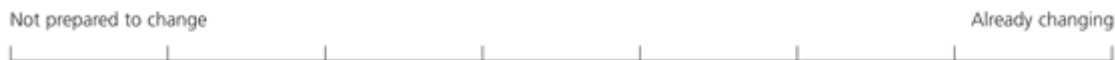


A 'Stages of Change' Approach to Helping Patients Change Behavior

Changing Behavior for Your Health

1. On the line below, mark where you are now on this line that measures change in behavior. Are you not prepared to change, already changing or someplace in the middle?



2. Answer the questions below that apply to you.

- If your mark is on the left side of the line:
 - How will you know when it's time to think about changing?
 - What signals will tell you to start thinking about changing?
 - What qualities in yourself are important to you?
 - What connection is there between those qualities and "not considering a change"?
- If your mark is somewhere in the middle:
 - Why did you put your mark there and not further to the left?
 - What might make you put your mark a little further to the right?
 - What are the good things about the way you're currently trying to change?
 - What are the not-so-good things?
 - What would be the good result of changing?
 - What are the barriers to changing?
- If your mark is on the right side of the line:
 - Pick one of the barriers to change and list some things that could help you overcome this barrier.
 - Pick one of those things that could help and decide to do it by _____ (write in a specific date).
- If you've taken a serious step in making a change:
 - What made you decide on that particular step?
 - What has worked in taking this step?
 - What helped it work?
 - What could help it work even better?
 - What else would help?
 - Can you break that helpful step down into smaller pieces?
 - Pick one of those pieces and decide to do it by _____ (write in a specific date).
- If you're changing and trying to maintain that change:
 - Congratulations! What's helping you?
 - What else would help?
 - What are your high-risk situations?
- If you've "fallen off the wagon":
 - What worked for a while?
 - Don't kick yourself—long-term change almost always takes a few cycles.
 - What did you learn from the experience that will help you when you give it another try?

3. The following are stages people go through in making important changes in their health behaviors. All the stages are important. We learn from each stage.

We go **from** "not thinking about it" **to** "weighing the pros and cons" **to** "making little changes and figuring out how to deal with the real hard parts" **to** "doing it!" **to** "making it part of our lives."

Many people "fall off the wagon" and go through all the stages several times before the change really lasts.

FIGURE 1.

The Readiness to Change Ruler can be used with patients contemplating any desirable behavior, such as smoking cessation, losing weight, exercise or substance-abuse cessation.

Information from references 4 26 and 27.

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