

Information Sheet

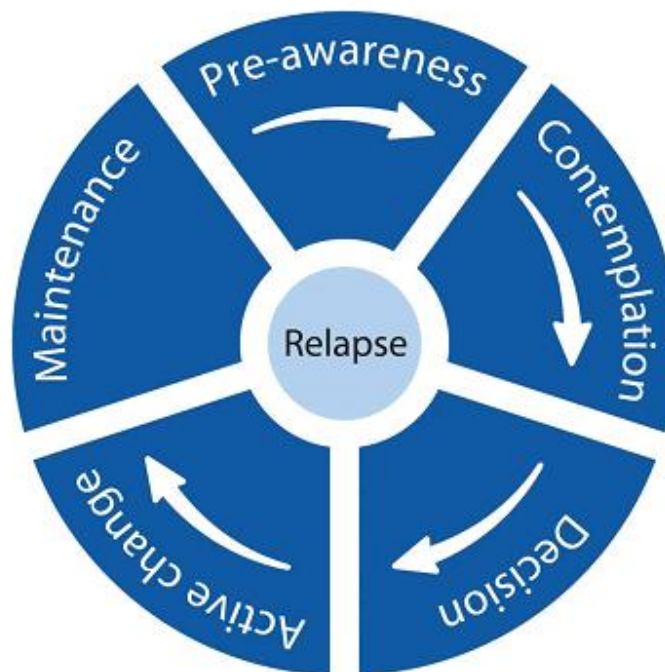
How people change

The Wheel of Change describes the journey that someone takes when they seek to make a significant change in their behaviour. How you can best help the learner move from one stage of change to the next depends on which stage the learner is currently at. The help you give someone to move from pre-awareness into contemplation, for example, is different from the help you would give to move a person from contemplation to decision.

Paul Lalgee

The stages of change

When people make significant changes in their lives, they go through an identifiable series of stages. These stages are represented in the Wheel of Change. Certain ways of thinking, feeling and behaving are associated with each stage.



Pre-awareness

Sooner or later, you are likely to find yourself facing a learner with a problem – or rather, a learner you believe has a problem. Learners in the pre-awareness stage have a perspective that is very different from yours.

They may show one or more of the following characteristics:

- **Reluctance:** they lack knowledge and awareness about the facts relating to their behaviour or the possible impact of their behaviour on their future.
- **Rebelliousness:** they present themselves as aggressive and resistant to change; they appear to be governed by emotions rather than rational thought, and do not believe they can change.
- **Resignation:** they seem overwhelmed by the idea of change and resigned to the fact that they cannot change. Previous attempts to change may not have worked, and the learner lacks hope.
- **Rationalisation:** the learner always has a reason why they do not have a problem or why it is pointless to change. Their perspective stems from a belief that they do not have a problem – it is only other people who think they do.

The frustration for you is not that your learners cannot see solutions. It is that they cannot see their problems.

Contemplation

This is the stage at which learners are aware that a problem exists but have not yet made a commitment to take action to change. However, they are willing to consider the problem and accept that a change might help them to get where they want to be in the future.

During this stage, they are likely to experience mixed feelings and ambivalence. On the one hand, they can see the benefits of changing; on the other, they are aware of what they would lose by changing. They may fluctuate between the two opposing attitudes. This can be an uncomfortable state to be in.

Decision

At this stage, learners decide to take positive action to change their behaviour. They are willing to collaborate on drawing up an action plan that is acceptable, accessible, appropriate and effective. Without such a plan, they are likely to slip back into the contemplation stage.

Active change

At this stage, learners are putting into action their plans for modifying their behaviour, experiences or environment in order to overcome their problems. You need to provide appropriate support and feedback so that they quickly experience short-term benefits.

Maintenance

This is a period of consolidation, when the new behaviours are turned into new habits. Your support decreases.

Relapse

Changing behaviour is not easy and learners may experience several slips and relapses along the way. Relapse can happen at any stage and is a normal part of the change process, particularly when the change involves well-established behaviours.

Using the Wheel of Change

Once you are familiar with the stages on the Wheel of Change, you will begin to perceive your learners differently and to interpret the things they do and what they say about themselves as clues to the stage they are at on the Wheel. But look out for themes in what learners say. One statement may appear to send a very strong message about the stage they are at, but will need corroborating with other similar statements.