ADOPTING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE: A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH
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If at any time you want or need help changing a problem behavior, don’t hesitate to contact your employee assistance program or a mental health professional.
CHANGE IS NATURAL

Did you know that most people who make significant changes in their lives do it in a way that is very similar to all other people who make significant self-changes? It is not so much the thing they want to change that is similar, but the thoughts, and feelings and steps they take to effect change that is similar. For example:

- A man loses his wife to divorce and he decides that maybe there was something to her complaint about his lack of communication.
- A person has a near fatal car accident and decides that she is going to spend more time with her kids.
- Someone doesn’t like his results on a stress test and makes a decision to do something different.
- A person loses a job because of a temper problem and makes a decision to do something about it.

Once people start to think about what they are doing, and allow themselves to experience the feelings associated with the consequences of their actions, they are already on the path to change. It is not that they did not know about the problem before, it’s just that the problem has manifested in such a way as to get their full attention at that moment because they are feeling the full effect of the problem. The good news is that you don’t have to go through all those dramatics to get to the point of deciding to change. We can walk you through it in this workbook.

Help for lifestyle changes

Whether you are considering changing a bad habit, an addiction (e.g., smoking, alcohol, gambling), an aspect of your personal life (e.g., divorcing, leaving a stressful job, ending an abusive relationship), or your lifestyle (e.g., exercising, eating healthfully), this workbook will give you insight into the process of change and provide step-by-step instructions for making healthy, informed and responsible changes.

Note: Keep in mind that behavior change is difficult. Be patient. You may want to enlist a friend, relative or co-worker to help you reach your goal(s). For example, if you and a friend both want to lose weight, participate in exercise activities together, such as setting regular times to take walks together.
ARE YOU READY TO CHANGE?

Knowing where you are in the change process enhances your chance of success at changing a behavior. This ready-or-not quiz will help you determine your readiness for change, and identify appropriate actions to move you through your current stage and onto the next. Read each statement below and circle the response that best reflects your current thinking on a behavior or habit.

(*Note: This quiz presumes that you are not actively engaged in changing a problem behavior at this time. If you are, please skip to page 13.)

1. Regarding my awareness about this behavior:
   a. Others have suggested that I have a problem behavior, but I don’t agree.
   b. I might have a problem behavior, but I am not sure.
   c. I have a problem behavior.

2. When a loved one or trusted friend suggests that I may have a problem behavior …
   a. I am likely to tune them out, change the subject or get defensive.
   b. I don’t like it, but I know that they see something that worries them and are right in expressing concern.
   c. I am ready to listen and talk about it.

3. This problem behavior …
   a. is really just a nuisance, and I don’t have time to deal with it.
   b. is causing me worry and/or distress.
   c. is causing me, and some of the people I care about, significant worry and/or distress.

4. When I think about my problem behavior …
   a. I usually make excuses, rationalize or minimize its impact on my life.
   b. I want to change, but I don’t because of fear, pride or lack of motivation.
   c. I really want to change, but I don’t know how to begin or continue once I start.

5. Regarding knowledge of my problem behavior:
   a. I know very little about it.
   b. I have begun learning more about it.
   c. I have learned a great deal about it.

6. Regarding my knowledge of resources for my problem:
   a. I don’t know of any resources.
   b. I have learned about some of the resources available but don’t feel I have enough information.
   c. I have more than adequate knowledge about how or where to get help.

7. Regarding my current motivation for change:
   a. I have practically no, or very little, motivation at this time.
   b. I have some motivation to change, but I will need more to succeed.
   c. I am very motivated to change.
8. Regarding my current plans to change:
   a. At this time, I have no plans to change.
   b. I am thinking about change and the impact it would have on my life.
   c. I have a definite plan for change.

9. Regarding my support for change from others:
   a. I have almost no support from others.
   b. I have some support, but it may not be enough.
   c. I have excellent support.

10. Regarding previous attempts to change:
    a. I have never seriously attempted to change this behavior.
    b. I have tried to change on one or more occasions but have failed miserably.
    c. I have tried to change before and have had some temporary success.

Tally your score:

Number of “a” responses: _____ x 1  =  ____

+  
Number of “b” responses: _____ x 5  =  ____

+  
Number of “c” responses: _____ x 10 =  ____

TOTAL SCORE:  ____  

What does your score mean?

10–15 points

**Precontemplation stage:** Your score suggests that you are not yet ready to engage in changing this problem behavior. Many people never acquire the motivation or knowledge necessary to move beyond precontemplation. You can learn more about the specific characteristics of precontemplation by reading “Acknowledging the Problem,” on page 5.

