

# The Stages of Change Model

## **Objective**

To identify your current readiness for change by applying the Stages of Change model to your own experience.

## **You Should Know**

Are you ready for a change? Before you decide, let's look first at how people typically make changes. The Stages of Change model, developed by psychologists James Prochaska, Carlo DiClemente, and John Norcross, is a wonderful tool that can be used not just to identify where you are with making life decisions, such as leaving relationships, changing jobs, losing weight, and so on.

Change is a process that typically follows these stages:

### *Precontemplation*

This is the stage when people are not thinking about changing their behavior. They are perfectly happy and not concerned at the moment about any harmful consequences. Loved ones, friends, or health-care professionals might have expressed concern, but people in the precontemplation stage of change don't believe they have a problem, at least not one that requires changing their habits.

### *Contemplation*

In this stage, people recognize that they have a problem and are thinking about the pros and cons (benefits and costs). They might also be thinking about making changes *someday* but aren't doing anything about it right now.

### *Preparation*

People in this stage are starting to make small changes in their behavior.

### *Action*

In this stage, people are taking definite action toward changing their behavior.

### *Maintenance*

The maintenance stage means that people have instituted change for around six months.

## What to Do

In this exercise, reflect on your stage of change, being as honest as you can be.

What stage of change best describes where you are *right now*? Explain why you chose that stage.

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Think of a time (now or in the past) when you were in the precontemplation stage. Describe when and where, and what it was like.

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What about the contemplation stage? Describe when and where, and what it was like.

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What about the preparation stage? Describe when and where, and what it was like.

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Have you ever been in the action stage of change? Describe when and where, and what it was like.

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Describe any time when you have been in the maintenance stage—that is, maintained your desired change—for at least six months.

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## Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

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