

The Brain Health & Wellness Project

Goal Setting Invitation: Sample Scripts for Clinicians

The following sample situations and scripts offer 4 natural openings to integrate an invitation to health behaviour change with your patients.

Behavior Change Invitation #1: *The Classic*

Use the *Health & Resilience Pre-Questionnaire* results to invite a health change.

Sample invitation: *“Based on your answers on the Health and Resilience Questionnaire, it looks like you feel there’s be some room to improve on your.... :*

- *physical activity OR*
- *staying connected to friends OR*
- *learning something new*

...Would you like to set a small goal to work on that?”

Behavior Change Invitation #2: *You’re Ideal!*

Use the presenting concern as the relevant springboard to invite a behavior change.

Sample Invitation: *“The _____ (pain/mobility/ med side effects/blood pressure/work stress/ depression/ anxiety/ insomnia/ addictions/ etc) that you are dealing with make you ideal for a health and resilience initiative that could help you with this issue. Would you like to hear about it?”*

Behavior Change Invite #3: *The 4 Seasons*

Use seasonality to invite or renew a relevant health goal.

Sample Invitation: *“Now that it’s _____ (Spring/Summer/Winter/Fall), let’s looks at your baseline to see how you feel you are doing in some key health areas. Would you like to set a goal to activate your health over _____ Winter/Summer/now that it’s Spring/as the colder weather approaches...?”*

Behavior Change Invite #4: *Transitions Points*

Use a life transition/developmental milestone or even a birthday as a springboard.

Sample Invitation: *“Now that you are caregiving/ retired/living alone/dealing with a new medical issue/facing these financial concerns/figuring out your life as a single parent/ moving into long term care/ divorcing...this would be a good time to check in on how you are feeling about some key health areas to help you stay as well as you can...Would you like to set a goal to help take care of yourself through this next phase?”*

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Stoplight Scripts – Assessing Readiness for Health Change and Responding to Your Patient

Your patients will respond in different ways at different times to the invitation to behaviour change. Using the metaphor of a stop light, they might say: “No” (red light- unready), “Maybe” (yellow light- ambivalent), or “Yes” (green light—ready to go). The following outlines ways to respond to all of these situations.

Navigating a Red Light Response:

- Patient responses such as “No, Not ready, Can’t, Won’t” are perfectly fair and very common responses at any given visit! We can all be in a “red light” zone for healthy behaviour on any given day.
- **Simply inviting the health behaviour change is an intervention and gets people thinking.** Data show that the invitation from a care provider is enough to trigger subsequent readiness.

Red Light- Clinician Responses:

- Acknowledge in a non-judgmental way and normalize the response with, *“Fair enough”* or *“I hear you!”*. The issue has been noted and can be talked about again at a subsequent visit. **It is not your job to make anyone do anything!**

Typical Yellow Light Responses:

- I would but... Maybe next month... I just don’t feel motivated but I know I should... If I weren’t _____(depressed/so anxious/dealing with this medical condition), then I would.... If I had time I would...

Yellow Light- Clinician Response:

- Empathize with the ambivalence and limitations mentioned. Normalize that health change is hard and that most of us struggle to make change happen!
- Invite one very small behavior change in a target health area. Choosing something that is meaningful to the patient can also help. For example, *“Even with the (time limitations/lack of motivation etc.)...would you consider setting one really small goal and just see how it goes? Is there a very small change you can think of that would still be meaningful to you? No goal is ever too small and if it doesn’t happen, no problem...”*

Even for a keen Green Light Patient- Clinician Response:

- Even for the enthusiasts, remember to keep the goal very small. Focus on concrete, or “S.M.A.R.T.” goals - **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction-oriented, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-limited. The more specific and doable the goal is, the more likely the patient will succeed.

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