16–40 points

**Contemplation stage:** Your score suggests that you are considering changing this behavior but are not quite ready. People in this stage seek knowledge and additional encouragement before they engage in behavior change. You can learn more about the specific characteristics of contemplation by reading “Resolving Ambivalence,” on page 8.

41–100 points

**Preparation stage:** Congratulations! Your score suggests that you are preparing to change this behavior. People in this stage have acquired additional knowledge and support and have a viable plan. You can learn more about the specific characteristics of preparation by reading “Preparing to Change,” on page 10.
ACKNOWLEDGING THE PROBLEM

If you scored between 10 and 15 points on the ready-or-not quiz, you are in the first stage of the behavior change process—called precontemplation. During precontemplation, the notion of changing a problem behavior is just that, a notion without much substance or intent to change.

Are you someone who has an inkling that you would be better off without a (health and wellness) issue, but you do not allow yourself to think or feel about the consequences of what you are doing because you have no intention of changing, or are afraid of trying to change and failing? Are you so good at avoiding information about the health and wellness problem that you have become skillful at keeping yourself “ignorant”, or “in the dark” of the consequences of the problem? Do you feel fated and unable to change a serious health issue? If you have given up on yourself and given in to the problem then this section of the workbook is for you.

Let’s acknowledge the fact that you are not ready to take action steps to directly change the problem and because of that, quite frankly you should not. There is no need to. The fact is it is OK for you to be where you are. You can change, but why not approach it in a way that works for you? Bottom line: putting down your cigarettes cold turkey, or going on a strict diet, or participating in an Iron Man marathon is just not going to do it for you (or for most of us) right now.

The following exercises will further you on the change process. Please answer the following questions as best you can. You will be on your way to finding that place inside that knows there is a problem but refuses to acknowledge it or do anything about it.

What difficulties have you had in relation to your problem behavior?

What worries you about your problem behavior?

What could happen if you never change?

What upsets the friends and the one you love the most about the problem?

What would your life be like without the problem?
How People Stay Secure and Safe When They Are Really Insecure and Unsafe

Everyone—you, your peers, your co-workers, your family, even the people who are demanding that you change something about yourself—all have defense mechanisms. It is human defenses that keep us where we feel comfortable, secure and safe. It is what we know, do and experience in our comfort zone that can prevent us from making positive change, even if what we are doing is killing us.

It is critical to gain an understanding of the four basic human defense mechanisms and to identify the ones that you use the most to keep you comfortable, safe and secure. Incidentally, it is these human defenses that can be used to your advantage when it is time to act on your conviction.

Study the defense mechanisms below and list examples from your own life.

**Denial and minimization:** protects you by not acknowledging unpleasant consequences of your behavior. Denial filters out information that may help you to change, which leaves you uninformed of behaviors others see as problematic.

**Rationalization:** plausible or “good excuses” for our irrational behavior or the use of intellectualizing to empty consequences or events of personal significance. Examples: For a parent who gives in to the demands of her child’s every whim: “My father was too severe” or “my mother never indulged me.”

**Projection and displacement** is based on fear of allowing our feelings to be displayed toward the source of the problem when we redirect them toward anything other than the self.

**Internalization:** Turning painful feelings created by others (i.e., a critical parent, spouse or friend, or someone with poor boundaries offending others) inward and failing to express negative feelings or assert our boundaries; we internalize them and fall into self-blame, low self-esteem or depression. Feelings of inescapable failure stop them from trying to change and clinging to the belief that they cannot change and they most likely will not.

List any defense mechanism that describes you best:
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
Ask trusted peers or loved ones for support

If you are feeling defensive, angry or frustrated at peers and loved ones who mean well but just make things worse, you may try the following:

- Communicate to peers who are pushing you to act too soon that you are trying to be more open and less defensive but are not ready to take action yet.
- Communicate to your peers that you need to talk, to get feedback and feel cared for first as you move toward action.
- Ask a peer or someone you trust to describe clearly and directly how you defend yourself and what it is you defend.

(For more in-depth exercises, please refer to the appendix in the back of the workbook)

Step up to the next phase

If you are just admitting a problem then it is time to start educating yourself about it. It is time to do the things you have avoided for so long. Begin by finding out as much as you can about the problem and what you can do about it. Read, watch TV specials, investigate the problem on the Internet—whatever you need to do to bring illumination to yourself.

If, however, you have been at this level of development for a long time—by overanalyzing, exploring every aspect of the problem area, reading all the books, constantly investigating through the Internet, knowing all you can know about it even more than the so-called experts—but without really doing anything, is also a good place for you to start.

