Enhancing Motivation

Using motivational interviewing skills is considered a best practice approach for engaging parents with substance use disorders. These components can be found in the research as foundational steps toward motivating growth.

Build trust and rapport
- Express empathy through reflective listening.
- Communicate respect for and acceptance of the person and their feelings.

Create a helping alliance
- Establish a nonjudgmental, collaborative relationship.
- Be a supportive and knowledgeable consultant.

Regular maintenance is necessary
- Compliment rather than denigrate.
- Listen rather than tell.

When change is needed
- Gently persuade, with the understanding that change is up to the individual.
- Provide support throughout the process.
- Develop discrepancy between the person’s goals or values and current behavior, helping to recognize the discrepancies between where they are and where they hope to be.
- Amplify ambivalence. Ambivalence is normal. Exploring and resolving ambivalence moves toward behavioral change.
- Avoid argument and direct confrontation, which can degenerate into a power struggle.
- Adjust to, rather than oppose, the person’s resistance. Roll with resistance as it is a signal to change strategies.

Always focus on strengths
- Support self-efficacy and optimism: that is, focus on strengths to support the hope and optimism needed to make change.

Source: Enhancing Motivation to Change in Substance Abuse Treatment, SAMHSA Tip 35