

Stages of Change Model

Understanding Your Change Readiness

Thinking Patterns & Progression

Topic Studies · The Recovery Files

In this workbook: key ideas, worksheet.

The topic's scored self-assessment is in the app.

KEY IDEAS

The Stages of Change Model

The Stages of Change Model (also known as the Transtheoretical Model) describes the journey of behavior change as a process that unfolds through distinct stages. Understanding where you are in this process helps you identify what support and strategies will be most helpful.

The Five Stages:

1. Precontemplation: Not yet recognizing the problem
2. Contemplation: Aware of the problem, considering change
3. Preparation: Planning and preparing to change
4. Action: Actively making changes

5. Maintenance: Sustaining change over time

Change is not linear—people may move between stages or revisit earlier stages. This is normal and part of the process. Understanding your current stage helps you take appropriate next steps.

Stage 1: Precontemplation

Precontemplation: "I Don't Have a Problem"

In this stage, you may not recognize that your behavior is problematic or that change is needed. This isn't denial in a moral sense—it's where awareness hasn't fully developed yet.

Common Characteristics:

- "My behavior isn't really a problem"
- "Others are overreacting or worrying too much"
- No current intention to change
- May be unaware of consequences
- Resistance to discussing the behavior

How to Progress:

- Gather information about the behavior's impact
- Listen to concerns from trusted people
- Increase awareness without pressure
- Explore personal values and goals
- Notice patterns and consequences honestly

Stage 2: Contemplation

Contemplation: "I'm Thinking About Change"

You're aware a problem exists and are thinking about addressing it, but haven't yet committed to taking action. This stage involves weighing pros and cons, often experiencing ambivalence.

Common Characteristics:

- Acknowledging the problem exists
- Weighing benefits of changing vs. staying the same
- Experiencing ambivalence or mixed feelings
- Not yet ready to commit to action
- Gathering information about change options

How to Progress:

- Complete a thorough pros/cons analysis
- Explore motivation for change
- Identify personal goals and values
- Research change strategies and resources
- Set a tentative timeline for taking action

Stage 3: Preparation

Preparation: "I'm Getting Ready to Change"

You've decided to change and are making concrete plans to do so in the near future. This stage involves gathering resources, building support, and preparing for action.

Common Characteristics:

- Committed to changing soon (within a month)
- Making concrete plans for change
- Gathering resources and information
- Making small preliminary changes
- Building support systems

How to Progress:

- Create a specific action plan with dates
- Identify and address potential barriers
- Build your support network
- Gather necessary resources and tools
- Set a firm start date for action

Stage 4: Action

Action: "I'm Making Changes"

You're actively making changes to your behavior and lifestyle. This stage requires the most commitment, energy, and visible effort as you implement your change plan.

Common Characteristics:

- Making observable modifications to behavior
- Implementing strategies and using tools
- Experiencing both challenges and victories
- Requires significant time and energy
- Visible commitment to change process

How to Progress:

- Continue implementing your change strategies
- Track your progress and celebrate wins
- Address challenges as they arise
- Maintain connection with support systems
- Build sustainable habits and routines

Stage 5: Maintenance

Maintenance: "I'm Sustaining My Changes"

You've successfully changed your behavior and are working to maintain these changes over time. The focus shifts from making changes to preventing relapse and integrating new patterns into your life.

Common Characteristics:

- Sustained behavior change (6 months or more)
- New habits feel increasingly natural
- Active relapse prevention strategies
- Confidence in ability to maintain change
- Integration into lifestyle and identity

How to Continue:

- Stay vigilant about high-risk situations
- Continue using support systems
- Celebrate long-term milestones
- Help others who are earlier in change
- Remember change is an ongoing process

Remember: Moving between stages is normal. Setbacks don't erase progress—they're opportunities to learn and strengthen your change process.

WORKSHEET

Stages of Change Worksheet

Reflective Journey Through Change

Worksheet Completion 0 / 18

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For each stage, read the description and answer the reflective questions. Be honest with yourself—there are no right or wrong answers. This reflection helps you understand where you are and what might help you move forward.

Stage 1: Precontemplation

In this stage, you may not recognize that your behavior is problematic or that change is needed.

Do you think your current behavior is causing any problems in your life? Why or why not?

How do others close to you view your behavior?

What would need to happen for you to consider changing?

Stage 2: Contemplation

You're aware that a problem exists and are thinking about addressing it, but haven't committed to taking action.

What are the pros and cons of continuing your current behavior?

What are the pros and cons of changing?

What concerns or fears do you have about changing?

Stage 3: Preparation

You've decided to change and are making plans to do so in the near future.

What specific changes do you plan to make?

What resources or support do you need to make these changes?

What potential obstacles might you face, and how can you overcome them?

Stage 4: Action

You're actively making changes to your behavior and lifestyle.

What specific steps have you taken to change your behavior?

What strategies are working well for you?

What challenges are you facing, and how are you addressing them?

Stage 5: Maintenance

You've sustained your behavior change for a while and are working to prevent relapse.

How long have you maintained your new behavior?

What strategies are you using to prevent relapse?

How has your life changed since modifying your behavior?

Final Reflection

Which stage do you feel you're currently in? Why?

What would help you move to the next stage (if applicable)?

What have you learned about yourself through this reflection?