In either case there are two things that characterize this conflict that are difficult to understand but critical for you to understand in order to move on to the next phase:

- Dealing with your feelings of ambivalence: the feeling of wanting to change and not wanting to change at the same time
- Giving up the fantasy that change is effortless.

Ambivalence:

It sounds like paradox, right? Well, it is, but it happens all the time. Some people want to lose weight but also love to graze all evening or have steak at dinner regularly. Someone may want to make partner at a law firm which places a high value on overtime, and also wants to spend more time with her kids. Someone may have a strong desire to get fit but spends 10 hours a week doing volunteer work instead. All of these have a common thread—a strong desire to do something different and a strong desire to keep doing what has been done in the past.
**Fantasy: change is effortless**

The thought that “I can change almost anytime I want” is common to almost everyone. The vision of yourself as smokeless and fit, or sober without desire to drink, or of easily attaining some goal that pleases you is just that, a vision. Visions are necessary; we need them to help motivate us. But what happens between the vision and attaining it is the fantasy part, the part where real world or what it takes to complete a small step toward fulfilling that vision is often fuzzy and vague. It’s where the rubber meets the road.

The following exercises are designed to help undo the defenses you identified and developed in the first place that allowed you to continue with your poor health issue for so long.

**Awareness of ambivalence** is essential to avoiding contemplation traps.

**Contemplation Traps: Delay tactics (defenses)**

**Search for absolute certainty:** overanalyzing, exploring every aspect of the problem by reading book after book or by seeing therapist after therapist. The hope that having enough knowledge may make it easier to change or the hope that it will go away while thinking about it. Substituting anxiety for working and mistaking working for action can keep someone in the contemplation stage for years. (Rationalizing)

**Waiting for the “Magic Moment”:** The belief that there is a perfect time to change. We hear things like: “When the time is right.” When is that? “When I am good and ready.” When will you be ready? “When things slow down.” That usually never happens. (Projection and displacement)

**Wishful thinking:** The desire to stay the same but with different and less destructive consequences. Basically it is having your cake and eating it too. (Denial)

**Moving on**

This first stage of change, precontemplation, is a difficult stage to define and understand. Yet, you will know if you are precontemplating changing a problem behavior if one of the following is true:

- you tried in the past to change the behavior and were unsuccessful
- your problem behavior is causing you at least a little bit of distress from time to time (or more often)
- your problem behavior is causing a loved one distress

On the next page, the article “Resolving Ambivalence” focuses on the contemplation stage of change and will help you identify and resolve any ambivalence you feel about changing your problem behavior.
RESOLVING AMBIVALENCE

If you scored between 16 and 40 points on the ready-or-not quiz, or have moved through the precontemplation stage described in “Acknowledging the Problem,” you now are in the second stage of change, contemplation. The contemplation stage is defined by the experience of ambivalence. You have decided that you will change your problem behavior; you just haven’t yet mustered up the motivation. Maybe you have been in this stage for months or even years.

You know you are contemplating changing a problem behavior if you:

- can acknowledge that you have a problem behavior
- wish that you could change the behavior
- feel stuck by fear or ambivalence

All in all, you are no longer content with the status quo. It might not feel like it, but this is a positive place to be—because your denial is gone.

So, how can you commit to finally changing that problem behavior? This section will address some of the ambivalence you may have and will offer tips to move you forward.

Ambivalence

The contemplation stage of change is filled with ambivalence. You are being pulled in opposite directions—your wish to change and your fear of changing.

All of your fears are real, and you should take a considerable amount of time to contemplate your fears during this stage. But be careful. Your fear could overtake you, and you could become “stuck” in this stage of considering changing and, consequently, never make the decision to change.

Contemplation inventory

Your goals are to:

- consider the advantages of changing your problem behavior
- develop resolve in your intention to change
- develop optimism that you can change your problem behavior

Write down your responses to the following questions in the spaces provided.

Advantages of change:
1. If you changed, what would your new life be like?
Optimism about change:

1. What encourages you to think that you can change if you want to?

2. When else in your life have you made significant change like this? How did you do it?

3. What personal strengths do you have that will help you succeed?

Intention to change:

1. What do you want to have happen?

2. How important is this to you? How much do you want to do this?

3. What would you be willing to try?

Moving on

The contemplation inventory might help you resolve your ambivalence about changing. If so, then you are one step closer to making that change. On the next page, “Preparing to Change” focuses on the preparation stage of change and will help you develop the plans that you need to be successful in changing your problem behavior.
PREPARING TO CHANGE

If you scored 41 to 100 points on the ready-or-not quiz, or have moved beyond the contemplation stage described in “Resolving Ambivalence,” you now are in the third stage of change, preparation. You are committed to changing, you are motivated, and you are ready to get started. Your enthusiasm is growing; in fact, you have told your closest friends and family members about your intentions to quit smoking, quit drinking or start exercising. You may have even asked them for advice on how they beat a nasty habit. You may have called Alcoholics Anonymous or Overeaters Anonymous to find the closest meeting, or even contacted your behavioral health care company to get referrals to a counselor. You are willing to try anything!

