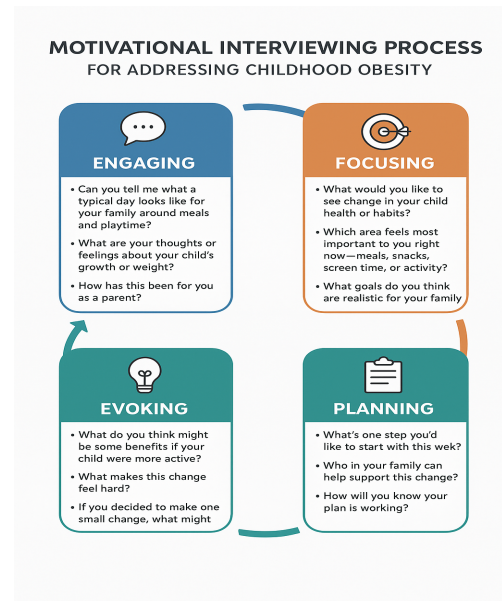


It Starts with a Conversation: How Motivational Interviewing Can Transform Childhood Obesity Prevention

“My family feels ready to make a small change - we will stop drinking soda for one week.”

Childhood obesity remains one of the most pressing challenges of our time. As pediatricians, we witness its impact every day on children struggling with low self-esteem, showing early signs of insulin resistance, and families feeling unsure where to start. Recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released its *Clinical Practice Guideline for the Evaluation and Treatment of Children and Adolescents with Obesity*, providing a comprehensive framework to support pediatricians in managing this complex condition.

One of the key approaches highlighted in the guideline is Motivational Interviewing (MI), a powerful tool that goes beyond prescriptions or diet plans, instead **it starts with a conversation**. MI focuses on partnership rather than persuasion. Instead of telling families what to do, we guide them to discover their own reasons and readiness for change. **In our daily practice 4 steps of MI might look like below image:**



These open-ended questions help shift the dynamic. Families become active participants in their child's health journey rather than passive recipients of medical advice. When parents identify what matters most to them - whether it's improving their child's energy levels, school performance, or emotional well-being meaningful change becomes possible.

As pediatricians, our role extends beyond diagnosing and treating, it's about **empowering families to lead healthier lives**. Through Motivational Interviewing, we can transform the way we approach obesity prevention: from lectures to listening, from “what's wrong” to “what's possible”, from directing to guiding together.

Childhood obesity prevention isn't just about food or exercise - it's about hope, support, and connection. And sometimes, it all begins with a simple question:

“What's one small change your family feels ready to make today?”



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