



# STAGES OF CHANGE

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## 1) PRECONTEMPLATION STAGE

***"IT ISN'T THAT WE CAN'T SEE THE SOLUTION. IT IS THAT WE CAN'T SEE THE PROBLEM"***

Precontemplators usually show up in therapy because of pressures from others... spouses, employers, parents, and courts... Resist change. When their problem comes up, they change the topic of conversation. They place responsibility for their problems on factors such as genetic makeup, family, society, destiny, the police, etc.

They feel the situation is *HOPELESS*.

## 2) CONTEMPLATION STAGE

***"I WANT TO STOP FEELING SO STUCK"***

Contemplators acknowledge that they have a problem and begin to think about solving it. Contemplators struggle to understand their problems, to see its causes, and wonder about possible solutions. Many contemplators have indefinite plans to take action within the next few months.

***"YOU KNOW YOUR DESTINATION, AND EVEN HOW TO GET THERE, BUT YOU ARE NOT READY TO GO YET"***

It is not uncommon for contemplators to tell themselves that some day they are going to change. When contemplators transition to the preparation stage of change, their thinking is clearly marked by two changes. First, they begin to think more about the future than the past.

The end of contemplation stage is a time of *ANTICIPATION, ACTIVITY, ANXIETY, and EXCITEMENT*

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### 3) PREPARATION STAGE

Most people in the preparation stage are planning to take action and are making the final adjustments before they begin to change their behavior. **Have not yet resolved their**

*AMBIVALENCE* . Still need a little convincing.

### 4) ACTION STAGE

Stage where people overtly modify their behavior and their surroundings. Make the move for which they have been preparing. Requires the greatest commitment of time and energy.

*CHANGE IS MORE VISIBLE TO OTHERS.*

### 5) MAINTENANCE STAGE/RELAPSE

Change never ends with action. Without a strong commitment to maintenance, there will surely be relapse, usually to precontemplation or contemplation stage.

### 6) TERMINATION

It's a lifestyle! It's not hard. You're not working on it anymore.

***MOST SUCCESSFUL SELF-CHANGERS GO THROUGH THE STAGES THREE OR FOUR TIMES BEFORE THEY MAKE IT THROUGH THE CYCLE OF CHANGE WITHOUT AT LEAST ONE SLIP. MOST RETURN TO THE CONTEMPLATION STAGE OF CHANGE. SLIPS GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN***

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Stage of Change	Strategy
<p><b>Pre-Contemplative:</b> "What problem? Don't bug me". Just visiting the meeting. Often a court or EAP program coerced presence.</p>	<p><b>Strategy:</b> elicit open discussion and perceptions of the whole situation. <i>Use: ABC 's</i></p>
<p><b>Contemplative:</b> "I want to change, but then I don't." Ambivalent (rather than unmotivated or in "denial").</p>	<p><b>Strategy:</b> Help clarify the situation <i>Use: Cost/Benefit Analysis, Brainstorming , ABC's for Emotional Upsets</i></p>
<p><b>Determination &amp; Preparation:</b> "I know I need to, but how?"</p>	<p><b>Strategy:</b> Determine the best course of action or plan. Create a menu/plan, seek advice , recommended readings, and set a date to start. <i>Use: Cost/Benefit Analysis, Role Playing , ABC 's for Emotional Upsets</i></p>
<p><b>Action:</b> "Now I'm working on it."</p>	<p><b>Strategy:</b> Develop practical methods, encouragement and sources of social support. <i>Use: ABC 's , DISARM , Brainstorming , Role Playing , Review Cost/Benefit Analysis</i></p>
<p><b>Maintenance:</b> "Need to stay with it."</p>	<p><b>Strategy:</b> Identify and use relapse prevention strategies. Anticipate "abstinence violation effect" in case of a "lapse". Work on other problems or life-style changes to find a balanced and rewarding life. <i>Relapse:</i> "Better try again and learn" vs. "might as well give up". Help to cycle back into appropriate stage without becoming stuck or demoralized. Re-frame set backs as grist for the mill and a mistake. <i>Use: ABC 's, DISARM, Brainstorming , Role Playing, Review Cost/Benefit Analysis</i></p>
<p><b>Permanent Exit or "Graduation":</b> "Moving on to other things".</p>	<p><b>Strategy:</b> Support and promote continued self-efficacy and closure, while allowing for return.</p>

Acknowledgements: Prochaska, J.O., DiClemente, C.C. & Norcross, J.C. *In Search of How People Change: Applications to Addictive Behaviors*, American Psychologist, 47, 11-2-1114, 1992, and Prochaska, J.O., Norcross, J.C., & DiClemente, C.C. *Changing for Good*

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# Allegory of Change

BY PORTIA NELSON

1.

I walk down the street  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I fall in  
I am lost.....I am helpless  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes forever to find a way out.

2.

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I am in the same place but,  
It isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to get out.

3.

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it is there.  
I still fall in.....it's a habit.  
My eyes are open.  
I know where I am  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.

4.

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

5.

I walk down another street.

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