

9 Tips for Helping Your Clients to Make Behaviour Change

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1. **Adopt a partnership approach** - It is important that the person feels they are on equal footing and that they are comfortable to express their feelings, ideas and concerns about change without being judged. Support them to make their own decisions and be respectful of their choices, even if you don't agree with them.
2. **Be aware of your own agenda and assumptions** as your personal beliefs and attitudes can have a significant impact on how effectively you communicate and relate to the person. Be transparent about your own agenda and clarify their needs and expectations to ensure that you are both on the same page and that the most important issues are prioritised.
3. **Help them to understand and articulate their motivations for change** – The person needs to argue for making the change themselves. Resist the temptation to convince a person why they should change, because if they are in two minds about doing it, they are likely to respond by defending the status quo and literally talk themselves out of change. When there are many issues they want to change and it all seems too overwhelming, help them to narrow it down and identify a specific change they are feeling ready, willing and able to work on and tackle one thing at a time.
4. **Support them to build the skills, knowledge and capacity required to make the change** - Help them to identify the abilities they will need in order to make their desired change and to explore strategies for building or enhancing these.
5. **Tap into their strengths and values** - These are the intrinsic motivators and drivers for change and are a key resource that will help to achieve change. Focus on what is right with people and the belief that people do have strengths and abilities to recover from adversity as opposed to emphasising the problems, vulnerabilities and deficits. What one focuses on tends to become their reality.
6. **Build their confidence and self-efficacy** – People need to have the confidence and belief in themselves that they can make change. If their confidence is low; help them to understand the contributing factors and develop strategies for overcoming these. Tapping into their strengths, values and previous successes can help to enhance self-efficacy. It is normal to lack confidence when you lack skills or experience, but if you waited until you were confident to do something you would probably never do it. Being confident does not mean the absence of fear and that only by doing something do we develop the skills and achieve goals.
7. **Assist them to develop their own goals and an action plan** – Support them to set goals that are meaningful to them and where necessary to break down bigger goals into more manageable **SMART** sub goals, ie goals which are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime framed. Encourage them to consider what barriers are likely to get in the way of their goals and to incorporate strategies in their plan for overcoming these. Don't wait for failure to address barriers, do it up front to improve the likelihood of success. It is important to set achievable goals and actions and to celebrate successes along the way.
8. **Enhance their resilience** – Resilience is about having the determination, strength and flexibility to overcome and adapt to obstacles along the path of change. Resilience is essential for sustainable change and is a key ingredient for health and wellbeing. Work with them to develop strategies (eg social supports, coping strategies, problems solving skills and techniques for managing unhelpful feelings, sensations and thoughts) for enhancing their psychological flexibility and resilience.
9. **Be present and mindful** – Focus your attention on the person, with an attitude of openness and curiosity, as this will help you to truly engage with the person. Be aware and try to avoid being carried away by your thoughts and going into a kind of autopilot mode, as this will alter the experience and affect your engagement.

If you would like to learn more strategies and approaches to help your clients with making lifestyle or behavioural changes, Be Inspired Group offers a range of training, education and consulting services. For further information please check out our website www.beinspiredgroup.com.au