

Stage 1: Precontemplation

Characteristics

- Denial
- Ignorance of the problem

Strategies

- Rethink your behavior
- Analyze yourself and your actions
- Assess risks of current behavior

The earliest stage of change is precontemplation.¹ During the precontemplation stage, people are not considering a change. People in this stage are often described as "in denial," because they claim that their behavior is not a problem. In some cases, people in this stage do not understand that their behavior is damaging, or they are under-informed about the consequences of their actions.

If you are in this stage, you may feel resigned to your current state or believe that you have no control over your behavior. This is not true.

If you are in this stage, begin by asking yourself some questions. Have you ever tried to change this behavior in the past? How do you recognize that you have a problem? What would have to happen for you to consider your behavior a problem?

Stage 2: Contemplation

Characteristics

- Ambivalence
- Conflicted emotions

Strategies

- Weigh pros and cons of behavior change
- Confirm readiness and ability to change
- Identify barriers to change

During this stage, people become more and more aware of the potential benefits of making a change, but the costs tend to stand out even more. This conflict creates a strong sense of ambivalence about change. Because of this uncertainty, the contemplation stage of change can last months or even years.¹

Many people never make it past the contemplation phase. Be the exception.

You may view change as a process of giving something up rather than a means of gaining emotional, mental, or physical benefits. If you are contemplating a behavior change, there are some important questions to ask yourself: Why do you want to change? Is there anything preventing you from changing? What are some things that could help you make this change?