

# Engagement/Motivational Enhancement

**What:** Getting children and caregivers attending sessions and actively participating both IN session and in doing weekly practice of skills. Help move ambivalent (“I want things to change, but this sounds like work”) children and caregivers off the fence.

**Why?** Therapy only works when children and families attend, learn new skills and use them in real life. Ambivalence is a major barrier to change.

## Engagement at First Phone Contact and First In Person Contact:

1. Ask about the problem for which the child or **caregiver** wants help. Find a “hook”
2. Say and show that therapy can help (handout, statements, therapy “preview”)
3. Ask about previous experiences or views about therapy *Have you or anyone in your family tried therapy before? What was helpful? What wasn't so helpful? What do you think about the idea of going to therapy? Your friends/family? Discuss/explain/contrast to THIS therapy.*
4. Problem solve barriers (transportation, appointment times, parking, insurance) *“All families are busy, what are some things that might get in the way of you/your child attending sessions?”*
5. Tell (a little bit) about what happens IN this therapy. **DON'T** spend ALL your time on **PAPERWORK**. A little therapy, or therapy preview, goes a long way with engagement.

## Motivational Enhancement

When youth/caregivers do not buy into treatment with the treatment description or psychoeducation...OR aren't attending or practicing skills:

**DO NOT:** Tell clients what to do, try to talk them into steps, argue, keep pushing for change.

**DO** Ask questions; elicit interest in change FROM the client. UNDERLINE any of their statements about change (by repeating back, asking for more information anytime the person talks about change/desire for change). *Tell me more about what you want for your child/yourself. What are some of the things you want to change? What is hard about taking steps to help things change? What are some of the downsides to changing? Why do you want things to change? What are some of the benefits/pros of changing? What has worked for you in the past?*

**Summarize** the discussion for the client, ending WITH the change/positive things. Ask the client about next steps.

Points to Consider

- Many children have to come to therapy ANYWAY so motivational enhancement is more challenging (can't decide to attend or not attend, like adolescents or adults).