However, back up for a moment—before you quit cigarettes cold turkey or take that five-mile run. Making change without preparing for change can lead to feelings of frustration, stress, and, possibly, failure. This section will show you how to create a detailed plan of action to increase the likelihood of effective change. You are, after all, the sole creator of your plan, your success and your life!

Planning

It is important at this stage of change to get a firm grasp on exactly what constitutes a plan. You have planned many other things in your life, such as weekends, vacations, a wedding. To do so, you took certain steps in the planning process for each of those events. For example, you decided to take a vacation, thought about what type of vacation you wanted, researched necessary information to fulfill your idea of the perfect vacation and developed your final itinerary. More than likely, you kept thorough notes on all your planning efforts to stay organized.

Preparing to change inventory

Your goal is to:

• Consider all your options.
• Develop a plan of action.

Write down your responses to the following questions in the spaces provided.

Brainstorm options

• What have you heard others say about what has worked for them? Will any of their suggestions work for you? Why or why not?

• What have you considered doing? What have you tried in the past? Why didn’t it work?
Once you have brainstormed the many options to help you change your behavior, develop and write down a list of resources that will help as you create your plan and move forward into action. Some of those resources might include: the name and phone number of a friend who has stopped drinking; a friend who has recently joined a gym or a local weight loss program; the toll-free number to your employee assistance program (EAP); your medical doctor’s number. Keep these handy as you move into the next phase.

**Resource list**

**Plan your itinerary (create a plan of action)**

1. **Set concrete goals.** Remember that a goal is much more than simply stating your intention, “I want to stop procrastinating,” or “I want to feel better.” Your goals should follow these guidelines:

   • **Make them realistic:** this is the golden rule for avoiding failure.

     **Not:** “I will be a millionaire by the time I’m 50.”
     Instead: “I want to save 10 percent of my annual income.”

   • **State them positively:** You want to achieve success; not avoid failure.

     **Not:** “I will quit eating junk food.”
     Instead: “I will take care of my body by eating five servings of vegetables every day, and limiting junk food to one serving a day.”

   • **Make them measurable:** so you will know when you have achieved success!

     **Not:** “I will lose weight.”
     Instead: “I will weigh within three pounds of the weight that is appropriate for my body type.”

2. **Create the specific steps you will take to reach those goals.** Revisit the list of options and resources you developed during the brainstorming phase. Choose the options and resources from this list that make the most sense for you. For example, if your goal is to lose some weight, and you can accommodate in your monthly budget, then you might consider joining a gym. If not, then you may want to ask a neighbor or your spouse to walk with you either before or after work. These options will become the specific steps that you take to reach your goal. These steps also should be realistic, positively stated and measurable.
An example

You decide for the New Year to focus on losing weight.

**Goal:** I will weigh within 3 pounds of the weight that is appropriate for my body type.

**Objective 1:** Develop an exercise program.
- **Step 1:** Walk for 30 minutes, three times per week for four months.
- **Step 2:** Walk for 45 minutes, three times a week after four months.
- **Step 3:** Introduce light weightlifting with hand weights after eight months.
- **Step 4:** Continue this pattern until exercise becomes a habit.

**Objective 2:** Develop healthful eating habits.
- **Step 1:** Keep a food diary for two weeks.
- **Step 2:** If necessary, cut sweets and fats in half.
- **Step 3:** If necessary, increase daily fruit and vegetable servings.
- **Step 4:** If necessary, balance the food groups in your daily diet.
- **Step 5:** Cut restaurant portion sizes in half.
- **Step 6:** Revisit this plan in 6 months.

