

Embody Your Mind



Learning & Growing Together

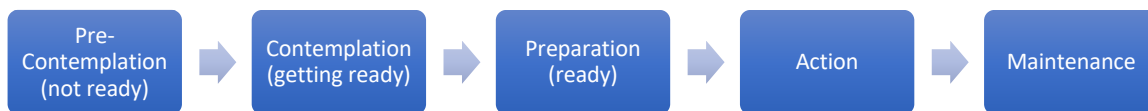
Change?

Do I understand the nature of change? Am I ready for change? Am I prepared for change? The following is built off of the “transtheoretical model of change” and helps us understand our relationship to change.

Brief descriptions of each category follow with an opportunity to apply to your own current life experience. In reality these are not linear processes.

To the best of one’s ability, these must be approached with patience, understanding, and compassion in ourselves and others.

Note: this is designed for professional development use and not intended to be used in this form in the clinic. (References: Prochaska 1997; Prochaska, Redding, & Evers in Glanz, Rimer, & Viswanath, 2015)



Precontemplation (Not Ready)

When we are in this state, we generally do not intend to take action in the foreseeable future, usually measured as the next six months. Being uninformed or under informed about the consequences of our behavior may contribute to us being in this state. Multiple prior unsuccessful attempts at change can lead to feelings of failure or reinforce existing unconscious shame (feelings of inadequacy or incompetence linked to that perceived failure). Sometimes if we are experiencing this state we might get characterized as "resistant", "unmotivated", or simply being unready for help – which is not helpful to us. This state is better seen as common and normal; and approached from the understanding that traditional healthcare programs are not designed to meet their needs. If we find ourselves in this stage, it can be helpful to discuss our perceptions and feelings about this concept.

What are my thoughts about how this stage applies to my current life experience? _____

Contemplation (Getting Ready)

If we are experiencing this state, we may intend to take action towards change in the next six months, and are more aware of the pros of changing, but are also acutely aware of the cons. In a meta-analysis across 48 health risk behaviors, the pros and cons of changing were equal (*Hall & Rossi, 2008*). This weighting between the costs and benefits of changing can produce profound ambivalence that can cause us to remain in this stage for long periods of time. This phenomenon is often characterized as chronic contemplation or behavioral procrastination. If we are in this “Contemplation” stage, generally we are not yet ready for traditional action-oriented (empowerment-based) programs that expect us to act immediately.

What are my thoughts about how this stage applies to my current life experience? _____

Preparation (Ready)

Preparation is the stage in which we intend to take action in the immediate future, usually measured as the next month. Typically, we have already taken some significant action in the past year. If we are in this stage, we have a plan of action, such as joining a gym, consulting a counselor, talking to our physician, or relying on a self-change, self-care approach. If we are experiencing this stage, generally we are well-suited for action-oriented programs.

What are my thoughts about how this stage applies to my current life experience? _____

Action

Action is the stage in which we have made specific modifications in our lifestyles within the past six months. Because our action is observable, the overall process of behavior change often has been equated

with action. But in the transtheoretical model of change, Action is only one of five stages and not all modifications of behavior count as Action in this model. In most applications, we have to attain a sustainable level of action for change that criterion that is sufficient to reduce our risk of disease. A famous cardiologist, Dean Ornish, has demonstrated that with proper support and enacted capacity for Action, we can demonstrate reversal of heart disease. Another example is that in the past, reducing the number of cigarettes or switching to low-tar and low-nicotine cigarettes were formerly considered an acceptable action, but now the consensus is clear—only total abstinence counts.

What are my thoughts about how this stage applies to my current life experience? _____

Maintenance

Maintenance is the stage in which we have made specific overt modifications in their lifestyles and are working to prevent relapse; however, they when we are here, we do not necessarily apply change processes as frequently as when we were in the Action stage. While in the Maintenance stage, we are less tempted to relapse and grow increasingly more confident that we can continue our changes. Based on self-efficacy data, researchers have estimated that Maintenance stages can last from six months to about five years. While this estimate may seem somewhat pessimistic, longitudinal data in the 1990 Surgeon General’s report support this temporal estimate. For example, after 12 months of continuous abstinence, 43% of individuals returned to regular smoking. It was not until 5 years of continuous abstinence that the risk for relapse dropped to 7% (USDHHS). When stressors arise, maladaptive coping patterns often tend to re-emerge. This can be seen as part of a process and reminds us of the importance of repetition for ongoing learning within our experience. Identifying strategies, such as enhanced social support, can help us continue forward.

What are my thoughts about how this stage applies to my current life experience? _____
