

Stages of Change

Stage 1: Precontemplation

The participant is either unaware of problem behavior or discouraged when it comes to changing it. She needs to feel understood and have the opportunity to share her current and past experiences and future desires. The WIC counselor needs to listen and resist giving advice.

Stage 2: Contemplation

This participant starts to communicate about a problem or behavior and may start to talk about wanting to solve the problem or change the behavior. She might gather information but not act on it. The WIC counselor works with the participant to consider pros, cons, concerns, and desires. The WIC counselor focuses on strengthening the participant's self-efficacy and ability to see a possible course of action.

Stage 3: Preparation

The participant is ready to change in the near future. She may have tried and failed to change in the past. She has learned valuable lessons from her past attempts to change. She needs to develop a plan that will work for her. The WIC counselor helps the participant think creatively about options for change. The WIC counselor can ask permission to provide a menu of suggestions to help the participant.

Stage 4: Action

Participants at this stage are actively engaged in change. They stop smoking, walk at least 20 minutes most days, or wean their toddler from a bottle. This requires a great commitment of time and energy. The WIC counselor supports the participant by being affirming and empathetic and helping the participant adopt strategies for success.

Stage 5: Maintenance

The participant now focuses on keeping up with the goals attained during the action stage, so that these small steps become part of a larger improved nutrition and health lifestyle. The WIC counselor continues to support the participant by identifying ways to overcome challenges and realize that relapse is not failure but an opportunity to learn and renew the attempted behavior change.