Your plan of action

**Goal:**

**Objective:**

**Step 1:**

**Step 2:**
Step 3:

Moving on

Creating a plan for change is behaving in a way where you believe that your plan will come to pass. Now that you have created your detailed, specific, realistic and concrete action plan, it is time to move into the fourth stage of change, action, featured in “Making it Happen.”
Stage four of making behavior change, the action stage, is where all the thinking and planning are finally put to the test. At this point, you’ve contemplated and prepared to make a behavior change by creating a plan of action. You are ready to take a step such as:

- going to counseling or treatment
- attending a 12-step program or support group
- starting a diet or exercise program
- taking a class to learn a new skill
- being assertive in a difficult matter
- quitting a stressful or unhealthy job
- attending church, synagogue or mosque

Action, as the name implies, is when someone who has been contemplating change engages his plan behaviorally, meaning he actually does something different. Whether you want to lose weight, quit smoking or reach another goal, here are some ideas for acting on your plan and achieving success.

**Good intentions versus action**

Engaging an action plan is no small thing. If changing a behavior were easy, everyone would do it. Taking that big step and actually changing a behavior is truly a breakthrough. Why? Because too many people remain stuck in the contemplation and planning stages for months, years or, sometimes, forever.

**What moves you to change?**

The reasons for moving from contemplating change to action are important and should be acknowledged and incorporated into the action plan. Here is an example:

*Doris gained 50 pounds during her last pregnancy. After the delivery, she fully intended to lose the weight and get back into shape. However, three years later, Doris remained about 30 pounds overweight. Because she had initially told herself that she was going to lose the weight, she didn’t pay much attention. Besides she was busy raising two children. Doris was shocked into action when she saw herself in her cousin’s wedding photos. She had no idea that she looked so fat. That was the impetus necessary to jumpstart Doris’s plan into action. That photo, which she promptly duplicated, is now permanently affixed to her bathroom mirror and to her refrigerator. This photo serves as a visual reminder of the motivation it took to move from contemplation into action.*

Reviewing your precontemplation inventory (see page 5, “Acknowledging the Problem”) can be very helpful in sustaining change, especially when the going gets tough. Keeping the reasons for behavior change close at hand will bolster motivation.
Involving others for support and accountability

The action stage often is preceded by a pronouncement or commitment to trusted friends or family members regarding a decision to change, specific strategies or treatment and a request for support. Doing so is a very positive move because it adds support and accountability. Knowing that others are watching, cheering one on and holding one accountable decreases the likelihood of relapse. For example, if an individual announces to her family and friends that she is on a low-fat diet, it’s much more difficult to eat high-fat foods in the house or when out to eat with friends.

Engaging change

Review the plan of action that you created as you were preparing to make this change. This plan includes the realistic, positive and measurable goal(s), as well as the specific steps you will take to reach the goal(s). It is now time to take that first outlined step. To stay on track, remember to:

- Ask for specific accountability and support from others. For example:
  - Pick a small support team of individuals you trust.
  - Arrange regular contacts or check-in times with your support team.
  - Give your team permission to ask tough questions about your commitment.
  - Arrange time to relax and unwind with friends and family.

- Be honest with yourself and others about your progress and setbacks.

- Set up short-term rewards with your support team. For example:
  - Go out for a nice dinner after one week of not smoking.
  - Purchase new clothes after losing 10 pounds.

Keep moving forward

Changing behavior and sticking to a plan is hard so don’t get discouraged by minor setbacks and give up. For example, if you decided to lose 30 pounds by exercising for 30 minutes each day—good for you. But if you only manage to exercise four days of the week rather than seven, doing so is still far better than not exercising at all. In other words, goals are good and necessary, but don’t get discouraged when you fall short. Learn from your setbacks, make adjustments and keep moving forward. It will be worth it.

When you have successfully incorporated this behavior change into your lifestyle, you are considered to be in the “maintenance” stage of the change process, covered in “Sustaining the Effort” on the next page.
SUSTAINING THE EFFORT

Congratulations on reaching the final stage in the process of making a behavior change! Your preparation and commitment to following your plan of action have paid off. The maintenance stage of the process of making behavior change—stage five—is typically considered to be the downhill leg of the change process. This is a bit of a misnomer, particularly for those dealing with chronic problems such as addictions or overeating. The word “maintenance” implies a passive approach to sustaining change. Although it is true that a small percentage of individuals who have successfully come through the action stage report that they no longer have a desire to, or face temptation to, engage in their problem behavior, the vast majority of people report a significant risk for relapse. Here are some helpful strategies for maintaining change.

From action to maintenance

Although no clear line of demarcation separating the two stages exists, experts suggest that maintenance occurs when the behavioral change has been successfully integrated and accommodated into one’s lifestyle.

For example, going on a low-carbohydrate diet in order to lose 20 pounds is very difficult at first, requiring a lot of cognitive energy to learn which carbs are good and which carbs are bad, and so forth. Once one learns the ropes, finds a tasty low-carb diet and incorporates it into one’s lifestyle, it doesn’t require so much thought. In other words, the person can “just do it.”

