Behavior Change:
Improving Outcomes by Guiding People to Success
Behavior change promises to be the most revolutionary movement in health care in the 21st century. It's a personal process that belongs to every individual. Our job in health care is to simplify that process using the most effective practices and tools. Fortunately, there are more than 50 years of behavioral science that inform us about what works.

Best practices in behavioral science begins with listening to people, helping them identify personal motivators for change, and guiding them toward success experiences—successes that create confidence in people trying to achieve behavior change. Health coaches and care managers are most effective at following these best practices when they are embedded into their workflow. When behavioral science sits at coaches' fingertips, your staff will become powerful change facilitators. This sets your organization ahead in achieving the Triple Aim of increasing satisfaction, lowering costs, and improving outcomes.
But why is it so important now?

In 1900, more than half of deaths in the U.S. were attributed to pneumonia/influenza, tuberculosis, and gastrointestinal infections. The 19th century health care system was designed to provide acute care — if people survived, they were treated and released.

But we’ve advanced beyond that. By 2013, the overall number of deaths due to viral and bacterial diseases had decreased significantly. We now see the majority of deaths are caused by heart disease, cancer, and COPD. Many factors have forced us to look at different ways of treating people’s health needs:

- **Chronic Disease.** The leading causes of death today are a function of behavior and lifestyle. Behavior change is the most important treatment for the epidemic of chronic disease.

- **Health Disparities.** Even though prevailing diseases have changed, health disparities among socioeconomic groups have endured. Behavior change gives us more precise models that help explain why, for instance, mortality rates double as you walk up Fifth Avenue from midtown Manhattan into Harlem.¹

- **Health Care Costs.** The health care industry spends more than $1.6 trillion each year treating chronic, largely preventable diseases. Behavior change not only makes sense, it’s an economic imperative.²

- **Information Overload.** We live in an age of information overload. It’s easy to find out how to use your new asthma inhaler, but it can be overwhelming to look for information about your newly diagnosed heart condition when an initial internet search suggests thousands of hits. Applying behavior change principles allows you to customize information to cut through competing data and search for content that relates to people’s exact needs.

- **Medication Adherence.** Nearly three out of four Americans don’t take their medications as prescribed.³ Behavior change science can support adherence to medicines—improving the cost burden and decreasing the chances of serious health consequences.

The cure for our modern behavioral epidemic is to guide and support people as they try to adopt healthier behaviors.
3 Steps to Launching the Behavior Change Process

It’s easy to feel overwhelmed when thinking about behavior change. To make it more manageable, simplify behavior change into three steps: listening, assessing and segmenting, and tailoring interventions.
How well do we understand the people we are treating? What do they already know? What are their challenges? What motivates them? What experiences are influencing their health care choices?

The best way to learn the answers to these questions is to listen through a person-centered interviewing approach called motivational interviewing that respects individual experiences. Its main principles are partnership, acceptance, compassion, and evocation. Through motivational interviewing, your care managers will begin establishing partnerships with people and will elicit more information with less “digging.”

+ With motivational interviewing, your staff will move away from directed language—telling a person what they need to do—and move toward discovering the real reason they want to make a health or behavior change. This increases the likelihood that they will successfully move in the direction of managing their health.

+ Motivational interviewing fosters the therapeutic relationship between care coordinators and patients—providing empathy, trust, and respect that enables the patient or member to be an equal partner in their care. It’s designed to elicit “change talk,” which encourages the individual to voice a commitment to change. This helps eliminate “sustain talk,” which focuses on reasons of why change isn’t possible. Change talk has been shown to be predictive of behavior change.4
Using motivational interviewing, your staff will enhance their skills aimed at:

+ Establishing partnerships with people, helping them feel heard and understood, to elicit precise arguments for and commitments to change.
+ Identifying how to incorporate health behavior change into peoples’ daily lives.
+ Finding ways to support and maintain health behavior change.
+ Listing goals in actionable and measurable terms.
Assessing a patient’s needs based on which stage they are in on their health care journey allows you to pinpoint how you can support engagement and activation.

People are more likely to pay attention and be excited about conversations which are relevant and connected to their situation.

+ Most members have multiple issues, from chronic conditions to lifestyle factors (poor sleep, stress, etc.), which impact their health. By focusing on the topic of greatest importance to the patient, you make the conversation more impactful.

+ When you segment people by their needs, you gain a greater understanding of how to manage their conditions. This enables you to select health education developed to meet those needs and information and tools that will empower them to make positive health changes. And, by customizing information expressly for them, you’re providing content that does more than just give them facts.

