

Client Handout – Volume 6

Behavior Modification



Anyone who has ever broken a New Year's Resolution understands the difficulty of behavior change. Making a lasting change is seldom easy, and usually involves a significant commitment of time and energy.

The Stages of Change Model helps us understand the pathway to change.

The Five Stages of Change	
Pre-contemplation	Problematic habits are not recognized. Therefore, the idea of change is not seriously considered.
Contemplation	Awareness of the costs and benefits of change begins.
Preparation	Demonstrated efforts and plans to initiate change are shown.
Action	Direct action is taken in order to accomplish desired change.
Maintenance	Successful avoidance of undesirable behaviors and maintenance of new behaviors.

Real change begins with the contemplation of the need for it. It may be at this time that new information elicits the desire to change. It may come in a flash of insight that creates determination to take action. You may be saying to yourself "That's it, I've had it! I'm doing something about this right now!" It's important to take advantage the instant the opportunity arises.

Being aware of the Keys to Change will help reduce negative self talk often associated with trying something new. There are six keys to change. The path to change is cyclical; all the steps are interrelated and repeated many times.

The Six Keys to Change	
True Desire	There must be sufficient desire to facilitate a behavior change.
Strong Belief	We must believe we need to change. We must believe that we are the only ones who can make the change for ourselves, and that we have the capacity to do it.
Knowledge	We must have adequate information to approach behavior changes logically and healthfully.
Plan for Change	Realistic short and long term goals must be made.
Setbacks	It is inevitable that setbacks will occur. How we respond to them is the key. Everyone is bound to give in to temptation from time to time. The danger isn't a single splurge but letting it become an excuse for an all-out binge or reason to give up.
Progress	Incorporate ways to measure, record, evaluate, and reward progress. Set mini goals along the way and reward yourself when you reach them.

Your goal for change should not be all or nothing. Too many people believe that the only worthwhile change is a complete overhaul. That simply isn't true.

There is always something that can be done to improve our health and fitness levels. The change might be a simple act like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or more demanding like committing to 3 exercise classes per week. How about adding 5 miles per week to a marathon training program? The beauty of it all is that everyone has somewhere to go, another step to take, another accomplishment to make. It is human nature to strive for higher ground. Knowing where you are, where you want to go, and being aware of the cycle of change will bring you closer to success.

Remember that having a setback is a normal part of the change process, and does not constitute complete failure. Get right back on track and reward yourself for your progress!