

Worksheet 8.3: Using DARN-C to elicit change talk

See *SBC*, Chapter 14, p. 233.

DARN-C was introduced in Module 4 (Exercise 4.3). It is a useful tool to help Edi progress from thinking about making changes to actually stating 'I am going to do it'.

Table 8.9 DARN-C questions, to ascertain the level of readiness reached towards changing a particular behaviour and to promote discussion

Desire – Can you tell me more about why that would be the one you would like to try first?

Ability – How do you think you could work towards achieving this? Is there anything I or anyone else could do to help?

Reason – Could you help me understand why you feel this is the most important one for you to change first?

Need – What are the things that mean you need to change this (is it what the doctor said...?)

Commitment – DARN questions can help to elicit talk of change and an increased commitment to actually make changes.

Example

A conversation between a Dad and his son, in which Dad is seeking to elicit change talk might go like this:

Desire

Dad: Can you tell me more about why that specific behaviour would be the one you want to change first.

James: Well everyone gets upset when I break something. After the initial release I get, then I very quickly feel guilty and I know I am going to be in trouble. So, we all feel bad and I would like to avoid that if at all possible.

Dad: That sounds like a good reason.

Ability

Dad: Tell me how you are planning to make this change, could I help in any way?

James: I need to find something that will help me to calm down so that I don't break things, a distraction or something that gives me the same feeling of release.

Dad: That sounds like a great idea James. What sorts of things might be helpful?

James: Dunno.

Dad could then ask permission to make a few guesses (based on the menu of options in the previous exercise).

Reason

Dad: You have chosen to try to stop breaking things. Tell me more about why this is important for you to challenge this one, rather than one of the others that are on your list.

James: The others seem too hard at the moment. I think if I start with this one and it goes reasonably well than I might be more confident about trying to challenge some of the others. For example, I can see that my friends are making all sorts of plans for visits to festivals next summer and many of my rigid rules will stop me from being able to join in. I am not ready to challenge them yet though. It is all a bit scary to be honest.

Dad: James it is wonderful to hear you talking about your future plans. You are right to take one step at a time. I am so proud of you and am here to help.

Need

Dad: James on a scale of 0 to 10 how important is it for you to change this behaviour, and how confident are you that you can do it?

James: I really do want to change this, my desire to change is maybe 9 or 10 for importance. Not sure about confidence. Much lower I guess, say 3 or 4. Now I have a few ideas about alternatives I am feeling a bit more confident.

Dad: Sounds like this is really important for you. It takes time an effort to make changes and I can understand why your confidence is quite low. We have to start somewhere and I believe you will give it a real go. I wonder what I can do to help?

James: I guess if I try and it is a success. You are always going on about success breeding success. One of your funny little sayings but I guess in this case it is true.

Commitment

James: I like the idea of making a crisis card that I can keep with me. As a first step I am going to make a crisis card. Will you help me Dad?

Using the DARN-C approach, Dad has helped James to really think about why he might want to make changes and he has elicited some powerful change talk from James. This is no guarantee that he will make the change, but the more he has verbalised his desire and commitment to change the more likely he is to do it.