**The 12 Card Sort Exercise: School Refusal**

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| P1  It’s fine not to go to school - I’m OK as I am | P2  It’s other people who make going to school difficult for me |
| C1  It would be good to be able to go to school | C2  I’d like to be able to learn new things in school |
| D1  I’d like to be able to go to school | D2  I’d like some ideas on how to be able to go back to school |
| A1  I have some ideas about how I could go back to school | A2  I know some ways to change and they are helping |
| M1  When I feel like something is about to go wrong I can figure out what to do | M2  It’s hard work but I feel I can keep going to school |
| R1  Things have been going well until recently | R2  I do try to go to school but I can’t keep it up |

**Disagree Neither Agree**

**-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4**

**Strongly Neither Strongly**

**Disagree Agree**

**Instructions**

1. The cards are handed to the young person.
2. The young person is told that he/she is to place each card on one of three piles, namely agree (with the statement on the card), disagree (with the statement on the card and neither (agree or disagree with the statement on the card).
3. The first card is read with or to the young person.
4. The young person is asked whether he/she felt that this was the sort of thing she may say, and to place the card on the appropriate pile. After a few cards are sorted, the card sorting process is individualised. Some young people choose to read the statements themselves, and quickly understand the card sorting process. For other young people, the cards are all read for them, and they are helped throughout the sorting process. After completion of the first level sorting task, the young people are introduced to a 9 point strongly disagree to strongly agree continuum scale. This continuum scale ranges from 4 (strongly disagree) through 0 (neither agree nor disagree) to +4 (strongly agree).
5. Cards from the strongly agree and strongly disagree piles are taken in turn.
6. Based on how strongly the young person agrees with the statement, she places the card underneath the scale at points ranging from +4 through +3 and +2 to +1.
7. Based on how strongly the young person disagrees with the statement, she places the card underneath the scale at points ranging from 4 through 3 and 2 to 1.
8. Cards from the ‘neither’ pile are placed at position 0 on the continuum. For some young people, including younger pupils, we simplified the process by just asking the young person to put the cards into the initial three piles, namely ‘agree’, ‘disagree’ and ‘not sure’.

Using this method, the young person could talk as much or as little as he/she felt comfortable doing – for the only requirement was for the young person to decide how far she agreed with the statements on the cards; an activity which doesn’t require any verbal communication at all if the young person feels comfortable communicating his/her views by ‘doing’ (placing cards in different places) rather than by talking. Verbal interactions often increase as the card sort progressed.

**NB:** the letters on the cards relate to the stages of change **pre-contemplation** (not contemplating changing, I am happy as I am), **contemplation** (ambivalent about change, I might change, I might not, I am undecided), **preparation** (some experience with change, I am testing the waters and I am planning to change), **action** (practicing new behaviour, I will give my plan a go), **maintenance** (continued commitment to sustaining new behaviour, I am committed to this, it is working well for me), **relapse** (resumption of old behaviours, I tried, I can’t keep it up). See table below.

**Adapted from:** Hughes, M. and Booth, V. (2009) Assessing Pupil Motivation for Change: Using Card Sort Methodology, in McNamara, E. (ed) Motivational Interviewing, PBM: Merseyside

**Prochaska and DiClemente’s Stages of Change Model**

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| **Stages of Change** | **Characteristics** | **Techniques** |
| **Pre-contemplation** | Not currently considering change: ‘Ignorance is bliss’ | Validate lack of readiness  Clarify: decision is theirs  Encourage re-evaluation of current behaviour  Encourage self-exploration, not action  Explain risk and personalise the risk |
| **Contemplation** | Ambivalent about change: ‘Sitting on the fence’  Not considering change within the next month | Validate lack of readiness  Clarify: decision is theirs  Encourage evaluation of pros and cons of behaviour change  Identify and promote new, positive outcome expectations |
| **Preparation** | Some experience with change and are trying to change: ‘Testing the waters’  Planning to act within 1 month | Identify and assist in problem solving re: obstacles  Help CYP identify social support  Verify that the CYP has the underlying skills for behaviour change  Encourage small initial steps |
| **Action** | Practicing new behaviour for 3-6 months | Focus on restructuring cues and social support  Bolster self-efficacy for dealing with obstacles  Combat feelings of loss and reiterate long-term benefits. |
| **Maintenance** | Continued commitment to new behaviour post 6 months to 5 years | Plan for follow-up support  Reinforce internal rewards  Discussion coping with relapse |
| **Relapse** | Resumption of old behaviours: ‘Fall from grace’ | Evaluated trigger for relapse  Reassess motivation and barriers  Plan stronger coping strategies |