

## Worksheet 5.4: Five key principles: DEARS

Motivational Interviewing is based around five principles, easily remembered using the acronym DEARS.

These five principles have been successfully rolled out to carers over the past 10 years in several research programmes at the Maudsley.

**Developing discrepancy.** This helps the sufferer realise there is a difference between where they are today, and where they want to be in the future. Their current behaviour is likely to hold them back and reduce the likelihood that they can achieve their goals. Carers can help to motivate the sufferer to resolve the discrepancy by changing their behaviour.

**Expressing empathy.** People with eating disorders often feel that nobody understands them, they are totally alone and this is a terrifying position to be in. Carers can come alongside their loved ones and try to step in to their shoes. Imagining what they are feeling, and listening carefully to their responses, can be a useful way of expressing empathy.

**Amplifying ambivalence.** It can seem like your loved one sees their eating disorder as their friend and ally. However, even the most resistant young person can recognise that there might be some negatives to their illness. Carers can look out for any small signs, notice them, repeat and amplify them in order to help their loved one to recognise that change might have some positive outcomes.

**Rolling with resistance.** Eating disorder sufferers can be extremely resistant to change and can become extremely upset, especially if they feel they are being pushed in to a corner. Lecturing, nagging, pestering, arguing can quickly result in huge arguments and distressing scenes. When emotions are running high it can be useful to notice this and take a step back. For the moment accept and allow the resistance to change.

**Supporting self-efficacy.** Allowing the young person to take control of their own destiny and believing that they can do it. Your belief that they can create their own goals is incredibly motivational, and with your support they can find the best path towards these goals. Carers acknowledging that the young person is making an effort and has the energy to try again when things don't go according to plan helps to build and support their self-efficacy.

### ***Example scenario using DEARS***

Andrew, age 14, is a fabulous all-rounder who is very popular with his peers. He is involved in lots of sports, the school play, music tuition, high academic sets and thus entry tests to high-end schools. He appears very confident and happy although a few of his close friends have noticed that he has become very interested in reading about celebrities who have

used self-harm as a coping mechanism. They decide to talk to Andrew's Mum who asks Andrew if everything is OK. Andrew is adamant that he is fine and that he is just intrigued that celebrities like David Beckham feel so much pressure that they develop these coping strategies.

Either in pairs or as a group using the above scenario write down some useful phrases using DEARS.

Here are some possible options, can you think of any more?

### ***Develop discrepancy***

- I know you love doing all these different activities *and* I have noticed that you seem to be struggling to fit everything in and you seem anxious.

### ***Express empathy***

- I understand that you really enjoy all of these activities that you are doing, and you have a great deal of talent for so many different things. It must be hard sometimes to prioritise and/or to say no to things. I know many students wouldn't have the energy and resourcefulness to fit everything in.

### ***Amplify ambivalence***

- It must be annoying and frustrating for you to see that most of your friends have more spare time to relax at the weekends. Do you think they have had to prioritise and perhaps let a few things go? I know that you wanted to go to the rugby this weekend, and you were unable to because of drama rehearsals you love.

### ***Roll with resistance***

- I can see that you think I am making a fuss about nothing and that must be annoying for you. I am just concerned about you taking on too much and getting exhausted. Let's focus on something else and come back to this later...

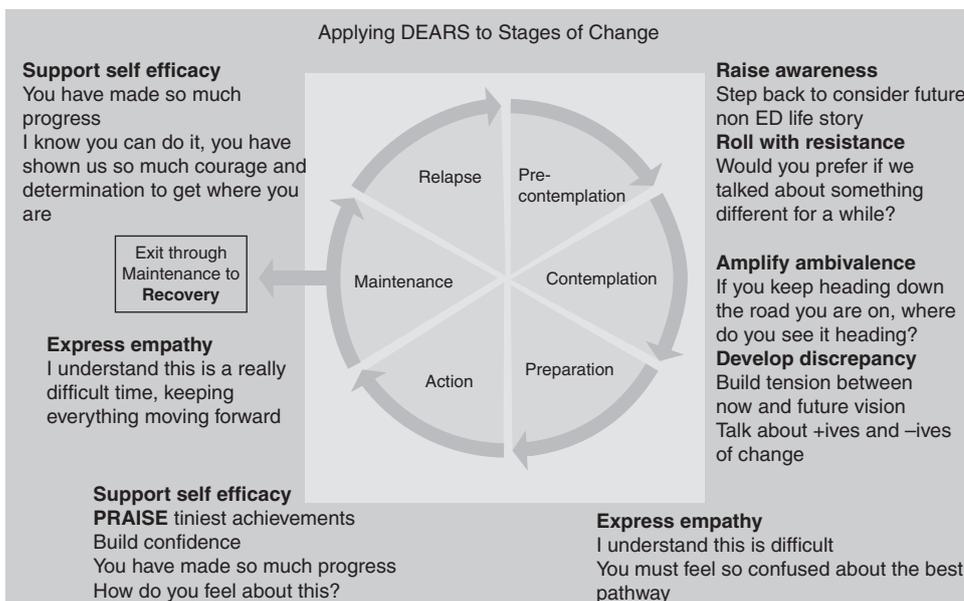
### ***The coke bottle analogy for rolling with resistance***

A highly anxious person is like a fizzed up coke bottle. If you open it immediately it will explode everywhere. It needs to be opened slowly with small turns of the lid. If the coke starts to fizz out you can turn the lid back a little tighter and then wait again for the pressure to subside.

Trying to converse with a highly anxious person can have the same result. Stepping back, giving some space and being patient can help that person's anxiety to gradually subside.

## Supporting self-efficacy

- You are incredibly organised and resourceful and you manage to fit so many things in to your week. I don't imagine many of your friends are so organised.
- You have clearly thought long and hard about carrying on with all your activities, and planning how you can fit everything in. I can see that sometimes you struggle to fit everything in and that sometimes things don't go according to plan. I admire the way you can pick yourself up when things don't go according to plan.



**Figure 5.6** DEARS can be used wherever Edi is in the cycle of change

## Scenario for further practice

Gemma is 14 and really wants to go on the school trip to Spain in the Spring term. She knows that the school requires her to get signed off by the consultant as fit to travel, and she has a meal plan designed to achieve the requisite weight gain in plenty of time. She is finding it very difficult to stick to the meal plan. Imagine you are Dad using DEARS to try and help motivate her.

At each stage ask carers how they think Gemma might respond. This helps carers to start to feel that this language may help to open up conversations and elicit thoughts about change even if change doesn't happen straight away.

After the carers have come up with their own ideas, ask them how they think Gemma might now be feeling and contrast that with how she might be feeling if Dad used a more directive, rhino-like approach.