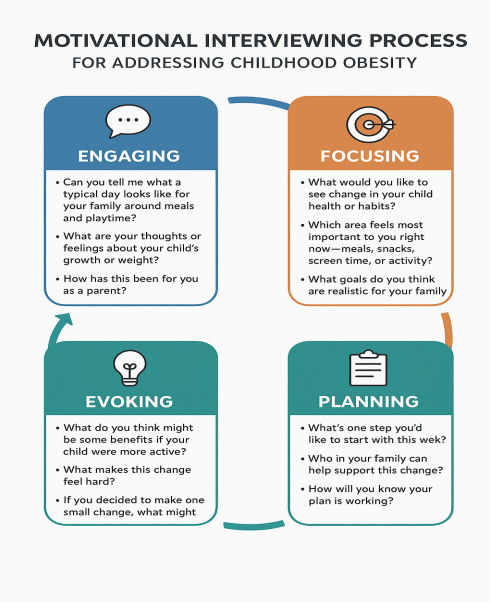
It Starts with a Conversation: How Motivational Interviewing Can Transform Childhood Obesity Prevention

"*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?"**



Vaishali Benaka Hebbar, MD, FAAP, CLC
Vice Chair, Obesity Prevention Committee, AAPCA1