

Coaching through the Stages of Change

Why coaching through stages of change is important (www.prochange.com)

- Behaviour change is a *process* that occurs through a sequence of stages. Health coaching needs to assist people as they progress over time.
- Stages can be both stable and open to change.
- The majority of at-risk populations is not prepared for action and will not benefit very much from traditional action-oriented prevention programs. Helping them begin at the appropriate stage and progress through realistic goals is more effective.
- Tailoring matters! Programs tailored to each stage do better than those that are not.

Stages of Change (Mental Health Commission of Canada; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986).

Stages of Change	Characteristics	Techniques
Pre-Contemplation	Not currently considering change: "ignorance is bliss"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate lack of readiness • Clarify: decision is theirs • Encourage re-evaluation of current behaviour □ • Encourage self-exploration, not action • Explain and personalize the risk
Contemplation	Ambivalent about change: "Sitting on the fence" Not considering change within the next month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate lack of readiness □ • Clarify: decision is theirs □ • Encourage evaluation of pros and cons of behaviour change □ • Identify and promote new positive outcome expectation
Preparation	Some experience with change and is trying to change: "testing the waters." Planning to act within one month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and assist in problem solving re: obstacles □ • Help person identify social support □ • Verify person has underlying skills for behaviour change • Encourage small initial steps
Action	Practicing new behaviour for three to six months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on restructuring cues and social support □ • Bolster self-efficacy for dealing with obstacles • Combat feelings of loss and reiterate long-term benefits
Maintenance	Continued commitment to sustaining new behaviour. Post six months to five years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for follow-up support • Reinforce internal rewards • Discuss coping with relapse
Relapse	Resume old behaviours: "fall from grace"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate trigger for relapse • Reassess motivation and barriers • Plan stronger coping strategies

Mental Health Commission of Canada. Mental health first aid Canada: Stages of Change. Retrieved from <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca>.

Pro Change. Transtheoretical Model. Retrieved from <http://www.prochange.com>

Prochaska, J.O., & DiClemente, C.C. (1986). Toward a comprehensive model of change. In W.R. Miller & N. Heather (Eds.), *Treating addictive behaviors: process of change*. New York: Plenum.

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