

# Stages of Change Descriptions

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Descriptors</b>
Pre-contemplation	Person is not thinking about or does not want to change a particular behavior
Contemplation	Person is thinking about changing a behavior
Preparation/Determination	Person is seriously considering and planning to change a behavior and has taken steps toward change
Action	Person is actively doing things to change or modify behavior
Maintenance	Person continues to maintain behavioral changes until they become permanent
Relapse	Person returns to pattern of behavior that she/he has begun to change (returns to one of the first three stages)

From Prochaska, J. O., Norcross, J. C., & DiClemente, C. C. (1994). *Changing for good: The revolutionary program that explains the six stages of change and teaches you how to free yourself from bad habits*. New York: Morrow.

# Ten Strategies for Evoking Change Talk

## 1. Ask Evocative Questions

Why would you want to make this change? (Desire)  
How might you go about it, in order to succeed? (Ability)  
What are the three best reasons for you to do it? (Reasons)  
How important is it for you to make this change? (Need)  
So what do you think you'll do? (Commitment)

## 2. Ask for Elaboration

When a change talk theme emerges, ask for more detail. In what ways?

## 3. Ask for Examples

When a change talk theme emerges, ask for specific examples.  
When was the last time that happened?  
Give me an example. What else?

## 4. Look Back

Ask about a time before the current concern emerged. How were things better, different?

## 5. Look Forward

Ask what may happen if things continue as they are (status quo).  
If you were 100% successful in making the changes you want, what would be different? How would you like your life to be five years from now?


## 6. Query Extremes

What are the worst things that might happen if you don't make this change? What are the best things that might happen if you do make this change?

## 7. Use Change Rulers

Ask, "On a scale from zero to ten, how important is it to you to [target change] - where zero is not at all important, and ten is extremely important?"

Follow up: And why are you at \_\_\_\_ and not zero? What might happen that could move you from \_\_\_\_ to [higher score]?  
Instead of "how important" (need), you could also ask how much you want (desire), or how confident you are that you could (ability), or how committed are you to \_\_\_\_ (commitment).



Asking “how ready are you?” tends to be a bit confusing because it combines competing components of desire, ability, reasons and need.

### **8. Explore Goals and Values**

Ask what the person’s guiding values are. What do they want in life? Using a values card sort can be helpful here. If there is a “problem” behavior, ask how that behavior fits in with the person’s goals or values. Does it help realize a goal or value, interfere with it, or is it irrelevant?

### **9. Come Alongside**

Explicitly side with the negative (status quo) side of ambivalence. Perhaps \_\_\_\_\_ is so important to you that you won’t give it up, no matter what the cost.

### **10. Explore Decisional Balance**

First ask for the good things about status quo, then ask for the not-so-good things too.

# Responding to Change Talk

When you hear change talk, don't just sit there! Normally in MI one would respond in one of four ways, represented by the acronym EARS:

**Explore** - Ask for elaboration: how, in what ways, why? Ask for examples: when was the last time this happened (e.g., for an adverse consequence).

**Affirm** - Express agreement, appreciation, encouragement, etc.

**Reflect** - This is the most common response to change talk – to offer a simple or complex reflection.

**Summary** - Change talk is also collected in “bouquet” summaries.

# Decisional Balance Worksheet

<b>Benefits of Changing</b>	<b>Benefits of Staying the Same</b>
<b>Drawbacks to Changing</b>	<b>Drawbacks to Staying the Same</b>

# Planning

Although the change plan is the family's, creating it is an interactive process between you and the family. One of your most important tasks is to ensure that the plan is feasible. When the family proposes a plan that seems unrealistic, too ambitious, or not ambitious enough, a process of negotiation should follow. The following areas are ordinarily part of interactive discussions and negotiations:

- *Intensity and amount of help needed*--for example, the use of only self-help groups, enrolling in intensive outpatient treatment, or entering a 2-year therapeutic community
- *Timeframe*--a short- rather than a long-term plan and a start date for the plan
- *Available social support*--including who will be involved in treatment (e.g., family, Women for Sobriety, community group), where it will take place (at home, in the community), and when it will occur (after work, weekends, two evenings a week)
- *Sequence of subgoals and strategies or steps in the plan*--for example, first to stop dealing marijuana, then stop smoking it; to call friends or family to tell them about the plan, then visit them; to learn relaxation techniques, then to use them when feeling stressed at work.
- *How to address multiple problems*--for example, how to deal with legal, financial, and health problems.