Preventing relapse

There is no cure for most problem behaviors. Consequently, the potential for relapse is very real and must not be underestimated.

Think of relapse as a process and not an event. In other words, relapse includes identifiable thoughts and feelings that, if avoided, inexorably lead to engaging in the problem behavior again. Self-deception is the common thread in most instances of relapse.

Consider a recently recovering compulsive gambler, Jim, who has not wagered in four months. At Gamblers Anonymous he has learned that he should avoid people and places associated with gambling. However, Jim is feeling very confident in his recovery, so much so that when he is invited to a low-stakes poker game for a friend’s bachelor party, he tells himself that he can handle it. Within minutes of arriving at the party, Jim is overwhelmed by a desire to gamble. He tells himself that he will gamble “just to be social” and sets his loss limit at $10. By the end of the night, he has lost more than $250. The story illustrates that relapse occurs the moment one breaks even a little rule or tells oneself a little lie.

VALUEOPTIONS®
Signs and symptoms of relapse

- increased feelings and perception of stress and feeling overwhelmed
- pretending things are OK when they are not
- self-pity
- isolating from supportive people
- feelings of anger or entitlement
- skipping treatment sessions or support meetings
- feeling overly confident
- poor sleep
- overworking

Strategies for maintaining change

Maintaining behavioral change is about more than avoiding relapse. It also involves taking a proactive approach. Here are some helpful strategies for maintaining change:

- Review goals, accomplishments and any setbacks each week.
  - Be honest with yourself about your progress and setbacks.
  - Keep a private journal of your thoughts and feelings about your life as you journey through the change process.
  - Look for ways to improve your plan—ask others.
- Stay in touch with your support team.
  - Periodically assess the level of support and accountability you need and adjust accordingly.
  - Disclose newly discovered relapse triggers or risky situations immediately.
  - Ask for specific feedback on how your support team perceives your progress and attitude. Does anything concern them?
- Learn more about your problem behavior. Consider attending a workshop or conference.

Acceptance

Acceptance is perhaps the purest outcome of the maintenance stage. This is the spiritual aspect of the change process and the one that is hardest to define and measure. Acceptance is that place you come to when you realize that you really had to make a change and, that you will be all right. The “Serenity Prayer” sums up the change process eloquently and succinctly:

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

If you are struggling with maintaining a change, revisit the previous stages in your process by reviewing “Preparing to Change” and “Making It Happen.”
CHANGE READINESS SCALE FOR WEIGHT LOSS

Each statement represents a thought that might occur to a person who is deciding whether or not to lose weight. Please indicate how IMPORTANT each of these statements might be to you if you were considering a decision to lose weight. There are five possible responses to each of the items that reflect your answer to the question “How important would this be to you?” Please circle the number that best describes how important each statement would be to you if you were deciding whether or not to lose weight.

1 = Not important at all
2 = Slightly important
3 = Moderately important
4 = Very important
5 = Extremely important

1. The exercises needed for me to lose weight would be a drudgery.
2. I would feel more optimistic if I lost weight.
3. I would be less productive.
4. I would feel sexier if I lost weight.
5. In order to lose weight I would be forced to eat less appetizing foods.
6. My self-respect would be greater if I lost weight.
7. My dieting could make meal planning more difficult for my family or housemates.
8. My family would be proud of me if I lost weight.
9. I would not be able to eat some of my favorite foods if I were trying to lose weight.
10. I would be less self-conscious if I lost weight.
11. Dieting would take the pleasure out of meals.
12. Others would have more respect for me if I lost weight.
13. I would have to cut down on some of my favorite activities if I try to lose weight.
14. I could wear more attractive clothing if I lost weight.
15. I would have to avoid some of my favorite places if I were trying to lose weight.
16. My health would improve if I lost weight.

17. Trying to lose weight could end up being expensive when everything is taken into account.

18. I would feel more energetic if I lost weight.

19. I would have to cut down on my favorite snacks while I was dieting.

20. I would be able to accomplish more if I carried fewer pounds.

Scoring:

Pros are all even numbered questions in **bold**.
Cons are all odd numbered questions in *italics*.

To get the average number of pros endorsed, add up the total number of points from questions 2+4+6+8+10+12+14+16+18+20 divide by 10.

To get the average number of cons endorsed, add up the total number of points from the questions 1+3+5+7+9+11+13+15+17+19 divide by 10.