+ Finding a proven approach to segmenting patients’ needs was the goal of a research study that resulted in the development of the Cardiff Change Model. The model was developed based on a review of 3,223 published studies. It looked for interventions that helped patients make successful behavior change. It then identified the most effective behavior change techniques (BCTs). Using this model, health interventions can be mapped to each of its five stages: awareness, learning, motivation, behavior, and sustainability.
### Mapping Health Education to the Cardiff Model Stages Using Healthwise Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cardiff Change Model Stages</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Sustainability</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior Change Techniques (examples)</strong></td>
<td>+ Assess personal risk</td>
<td>+ Learn a skill</td>
<td>+ Personal motivators</td>
<td>+ Create an action plan</td>
<td>+ Tracking &amp; feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>+ Understand illness</td>
<td>+ Role modeling</td>
<td>+ Build support</td>
<td>+ Rehearse behavior</td>
<td>+ Address barriers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage-Specific Content (examples)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Type 2 Diabetes</strong>: Describes how insulin is made and used by the body. Describes symptoms and treatments. Discusses the impact of obesity on diabetes, as well as exercise and diet.</td>
<td><strong>Type 2 Diabetes: Giving Yourself an Insulin Shot</strong>: Outlines the process for safely and effectively giving oneself insulin shots.</td>
<td><strong>Diabetes: Coping With Your Feelings About Your Diet</strong>: Discusses how to deal with negative emotions about diabetes.</td>
<td><strong>Diabetes: Planning Your Next Steps</strong>: Talks about creating an action plan, setting small, achievable goals, and monitoring progress.</td>
<td><strong>Eating Out When You Have Diabetes</strong>: Provides strategies for staying on a diabetes meal plan when at a party or eating at a restaurant.</td>
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Using a segmentation model such as the Cardiff Change Model allows your staff to advance behavior change by:

- **Cueing your staff to listen closely** to the person’s needs and preferences in the moment.
- **Evaluating and pinpointing** what an individual’s specific behavior change needs are at a given time.
- **Identifying where people are** along their behavior change journey.
- **Helping patients form practical plans** including how to manage barriers, such as plateauing on a weight-loss goal.
In the Cardiff Change Model, behavior change techniques (BCTs), are mapped to each of the five stages. BCTs are based on existing research showing which interventions are most helpful according to a person’s behavior change stage.

Using behavior change techniques with patients, your staff will enhance their skills aimed at:

+ Preparing and delivering personalized health interventions designed to engage patients.
+ Coaching people toward experiences that align with their behavior change needs. For some people, that may mean learning a new skill, such as using a home blood pressure cuff. For others, the conversation may need to focus on overcoming barriers to taking their medications as prescribed.
+ Building confidence by guiding people to achievable success experiences.
Imagine being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. Your doctor then hands you a bowl filled with pills — pills of every shape, size, and color. He directs you to take whichever pills you like until you find the right combination that makes you feel better. Crazy, right?

Now imagine you are faced with the prospect of changing behavior that is causing your type 2 diabetes.

You have just learned about the dangers of letting your condition go unchecked. Rather than handing you a long list of things you should do — test your blood twice a day, exercise five days a week, and read about the long-term consequences of poorly managed diabetes — your care manager works with you to find the best approach for you. She assesses your needs and where you are in the change model. She listens to your concerns and determines that, at this particular time, you have significant family and economic barriers to healthy eating. But she learns that you do live near a park and are open to the possibility of taking a nightly walk.

Your doctor wouldn’t ask you to guess which pill works best for your disease. Why would your care manager ask you to guess which behavior change technique to use at this particular time?

The framework of stages and behavior change techniques creates a guide that care coordinators can use to tailor interventions. Here’s an example of how this focused approach can accurately target and engage an individual effectively:
The Benefits of a Successful Behavior Change Program

Historically, the traditional model of trying to get people to adopt healthier behaviors hasn’t worked. In a U.S. Health & Retirement Study, among those with newly diagnosed heart disease, only 40% who smoked were able to quit. There were no significant increases in exercise for any of the health conditions studied, and changes in alcohol consumption were small.5

Behavior change isn’t easy. The good news is that it is possible. And using behavioral science as a guide increases the odds of success.
Engage Your Patients

Your challenge is to invite your members and patients to partner with you in their health care. We’ve talked about tailoring interventions and information to a patient’s needs, but how do we do that? Look deeply at a patient’s background, history and community by:

- Being curious about what people know and what motivates them to be healthy.
- Identifying the environmental, cultural, social/family, physical, and psychological barriers to behavior change.
- Supporting problem solving and implementing strategies for overcoming these barriers.

