just like my Dad had. I really don't want that."

"OK, now let's imagine if you did start exercising regularly. What might be different in five years?"

"Well, I'd likely lower my blood sugar levels. And maybe I could get in good enough shape to play basketball again. I'd like that."





Motivating People to Make Healthy Changes

Mary:

Low Importance/Low Confidence

Mary has little confidence that she can give up drinking alcohol and doesn't think it's important. She rates importance and confidence a 3. When asked why, Mary explains that her daily two to three glasses of wine help her

unwind. She has tried to cut back to one glass a day, but her attempts have always failed.

In situations like Mary's, you need to gauge whether and how to continue the discussion.



Consider talking about a different behavior change.¹

When people give both importance and confidence low ratings, it might not be productive to pursue the conversation. You might offer to talk about a different healthy behavior change (eg, changes in eating habits) that the person might make.

"Maybe you would prefer to talk about another topic today? What do you think? We could always talk about your drinking at another time, when you're ready."

If you decide to continue the discussion, ask follow-up questions related to the importance ruler.

When a person ranks both importance and confidence low, you should start by exploring importance.¹ Using the importance ruler, frame questions so the person is prompted to think about positive aspects of adopting the behavior. When the individual mentions a potential benefit of making the change, ask follow-up questions to help that person reflect on and explore that benefit more deeply.^{1,2}

"Mary, you rated the importance of reducing your alcohol at a 3. Why so high? What made you rate it as a 3 and not a 2 or a 1?"

"Well, I've heard that alcohol raises your risk of breast cancer, which runs in my family."

"So you'd rate giving up alcohol as a 3 on the importance scale because alcohol can raise your risk of breast cancer.³ What other benefits might you gain by reducing or stopping alcohol use?"



Motivating People to Make Healthy Changes



“I might have more energy. When I drink too much, I drag the next day.”

Ask for an example or elaboration.¹

“I’m wondering, what would you do with the extra energy you’d gain from giving up alcohol?”

“Oh, I’d play with my kids more. They are always asking me to play with them more.”

Ask the person to rank importance again.²

You might ask the person how their loved ones would rank the importance of the behavior change.

“Mary, if your kids were asked to rank the importance of your stopping drinking on a scale of 1 to 10, what number do you think they’d pick?”

“Oh my, probably a 9 or a 10. They hate it when I drink too much.”

“Why do you think the kids’ number would be so high?”





Motivating People to Make Healthy Changes

William: High Importance/Low Confidence

William is well aware that his obesity contributed to his heart attack. He ranks the importance of losing weight at an 8, but his confidence rating is a 2.

Since William already believes in the value of losing weight, you don't need to spend a lot of time reinforcing the importance of weight loss. Instead, explore ways to build William's confidence.¹



Ask about the person's most successful attempt to date.¹
Listen for opportunities to point out the person's strengths, and try to keep the conversation focused on factors that are in the person's control.¹

"Have you tried to lose weight before? If so, tell me about your most successful attempt. What made that attempt different from your other attempts?"

"A few years ago, I lost 12 pounds in six weeks. I planned and shopped for all my meals and snacks, which really helped."

"So, you are a good planner. That's a great skill to have. There's a lot of planning involved when you want to lose weight."

"But that diet turned out to be too stringent. I couldn't eat anything I liked. I ended up quitting the diet and gained weight again."

Brainstorm small, specific strategies for achieving goal.¹

"Sounds like you want to lose weight but still be able to enjoy your favorite foods from time to time. Do I have that right?"

Motivating People to Make Healthy Changes



“Yes, that’s about it. I also don’t want to get too hungry.”

“OK, let’s use your planning skills to figure this out. How about if we brainstorm ideas for ways to lose weight? Let’s focus on small, specific ideas that don’t feel too stringent to you.”

“One strategy that has worked for other people is substituting a healthy food for a less healthy food a few times a week, such as an apple for a bowl of ice cream.”

“That wouldn’t work for me. I’m really not a fruit person.”

“That’s fine. You are the best judge of weight loss strategies that will work for you. What ideas do you have?”

“I started using flavored creamer in my coffee a year ago. But I think I could just drink my coffee black.”

“Great idea! Do you have any other ideas on how you might try to lose weight?”