*Overall scores:   Pros =  
Cons =  

Change readiness results

People often go through identifiable stages when making a decision to change something in their lives. Part of the decision to move from one stage to the next is based on the relative weight given to the pros and cons of changing a behavior. In this case the pros represent positive aspects of changing a behavior; and the cons represent negative aspects of changing a behavior, and may be thought of as barriers to change. These stages of change are: precontemplation stage, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance.

If you received more cons than pros you are in the pre-contemplation stage. This is the stage at which there is no intention to change behavior in the foreseeable future. Many individuals in this stage are unaware or under aware of 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. In the pre-contemplation stage, the cons of changing a problem behavior will be judged by individuals to outweigh the pros.

*It is important that you increase your awareness of the need for change and your concern about the current pattern of behavior; it is important to envision the possibility of change.*
If you received approximately equal number of pros and cons you are in the contemplation stage. This is the stage in which people are aware that a problem exists and are seriously thinking about overcoming it but have not yet made a commitment to take action. The resulting indecision and lack of commitment are largely responsible for so many individuals becoming stuck in the contemplation stage, substituting thinking for action while continually struggling with weighing the costs and benefits of changing behavior. 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.

*It is important to do an analysis of the pros and cons of your current behavior pattern and count the costs of not changing as well as count the cost and benefits of change. This may lead you to making a decision to change.*

If you received slightly more pros than cons you are in the preparation stage. This is a stage that combines intention and behavioral criteria. Individuals in this stage are intending to take action in the next month and have unsuccessfully taken 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. These are the people that should be recruited for action-oriented smoking cessation, weight loss, or exercise programs. In progressing from pre-contemplation to action, the pros of change tend to increase whereas the cons of change tend to decrease.

*It is important to increase your commitment and create a change plan that is acceptable, accessible, effective and implemented in the near term.*

If the pros outweigh the cons you are in the action stage. This is the stage in which individuals modify their behavior, experiences, or environment in order to overcome their problems. Action involves the most overt behavioral changes and requires considerable commitment of time and energy. In the action and maintenance stages, the pros outweigh the cons.

*It is critical to continue to implement strategies for change; revising your plan as needed; sustaining commitment in face of difficulties and experience successful action to change current patterns. Your new behavior pattern has been established for a significant period of time (3 to 6 months).*

If the pros outweigh the cons you are in the maintenance stage. Maintenance is the stage in which people work to prevent relapse and consolidate the gains attained during action. In the action and maintenance stages, the pros outweigh the cons.

*You have been sustaining change over time and across a wide range of different situations. You have been avoiding slips and relapse back to the old pattern of behavior.*

*It is important to experience long-term sustained change of the old pattern and the establishment of a new pattern of behavior.*
Use this chart to track the types and amount of food you eat and the times of day when you eat. Hunger can be tracked by time of day or on a severity scale from 1-4 (1=not hungry, 2=slightly hungry, 3=hungry, 4=very hungry.)

Exercise can be tracked in minutes or steps.

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**CHANGE READINESS SCALE FOR EXERCISE**

This section looks at positive and negative aspects of exercise. Read the following items and indicate how important each statement is with respect to your decision to exercise or not to exercise in your leisure time. Please answer using the following 5-point scale:

1 = Not important  
2 = Slightly important  
3 = Moderately important  
4 = Very important  
5 = Extremely important  

If you disagree with a statement and are unsure how to answer, the statement is probably not important to you. How important are the following opinions in your decision to exercise or not to exercise?

1. *I would have more energy for my family and friends if I exercised regularly*  
2. *I would feel embarrassed if people saw me exercising.*  
3. *I would feel less stressed if I exercised regularly.*  
4. *Exercise prevents me from spending time with my friends.*  
5. *Exercising puts me in a better mood for the rest of the day.*  
6. *I feel uncomfortable or embarrassed in exercise clothes.*  
7. *I would feel more comfortable with my body if exercised regularly.*  
8. *There is too much I would have to learn to exercise.*  
9. *Regular exercise would help me have a more positive outlook on life.*  
10. *Exercise puts an extra burden on my significant other.*

**Scoring:**

Pros of exercise are the odd numbered items in *italics.*  
Cons of exercise are the even numbered items in **bold.**

To get the average number of pros endorsed, add up the total number of points from the odd numbered questions 1+3+5+7+9 and divide by 5.
To get the average number of cons endorsed, add up the total number of points from the even numbered questions 2+4+6+8+10 and divide by 5.

*Overall scores:  Pros =  Cons =

**Change readiness results**

People often go through identifiable stages when making a decision to change something in their lives. Part of the decision to move from one stage to the next is based on the relative weight given to the pros and cons of changing behavior. In this case the pros represent positive aspects of making a decision to exercise, and the cons represent negative aspects of making a decision to exercise, and may be thought of as barriers to change. These stages of change are: pre-contemplation stage, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance.

