

Are You Ready To Change?

An individual's readiness or motivation for change is an important factor in determining whether or not they will actually make the effort to change. Most change is not a one time occurrence or single event. It is dependent on behaviors that happen and maintain themselves over time. According to the **stages of change model** developed by Prochaska & Goldstein in 1991), people go through 5 identifiably distinct phases when making lifestyle changes. These stages do not occur in a linear process. An individual may move back and forward again and again through these stages of change. What stage are you in now?

Pre-contemplation Stage

An individual in this stage does not intend to make any changes, at least not within the next six months. They may be unaware or in a state of denial about needing lifestyle change. Although they may become educated about the risks associated with unhealthy habits, this client may be pessimistic about their ability to change or may question the effectiveness of methods utilized for change. In this stage, for example, a smoker may selectively tune out information that would justify a decision to quit.

Contemplation Stage

Weighing the pros and cons associated with a lifestyle change occur in this stage. The benefits as well as the effort, cost, effectiveness of treatment, time requirements, and other considerations are given some thought. During this stage the client may waver in their conviction to follow through, approaching readiness to make an effort at changing then backing away from it. Individuals may spend month or years not quite committed to start the process.

Preparation Stage

Individuals in this stage will initiate an effort to change within 30 days. They have done the research, initiated appointments with professionals who can help them be successful, and made a commitment to follow through with their plans. Friends and family may have already observed positive behavior habits.

Action Stage

The process of change has begun here. The individual is doing what needs to be done to elicit a positive lifestyle change: engaging in regular physical activity, eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking more water, eliminating risking behavior. Although on target, it's this phase that the client is at the greatest risk for relapse.

Maintenance Stage

Sustained and successful lifestyle behavioral change as occurred in this stage. Individuals in this stage work hard to maintain their desired level of accomplishment and may modify and control their environment to insure their continued success.