

Stages of Change

Maintenance

Continued commitment to sustaining new behavior.

Precontemplation

Not yet ready.

Action

Actively attempting to change behavior.

Relapse

Fall back into old patterns of behavior. Common to have set backs.

Contemplation

Awareness there is a problem, willing to think about change.

Preparation

Planning to take action to change very soon.

Stages of Change Summary

When someone has problematic alcohol or other drug use, it takes a number of steps to recover. Gaining an understanding of where someone is in the cycle of change can help determine what interventions are likely to be most effective.

Precontemplation	The person is unaware or barely aware that there is a problem the cons of giving up outweigh pros, there is no intent to change drug-using in the foreseeable future.
Contemplation	The person acknowledges that there is a problem, are open to information and education, are considering change but are not quite ready, and are considering the pros and cons of giving up.
Preparation	There is an intention to give up the drugs, the person is beginning to set goals and plans, and strategies are developed.
Action	The person is open to <u>receiving help</u> and are also actively <u>seeking support</u> from others. They have accepted that the need to make a change and are ready to take action to achieve this.
Maintenance	The person continues to abstain from drugs. The person is able to more clearly identify situations and self-defeating behaviours that encourage relapse. They continue to work to prevent relapse.
Relapse	The person uses drugs again. This is seen as a <u>learning opportunity</u> - a chance to learn what strategies did not work, and what part of the plan did not work.

- It is important to note that people can move back and forth through these stages.
- Slips or relapses occur when people who have moved into the action stage change their minds and slip back into their previous drug use.
- Relapses are common when people are trying to give up drugs.
- Relapses have been traditionally viewed as failures and time to start over again.
- A better way to view a relapse is as a learning opportunity - a way for people to see what part of their strategy or plan to give up drugs is not working or needs improvement.
- When people relapse they go back to one of the earlier stages of the model.

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For example, someone in the 'pre-contemplation' stage is happy using and is unlikely to respond to advice on the harms of use. At this stage, interventions that focus on reducing harm from use are the only likely productive steps. Motivational counselling at the various stages of change can be a helpful strategy in assisting the individual to go through with the particular change they are wanting to make.

STAGE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	GOALS	TECHNIQUES
Precontemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No intention of changing behavior • Denial/lack of awareness that there is a problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the individual develop a reason for changing • Validate the individual's experience • Encourage further self-exploration • Leave the door open for future conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate lack of readiness • Clarify that the decision is theirs • Explain and personalize the risk • Explore potential concerns and re-evaluation of current behavior • <u>Encourage possibility of change</u>
Contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of problem • Willing to think about change • Ambivalent about change within the next month: 'Sitting on the fence' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate the individual's experience • Encourage evaluation of pros and cons of change • Encourage further self exploration • Identify and promote new positive outcome expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate lack of readiness • Encourage evaluation of pros and cons of change • <u>Encourage further self-exploration</u> • Leave the door open for future conversations
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The individual has had some experience with change: 'Testing the waters' • Planning to <u>take action</u> to change within the next month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise the decision to change behavior • Prioritize behavior change opportunities • Identify and assist in problem solving • Encourage small initial steps • Encourage identification of social supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise the decision to change • Prioritize behavior change opportunities • Identify obstacles • Encourage small initial steps • Identify social support

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STAGE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	GOALS	TECHNIQUES
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Actively attempting to change behavior</u> • These behavior changes may occur over a 3-6 month period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate all efforts at behavior change • Focus on restructuring behavioral cues and social situations supportive of the change process • Bolster self-efficacy for dealing with obstacles • Combat feelings of loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure cues and social support • Bolster self-efficacy for dealing with obstacles • Reiterate long-term benefits
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued commitment to sustaining new behavior • New behaviors replace old ones • Post 6 months to 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate progress so far and the potential for sustained change • Plan for follow-up support • Reinforce internal rewards • Discuss the potential for relapse as a normal part of the change process and make a plan to address relapse situations and feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan follow-up support • <u>Reinforce</u> internal rewards • Discuss strategies to cope with relapse
Relapse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall back into old patterns of behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate efforts to resume 'changed' behavior • Evaluate trigger for relapse - treat the relapse as a learning experience • Reassess motivation and barriers to sustained change • Identify additional coping strategies or support which may be required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate triggers for relapse • Reassess motivation and barriers • Plan effective coping strategies

Stages of Change Scripts

Motivational interviewing is a person-centred counselling style that addresses ambivalence about change. It is not intended to be used as a standalone treatment for substance use disorders, but rather specifically for working with ambivalence about change.

