

Identifying Change Talk or Sustain Talk

The following are statements you might hear from clients. Read and identify whether each is an example of change talk (C) or sustain talk (S) by placing a check mark in the appropriate column.

CHANGE TALK

Expressed dissatisfaction with status quo/current status

SUSTAIN TALK

Satisfaction with status quo/current status

STATEMENT		C	S
1.	I don't understand why I need to fill out that paperwork.		
2.	I smoke a little but not nearly as much as most people I know.		
3.	I would like it if my kids minded better.		
4.	If things don't change, I'm worried about what will happen.		
5.	I don't like the way my partner controls all the money ...		
6.	... but he is a good provider for me and the kids.		
7.	I would like to learn how to do things differently.		
8.	Everybody is making a big deal out of nothing.		
9.	This is how it was when I was raised, and I turned out fine.		
10.	I want to be a good example for my kids.		
11.	I know someone who smoked until they died at 95.		
12.	My doctor was worried about my smoking.		
13.	If I had a GED, I could get a better job ...		
14.	... but it is hard now that I have kids.		

Growing Change Talk

Asking Evocative DARN Questions

Directions: Use your partner's behavior change example from earlier to help grow their change talk. Ask at least one evocative question from the list below to evoke their desire, ability, reasons, and need for making the change. Insert your partner's desired behavior change in the question blank below.

Desire

- Explores desires or wants, hopes, and wishes

How would you like things to change? What don't you like about how things are now?

How do you want your life to be different a year from now?

Ability

- Explores thoughts about what someone can do, is able to do, or could do.

What do you think you might be able to change?

What ideas do you have for how you could _____?

How likely are you to be able to _____?

Reason

- Explores reasons for considering a change or making a change.

What could be some advantages of _____?

What might be three best reasons for _____?

Finish this sentence: "Things can't go on the way they have because _____?"

Need

- Explores the urgency for this particular change.

How serious or urgent does this change feel to you?

What do you think has to change?

Complete this sentence: "I really must _____."

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 means this is the most important thing to you right now, how important would you say it was for you to _____?

Principles and Practices to Remember:

- There is no way to force people to like change BUT we do have the ability to make them feel less threatened by it.
- Sustain talk is not pathological or oppositional. It's a natural part of the change process.
- When you hear sustain talk, don't push back. Listen to it, respect it, and reflect it to show you understand.
- The goal is to shrink the frequency and intensity of sustain talk and grow the frequency and intensity of change talk by asking evocative DARN questions that help clients create their own argument for change.