

BRAVE

How to sensitively discuss growth, weight and health behaviours



Children
and families



Build relationships

Hear the parent/caregiver talk, seek to understand and be empathetic towards the family and their situation. Once presenting concern has been addressed:

“ How are you and your family? Is there anything else you would like to discuss about your child's health and wellbeing?



Raise respectfully

Introduce the topic of growth and health behaviours and use weight-neutral, sensitive language. For example, focus on health, health behaviours or other factors that contribute to growth.

Scenario 1: Offer a safe and respectful space for open communication.

“ Supporting your child's overall health and wellbeing by enjoying healthier behaviours together as a family, provides children the best start to life. We know achieving this can be hard sometimes. Everyone deserves support and I'm happy to chat if there is anything you've been finding tricky. Is this something you would like to discuss today?

Scenario 2: Link to presenting health concerns where appropriate.

“ I can see that talking about the [growth chart] has come as a surprise to you. Let's consider the role wellbeing and health behaviours, such as [health behaviour¹] can play in supporting growth and development. Would it be okay if we spoke about this further today?

¹ **Health behaviours** that could be highlighted here include nutrition, movement, sleep, emotional wellbeing, screen time. This may differ based on the parent or family. Consider that there are social determinants of health that may impact these health behaviours such as food security or access, other conditions such as neurodivergence.



Ask about attitudes

Ask the parent/caregiver about their perspectives, attitudes and motivations towards supporting their child's growth and health behaviours.

“ How do you feel about your child's growth?

“ How do you feel about your child's overall health and wellbeing?

“ What does maintaining your family's health and wellbeing mean to you?

“ What areas of your child's health or wellbeing are most important to you?

“ What motivates you or your family towards better health/healthier behaviours?

“ What has been your experience with making improvements to your or your family's health and wellbeing in the past?

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Validate values

Validate the parent/caregiver's viewpoint and acknowledge their stage of change. Relay understanding through paraphrasing, being empathetic, avoiding judgement and incorporating positive language.



Precontemplation

If the parent/caregiver has not raised health concerns or is reluctant to discuss aspects of their child's health and wellbeing.

“

Do you feel your motivation for your child [motivations²] would help you make positive health changes? What would it mean if things were to stay the same?

“

I understand you have competing priorities at the moment. I can help you make small changes that may have big impacts on your child/family's health if you would like to chat further at your next appointment.

² **Motivations** examples that could be highlighted here include 'to be more engaged with family and friends' or 'to feel healthier and more confident'.

Contemplation

If the parent/caregiver is ready to discuss or change health behaviours, use exploratory, open-ended questions.

“

I can see that [health behaviour¹] is important to you and/or an area you would like to support your child with.

“

It's great you are being proactive and have made attempts to support your child's health – small changes now can make a big difference in [child's name]'s overall wellbeing. I understand that it can be hard to continue positive changes over time. Do you want to talk about what has or hasn't worked in the past, or ways we could support you and your family to help maintain these positive changes?



Engage and enable

Co-create next steps together through educating and enabling the parent or family. Consider using a SMART goal setting template or build an automated template into your clinical software.

“

I will leave it with you to decide how you would like support with your child's wellbeing and [health behaviour¹]. I am here to support you at a future appointment when you are ready.

³ **Actions** will be personalised to the family and child's circumstances. Examples may relate to moving more, improving sleep, increasing vegetable or fruit intake, decreasing screen time, supporting your child's emotional wellbeing.

⁴ Refer to evidence-based **programs or resources**. Use local directories or head to Clinicians Hub for [free statewide referral pathways](#) and [resources](#).

“

You're taking a really positive step by looking at this now. It is all about supporting [child's name] to feel their best and be their healthiest, as they grow. It would be great to talk about a small goal that you could work towards such as [action³], or alternatively, here are some [programs or resources⁴] that can provide you with further support or get you started. We can arrange a follow up appointment to continue this conversation.