



WISEWOMAN Stages of Change Tip Sheet

Created by the W. Virginia WISEWOMAN Program



Stage	Characteristics	Assistive Techniques	Helpful Questions
Pre-Contemplation	Not considering changing, may be in denial, resigned, feels they have no control, does not think the situation applies to them, believes the consequences are not serious	Identify current health knowledge, increase awareness re: health behaviors, personalize the risks, identify the benefits of making changes, discuss benefits of small changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What would help you to understand that this is a problem?” • “What warning signs would let you know that this is serious?” • “How could you do that differently?”
Contemplation	Weighing the benefits of the cost of change, currently experimenting with changes, personalizing the risks, assessing her level of control, confronting the reality of the risks of not making changes	Discuss barriers and strategize ways to overcome, assist in setting goals, discuss the costs of not making changes, explore the rewards of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What makes this a good time to change?” • “What are some of the barriers you think you might encounter?” • “What might help with that?”
Preparation	Planning to make changes within the next 30 days, identifying the steps she will take,	Acknowledge decision to change, encourage small steps, assist in identification of barriers and strategies to overcome them, identify support, assist with change plan, help her prioritize the changes she wants to make, verify her skills to make the changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What will be your first step?” • “How important is xxx in your plan?” • “Who will support you?” • “What might prevent this? How would you deal with that?” • “Tell me what you know about xxxx?” • “You have told me several things you are planning to change. Let’s make a list in order of importance.”
Action	Taking definitive action, assuming control, personalizing the information, confronting reality	Acknowledge the action, provide feedback and reinforcement, encourage appropriate self-rewards, Strategize how to overcome setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’m so proud to see you have started walking.” • “How do you reward yourself?” • “What gets in your way and how do you overcome that?”
Maintenance	Has become the expert, has maintained the change for longer than six months, committed to keeping the new behavior	Identify factors that keep her on track, reinforce internal rewards, strategize how she would deal with a relapse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What is your support system?” • “What could cause you to relapse?” • “If you were to relapse, what could you do to get back on track?” • “How do you feel now that you have ...?”
Relapse	Returned to old behaviors, dealing with feelings of failure and guilt	Explore the triggers for relapse, reassess motivation for change, identify barriers, develop stronger coping strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What do you think lead to your relapse?” • “What made you originally want to change?” • “How did you feel when you made the change?” • “What would it take to get you started again?” • “How could you avoid this in the future?”