

## Making therapeutic change

There are lots of things in life that people often want to change. Maybe getting fitter, losing weight, or giving up smoking. Many people who want to give up smoking talk about it a lot, they really hate the way they smell, have to smoke outside, and are made to feel like a bad person. They often have a picture of themselves as a non-smoker, and they really like the picture. But very often they have a number of times when they will try to give up and fail. So what makes the difference?

Firstly, they need to have a **clear goal**, just giving up is often not enough, and it may be to change their health after a scare, or to save money or even to please a loved one. Wanting to be smoke free isn't enough, for change most people need a trigger and a clear goal they are aiming for, then they need to balance the gain and cost of smoking. Obviously, they must have enjoyed the habit at some level and they need to balance this against how valuable the new goal is. For some this may be harder than others and the social pleasure of smoking may mean that the gains are just not enough, and so they will not try or will quickly give up.

Once a person has decided on balance that change is best for them, they need to look at their **own motivation**. Change always has a cost. For a smoker, this may be withdrawal from nicotine, for a dieter going to a group and changing eating habits. This is often the biggest hurdle to change because wanting something, balancing doing it, is definitely in your best interest, but seeing the cost can be the moment when a person stops the change process, so before you start on the therapy process, just take a moment to think about your goals, on balance what are you prepared to change to get them and how committed are you to go through the process.

Just think for a moment, what **changes would you like to see at the end of therapy?** These need to be realistic, we are not trying to create a perfect child but a real child, who will have temper tantrums weekly, never flush the toilet, argue over teeth cleaning, be grumpy on shopping trips and annoying when you are on the phone. Children are hard work, and the more you have the harder they are. So, your goal has to be realistic not idealistic.

So, ask yourself:

- ✚ What changes would you like to see at the end of therapy?
- ✚ How much is that change worth to you?
- ✚ What would you pay, in your time, energy, routines, free time?
- ✚ How valuable is the change?
- ✚ What is your commitment to the change?
- ✚ How prepared are you to actually make changes to your life for the change you want to see in your child?

Now your first thought may be, but why do I have to change, it's my child's behaviour that we have come to Chrysalis for. And of course, you are right. But, at the present your child does not have the capacity to just change, to be different in spite of all the consequences that they may have had, even when the risk is that they may have to leave you and go back into care. Your child's brain is stuck in a pattern of behaviour that means that for them to change, the environment in which they are living has to change first. In this phase of therapy your child is the FOCUS of change not the AGENT of change.

**The AGENT OF CHANGE is you and your therapist working together as a team.**