

NEBRASKA LICENSEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Stages of Change

In order for people to stop drinking and using substances, change must occur. Carlo C. DiClemente and James O. Prochaska introduced the Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM) in 1985. The heart of TTM is “the notion that behavior change involves a process that occurs in increments and that involves specific and varied tasks” (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). The most common component of TTM is known as the Stages of Change, which is used extensively in the treatment of alcohol and substance use, as well as with many other problem behaviors.

The Stages of Change consists of five stages, with each stage displaying a different readiness to change. In order to attain and sustain sobriety, people will move through each stage of change.

Precontemplation (“I don’t have a problem.”)

- ✓ DiClemente identified Pre-contemplators as “the Four R’s”:
 - Reluctant – The person does not believe their alcohol/substance use is problematic.
 - Rebellious – The person is resistant to other people’s demands, or being told what to do.
 - Resigned – The person has made attempts to stop using and has not been successful. These people have often given up hope that they can change.
 - Rationalizing – The person is able to list the many reasons why alcohol or substance use is not problematic. These people often believe they have “all the answers.”
- ✓ People in this stage are not thinking about or considering any form of change, likely because they are in denial.

Contemplation (“Well, I might have a problem.”)

- ✓ People in this stage are willing to acknowledge that their alcohol/substance use may be problematic, but are highly ambivalent, and not ready to make the necessary changes.
- ✓ People are able to consider the pros and cons of continuing to use alcohol/substances versus discontinuing their use.

Determination (“Ok, I have a problem, now what?”)

- ✓ People commit to making changes and decide to stop using alcohol/substances.
- ✓ People often ask friends, family, counselors, or others for help, “What do I need to do?”
- ✓ People begin to develop a plan to stop using alcohol/substances.

Action (“I’m doing it.”)

- ✓ People put their plan into action. They will often start counseling, or enroll in treatment, begin to attend recovery support groups, or tell their family and friends about their decision to stop using.
- ✓ Hope and self-confidence begins to redevelop for people.

Maintenance (“I’m doing it without thinking.”)

- ✓ Long-term sustained changes occur within people and become second nature.
- ✓ People are able to anticipate relapse situations and choose from a multitude of relapse prevention skills to sustain sobriety.

We know that alcoholism and substance use disorders are chronic diseases in which relapse is always a possibility. Therefore, it is possible for someone in the maintenance stage to relapse, and immediately return to the action stage of change. This is part of the Stages of Change process.

Miller, W. R. and Rollnick, S. (2008). *Motivational interviewing: preparing people for change* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

If you are a licensed health or health-related service professional wanting more information about sobriety and recovery, please contact the NE LAP at (800) 851-2336 or (402) 354-8055 or visit our web site at www.lapne.org. If you would like to consult with the NE LAP, or schedule an assessment or an educational presentation, please ask for Michelle Hruska, NE LAP Coordinator, or Nicole Winkler, NE LAP Counselor.

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