

The stages of change

A workbook for understanding where you are, and what the next stage asks of you



Change is a fundamental aspect of life that is inevitable and ever-present. It is a process that can manifest in many different forms, ranging from small shifts in our daily routines to major transformations that shape the course of our future. Change can be both exciting and intimidating, as it often involves stepping out of our comfort zones and embracing new experiences.

One of the key characteristics of change is its dynamic nature - it is constantly evolving and adapting to the circumstances around us. Change can occur gradually over time, or it can happen suddenly and disruptively. This fluidity is what makes change so fascinating and challenging to navigate.

In our personal lives, change can take many forms. It could be a career switch, a move to a new city, a new relationship, or a change in our daily habits. These changes may bring about feelings of uncertainty, fear, or excitement, but ultimately they offer opportunities for growth and self-discovery.

Change can often be broken down into various stages, helping us understand the process of transformation and the different emotions and challenges that may come with it.

- 1. Precontemplation:** In this stage, individuals are not yet considering making a change.
- 2. Contemplation:** At this stage, individuals are aware of the need for change and are considering taking action.
- 3. Preparation:** In the preparation stage, individuals have made the decision to change and are actively planning how to do so.
- 4. Action:** This stage involves making tangible changes.
- 5. Maintenance:** Sustaining the new behavior over time.
- 6. Termination or Relapse:** The new behavior is integrated into their lives, and the change has become permanent.

How this workbook is laid out. Pages 2 and 3 describe each stage. Page 4 is the cycle and a quick “where am I?” check. Pages 5 to 7 have three questions for every stage; answer the stage you are in, not all six. Pages 8 to 11 are tools: the readiness ruler, the decisional balance, barriers, and tips for moving forward.

The 6 stages of behavioral change

Stages one to three

One common model used to describe the stages of change is the Transtheoretical Model, also known as the Stages of Change model. This model identifies six stages through which individuals may progress when making a change. These stages are:

1. Pre-contemplation

The stage of precontemplation is characterized by a lack of awareness or willingness to consider change. An individual in this stage may be in denial about the need for change or simply not ready to address the issue. For example, someone who is struggling with their physical health but refuses to acknowledge the importance of diet and exercise may be in the pre-contemplation stage.

2. Contemplation

As individuals move into the contemplation stage, they begin to recognize the need for change and start weighing the pros and cons of making a transformation. For instance, someone who is contemplating quitting smoking may start to realize the health benefits of kicking the habit but may also be daunted by the challenges of breaking free from nicotine addiction.

3. Preparation

In the preparation stage, individuals have made the decision to change and are actively planning how to do so. This could involve setting specific goals, seeking out resources and support, and creating a roadmap for success. A person preparing to transition to a new career may start updating their resume, networking with professionals in their desired field, and enrolling in relevant courses.

A stage is not a grade. Being in pre-contemplation is not a failure; it is information about what kind of help is useful right now. Each stage has its own work, and skipping ahead usually means coming back.

The 6 stages of **behavioral change**

Stages four to six

4. Action

The action stage is where individuals take concrete steps to implement the changes they've planned. This could involve adopting new behaviors, habits, or routines that support their desired outcome. For example, someone aiming to improve their mental health may start practicing mindfulness meditation, engaging in therapy, and prioritizing self-care activities.

5. Maintenance

Once changes have been successfully implemented, the maintenance stage focuses on sustaining the new behaviors over time. This requires ongoing effort, commitment, and perseverance to prevent relapse and solidify the transformation. A person who has lost weight through healthy eating and regular exercise must maintain these habits to prevent weight regain.

