



## **Effective Communication with Families:**

*Scott Gee, MD; Jodi Ravel, MPH; Sandra Roberts, RN; Amanda Wylie, Regional Health Education – Kaiser Permanente Northern California*

### **COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES**

#### **Lifestyle Advice – Well Child or Urgent Visit**

- < 1 minute
- Children not currently at risk for overweight

#### **Brief Focused Advice – Well Child Visit**

- < 3 minutes
- Children who are overweight or at risk for overweight

#### **Brief Negotiation & Cognitive Behavioral skills – Follow up Visit or Weight Management Intervention**

- 10+ minutes: single or multiple sessions
- Children who are overweight or at risk for overweight

#### **Who do you communicate with? Always engage the patient**

#### **Brief Negotiation Skills** – Particularly effective for contemplative/ ambivalent patients

- Asking open-ended questions
- Listening
- Summarizing
- Clinician Style: empathetic, accepting, collaborative

#### **Cognitive Behavior Skills** – For patients ready and willing to make changes

- Develop awareness of eating habits, activity and parenting behavior
- Identification of problem behaviors
- Problem solving and modification of problem behaviors
- Weekly goal setting for children and parents on dietary, activity and self-esteem/ parenting goals
- Positive reward systems
- Record keeping
- Weight checks

#### **Assess Readiness**

- “On a scale from 0 to 10 how ready are you to consider (option chosen above)?”
- 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?”



## Tailor the Intervention

Stage of Readiness	Key Questions
<p><b>Not Ready: 0-3 or broaching the subject initially</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness</li> <li>• Elicit change talk</li> <li>• Advise and encourage</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ask Permission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Would you be willing to spend a few minutes discussing your weight?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Are you interested in discussing ways to stay healthy and energized?”</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Ask an Open-Ended Question – Listen – Summarize</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “What do you think/ How do you feel about your weight?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “What have you tried so far to work toward a healthier weight?”</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Share BMI/ Weight/ Risk Factors (Optional)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your current weight puts you at risk for developing heart disease and diabetes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ask for the patient’s interpretation: “What do you make of this?”</li> <li>○ Add your own interpretation or advice as needed AFTER eliciting the patient’s/ parent’s response</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Close the encounter:</b> Show appreciation/ acknowledge willingness to discuss change: “Thank you for being willing to discuss your weight.”</p>
<p><b>Unsure: 4-6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate ambivalence</li> <li>• Elicit change talk</li> <li>• Build readiness</li> </ul>	<p><b>Negotiate the Agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “There are a number of ways to achieve a healthy weight. They include (see poster)”:</li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Get up and play hard 60 minutes a day</li> <li>○ Eat 5 helpings of fruits and vegetables a day</li> <li>○ Cut back on TV and Video games, less than two hours day</li> <li>○ No sweetened drinks, just water and milk</li> </ul> <li>• “Would you like to discuss any of these further today – or perhaps you have another idea that isn’t listed here?”</li> </ul> <p><b>Explore Ambivalence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Step 1: Ask a pair of questions to help the patient explore the pros and cons of the issue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are the things you like about (blank)? <b>And</b> What are the things you don’t like about (blank)?”</li> <li>○ What are the advantages of keeping things the same? <b>And</b> What are the advantages of making a change?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Step 2: Summarize Ambivalence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Let me see if I understand what you’ve told me so far...” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin with reasons for maintaining the status quo, end with reasons for making a change</li> <li>▪ Ask: “Did I get it all? / Did I get it right?”</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Where does that leave you now?</li> <li>• What do you see as your next steps?</li> <li>• What are you thinking/ feeling at this point?</li> <li>• Where does (blank) fit into your future</li> </ul> <p><b>Close the encounter:</b> Emphasize choice, and express confidence: “I strongly encourage you to be more physically active. The choice to increase your activity, of course, is entirely yours. I am confident that if you decide to be more active you can be successful</p>
<p><b>Ready: 7-10</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen commitment</li> <li>• Elicit change talk</li> <li>• Facilitate action planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is this important to you now?</li> <li>• What are your ideas for making this work?</li> <li>• What might get in the way? How might you work around the barriers?</li> <li>• How might you reward yourself along the way?</li> <li>• Summarize: “Our time is almost up. Let’s take a look at what you’ve worked through today.</li> <li>• Confirm next steps and arrange for follow-up: “Are you able to come back in one month so we can continue to work together?”</li> </ul>