



## Readiness to Change Assessment

### Motivation

 Assessment

 30 min

 Client

 Yes

Many clients enter therapy because they desire change, but change is rarely a simple or linear process. “Stage-based” approaches to behavioral changes have proven to be particularly effective in increasing motivation to pursue a goal as they allow for realistic expectations of progress (Zimmerman, Olsen, & Bosworth, 2000).

Prochaska et al.’s (1994) Stages of Change model, also known as the Transtheoretical Model of Change (TMC), is one such approach commonly used in clinical settings. In this model, change is regarded as gradual, sequential, and controllable. People’s readiness to change is determined by their (1) willingness to change, (2) confidence in making the desired change, and (3) actions taken to make the change. The model identifies six stages ranging from “pre-contemplation,” where there is no intention to change, to “termination,” where the desired behavior is well established, and a life-long change is a part of the individual’s new identity (see Appendix A for the model and Appendix B for a more detailed description of these stages) (Zimmerman, Olsen, & Bosworth, 2000; Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, 2007).

Identifying where clients are in the process of transformation is important for several reasons. First, it allows the practitioner to choose appropriate interventions, and the TMC explains why certain interventions work better at specific points in the change process. Second, it allows the practitioner to tailor approaches to therapy in a way that matches their clients’ current level of motivation. This prevents clients from feeling extrinsically motivated or even “forced” by their practitioner to make changes. Finally, if clients have unsuccessfully attempted to make changes in the past and feel frustrated and discouraged, the TMC allows the practitioner to explain setbacks as an integral part of the process necessary for learning and growth. The purpose of this tool is to assess the client’s readiness to change using the TMC.



### Author

This tool was created by Beata Souders (MSPP).



### Goal

The purpose of this tool is to assess clients’ current readiness to change using the 6 stages described in the Stages of Change Model (TMC) by Prochaska et al. (1994). This assessment informs the therapeutic approach and potential interventions to facilitate gradual progression from one stage to the next to achieve long-term behavioral change.



## Advice

- Please note that this tool provides only a very general indication of the client's stage of change. This tool should be considered as a conversation starter.
- Make sure to verify the assessment by always consulting the results with your clients. Do clients recognize themselves in the stage that was identified?
- In this assessment, the answers to questions are limited to "agree" and "disagree" to avoid introducing more ambiguity when assessing motivation.
- If a client scores the same on two different stages, it is advisable to select a stage further in the process of change. For example, the client who scores the same on "contemplation" and "preparation" should be considered to be in the "preparation" stage of the model.
- It is important to consider not only the clients' overall score on the assessment but also their answers to the individual items, as these reveal why clients find themselves in a given stage. For example, if clients' overall scores indicated that they are in the pre-contemplation stage, the specific items selected can provide insight into the four possible reasons for why they are not ready to change (see Stages of change summary chart in Appendix B for a detailed description). These distinctions inform different approaches to collaboration in problem-solving.
- Clients need to understand that relapse is normal and that as many as 80% of clients experience it at least once during the process (Prochaska et al., 1995).
- For ease of application, refer to the Model of change in Appendix A and the Stages of change summary chart in Appendix B. Provide the client with the simplified assessment, included in Appendix C, to follow during the session.
- The tool can be used both in the beginning and throughout the therapeutic relationship to measure progress. Once clients are familiar with the model, they can indicate where they are in the process of change.



## References

- DiClemente, C. C., & Prochaska, J. O. (1998). Toward a comprehensive, transtheoretical model of change: Stages of change and addictive behaviors. In W.R. Miller & N. Heather (Eds.). *Treating addictive behaviors* (2nd. Ed.). Plenum Press.
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2007). *Health behavior change: Participant workbook*. WRHA.
- Zimmerman, G.L., Olsen C.G., & Bosworth, M.F. (2000). A "stages of change" approach to helping patients change behavior, *American Family Physician*, 61, 1409-1416.

## Readiness to Change Assessment

The following Readiness to Change Assessment is intended to identify the client's stage of change. It also measures willingness and ability to change, so that the practitioner can help the client progress to the next stage through appropriate steps.

### Step 1: Identify the client's current situation

Ask clients to briefly describe their current situation and the behavior they want to change. This could be something they want to change or something they have changed previously but perhaps have experienced a relapse.

### Step 2: Administer the readiness to change assessment

Read carefully the following statements that clients in different stages make about behavioral change. Ask clients to decide whether they agree or disagree with the statements, and check off their answers to each question. You can provide the client with the simple version of the assessment to follow along (found in Appendix C).