Below are ideas for working within each stage.

Precontemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It sounds like you feel your alcohol or drug use isn't causing significant problems right now. Can you share what you like about it or what role it plays in your life?• Many people in this stage feel their use isn't an issue. Can we explore what might happen if it began to affect areas like your health or goals?• It's okay to feel unsure about making changes. If you could wave a magic wand, how would you like things to be different in your life?• What do you see as the positives and negatives of continuing to use? Let's explore both sides together.• Sometimes, others express concerns about our habits. Have you noticed anyone sharing their thoughts about your use?
Contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You've started to think about how your substance use might be affecting important aspects of your life, like your relationships or health. What's leading you to consider making a change now?• It sounds like you're weighing the pros and cons of changing your use. What feels most challenging about taking that next step?• You're starting to see some ways that change could improve your life. What's one thing you're most hopeful about if you made this change?• Sometimes the idea of change feels overwhelming. What small step do you think could be a manageable starting point?• What are some of the things that motivate you to consider change? Let's focus on those to build your momentum.
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You've decided to take steps to address your substance use. That's a big decision. What support or resources do you think will help you get started?• It's great that you're planning for change. What's one strategy you're excited to try first?• Making a plan can help make change feel more achievable. What are some specific goals you'd like to work on?• Support systems are key. Who in your life can you count on to encourage and help you through this process?• What barriers do you anticipate, and how can we plan to overcome them together?

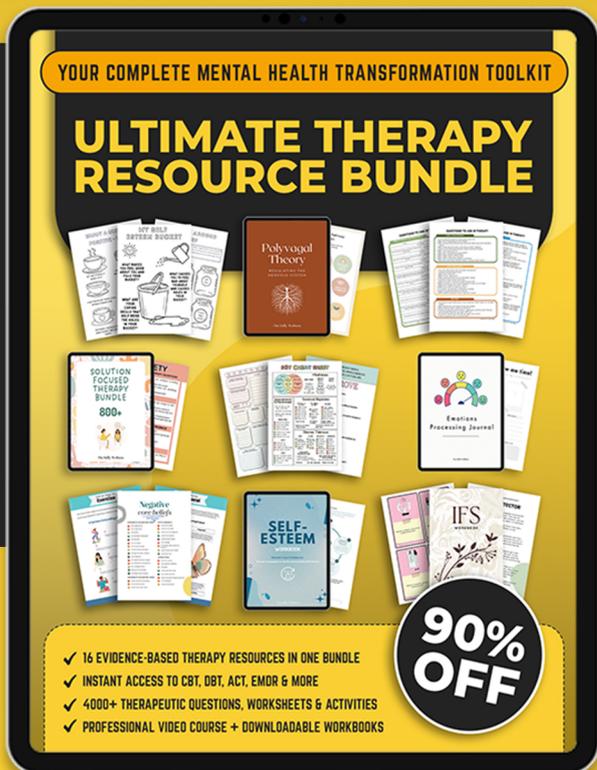
Stages of Change Scripts

Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You've already started making changes, and that's a huge accomplishment. What's been working well for you so far?• What positive effects have you noticed since you started making these changes? Let's celebrate those.• Every journey has its challenges. What's helped you stay committed during tough moments?• Are there new strategies you'd like to try to build on the progress you've already made?• Let's review your successes and identify what's been most helpful so far to keep your momentum going.
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You've been maintaining these changes for a while now, and that's something to be really proud of. What helps you stay on track day-to-day?• What routines or habits have been most helpful in keeping your progress steady?• Sometimes, maintaining progress can bring new challenges. What's something you've learned about yourself during this stage?• How are you celebrating your milestones? Recognizing your success can help keep you motivated.• Let's talk about any potential challenges ahead and how you can stay prepared for them.
Relapse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiencing a setback can feel tough, but it's a common part of the journey. What do you think triggered this moment, and how can we use what you've learned to strengthen your plan moving forward?• Relapse is part of the process for many people. What have you learned about what helps or doesn't help in staying on track?• Let's focus on what's worked for you before and how you can apply those strategies now.• What support do you think you need most right now to get back on track?• Every setback is an opportunity to learn. What's one insight you've gained from this experience?

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