

Module 12, Lesson 1 Tool:

Stages Of Change

Assess where your client is in his or her readiness to change using the following questions as a guide. Fully understanding a client's readiness to change is essential so that you can structure your sessions to best address this person's needs. Refer to the Stages of Change handout for more information on counseling techniques in each stage.

1. Precontemplation

Precontemplators are usually talking to a professional because they've been pressured by someone else and they're feeling resistant. They don't yet recognize that they have a problem and they may be in denial.

Ask the client...

- Why are you here?
- Do you think you have a problem?

The answers to these questions are "Because so-and-so made me" and "No" for precontemplators.

2. Contemplation

Contemplators acknowledge that they have a problem and are starting to think they might want to make some changes. Contemplators aren't sure of how or where to get started and are usually putting off taking any action.

Ask the client...

- Would making a change improve your life?
- Can you get started today?

The answers to these questions are "Yes" and "No" for contemplators.

3. Preparation

People in the preparation stage have decided it's time to make a change and they're planning to take action. They still need a little convincing, but they're done putting off the work.

Ask the client...

- Are you willing to make a commitment to new habits?
- Have you told others (family, friends etc.) about your desire to change?
- Are you ready to do the work?

The answers to these questions are all "YES!" for people in the preparation stage.

4. Action

People in the action phase are modifying their behaviors. They're committed to making improvements and they're devoting time and energy to change. Others are noticing that something is happening.

Ask the client...

- Are some of your habits different today than they were before?
- Are you seeing noticeable changes in your health and wellness?
- Have others commented on the progress you've made?

The answers to these questions are all "YES!" for people in the action stage.

5. Maintenance

People in maintenance have their new behaviors down pat. They've altered their identity, and they truly feel committed to long-term lifestyle changes.

Ask the client...

- Has a part of your identity changed for the better?
- Do your new habits feel easy to keep up?
- Is it unlikely that you'd ever slip back into old habits?

The answers to these questions are all "YES!" for people in the maintenance stage.