#### Readiness to change assessment

	Statements	Agree	Disagree	Office use
1	I am fine where I am, I don't have any problems that need changing			Pre-contemplation (Reluctant)
2	I might be ready for some self-improvement			Contemplation
3	I have decided I will change, just not yet			Preparation
4	Some people only talk about it, but I am making changes			Action



	Statements	Agree	Disagree	Office use
5	I have changed and this feels good			Maintenance
6	I don't want to change and will change when I'm ready			Pre-contemplation (Rebellious)
7	I enjoy [behavior] but sometimes I think it would be better to do it less			Contemplation
8	I have been looking at solutions to my problem			Preparation
9	I have been cutting down on [behavior]			Action
10	This is my 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> attempt, I hope I can maintain this			Maintenance
11	What's the point, I'm going to fail anyway			Pre-contemplation (Resigned)
12	Others have told me that I should change			Contemplation
13	I need to take care of other things first before I can make this change			Preparation
14	I fell off the wagon but I'm back working on [behavior]			Action
15	I've made progress but I worry I can't keep up			Maintenance
16	For some people, this may be a problem, but it does not apply to me			Pre-contemplation (Rationalizing)
17	I think I want to change, but I'm not sure what to do about it			Contemplation
18	I plan on starting next week			Preparation
19	This is really hard, but I'm doing it			Action
20	I quit [behavior] for 6 months, but I had a relapse			Maintenance



### Step 3: Score the readiness to change and identify the stage of change

Each item assesses a specific stage:

Items numbered 1, 6, 11, 16 = Pre-contemplation

Items numbered 2, 7, 12, 17 = Contemplation

Items numbered 3, 8, 13, 18 = Preparation

Items numbered 4, 9, 14, 19 = Action

Items numbered 5, 10, 15, 20 = Maintenance

All items are scored on the following scale: Disagree=0 and Agree=25. Sum the scores for all 4 items representing a specific stage to calculate the final score for each stage. There are 4 questions per stage; thus, the score for each stage will range from 0 to 100 in increments of 25.

Enter the client's score for each stage:

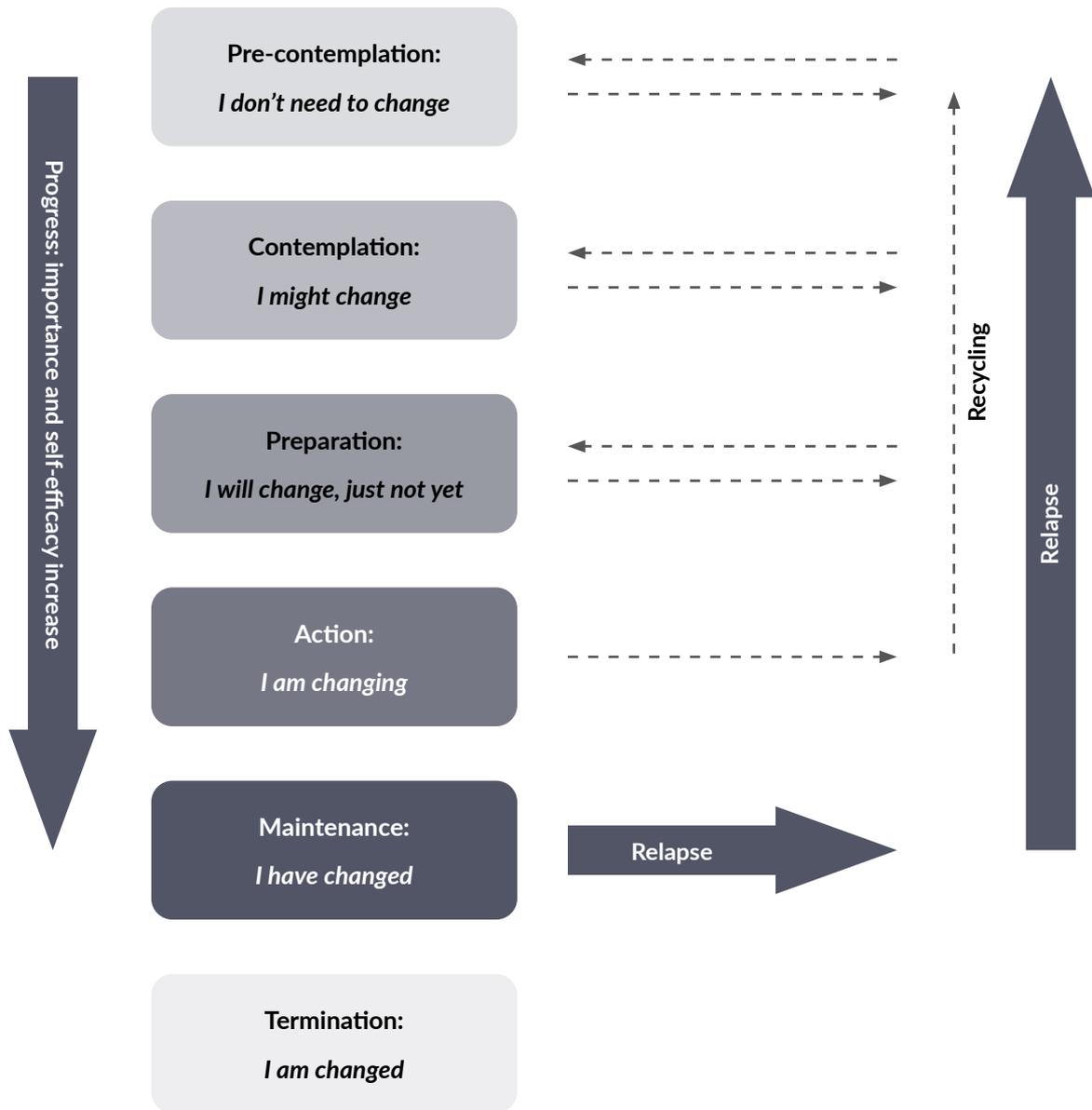
Pre-contemplation	/100
Contemplation	/100
Preparation	/100
Action	/100
Maintenance	/100

The highest score will reveal the client's stage of change. If two stages have the same score, the higher stage should be chosen.

