



Health and Behaviour Change

Be the Health Coach, PT or Nutritionist your clients deserve.





This overview outlines some of the fundamental concepts of human behaviour change.

To fully upskill in the science and practise of behaviour change, enrol in PreKure's online course PK101: Health & Behaviour Change go to <https://www.prekure.com/online-courses/>

Prevention before cure.

PreKure is a social enterprise that exists to inspire the medical profession to become more focused on disease prevention.

The current health system is failing sufferers of chronic disease—we need health coaches to help solve the problem. By completing our online courses and becoming a PreKure certified health coach, you can support people in making the critical lifestyle changes required to dramatically improve their health and hauora/wellbeing.

Together we can change medicine. Prevention is cure.
Lifestyle is medicine.



Behaviour Change

Behaviour change is hard and it's messy. Your clients need support and empathy to make long-term, sustainable lifestyle changes.

Our goal as health coaches is to provide our clients with information that doesn't just educate or inform them but helps them make better decisions and better choices in their lives. Ultimately, we should aim to become partners with our clients, to give them the tools they need to change their behaviour.

The role of a health coach is three-fold:

1. To help give **clarity** on what your client is trying to achieve
2. To give **confidence** and build the belief that they can, and will, make the changes required
3. Motivation. A little **inspiration**, or a nudge at the right time, can make all the difference.

Find the real why

Begin by understanding your client's "call to action". Why have they come to you for help and what are they trying to achieve. Make sure you ask, "Why" up to five times, to ensure you get to the root cause of the problem and the **real** "why".

Set SMART goals

Set SMART goals with your client. SMART goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-based—in other words, they're very clear and easily understood.

A word of warning

Having goals is important, but beware of encouraging thought processes that may "put happiness on hold", such as, "I'll be happy when I lose five kilos, or when I run a marathon."

Be happy now and enjoy the journey.



We are all guilty of overestimating health or lifestyle-related changes that we can achieve in the short term - but we often grossly underestimate what we are capable of in the longer term.

DR LOUISE SCHOFIELD

Use Motivational Interviewing techniques to get lasting results

Rather than simply telling your client what to do, get them to tell you what they are going to do. Motivational interviewing (MI) is a powerful technique, and it's fundamental in psychological counselling for behaviour change.

Biologically speaking, the human "negativity bias"—created in the amygdala, the midbrain's emotional centre—is hard-wired into us, to minimise danger. It is thought that when we tell someone to do something they're not already fully committed to, negativity bias kicks in and they become pessimistic and emotional, overgeneralising and experiencing a reduction in their working memory. All of this hinders behaviour change and the acceptance of new ideas, but by eliciting change talk and ideas, the frontal lobes of the client's brain are activated, overriding the emotional midbrain and running simulations of the probable positive impacts of the behaviour change.

Confrontation in an interview setting activates the midbrain, so telling a client that what they're doing is ridiculous, and that they need to adopt a different behaviour, almost certainly won't work. However, if you can get them to tell you what they need to do, then you have harnessed the real power of motivational interviewing and behaviour change.

It takes time, active practice, and constant review to achieve results, as we all tend to fall back on "solutions by telling". But this kind of directing isn't helpful for behaviour change—guiding is. MI techniques use partnership and compassion to get people talking about what is important to them. **O**pen-ended questions, **A**ffirmations, **R**eflective listening, and **S**ummaries (OARS) provide the basis for this type of interview. MI evokes change talk and helps your clients to discuss the changes they want to make.

The assumption is that people want to be healthy and be the best they can be. New knowledge may be an issue but it's not the major barrier to change. MI works by helping develop discrepancy, as in: "I love eating chips and drinking beer every night, but I want to be fit and healthy and remain physically attractive and feel good about my body and health."

Both things (daily beer/chips vs health and wellbeing) are acknowledged as being desirable, but they are not compatible with each other. The client can then decide what they want to do about it, and we can help them do it. Helping clients to weigh up the pros and cons of competing behaviours can help enormously.

TOP TIP

Become a better listener and responder. The most impactful things you can do as a coach, especially during difficult conversations, are:

- Smile
- Listen
- Say thank you—for example, "Thank you for trusting me with this." "Thank you for being honest with me." "Thank you for taking the time to come in today, I know you are busy."

Having a spirit of gratitude with your clients will go a long way.

Focus on creating new healthy habits

Left to its own devices, the brain will try to make almost any routine a habit, because it's constantly looking for ways to save effort. But habits are both a curse and a benefit, and as a health coach, you're looking to instil healthy habits in your clients while breaking the cycle of bad health habits.

We need time and repetition to form a habit, and the process is a three-step loop:

- 1. A cue or trigger**
- 2. A routine—physical, mental or emotional**
- 3. A reward—this helps your brain figure out whether or not this particular loop is worth remembering in the future.**

Once we break a habit into its component parts, we can fiddle with the mechanism. By learning to observe cues and rewards, we can change routines and, ultimately, behaviour. For example, what is the trigger for requiring a nightly dose of beer and chips?



Health coaches don't just encourage lifestyle change, they enable it.

**DR LISA DAWSON
(MEDICAL ONCOLOGIST)**

The 7 Rules of Behaviour Change



1. Know your **why**. Changing behaviour is not easy, so make sure you are fully committed to it—which means you need to understand your why!
2. Make it as **fun** as possible. If you want to get fitter, don't take up running if you hate running. Do a physical activity that you actually enjoy.
3. Be **positive with yourself!**
4. Make it as **easy** as possible. That means if you're trying to eat healthier, clear out those chips and choccy biscuits, so when your willpower is at a low point, you can't just reach in and grab the junk food—you have to get up and drive to the shops . . . which is much less likely to happen! Make the healthy choice the easy choice.
5. Make it a **habit**. Try and get into a routine as quickly as possible. For example, exercise at the same time each day.
6. Involve other **people**. When you've got support, you don't have to rely on just your own willpower.
7. Track and **measure** your progress. It can be very motivating.

Online course PK101: Health & Behaviour Change

Learn how to help your clients or patients achieve real and lasting changes in their health and wellbeing.

In this course, you will learn both the art and science of coaching and behaviour change, giving you the practical knowledge to help your clients or patients make sustainable behaviour changes. Learn all about motivational interviewing, how habits are formed, and discover the latest techniques from the field of positive psychology. This course arms you with everything you need to know, so you can really make a difference.

Sign up today at <https://www.prekure.com/online-courses/>



This course helped me to improve how I live my life, and how I can help others improve theirs as well. It's got many dimensions to it which made it a very interesting and inspiring course.

By aligning with a professional group like PreKure I can reassure my clients that I am using the latest, evidence-based tools and techniques to support them.



FAQs

Can I do the course even if I am not a PT or Health Coach?

Yes. This course is designed for those who work with clients and/or patients, teaching you how to change their behaviour and ultimately improving their health and wellbeing. You will also learn many tips and tricks that will help you and your loved ones personally as well. To date, we have had GPs, nurses, full-time mums, gardeners, IT specialists, and more enrolling on this course!

What are the benefits of doing the course?

You'll get the practical tools and resources you need to make your job as a Health Coach, GP, Nurse, Nutritionist, PT or mum easier. You'll learn the art of coaching and the secrets to achieving sustainable behaviour change. You'll develop and practise your skills in dealing with tricky clients, tough situations, and more.

To enrol, go to [Prekure.com/online-courses](https://www.prekure.com/online-courses)



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