

Making and Supporting Change



Navigating Your Way through the Stages of Change

The information in this handout is based on the research and writings of James Prochaska, John Norcross, and Carlo DiClemente. Their book, *Changing for Good*, published by Avon Books, is recommended reading.

| Stages of Change | Description | Self-Help Hints | Helping Others |
|--------------------------|--|---|---|
| Pre-contemplation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The person does not see the attitude or behavior as a problem. Prefers to change those around who are pointing to the problem. Transition to the next stage comes through growing self-awareness. Denial is Barrier to self-understanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become aware of how your defenses stop you from hearing information from those who could be most helpful to you. Seek out positive influences. Ask others to identify your defenses. Be open and yet protect yourself from the push to move too fast. Join a self-help group. Know who is on your side. Ask – if you could free others who have the same behavior as yours, would you? Increase your perception of the pros of changing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a nonjudgmental attitude. Give information about the behavior patterns and the impact you witness. A caring attitude is critical. Rather than pushing, give information that helps the person to consider change. Do not enable continuance of the problem behavior. |
| Contemplation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The person has opened their eyes to the existence of a problem. Experiences the desire to change and yet is resistant to change. Chronic contemplators are “stuck” in their behavior. Others act too soon and cannot sustain the momentum. Now is the time to fully understand the problem. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chose activities that will engage your emotions. (Movies, books, etc.) Ask the right questions about your patterns and the impact of your behavior. Learn what triggers the behavior. Conduct an appraisal of the consequences of and reactions to change by self and others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The person is not ready for change. They need support; someone to listen and understand. Express belief in ability to change and acceptance of person regardless of speed of change. Give more information that leads to self-awareness and motivation. |



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| Preparation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moving from the decision to change to the specific steps to take. ▪ Focus now is on the most suitable steps to take. ▪ Creating a multi-faceted, practical action plan. ▪ Making a public commitment. ▪ Planning for rewards and handling the pressure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time to get ready for making the change; create your plan of action. ▪ Take a look at the cons, are they lessening? If not, you are still at the contemplating stage. ▪ Plan small steps. Set a date. ▪ Go public (with at least one other person). ▪ Make a Contract. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remember that the action stage will be intense and at times overwhelming. Ask what you can do now and at the time of action. ▪ Ask how you will know when support is needed. |
| Action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most noticeable stage. ▪ Can be confused with successful change. ▪ May lead to quick relapse if the need for vigilance is not understood. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refocus your energy. Avoid situations that bring temptation. ▪ Pay attention to what triggers behavior. ▪ Use helpful reminders. ▪ Take walks or some other activity. ▪ Practice relaxation techniques. ▪ Recognize and free yourself from rigid thinking. ▪ Keep guilt trips to a minimum. ▪ Learn and practice assertiveness. ▪ Use positive means to deal with pressure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participate in positive activities together. Exercise together. Rearrange the old patterns of relationships to help with avoidance. ▪ Give steady appropriate reinforcement. |
| Maintenance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work to pull together the positives gained from previous stages and to prevent relapse. ▪ Acknowledge vulnerability to old problem even while building a life in which the old behavior has no value. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep a healthy distance from trigger. ▪ Create a new lifestyle. ▪ Revise your contract based on what you have learned. ▪ Ask a helper to be on call. ▪ Practice confronting temptations. ▪ Help someone else. ▪ Patience and persistence are key | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be on call for that person. ▪ Ongoing relationship based on honesty and mutual support. |

Relapse

Change is most often like an upward spiral. When you experience a relapse consider where it is best to reenter the cycle of change. You can always recycle after a relapse rather than give into defeat. If this becomes a pattern where the spiral looks more like a circle that goes nowhere, it may be time to consider professional help.