“I think I could start parking my car at the far end of my office parking lot. That way I’d get in extra walking every day.”



Motivating People to Make Healthy Changes



Assess confidence.¹

Ask the person to assess their confidence in being able to achieve the strategies identified.

“We’ve come up with a list of six small, specific ideas for how you could start eating fewer calories or burning more calories. Do you mind rating, on a scale of 1 to 10, your confidence in being able to achieve each action?”



ARCHITOOOLS

Building Improved Healthcare



Motivating People to Make Healthy Changes

Sally: High Importance/High Confidence

Sally knows it's very important to stop smoking, and she's fairly confident that she can quit. She has already cut down to five cigarettes a day. She rated importance at a 10 and confidence at a 7.

Some people who rank importance and confidence high may need little to no help in progressing towards their health goals.² But you can support their progress with strategies that bolster their confidence and reaffirm the importance of the change.



Affirm the positive achievement.²

“Way to go, Sally! In only three months, you’ve gone from smoking a pack a day to smoking just five cigarettes a day. That’s great. Quitting smoking altogether will lower your risk of lung cancer, breathing problems, and so many other diseases.”

Identify a date to begin the change.¹

“Are you ready to quit smoking altogether? What is your next step?”

“Yes, I believe that I’m ready. But I think I need a month to prepare.”

Make an action plan.¹

“Wonderful! To help ensure your success, let’s create a plan for how you’ll refrain from smoking. Let’s build on strategies that have worked for you so far. What changes did you make to cut back to five cigarettes a day? How did you do that?”



Set S.M.A.R.T Goals

For individuals who are ready to change, help improve their likelihood of success by guiding the individual toward setting health goals that are S.M.A.R.T, or specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timebound given a person's

current health and skill levels.⁵ To achieve their S.M.A.R.T goal, individuals will need an action plan that describes the specific actions they'll take. Help them identify actions they feel confident about, and frequently evaluate their progress.⁵

General Goals	S.M.A.R.T Goals	Action Plans
Lose weight	Lose 35 lbs in one year.	Lose 3 lbs this month by drinking water or unsweetened iced tea instead of my usual three soft drinks a day.
Get regular exercise	Walk for 30 minutes at least 5 days a week by the end of the month.	Walk for 15 minutes after lunch on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays with my friend Suzie every week this month.
Eat a balanced, nutrient-rich diet	Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day by my birthday.	Add a serving (1/2 cup) of fresh fruit, such as strawberries, to my breakfast cereal at least 5 days a week.








Break S.M.A.R.T Goals Into Small Habits

Individuals having trouble achieving their short-term health goals might try the Tiny Habits™ approach. Changing habits into small actions, using the following three steps, can help lead to the adoption of larger goals over time.⁶

- ▶ Break a desired behavior into small actions (eg, 25 push-ups a day becomes two push-ups).
- ▶ Tie the behavior to an anchor, or something you do every day to help you remember to do this small habit (eg, after I brush my teeth, I will do a push-up).
- ▶ Celebrate with a small pleasurable act (eg, say to yourself “nice job”). Giving yourself a reward makes you feel good, which helps wire the habit into your day.

Over time, adopting tiny habits can lead to the achievement of larger goals.⁶ The following example illustrates a tiny habit that may help set an individual on the path to achieving the goal of eating a healthier diet.

Tiny Habit	Anchor	Reward
 <p><i>I'll take strawberries from the fridge...</i></p>	 <p><i>after I pour cereal in a bowl...</i></p>	 <p><i>Then, I'll pump my fist in the air!</i></p>

Source: Based on work of B.J. Fogg.⁶





References

1. Mason P. *Health Behavior Change: A Guide for Practitioners*. 3rd ed. Elsevier; 2019.
2. Miller WR, Rollnick S. *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change*. 3rd ed. The Guilford Press; 2012.
3. Centers for Disease Control. Alcohol use and your health. Published December 2019. Accessed May 24, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm>
4. Centers for Disease Control. Quitting smoking. Published November 2019. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm
5. Bailey RR. Goal setting and action planning for health behavior change. *Am J Lifestyle Med*. 2017;13(6):615-618. doi:10.1177/1559827617729634
6. Fogg BJ. *Tiny Habits and the Small Changes that Change Everything*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; 2020.