### Step 4: Consult the results with the client

Ask clients to reflect on the statements in the assessment and describe what stood out to them. Invite them to consider the next steps.

**Appendix A: The model of change**



**Appendix B: Stages of change summary chart**

Stage	Attitude	Core thoughts	Critical markers	Description
Pre-contemplation	No	I don't need to change	Reluctant Rebellious Resigned Rationalizing	In the pre-contemplation stage, there are four possible reasons for resistance to change: Reluctance: Clients are unwilling to consider change, comfortable and averse to taking a risk, unaware of consequences Rebellion: Clients can be resistant to change because they value their independence Resignation: Clients feel helpless and overwhelmed by problems and feel like a failure Rationalizing: Clients employ rationalization as a form of protection; unlike rebellion, this stance is more about thoughts than emotions
Contemplation	Yes and no	I might change	Ambivalence	The contemplation stage is a period of instability. Clients are thinking about change. They are ambivalent while examining the benefits of and obstacles to change while looking for compelling reasons to change through a risk/reward analysis. Some clients will find themselves in this stage for prolonged periods, experiencing stress as they feel stuck.
Preparation	Yes, but	I will change	Procrastination	In the preparation stage, clients will see change as important and view themselves capable of change. However, they will often make "yes, but" statements and put off taking steps toward change. They will usually find themselves planning and strategizing for change, experimenting with changing the desired behavior, seeking support, and identifying potential roadblocks and resources.



Stage	Attitude	Core thoughts	Critical markers	Description
Action	Yes	I am changing	Behavioral Steps	In the action stage, change is visible and equated with progress. Alterations in awareness, thought processes, emotions, and self-image occur as clients exhibit diligence and put a lot of effort into the process. Most clients will experience setbacks and periodically resume the old behavior in this stage, which may halt the change process, make them feel demoralized over occasional “slips,” and sometimes result in the client giving up. These behaviors are a normal part of the action stage and are not seen as a failure or relapse.
Maintenance	Yes	I have changed	Commitment	In the maintenance stage, clients have successfully changed the behavior and accomplished their set goals, usually after six months. The new behavior is habitual and automatic and part of clients' lifestyles. This can be a difficult stage, as clients can become complacent, and the onset of negative circumstances can influence their commitment and threaten the sustained, long-term effort if no maintenance strategy is developed.

**Termination stage** In the termination stage, the new behavior is truly established, and the old behavior does not present a threat or a temptation. Clients are confident and able to transfer newly acquired skills to other situations. They do not identify with and cope well with the old behavior.

**Recycling** Most clients will find themselves recycling through the stages of change in thoughts and/or actions, which involves going back to the previous stage of change. This is particularly true in stages marked by increased ambivalence about change. The return to previous stages does not constitute relapse but presents opportunities for new learning to occur.

**Relapse** Relapse occurs only during the maintenance stage when the client returns to the old behavior, which can be brief or permanent.

**Appendix C: Readiness to change client questionnaire**

Please read carefully the following statements that people usually make about change. Circle if you **agree** or **disagree** with each statement.

Statements			
1	I am fine where I am, I don't have any problems that need changing	Agree	Disagree
2	I might be ready for some self-improvement	Agree	Disagree
3	I have decided I will change, just not yet	Agree	Disagree
4	Some people only talk about it, but I am making changes	Agree	Disagree
5	I have changed and this feels good	Agree	Disagree
6	I don't want to change and will change when I'm ready	Agree	Disagree
7	I enjoy [behavior] but sometimes I think it would be better to do it less	Agree	Disagree
8	I have been looking at solutions for my problem	Agree	Disagree
9	I have been cutting down on [behavior]	Agree	Disagree
10	This is my 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> attempt, I hope I can maintain this	Agree	Disagree
11	What's the point, I'm going to fail anyway	Agree	Disagree
12	Others have told me that I should change	Agree	Disagree
13	I need to take care of other things first before I can make this change	Agree	Disagree
14	I fell off the wagon but I'm back to working on [behavior]	Agree	Disagree
15	I've made progress but I worry I can't keep up	Agree	Disagree
16	For some people, this may be a problem, but it does not apply to me	Agree	Disagree
17	I think I want to change but I'm not sure what to do about it	Agree	Disagree
18	I plan on starting next week	Agree	Disagree
19	This is really hard but I'm doing it	Agree	Disagree
20	I quit [behavior] for 6 months but I had a relapse	Agree	Disagree