

# STAGES OF CHANGE

## Precontemplation stage

- Characteristics
  - ◆ Patient not even considering changing
  - ◆ May be in denial or not consider problem serious
  - ◆ May have tried to change and failed so many times they have given up
- Strategies
  - ◆ Educate on risks benefits
  - ◆ Highlight the positive outcomes related to the change
- Example
  - ◆ Smoker is in denial of health risks: “heart attack won’t happen to me, my father smoked for 92 years”



## Contemplation stage

- Characteristics
  - ◆ Person is ambivalent about changing
  - ◆ During this stage the person weighs benefits costs or barriers of the change including time, expense, fear
- Strategies
  - ◆ Identify barriers and misconceptions the patient has
  - ◆ Address their concerns and identify appropriate support systems
- Example
  - ◆ A patient with high cholesterol recognizing need to change: “I know I need to change my diet, but I don’t want to give up the foods I like”



## Preparation stage

- Characteristics
  - ◆ The person is prepared to experiment with small changes
- Strategies
  - ◆ Develop realistic goals and timelines for the change
  - ◆ Don’t try too many changes or too much change all at once
  - ◆ Provide positive reinforcement about patient’s willingness to change
- Example
  - ◆ Overweight patient preparing to exercise by identifying exercise facilities in their area and planning on how to fit this into their schedule



## Action stage

- Characteristics
  - ◆ The person takes definitive action to change their behavior
- Strategies
  - ◆ Provide positive reinforcement
  - ◆ Remind them of the positive benefits of the change
  - ◆ Verify their support system
- Example



Patient with high blood pressure fills medication, self-monitors BP daily, and continuously takes medication. They use reminder system to help them not forget to take medication

## Maintenance and relapse prevention stage

- Characteristics
  - ◆ The person strives to maintain the new behavior over the long term
- Strategies
  - ◆ Provide encouragement and support
  - ◆ Identify any potential barriers that may sideline them from their goals
- Example
  - ◆ Patient refills their medication regularly, continues to follow their diet, and incorporates daily visits to the gym

