



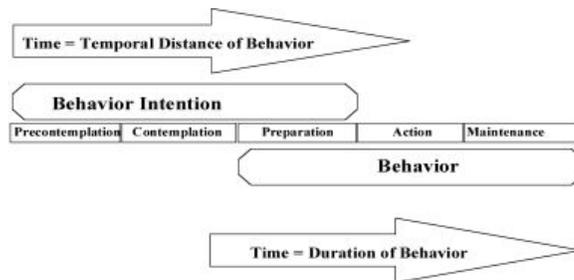
## Hope To Make Some Changes in the New Year? An Overview of How to Make Those New Year's Resolutions Stick

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Thank you for joining us for this discussion of strategies to achieve success with habit change and working towards a healthier lifestyle. We'll be covering a number of the points below during the presentation and we welcome your participation—feel free to share your own thoughts about the information presented and to ask any questions about the items listed below, or other related issues.

- What do we know about how people achieve success in modifying behaviors in pursuit of a healthier lifestyle?
  - Much of the research done to understand how we form the intention to make life changes and successfully implement plans to improve our lives comes from studies of smoking cessation and lifestyle counseling with medically ill populations.
  - The model described below, known as the "Transtheoretical Model of Change" is the most widely-accepted theory of how we make decisions involving lifestyle change and, importantly, the phases of change and factors which can support success.
  
- The Transtheoretical Model:
  - The Transtheoretical Model is a model of intentional change. It is a model that focuses on the decision making of the individual. The model describes change in habits or lifestyle as a process involving progress through a series of five stages.
    - Precontemplation is the stage in which people are not intending to take action in the foreseeable future, usually measured as the next six months. People may be in this stage because they are uninformed or under-informed about the consequences of their behavior. Or they may have tried to change a number of times and become demoralized about their ability to change. Both groups tend to avoid reading, talking or thinking about their high risk behaviors. They are often characterized in other theories as resistant or unmotivated or as not ready for health promotion programs. The fact is traditional health promotion programs are often not designed for such individuals and are not matched to their needs.
    - Contemplation is the stage in which people are intending to change in the next six months. They are more aware of the pros of changing but are also acutely aware of the cons. This balance between the costs and benefits of changing can produce profound ambivalence that can keep people stuck in this stage for long periods of time. We often characterize this phenomenon as chronic contemplation or behavioral procrastination. These people are also not ready for traditional action oriented programs.
    - Preparation is the stage in which people are intending to take action in the immediate future, usually measured as the next month. They have typically taken some significant action in the past year. These individuals have a plan of action, such as joining a health education class, consulting a counselor, talking to their physician, buying a self-help book or relying on a self-change approach.
    - Action is the stage in which people have made specific overt modifications in their life-styles within the past six months. Since action is observable, behavior change often has been equated with action. The Action stage is the stage where vigilance against relapse is critical.
    - Maintenance is the stage in which people are working to prevent relapse but they do not apply change processes as frequently as do people in action. They are less tempted to relapse and increasingly more confident that they can continue their change.



- A major implication of this model of behavior change is that the goal of behavior change efforts should be geared towards moving to the next phase of the model, rather than expecting to jump right into action without the advance mental preparation to sustain the desired change.
- Other aspects of the model:
  - Regression can occur, when individuals revert to an earlier stage of change. Relapse is one form of regression, involving regression from Action or Maintenance to an earlier stage. However, people can regress from any stage to an earlier stage. The bad news is that relapse tends to be the rule when action is taken for most health behavior problems. The good news is that for smoking and exercise only about 15% of people regress all the way to the Precontemplation stage. The vast majority regress to Contemplating or Preparation.
  - Having *positive expectancies* is critical: really try to envision just how much better life will be after successfully achieving the desired behavior change.
  - A number of factors have been shown to support success in sustaining behavior change:
    - Strategies to support decision-making during contemplation & preparation:
      - \* Consciousness Raising: increasing awareness
        - \* *I recall information people had given me on how to stop smoking*
      - \* Dramatic Relief: harnessing emotional arousal
        - \* *I react emotionally to warnings about smoking cigarettes*
      - \* Environmental Reevaluation: being open to seeing broader implications of the behavior
        - \* *I consider the view that smoking can be harmful to the environment*
      - \* Social Liberation: seeing how successful change is supported by the community
        - \* *I find society changing in ways that make it easier for the nonsmoker*
      - \* Self Reevaluation: self reappraisal
        - \* *My dependency on cigarettes makes me feel disappointed in myself*
    - Strategies to support behavior change during action & maintenance:
      - \* Stimulus Control: re-engineering your environment
        - \* *I remove things from my home that remind me of smoking*
      - \* Helping Relationships: making use of others' support
        - \* *I have someone who listens when I need to talk about my smoking*
      - \* Counter Conditioning: coming up with a Plan B to support the behavior change
        - \* *I find that doing other things with my hands is a good substitute for smoking*
      - \* Reinforcement Management: making sure that the new behavior is reinforced [
        - \* *I reward myself when I don't smoke*
      - \* Self Liberation: making the personal commitment to sustain the change
        - \* *I make commitments not to smoke*

***Good Luck!***

References:

Velicer, W. F, Prochaska, J. O., Fava, J. L., Norman, G. J., & Redding, C. A. (1998). Smoking cessation and stress management: Applications of the Transtheoretical Model of behavior change. Homeostasis, 38, 216-233. (summarized at <http://www.uri.edu/research/cprc/TTM/detailedoverview.htm>).

*Dr. John Jochem is a clinical psychologist with many years experience working with adults, adolescents, couples and families. Should you have any questions about this presentation, or wish to learn more about the range of services available through Dr. Jochem's practice, Hawthorn Counseling Group, feel free to call Dr. Jochem at (847) 680-0755 or contact him via email at [jjochem@aol.com](mailto:jjochem@aol.com) .*