

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

STAGES OF CHANGE

Premise

The transtheoretical model,¹ sometimes called the stages of change, developed by Prochaska and DiClementi,² describes behavior change as a process, not an event.³ As persons attempt to change their behavior, they move through a series of five stages.

Key Components

1. **Precontemplative:** Persons in this phase have no intention of changing their behavior. They may be either unaware of their risky behavior (uninformed), believe that their behaviors do not expose them to risk, or be unwilling to change their behaviors. They don't see a need to change the behavior.

"No way!" "I am not even thinking about it." "I know I have a lot of sexual partners, but I don't need to use condoms because my partners aren't at risk."

2. **Contemplative:** Persons recognize that their behaviors place them at risk and may be thinking about changing but have not made a commitment at this time. They see the need to change the behaviors, but have barriers to doing so.

"Yes I know I need to ..., but I can't right now because ...!" "What I do is a way of life for me." "I'm scared of getting infected, and I've thought about getting my partner tested for HIV, but I just don't know how he would react if I asked him ..."

3. **Preparation:** Persons see the need for change and are ready to try to make the change. They may be making plans and gathering support to make a change in the next 30 days.

"I just bought some condoms, and I'm going to talk to my partner about using them, before we have sex."

4. **Action:** Persons in this stage have just recently changed a particular behavior, such as using condoms consistently for a few months. People in this stage have usually changed a behavior within the past 6 months.

"My partner and I started using condoms and it wasn't bad at all."

¹ STD/HIV Prevention Training Centers. (2005). Bridging Theory and Practice trainer's guide (August ed.).

² Prochaska, J. O., DiClementi, C. C., & Norcross J. C., (1992). In search of how people change: Application to addictive behaviors. *American Psychologist* 47, 1102–1114.

³ National Cancer Institute. (2005). Theory at a glance: A guide for health promotion practice (2nd ed.).

5. **Maintenance:** People in this stage have consistently performed a behavior for more than 6 months and are relatively comfortable with the change; it has become a routine part of their lives.

“Using condoms is no big deal anymore; my partner and I have our routine down and always use them.”

Key Points for Discussion

Nonlinear: This model describes behavior change as a spiral process; behavior change can happen in a circular fashion. Persons can go from Precontemplative to Contemplative to Preparation and then back to Contemplative, for example. The length of each stage will vary for each individual, and people move back and forth between the stages.

Relapse: Behavior change is seen as a spiral because relapse often will occur and is seen as a normal part of the process of change. If relapse occurs, it doesn't mean one has failed and should therefore give up. Relapse indicates that one may need to continue developing skills, support, self-efficacy, or other factors that positively affect behavior to build a solid enough base so that behavioral goals can be reached and maintained.