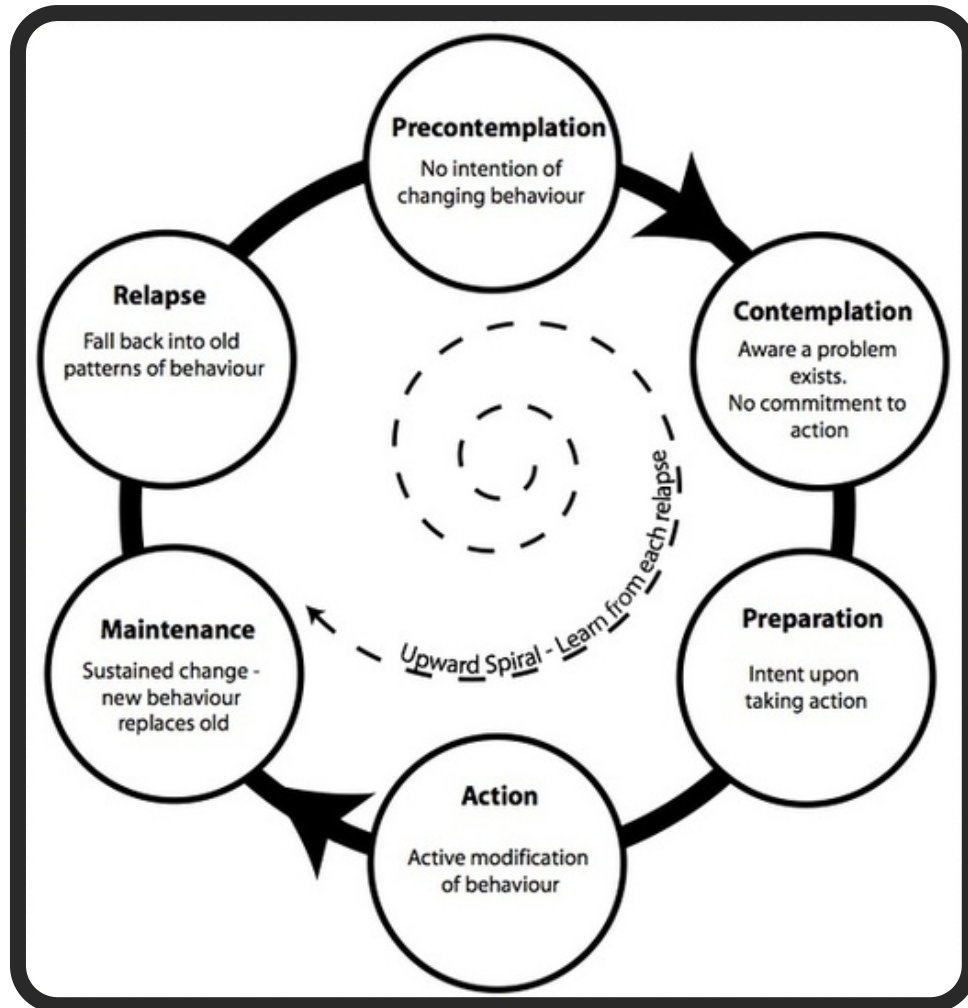


Stages of Change Model and Domestic Violence



The **Stages of Change** approach provides a framework that helps to understand not only the process involved in making changes, but also the activities individuals can engage in to make self-changes, or to assist others to make changes. The focus is on individual decision-making and how people change, rather than why individuals have problems. This model demonstrates that change is rarely easy and often requires a gradual progression of small steps toward a larger goal.

Stage 1 – Pre-Contemplation

Guiding Thoughts:

- Not thinking about changing
- Not interested in help
- Defend their current situation
- Possibly defensive if approached

Guiding Actions:

- Casually encourage them to call if “wanting to talk.”

Stage 2 – Contemplation

Guiding Thoughts:

- Person spends time thinking about problem
- Have considered change but still ambivalent
- Teeter/totter, weighing pro's & con's
- May doubt that long term gain will outweigh short term costs

Guiding Actions:

- Offer information (e.g. resources)
- Reflect with them the Pro's and Con's/Develop a full list
- Encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings about the situation
- Establish trust
- Gently challenge misconceptions that contribute to remaining in abusive situation
- Acknowledge risk and validate fears

Stage 3 – Preparation/Determination

Guiding Thoughts:

- Have stated their desire to change the situation
- Begin inquiring about options & looking for input about what to do
- Begin gathering information so they can initiate change
- Will be identifying available resources
- Will begin a "to do" list

Guiding Actions:

- Clearly define the situation they are wanting to change
- Review "Stages of Change" model with them
- Review available options with them
- Assist in gathering information from available resources
- Create a "to do" list
- Create a general action plan for completing the "to do" list
- Don't forget safety plan
- Remind of time and effort to implement change

Stage 4 – Action

Guiding Thoughts:

- Believe they have the power to change situation and are actively taking steps to change it
- This is the stage where people are most dependant on their own willpower
- Greatest risk of relapse

- Open to receiving help and likely to seek support from others

Guiding Actions:

- Be available for support
- Focus on building a support network
- Assist them to make an ongoing detachment plan from their abuser as temptation to re-engage is often heightened by extra pressure
- Discuss the benefits to having made change in their situation

Stage 5 – Maintenance

Guiding Thoughts:

- How am I going to continue with change?
- Wow – look at progress I’ve made.

Guiding Actions:

- Acknowledge grief associated with change
- Review with client the progress they’ve made
- Begin working on areas that are required to maintain new life (self-esteem, employability)
- Identify coping strategies
- Focus on self-care
- Empathize with difficulty maintaining change and normalize fluctuations

Relapse

Guiding Thoughts:

- I can’t do this anymore
- Maybe I’ll just see what happens if I...
- Support network may be less involved

Guiding Actions:

- Don’t take relapse personally
- This does not have to be a failure – opportunity to build a better foundation by identifying what led to relapse
- Review “Stages of Change”
- Assist in identifying high risk situations

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