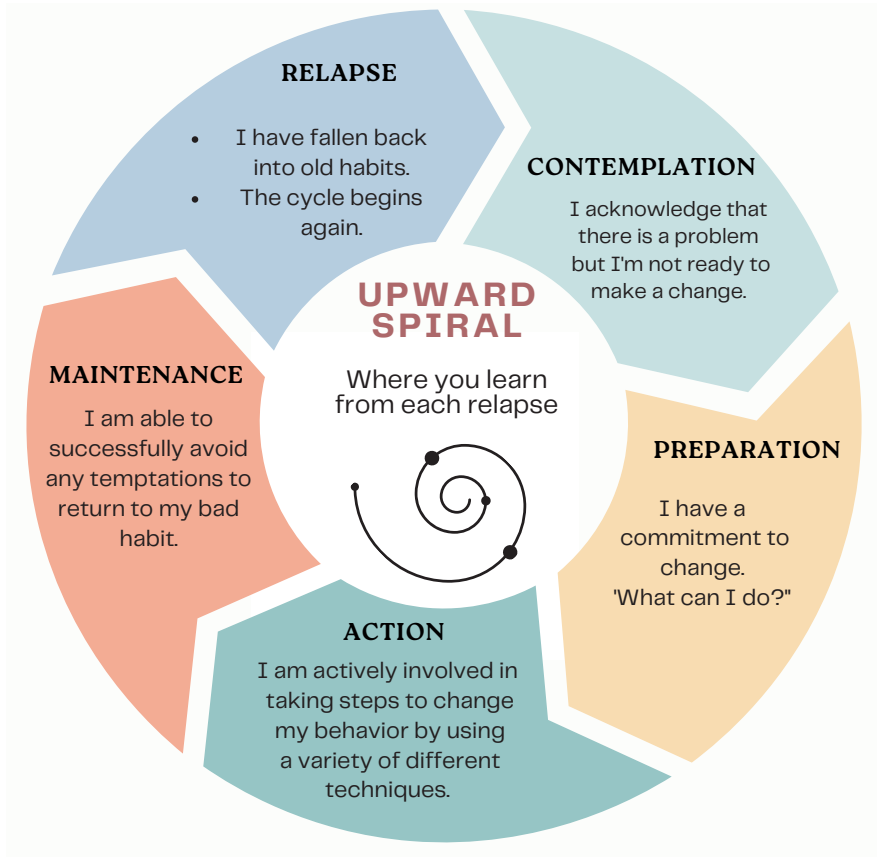
6. Termination or Relapse

In the termination stage, individuals have fully integrated the change into their lives, and it has become a permanent part of their identity. This could mean that the individual no longer struggles with the old behavior or temptation. However, relapse is also a common occurrence where individuals may return to old habits and need to re-enter the cycle of change to achieve lasting transformation.

Not a straight line. It's important to note that not everyone progresses through these stages linearly, and individuals may move back and forth between stages depending on their circumstances and readiness for change. Understanding these stages can help individuals navigate their personal transformation journey and provide insight into the challenges and victories that may come with change.

The cycle of change

An upward spiral, where you learn from each relapse



WHERE AM I RIGHT NOW?

Tick the one that fits best this week.

- ☐ **Pre-contemplation**
An individual in this stage may be in denial about the need for change or simply not ready to address the issue.
- ☐ **Contemplation**
I acknowledge that there is a problem but I'm not ready to make a change.
- ☐ **Preparation**
I have a commitment to change. "What can I do?"
- ☐ **Action**
I am actively involved in taking steps to change my behavior by using a variety of different techniques.
- ☐ **Maintenance**
I am able to successfully avoid any temptations to return to my bad habit.
- ☐ **Relapse**
I have fallen back into old habits. The cycle begins again.

What tells me I am in this stage?

What would moving to the next stage look like?

Understanding the cycle of **change**

Answer the stage you are in. Come back to the others when you get there.

1. Pre-contemplation

What aspects of my life or behavior am I currently avoiding addressing or acknowledging?

How do my choices or habits in this area impact my overall well-being or quality of life?

What barriers or obstacles might prevent me from considering the need for change?

2. Contemplation

What are the potential benefits of making a change in this area of my life?

What fears or concerns do I have about embarking on this transformation journey?

How can I gather more information or resources to help me make an informed decision about moving forward?

Understanding the cycle of **change**

Answer the stage you are in. Come back to the others when you get there.

3. Preparation

What specific goals or actions do I need to put in place to initiate this change process?

Who can I reach out to for support, guidance, or accountability as I prepare for change?

How can I create a structured plan or timeline to help me stay on track and motivated during this stage?

4. Action

What tangible steps can I take today to start implementing the changes I've planned?

How can I overcome any resistance, doubts, or setbacks that arise during this active phase of change?

How will I track my progress and celebrate small victories to stay motivated and engaged in this process?

Understanding the cycle of **change**

Answer the stage you are in. Come back to the others when you get there.

5. Maintenance

What strategies or routines have been most effective in helping me sustain the changes I've made?

How do I handle potential triggers or temptations that may threaten my progress during this stage?

How can I continue to prioritize self-care and personal growth to ensure long-term success and fulfillment in this transformed state?

