

BE STRONG

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THE KNOWLEDGE

WHICH STAGE OF BEHAVIOUR CHANGE ARE YOU?

This week's focus: The Stages of Change Model - a psychological model that categorises the stages of behaviour change, which can help us in becoming more motivated to make changes to our lifestyle.

Why is it important?: Understanding where we are on this continuum, then implementing some of the strategies can increase our motivation for and adherence to new behaviours.

What will we tell you?: The different 'stages of change' and strategies to move us along the continuum.

- 1 There are five stages in the Stages of Change model associated with behaviour change for health. These are: **Pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action** and **maintenance**.
- 2 **Pre-contemplation** – here you do not believe that changes need to be made, there is no desire for change, or you feel that change is impossible. Move forward from this stage by gathering information about your current health status and risk and what improvements could be realistically achieved. Investigate what change could look like.
- 3 **Contemplation** – Here there is some desire to make changes but there's some procrastination going on. You're aware of the benefits of making changes, but also aware of the sacrifices that it will take to make the changes. To move on from this stage list the pros and cons and give them a score as to how important they are to you. When the pros outweigh the cons that is when motivation to change will increase. Then identify anything that will get in the way of you following through with your planned changes and write these down too. As you do, you will naturally start to think of solutions to these barriers.
- 4 **Preparation** – Here you are actively planning to make a change that is imminent. To ensure you follow through into action a strategy would be to develop some well constructed SMART goals and SMART plans – include all the resources and strategies that you need to ensure you follow through with your action. These will include, how to overcome the barriers you identified in the contemplation stage, e.g child and pet care solutions, financial solutions, recruiting your support squad, deciding on your weekly routine, writing shopping lists, planning chores... all the things that might get in the way of you following through with your plans.
- 5 **Action** – here you put your plans in to action and get cracking with establishing and performing your new pattern of behaviour. Decide on your motivation for change? – your health, kids, friends, family, relationships? Whatever it is hold on to it, as it will help you stay in the game. Once you start taking action you need to continue to do so until the sacrifices you make become worth the benefits, then once that happens your motivation will increase.
- 6 **Maintenance** – The Holy Grail of behaviour change is behaviour maintenance. Here your behaviour is now your routine and habit. This can take about 6 months, so you must keep doing the do in the 'action stage' to ensure you eventually get to maintenance. Once you get to maintenance the new behaviours will be a lot easier and feel completely normal and natural to you.
- 7 **A word about relapse** - relapse happens, and it is perfectly normal. Whenever you have a relapse, review the stage you have fallen back to and take those same steps to move you forward again.

KEY MESSAGES

Understanding which stage of change you are in can help you to move forward towards building some healthier habits and routines.

If there are some new behaviours that you would like to adopt plot yourself on the model above and work out how you can move forward through the stages to action and eventually maintenance.

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