

Assessing Motivation:

The importance-confidence ruler technique

Importance and confidence reflect two conceptually independent dimensions that underlie patient readiness to change (“Why should I?” [Importance] and “How can I?” [Confidence]). The importance-confidence ruler technique incorporates many of the basic elements of Motivational Interviewing (MI): listening carefully, appreciating ambivalence, eliciting change talk, empowering, and collaborating. Furthermore, the ruler exercise yields for practitioners a clear sense of how ready patients are for change and how to be most helpful.

Ask the patient who has chosen to make a change:

On a scale of 0 to 10, how **IMPORTANT** is it for you right now to change?

0 ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 ___ 6 ___ 7 ___ 8 ___ 9 ___ 10

Not at all

Extremely

Important

Important

On a scale of 0 to 10, how **CONFIDENT** are you that you could make this change?

0 ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 ___ 6 ___ 7 ___ 8 ___ 9 ___ 10

Not at all

Extremely

Confident

Confident

If patient indicates a level of importance of <7, it might be important to work on factors to increase the patient’s sense of importance of the behavioural change, or instead work on a behavioural change that the patient sees as more important and therefore feels more confident of achieving success.

Similarly, if the patient indicates a level of confidence of <7 and a level of importance >7, it is important to assess and address barriers to making the behavioural change or specific factors that might increase patient’s confidence and thus his/her chances of success.

It is important to tailor your counselling according to the patient’s stage of change and motivation, as measured by the importance-confidence ruler technique.

For more information, refer to the Transtheoretical Model of Change/Stage of Change resource at CorHealthOntario.ca