Ten Strategies for Evoking Change Talk

1. Ask Evocative Questions: Ask open question, the answer to which is change talk.

2. Explore Decisional Balance: Ask first for the good things about status quo, then ask for the not-so-good things.

3. Ask for Elaboration: When a change talk theme emerges, ask for more details. In what ways? Tell me more…? What does that look like?

4. Ask for Examples: When a change talk theme emerges, ask for specific examples. When was the last time that happened? Give me an example. What else?

5. Look Back: Ask about a time before the current concern emerged. How were things better, different?

6. Look Forward: Ask what may happen if things continue as they are (status quo). Try the miracle question: If you were 100% successful in making the changes you want, what would be different? How would you like your life to be five years from now?

7. Query Extremes: What are the worst things that might happen if you don't make this change? What are the best things that might happen if you do make this change?

8. Use Change Rulers: Ask, "On a scale from zero to ten, how important is it to you to [target change] - where zero is not at all important, and ten is extremely important? Follow up: And why are you at ___and not _____ [lower number than they stated]? What might happen that could move you from ___ to [higher number]? Instead of "how important" (need), you could also ask how much you want (desire), or how confident you are that you could (ability), or how committed are you to (commitment). Asking "how ready are you?" tends to be confusing because it combines competing components of desire, ability, reasons and need.

9. Explore Goals and Values: Ask what the person's guiding values are. What do they want in life? If there is a "problem" behaviour, ask how that behaviour fits in with the person's goals or values. Does it help realise a goal or value, interfere with it, or is it irrelevant?

10. Come Alongside: Explicitly side with the negative (status quo) side of ambivalence. Perhaps _____is so important to you that you won't give it up, no matter what the cost.