**If you received more cons than pros you are in the precontemplation stage.** This is the stage at which there is no intention to change behavior in the foreseeable future. Many individuals in this stage are unaware or under aware of 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. In the pre-contemplation stage, the cons of changing a problem behavior will be judged by individuals to outweigh the pros.

*It is important that you increase your awareness of the need for change and your concern about the current pattern of behavior; it is important to envision the possibility of change.*

**If you received approximately equal number of pros and cons you are in the contemplation stage.** This is the stage in which people are aware that a problem exists and are seriously thinking about overcoming it but have not yet made a commitment to take action. The resulting indecision and lack of commitment are largely responsible for so many individuals becoming stuck in the contemplation stage, substituting thinking for action while continually struggling with weighing the costs and benefits of changing behavior. 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.

*It is important to do an analysis of the pros and cons of your current behavior pattern and count the costs of not changing as well as count the cost and benefits of change. This may lead you to making a decision to change.*

**If you received slightly more pros than cons you are in the preparation stage.** This is a stage that combines intention and behavioral criteria. Individuals in this stage are intending to take action in the next month and have unsuccessfully taken 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. These are the people that should be recruited for action-oriented smoking cessation, weight loss or exercise programs. In progressing from pre-contemplation to action, the pros of change tend to increase whereas the cons of change tend to decrease.

*It is important to increase your commitment and create a change plan that is acceptable, accessible, effective and implemented in the near term.*

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*You have been sustaining change over time and across a wide range of different situations. You have been avoiding slips and relapse back to the old pattern of behavior.*

*It is important to experience long-term sustained change of the old pattern and the establishment of a new pattern of behavior.*
**CHANGE READINESS SCALE FOR SMOKING CESSATION**

The following statements represent different opinions about smoking. Please rate HOW IMPORTANT each statement is to your decision to continue to smoke according to the following five-point scale:

1 = Not important  
2 = Slightly important  
3 = Moderately important  
4 = Very important  
5 = Extremely important

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Smoking cigarettes is pleasurable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>My smoking affects the health of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I like the image of a cigarette smoker.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Others close to me would suffer if I became ill from smoking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I am relaxed and therefore more pleasant when smoking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Because I continue to smoke, some people I know think I lack the character to quit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>If I try to stop smoking I'll be irritable and a pain to be around.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Smoking cigarettes is hazardous to my health.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>My family and friends like me better when I am happily smoking than when I am miserably trying to quit.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>I’m embarrassed to have to smoke.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>I like myself better when I smoke.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>My cigarette smoking bothers other people.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Smoking helps me concentrate and do better work.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>People think I’m foolish for ignoring the warnings about cigarette smoking.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Smoking cigarettes relieves tension.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>People close to me disapprove of my smoking.</td>
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</table>
17. By continuing to smoke I feel I am making my own decisions.

18. I’m foolish to ignore the warnings about cigarettes.

19. After not smoking for a while a cigarette makes me feel great.

20. I would be more energetic right now if I didn’t smoke.

**Scoring:**

Pros are all odd numbered questions and in *italics*.
Cons are all even numbered questions and in **bold**.

To get the average number of pros endorsed, add up the total number of points from questions 1+3+5+7+9+11+13+15+17+19 and divide by 10.

To get the average number of cons endorsed, add up the total number of points from questions 2+4+6+8+10+12+14+16+18+20 and divide by 10.

*Overall scores: Pros = **Cons = **

**Change readiness results**

People often go through identifiable stages when making a decision to change something in their lives. Part of the decision to move from one stage to the next is based on the relative weight given to the pros and cons of changing or not changing a behavior. In this case the pros represent favorable reasons for continuing to smoke, and may be thought of as barriers to change. Additionally, the cons represent negative aspects of continuing to smoke and may ultimately spur one on to make changes. The stages of change are: pre-contemplation stage, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance.

**If you received more pros than cons you are in the pre-contemplation stage.** This is the stage at which there is no intention to change behavior in the foreseeable future. Many individuals in this stage are unaware or under aware of 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. In the pre-contemplation stage, the pros of changing a problem behavior will be judged by individuals to outweigh the cons.

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**You have been sustaining change over time and across a wide range of different situations. You have been avoiding slips and relapse back to the old pattern of behavior.**

**It is important to experience long-term sustained change of the old pattern and the establishment of a new pattern of behavior.**
CONTRIBUTORS

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SOURCES