People will feel heard and understood when care managers use motivational interviewing to deliver the health information that meets an essential need. And they will be more receptive to the information they receive, more confident, and more motivated to change. These therapeutic relationships between your care staff and patients are based on empathy, trust, and honoring personal choices. Such relationships will uncover personal motivators for change and result in greater adherence to treatment and more awareness of self-care management techniques that affect overall health outcomes.
Support Accreditation and Quality Metrics

Supporting accreditation and quality measures is an ongoing issue for healthcare organizations. You face a rigorous set of standards and more stringent standards are being developed all of the time to improve care, enhance service, and reduce costs. So today, your organization may be asked to track BMI and smoking cessation rates among your population. Soon, you will be asked to reduce those rates. That’s where behavior change science comes in.

Organizations are expected to support patients’ behavior change to improve their quality metrics. Increased emphasis is being placed on tracking the quality of care delivered by health care entities. With improved statistics, organizations can address the drivers of chronic conditions and include patients as part of the care team—all things that a successful behavior change strategy can impact.
Achieve the Triple Aim

With the enormous impact of chronic diseases (and the behaviors that cause them) on health outcomes and costs, it’s clear that there is significant opportunity for organizations and practitioners to empower people to change their behaviors and improve their health outcomes. This, in turn, increases their satisfaction and lowers health care costs.

Triple Aim success is dependent on partnering with your patients.

“The greatest untapped resource in healthcare is the patient.”

~Dr. Vernon Wilson, Former Administrator HSMHA

Multiple studies demonstrate that clinicians who show empathy and alliance with patient goals generally have patients with higher activation, better results, and fewer medical complications. And higher activation levels correlate with the aims of improved health outcomes and lowered costs.
Alignment between the goals of the individual and the goals of the organization is becoming recognized as a critical element of achieving the Triple Aim. Triple Aim success includes:

- **Patient Satisfaction.** When your patients become motivated by empathic coaching, personalized interventions, and behavior change techniques designed for their needs, it’s likely that their satisfaction levels will increase as well.

- **Clinical Outcomes.** Regardless of where your patients are on the behavior change journey, applying the right behavior change techniques will help them move forward and achieve better health outcomes.

- **Reduced Health Care Costs.** As people are successful with behavior change, they’ll achieve more of their health care goals, such as weight loss, increased activity, or a reduction in A1c levels. When this happens they and your organization will see a reduction in their health care costs for their chronic conditions.
Implement Your Behavior Change Strategy

To put your organization at the forefront of addressing our modern behavioral epidemic, integrate your own evidence-based behavior change framework, like the Cardiff Change Model, or partner with a company that provides these kinds of tools. Take these steps to guide and support people as they effect positive health behavior change and help your enterprise meet its quality metrics and achieve accreditation.

1. Develop an Enterprise-Wide Strategy
   - Create a consistent vision to support patient activation and behavioral change.
   - Select a behavior change approach that supports your vision across your organization.
   - Integrate a behavior change enabled technical platform with current platforms and workflow.
   - Adopt a communication plan for stakeholders and staff.

2. Design Your Program
   - Plan how to engage people in a program they value and benefit from.
   - Use best practices of engagement to recruit and onboard people.
   - Design interventions to guide people toward success experiences they value.
   - Provide consistent protocols and workflows for your care managers.
   - Define outcomes metrics.

3. Train Your Staff
   - Assess staff training needs and define training objectives.
   - Select your curriculum and conduct ongoing trainings and evaluations.

4. Evaluate Your Program
   - Set periodic review of how your program is performing against your defined metrics.
   - Adjust your program and metrics as needed.
A New Vision for Health Care

Behavior change isn’t a trend—it’s the future of our industry. As health care providers, you succeed when you are able to guide people to better health. Behavior change can help you become a partner with the people you treat.

For a behavior change program that engages people, supports your quality metrics, and helps you achieve the Triple Aim, implement these three best practice elements to create a process that tailors interventions to meet the needs of your patients:

**Listen**
Use a person-centered interviewing approach called motivational interviewing that begins with listening and honoring choice. It elicits “change talk” and fosters the therapeutic relationship between coaches and patients that enables patients to be an equal partner in their care.

**Assess and Segment**
Segment patients by their needs based on the stage they are in on their health care journey. This allows tailoring of health education, developed to meet those differing needs that empower patients to make positive health changes.

**Deliver Tailored Interventions**
Use methods that guide people toward success experiences by determining their individual needs and then tailoring proven interventions to meet those needs.
Resources

10. http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/34/3/431.short
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