

Communication Guidelines to Promote Health Behavior Change

Ask permission

Would you be willing to spend a few minutes discussing your weight?
 Would you like to talk about different ways to exercise and eat?

Share BMI

Your BMI falls within the _____ category.
 The target BMI for someone your height is _____.
 Ask for the patient's interpretation: "What does this mean to you?"
 Add your own interpretation or advice as needed after eliciting the patient's response.

Offer options

There are a number of ways to achieve a healthy weight.

- Exercise and be physically active.
- Cut back on TV and computer time.
- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Cut down on soda, juice, other sugary drinks and alcoholic beverages.

Is there any one of these you'd like to discuss further today? Or perhaps you have another idea that I didn't mention?

Assess readiness

On a scale of 0 to 10, how ready are you to consider _____ [option chosen above]

Not Ready	Ready
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Straight question: *Why a 5?*
 Backward question: *Why a 5 and not a 3?*
 Forward question: *What would it take to move you from a 5 to a 7?*

Explore ambivalence

Step 1: Ask a pair of questions to help the patient explore the pros and cons of the issue.

- ❖ *What are the things you think are important or that you like about _____?*
- ❖ *What are the problems, or things, you don't like about _____?*

Step 2: Summarize ambivalence

- ❖ Ask: *Did I get it right?*

Tailor the intervention

State of Readiness	Key Questions
NOT READY 0-3 Raise Awareness Elicit Change Talk Advise and Encourage	<i>Would you be interested in knowing more about reaching a healthy weight? How can I help?</i>
UNSURE 4-6 Evaluate Awareness Elicit Change Talk Advise and Encourage	<i>Where does that leave you now? What do you see as the next steps? What are you thinking/feeling at this point? Where does _____ fit into your future?</i>
READY 7-10 Strengthen Commitment Elicit Change Talk Facilitate Action Planning	<i>Why is this important to you now? What are your ideas for making this work? What might get in the way? How can you deal with that? How might you reward yourself along the way?</i>

Close

Summarize.
 Show appreciation. Acknowledge willingness to discuss change.
 Offer advice, emphasize choice, establish realistic goals, and express confidence.
 Confirm next steps and arrange for follow-up.

Source: Adapted from the Adolescent Provider Tool Kit, Adolescent Health Working Group, 2004.