6. Termination

What signs or indicators suggest that I have fully integrated this change into my life?

How do I plan to prevent relapse and maintain the progress I've achieved?

What lessons or insights have I gained from this transformation journey that will guide me in future endeavors or challenges?

The readiness ruler

How ready am I, today, on a scale from 0 to 10?

The readiness ruler is a valuable tool for assessing your willingness to make a behavioral change. It allows you to evaluate your level of readiness on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 signifying no readiness at all and 10 indicating complete readiness to change. This tool can help you gauge your motivation and commitment, as well as track your progress over time.



For example, if you were considering quitting smoking, you might use the readiness ruler to score your current readiness level. If you rated yourself as a 5, you could then explore what factors are influencing your readiness and identify steps you can take to increase your motivation to quit.

What is the behavior you want to change? How would you rate your readiness level?

What are the primary factors influencing my readiness to change?

What obstacles or challenges am I facing that are affecting my readiness level?

What would move me one point higher?

Decisional balance

Weighing both sides honestly, including the good reasons not to change

The decisional balance worksheet is a useful tool that can help you weigh the pros and cons of a decision you are facing. By considering the benefits and drawbacks of different options, you can make a more informed choice that aligns with your values and goals.

BEHAVIOR / HABIT

MAKING A CHANGE

PRO / BENEFITS

MAKING A CHANGE

CONS / COST

NOT CHANGING

PRO / BENEFITS

NOT CHANGING

CONS / COST

Identifying barriers to change

What is holding you back, named plainly

This worksheet is designed to help you reflect on the potential barriers that may be hindering your ability to make the changes you desire. By exploring these barriers and gaining a better understanding of what is holding you back, you can develop strategies to address them effectively and move forward towards your goals.

Tick every barrier that applies, then star the two that matter most.

- ☐ 1. Resistance to change due to fear of the unknown or fear of failure.
- ☐ 2. Lack of motivation or drive to make a change.
- ☐ 3. Limited awareness or understanding of the benefits of change.
- ☐ 4. Ingrained habits or routines that are difficult to break.
- ☐ 5. Feeling overwhelmed by the thought of making a change.
- ☐ 6. Peer pressure or social influences discouraging change.
- ☐ 7. Lack of social support or encouragement from friends and family.
- ☐ 8. Financial constraints that prevent accessing resources needed for change.
- ☐ 9. Negative self-talk or limiting beliefs about one's ability to change.
- ☐ 10. Traumatic past experiences that hinder the ability to move forward.
- ☐ 11. Perceived lack of time or energy to commit to making a change.
- ☐ 12. Emotions such as guilt, shame, or anxiety holding back progress.
- ☐ 13. Physical or health limitations that impact the ability to change behaviors.
- ☐ 14. Difficulty in setting realistic goals or a clear action plan for change.
- ☐ 15. Surrounding environment or societal norms that do not support the desired change.

Other potential barriers:

For my two starred barriers, one thing that would make each smaller

Tips for moving forward

Five things that make change more likely to stick

Embarking on a journey to change a behavior can be both exciting and challenging. Whether you're looking to adopt healthier habits, break free from harmful patterns, or pursue personal growth, taking steps towards behavioral change requires determination, commitment, and a clear plan of action. In this guide, we will explore five essential tips to help you move forward and stay motivated on your path to positive behavioral transformation.

- 1 Set Clear and Realistic Goals:** Define specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals that align with the behavior change you want to make. By breaking down your goals into manageable steps, you can track your progress and stay motivated.
- 2 Create a Supportive Environment:** Surround yourself with people who support and encourage your behavior change efforts. Additionally, eliminate triggers or cues in your environment that may tempt you to revert to old habits.
- 3 Establish a Routine:** Develop a consistent daily routine that incorporates the desired behavior change. By creating habits and rituals around the new behavior, you can make it a natural part of your daily life. Consistency is key to maintaining motivation and making lasting changes.
- 4 Celebrate Small Wins:** Acknowledge and celebrate each small milestone you achieve on your journey towards behavior change. By recognizing your progress and rewarding yourself for your efforts, you can boost your motivation and reinforce positive habits.
- 5 Practice Self-Compassion:** Be kind and patient with yourself throughout the behavior change process. Understand that setbacks and challenges are a natural part of change and use them as learning opportunities to adjust your approach. Practice self-care and stay on your path to change.

My next step, and when I will take it

Who I will tell
