



Stages of Change- How Do I Make a Change?

If you think about a problem you solved in the past, perhaps smoking or not exercising, you may recall that the resolution did not happen all at once. The solution took time and you made adjustments as needed. Perhaps you even ignored the problem, then thought about working on it. You may have come up with a plan, then considered the resources you needed- mental, physical and social- to make it work. Then you acted. Once your plan was working, you needed to continue to take steps to maintain your new regimen. If you did not achieve your goal, you probably gave up for a time and thought about what else to try.

Each of these steps is a predictable part of the stages of change. There are a series of tasks to complete before moving to the next stage. By understanding these stages and what helps you to move through them, you can achieve your goal.

There are six well-defined stages of change:

- Pre-contemplation- Not considering change
- Contemplation- Thinking about making a change
- Preparation- Committing to making a change
- Action- Setting goals and changes habits
- Maintenance- Preventing relapse
- Termination- Relapse no longer a risk

Assessing Your Stage – Self Test

A key to successful change is to know what stage you are in. Many people believe by simply improving a problem, they are taking sufficient action. This self-test and your EAP service is designed to help you become free of your problem. You need only answer “yes” or “no” four statements.

1. I solved my problem six months ago.
2. I have taken action on my problem within the last six months.
3. I am intending to take action in the next month.
4. I am intending to take action in the next six months.

Self-test Results - If you answered:

- “No” to all-4 statements - you are in the pre-contemplation stage.
- “Yes” to statement 4 only – you are in the contemplation stage.
- “Yes” to statement 3 and 4 – you are in the preparation stage.
- “Yes to statement 2 and “no” to statement 1 - you are in the action stage.
- You’ve reached the maintenance stage when you can answer yes truthfully to statement 1.

In your work with your EAP counselor, you will work toward achieving your goal!

*Adapted from *Changing for Good* by James O. Prochaska, PhD, John C. Norcross, PhD, Carlo C. Diclemente, PhD